

Policy Document Definitions

Policy, procedures, and standards of practice (referred to as policy documents) are written guidelines or statements of position. DHS policy documents provide clarity and direction for tasks or behaviors which require official approval from DHS leadership. DHS employees, and contracted providers when appropriate, are expected to follow these policy documents and will be held accountable for adhering to them.

Any guidance or expectations strictly for contracted providers, which does not also apply to DHS employees, can simply be included in a contract specifications manual. DHS is not required to create a standard of practice for such guidance or expectations.

Policies

Audience: DHS employees and interns

What is a policy?

- A broad, concise guideline or statement of position explaining what is required of, or prohibited by, DHS employees.
- Uses the words 'must,' 'will' or 'shall.'
- Most often applies to all county or all DHS employees, though sometimes is office specific.

Some reasons a policy would be developed:

- A legal, regulatory, or funding body requires DHS or a DHS office to create an official policy.
- DHS employees, interns, providers, partners, or consumers would be at significant legal or safety risk without the policy (risk of lawsuits, physical harm to people, data breaches, unfair treatment, or service provision, etc.).
- DHS has a critical issue or challenge resulting in the need for clear, consistent direction for employees and interns.

DHS does not need to create a policy rewriting a law or regulation which DHS is already are required to follow. DHS cannot write policy for other organizations.

Procedures

Audience: DHS employees and interns

What is a procedure?

- Step-by-step directions for how to complete a critical task. The task must be completed in a specific way.
- Explains who, how, when, where in as much detail as required so there is no room for various interpretation.

Some reasons a procedure would be developed:

- A legal, regulatory, or funding body requires DHS or a DHS office to have an official procedure.
- DHS or a DHS office must outline how our staff will implement laws or regulations it is required to follow.
- Individuals are performing critical tasks in inconsistent ways or there is confusion about the proper way to complete critical tasks.
- DHS leaders want to document how to implement internal policy or specific practices without which there would be significant legal, safety or other risk.

DHS does not need to create a procedure rewriting a law or regulation which we already are required to follow. DHS cannot write procedures dictating how other organizations serve their clients. Statements of work will include information about how contracted providers will serve their clients.

Standards of Practice

Audience: DHS employees and interns, and sometimes also contracted providers

What is a standard of practice?

- Set of decision-making rules or general instructions related to providing services to clients.
- Expected activities related to a model, program, or practice.
- Scope and reach are narrower or refer to specific topic areas.
- Based on research and/or industry best practices.
- Standards applying to contracted providers must be written into contract specification manuals.

Some reasons a standard of practice would be developed:

- To ensure employees, interns, and contracted providers are consistently applying best practices and honoring regulatory requirements within their respective disciplines.
- To support employees, interns, and contracted providers in creating a uniform, accessible and equitable service delivery system.