# BUREAU OF WORKING FAMILIES

# STYLE GUIDE

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**1.** **Active versus Passive Voice**

Use the active voice when possible. When the W-2 Manual, an operations memo, or an administrator’s memo is creating an obligation or responsibility to do something, using active voice automatically pushes the author to identify the specific individual or entity that is responsible for taking an action. Using passive voice creates a provision that does not identify who is responsible. Be as clear as possible to hold the agency or individual accountable.

**Passive Voice Examples**

* W-2 participants and applicants will be informed of their right to request the BST or a formal assessment through the attached poster.
* At the initial W-2 eligibility determination and at each review, enrollment for each child subject to Learnfare must be verified.

**Active Voice Examples**

* The lobby poster informs W-2 participants and applicants of their right to request the BST or a formal assessment.
* At the initial W-2 eligibility determination and at each review, the FEP must verify enrollment for each child subject to Learnfare.

### 2. Capitalization versus Lower-Case

1. Use title case for manual section titles. In title case, capitalize only the first letters of principal words. Write prepositions and articles with lowercase letters, unless they start the title.

**Example**

3.2.2 Prospective Income Eligibility

1. Use lower case when using geographical area generically, even if W-2 is used.

**Example**

W-2 agencies must determine if applicants are applying in the correct W-2 geographical area.

1. Use title case when referring to a specific geographical area by its title.

**Example**

Dane County residents will belong to the Southwest Geographical Area. Rock County residents will also belong to this area.

d. Capitalize proper nouns, which refer to a unique entity.

**Example**

The Workload Dashboard provides a real-time snapshot of all the application-related Work Items assigned to one or multiple workers.

**3.** **Citing Wisconsin Statutes**

Use the following abbreviations in the Wisconsin Statutes and Annotations when citing the various statute units:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chapter, chapters | ch., chs. |
| Subchapter, subchapters | subch., subchs. |
| Section, sections | s., ss. |
| Subsection, subsections | sub., subs. |
| Paragraph, paragraphs | par., pars. |
| Subdivision, subdivisions | subd., subds. |

1. There is a space in between the section indicator (s. or §) and the numbering.
2. There are no spaces following the chapter number (none between numbers or letters).
3. To create the section symbol (**§**):
4. Click on **Insert** in the toolbar at the top of the screen, so that the Insert ribbon appears;
5. Select **Symbol** all the way to the right;
6. Select **More Symbols**;
7. Select the **Special Characters** tab;
8. Select the **Section** symbol by clicking on it; and
9. Select the **Insert** button.

**Correct Examples Incorrect Examples**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Single statute:   * Wis. Stat. s. 49.151(1)(a) * Wis. Stat. § 49.151(1)(a)   Multiple statutes:   * Wis. Stat. ss. 49.143 to 49.161 * Wis. Stat. ss. 49.143 - 49.161 * Wis. Stat. §§ 49.143 to 49.161 * Wis. Stat. §§ 49.143 - 49.16 | * Wis. Stat. s.49.001(3m) * Wis. Stat.16.61(5) * Wisconsin Statutes §49.47(4(K) * Wis. Stats. § 49.36 * Wis. Stats. 49.143(2)(d) * 115.29(4), Stats. * 115.29(4), Wis. Stats. * Wisconsin Statutes Section 49.96 * s. 118.15(3), Wisc. Stats; |

**Formula**: Wis. Stat. s. chapter. section(subsection)(paragraph)subdivision.subdivision paragraph

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example**   * Chapter 16 * Section 61 * Subsection 2 * Paragraph b * Subdivision 2 * Subdivision paragraph c | Wis. Stat. s. 16.61(2)(b)2.c |

**4.**  **References to Cares Worker Web**

Bold:page name, section heading, field name, and drop-down box choices

Title Case: proper nouns, links, tabs, radio, and command buttons. (See **2.a** for definition)

All Caps: field entries

**Note:** CWW displays field entries inconsistently. For example, some display as Y-Yes, while others display as Yes. In the same drop-down menu, some entries are all caps, others are title case. Please consistently use all caps when referencing a field entry.

**Examples**

* To initiate W-2 requests, FEPs must not navigate directly to the **W-2 Program Request** page and must not update the **Requesting this Program of Assistance/Subprogram of Assistance** field from NO to YES.
* The **Case Comments** page displays during intake and review driver flows. The FEP may type comments in the Comments box on the **Case Comments** page.
* The **Expected Changes** page in CWW will replace CARES screen ACEC. FEPs will be able to navigate directly to the **Expected Changes** page using the Navigation Menu or by selecting the Add Expected Change(s) button on the **Case Comments** page.

**References to CARES Mainframe or Legacy System**

When referencing CARES screens, always write out CARES screen before the TRAN code the first time it is referenced in the section. Thereafter, just use the TRAN code. When referencing a field on a CARES screen, write the field name and field entry in all caps as they display on the screen. Always capitalize when referencing PARMS.

**Examples**

* FEPS enter placements on CARES screen WPWW. In addition to case numbers, PINs display on WPWW.
* When workers post nonparticipation hours, the date entered in the NON PART DATE field must be the same date entered in the THRU field.
* To end a vendor payment on a case, enter either NL (if the information is no longer needed) or AE (to delete incorrect information) in the END REASON field on CARES screen WPVP.

**5.** **Dates**

1. In the month-day-year style of dates, commas must be used to set off the day *and* year.
2. Where month and year only are given, or a specific day (such as a holiday) with a year, a comma is not needed.
3. If a month-year or month-day date is used as an adjective, no hyphen or comma is needed.
4. Write out the month rather than the numeral when referencing dates.
5. Do not add **st**, **nd**, **rd** etc. after the number.

**Correct Examples**

* The CWW Training took place on February 2, 2006, in Milwaukee.
* In March 2008, she decided to end eligibility based on too many IPVs.
* The festivities of October 31 are celebrated by many Americans.
* The December 2003 financial statement shows the agency is within budget.

**Incorrect Examples**

* The CWW Training took place on February 2, 2006 in Milwaukee.
* In March 2008 - she decided to end eligibility based on an IPV.
* The festivities of October 31st are celebrated by many Americans.
* The 12/2003 financial statement shows the agency is within budget.

**Exception**

When the example or language has to do with the participation or reference period, it is okay to use the number of the month rather than the word.

* The penalty period for the first IPV is 03/01/2013 to 08/31/2013.

**6.** **Forms**

Form names are in title case and italicized. The form name is a link to the online form. The form number follows in parentheses after the form name and the word form. The number does not include division-identifying characters. The link should be the entire form name, including the number in parentheses.

**Example**

[*Authorization for Disclosure of Confidential Information* form (10779)](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/forms/pdf/dcf_f_dwsp10779.pdf).

**7.** **Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation Rules**

a. Match nouns and their respective possessive pronouns:

**Example**

The W-2 agency must display the poster in its lobby. (Since agency is singular, use the singular pronoun its.)

**Example**

The W-2 agencies must display the posters in their lobbies. (Since agencies is plural, use the plural pronoun **their**.)

**Example**

The W-2 participant must submit verification to her or his worker. (Since participant is singular, use the singular pronoun **her** or **his**)

**Example**

W-2 participants must submit verification to their workers. (Since participants is plural, use the plural pronoun**their**)

b. Use only one space between sentences and after colons.

c. When a policy refers to a timeframe that is a specific number of days, there must be an indicator as to whether they are **working days** or **calendar days**. Do not use **business days**.

**Example**

Within five working days after the mailing date of the W-2 Manual letter, the FEP must either notify or have had made reasonable attempts to notify the participant of the 20% or greater payment reduction and the reason(s) for the proposed reduction.

d. **Bold** words you wish to emphasize or call out.

**Example**

When a policy refers to a timeframe that is a specific number of days, there must be an indicator as to whether they are **working days** or **calendar days**. Do not use **business days.**

e. Always place a comma after the second to last item in a list, known as an **Oxford** or **Serial comma**.

**Example**

* She took a photograph of her parents, the president and the vice president.
  + This makes it seem as though her parents are the president and vice president, and she took a picture of them.
* She took a photograph of her parents, the president, and the vice president.
  + This makes it clear that she is taking a picture of her parents with the president and vice president.

## 8. Lists

a. Use numbers when the items need to follow a specific sequence, the list is inclusive, the items are musts (mandatory), or the list is so long that numbers help the reader reference items on the list.

**Example**

If the agency is going to reduce the participants’ payment by 20% or more, then the agency must:

1. Provide written notice to the W-2 participant of the proposed 20% or more payment reduction and of the reasons for the proposed payment reduction; and
2. Allow the participant reasonable time to rectify the deficiency, failure, or other behavior to avoid the proposed W-2 payment reduction.

b. Use bullets when the order of the items doesn’t matter, the list is not inclusive, and the items are mays (optional).

**Example**

Additional approaches to conducting an informal assessment may include:

* Paper and pencil tools provided by the W-2 agency;
* Automated screening and assessment tools available within the W-2 agency;
* Information gathered through face-to-face case management meetings;
* Worksite Performance Evaluations;
* Goal setting exercises/tools; and
* Experience with following through on job search and other assigned activities.

c. Capitalized listed items.

d. Use a period at the end of your list items if the items are complete sentences. Otherwise, use semi-colons and the second to last bulleted item must have the word **and** or **or** after it followed by no punctuation. A period follows the last bulleted item.

**Example**

Meeting or exceeding minimum Federal All-Family WPR rate is important for a number of reasons:

* It ensures that needy families are working toward becoming self-sufficient and not receiving assistance for an indefinite amount of time.
* A state that fails to meet the TANF Work Participation Rate may receive a financial penalty resulting in significant reductions to the states TANF block grant funding.
* Beginning in 2013, W-2 agencies will receive performance payments for meeting the quarterly Federal All-Families Work Participation Rate of 50%.

**9. Must, Should, and May**

1. Use **must** when policy mandates the action.

**Example**

The FEP must give the participant seven working days from the verification request date to provide the written documentation.

1. Use **should** when policy recommends the action.

**Example**

If a W-2 participant is not going to be able to participate in an assigned activity, the agency should encourage the participant to call the FEP prior to the activity start time.

1. Use **may** to indicate optional actions, depending on circumstances.

**Example**

At times, it may be appropriate to include personal goals as assigned activities in Part 3 of the EP. Examples of personal goals include:

* Addressing parenting issues;
* Obtaining financial counseling;
* Securing a driver’s license;
* Moving to a safer neighborhood; and
* Obtaining education and training to achieve long-term career goals.

Note: State law uses shall and may (i.e. shall = must, and may = should).

**10.** **Numbers**

1. Spell out only single digit numbers (one through nine) and use numerals for all others (10+).

**Example**

* There are five people in each of the seven homes for a total of 35 individuals.
* After three months in the program, only 13 people remained actively involved.

1. If the rule states you must use numerals for one of the numbers in a given category, *use them for all numbers in that category*. This applies to items within the same category; items in one category may be given as numerals and items in another category spelled out.

**Example**

* A mixture of buildings—one of **103** stories, five of more than **50**, and a dozen of only **3 or 4**—has been suggested for the area.
* I have had responses from 3 of the 18 people I invited

1. Numbers referring to pages, chapters, parts, volumes, and other divisions of a book, as well as numbers referring to illustrations or tables, are set as numerals.

**Example**

Upon completion of step 3, on page 37, the reader is asked to consult appendix B, table 7.

**11.** **Percentages (%)**

1. Use the numeral and not the word for percentages, even if it is a number less than 10.

**Example**

Fewer than 3% of the IPVs were dismissed.

1. The only time you would write out the word instead of using the number is if the number was at the beginning of the sentence. To avoid this, simply restructure the sentence.

**Example**

* Seventeen percent of the individuals left the program after six months.

**Fix:** After six months, 17% of the individuals left the program.

1. The word percent, an adverb, is not interchangeable with the noun percentage (1 percent is a very small percentage).
2. No space appears between the numeral and the symbol (%).

**12.** **References**

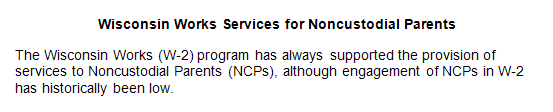
1. **Acronyms**
2. Define an abbreviation or acronym at its first use in the text.

**Example**

Income Maintenance (IM) agencies complete applications timely and process six-month report forms (SMRF) for Child Care and FoodShare more quickly under their new consortia-based administrative structure. Since implementation, IM consortia have recommended Workload Dashboard and SMRF enhancements.

1. If the first reference is within a heading, do not use an abbreviation or acronym. In this case, use the full term in the heading, but define the abbreviation or acronym in the following paragraph.

**Example**



1. **Policy**
2. When referring to a policy in another section of the W-2 Manual, use the word **see** followed by the section number. The section number should be a link. All should be in parentheses and follow the end of the sentence.

**Example**

During the application process, the FEP may also refer the applicant for vocational evaluation or formal assessment of employment barriers. (See [5.5.1](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/manual/05/05.5.1_Formal_Assessment.htm))

1. When a policy refers to applicants and participants, write out **and** or **or**. Don’t use **/.**

**Example**

Wisconsin Works (W-2) provides a Fact Finding review process to resolve disputes for applicants and participants who disagree with a W-2 agency’s decision.

1. **The Department, Division, Bureau, and Section**
2. Don’t use an ampersand (&) in DCFs title.

**Correct Example**

Department of Children and Families

**Incorrect Example**

Department of Children & Families

1. Don’t capitalize department, division, bureau, or section unless using them as specific titles.

**Example**

* + - All of the staff in my section will be receiving training in Excel this week.
    - The Policy Section will do a presentation for the entire department on W-2 policies.

1. Write **DCF**, not **The DCF**.

**13.** **Words and Phrases to Avoid**

1. Don’t use **prioritize** as a verb. For example, “The FEP must contact the CSA and ask that paternity for the CMC case is prioritized.” This does not provide specifics regarding what the FEP is asking the CSA to do. To the extent possible, policy should indicate what, when, and how actions must be taken.

**Example**

The FEP must contact the CSA within X days of placement and ask the CSA to initiate the process.

1. The word **use** is preferred over **utilize.**
2. Use **whether**, not **whether or not**.

**Example**

How agencies initiate a W-2 request depends on whether ~~or not~~ the applicant has an open IM case.

1. Use **regardless**, not **irregardless**. http://www.merriam- webster.com/dictionary/irregardless
2. Use **regarding,** not **in regard(s) to**.

**14.** **W-2 Terms**

1. Use **W-2 Group** when you are writing policy. Use **W-2 Assistance Group** when you are writing CARES instructions.
2. Identify who is required to perform the action. Use **FEP** when it's the FEP, **RS** when it’s the Resource Specialist and **W-2 agency** when policy doesn’t define who performs the action. Don’t use the ambiguous term **worker**.