Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Internet Guidelines

Contents

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Ready to go Online?

It's a fact of business life; the Internet changes everything. At DHMH, we're steering our way through this sea of change and launching exciting Internet/Intranet projects to meet the needs and demands of our customers.

These guidelines explain how to visually express DHMH's style on the Web. They set out the core elements of our Internet design. They explain how you can work with the mandatory elements and those that are open to your creative interpretation.

Why special guidelines for Web Design?

The simple answer? Because the web is different. We're now doing business 24 hours a day. And this calls for a new communications approach. Instead of thinking "print media", we need to think "online". This demands consistency in how we communicate our vision and the mission of DHMH as we implement and expand our Internet "exchange".

purpose

The DHMH Guidelines for the Web have been developed in coordination with the HICC eGovernment Workgroup, and with comment from a broad cross-section of DHMH staff and management. This document provides direction in the design, development, implementation, and maintenance of Web sites. The following guidelines were developed to:

- Ensure quality of departmental sites
- Promote a unified site for DHMH
- Facilitate Web development throughout the Department

The Information Resources Management Administration (IRMA) access guidelines, allow implementation to:

- People with disabilities
- People lacking multi-media functions
- People using non-current Web browsers
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds (where relevant)

executive summary

The DHMH Internet Guidelines are actually a combination website development guidelines and quality assurance guidelines, both of which, are required functions for each administration or program. 95% of the policy deals with website development technical requirements to be followed for all web designs.

The websites significantly affect how our customers see us; the guidelines also contain quality assurance requirements for administrations. The "Workflow Process for Establishing or Revising Websites" details how an administration is to assign responsibilities for ensuring accuracy and timeliness of the information on the websites. Each administration's responsibilities are also stated in the previous section of the guidelines titled "purpose".

terms of use/privacy statement

Terms of Use

These terms of use apply to the entire group of Web sites owned, operated, licensed, or controlled by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (sometimes hereinafter referred to as "DHMH"). Please read these terms and conditions carefully before using this Web site. By using this Web site or any other site owned, operated, licensed, or controlled by DHMH, you signify your assent to these terms of use. If you do not agree to these terms of use, you may not access or otherwise use the site. DHMH reserves the right, at its discretion, to change, modify, add, or remove portions of these terms at any time. Please check these terms periodically for changes. Your continued use of this site or any other DHMH Web site following the posting of changes to these terms will mean you accept those changes.

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Software Quality

DHMH and/or its related, affiliated and subsidiary organizational units do not warrant that any information, software or other material accessible through one of their Web pages is free of defects, viruses, worms, trojan horses or other harmful components.

Objectionable Information and Materials

When accessing or making use of any service provided on the Web pages of DHMH you may not:
post or transmit any unlawful, threatening, abusive, libelous, defamatory, obscene, pornographic, profane, or otherwise objectionable information of any kind, including without limitation, any transmissions constituting or encouraging conduct that would constitute a criminal offense, give rise to civil liability, or otherwise violate any local, national or international law, including without limitation, the U.S. export control laws and regulations; post or transmit any information or software which contains a virus, worm, trojan horse or other harmful component; restrict or inhibit any other user from using and enjoying the Web site; post, publish, transmit, reproduce, distribute or in any way exploit any information, software or other material obtained through our Web pages for commercial purposes (other than expressly permitted by the provider of such information, software or other material); or upload, post, publish, transmit, reproduce or distribute in any way, information, software or other material obtained through our Web pages which is protected by copyright, or other proprietary right, or derivative works with respect thereto, without obtaining permission of the copyright owner or rightholder, or upload, post, publish, reproduce, transmit or distribute in any way any component of our Web pages themselves or derivative works with respect thereto, except where expressly permitted in writing.
Disclaimer of Liability

For documents available from this site, the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene does not warrant or assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed.

Disclaimer of Endorsement

-- General --
DHMH does not endorse or recommend any commercial products, processes, or services. The views and opinions of authors expressed on DHMH Websites do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, and they may not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

-- External Links --

Some DHMH sites may provide links to other Internet sites only for the convenience of World Wide Web users. DHMH is not responsible for the availability or content of these external sites, nor does DHMH endorse, warrant or guarantee the products, services or information described or offered at these other Internet sites.

Medical Information: It is not the intention of DHMH to provide specific medical advice, but rather to provide users with access to general information to facilitate a better understanding of public health issues. Specific medical advice will not be provided, and DHMH urges you to consult with an appropriate, qualified medical provider for diagnosis and for answers to your personal questions.

Use of Electronic Signatures:

In order to conduct certain transactions with DHMH by electronic means, you, or your authorized representative, will be required to use an electronic signature when such signature is necessary. We will ask that you also agree to all terms and conditions presented in an Electronic Signature Agreement. Please be aware that an electronic signature is as legally binding as a handwritten signature.

Privacy Notice:

This Website is provided as a public service by the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

• Of the information we learn about you from your visit to "http://www.dhmh.state.md.us," we may store the following: the domain name from which you access the Internet, the date and time, the Internet address of the web site from which you linked directly to our site, the name of the file or the words you searched, and the browser used to access our site. This information is used to measure the number of visitors to the various sections of our site and identify system performance or problem areas. We also use this information to help us expand the coverage of the site to assist users in finding health information. We do not use "cookies" on our web site, unless specifically stated otherwise.

• If we request personal information from you we are obligated under state law to provide you with the following information:

(I) the purpose for which the personal information is collected
(II) Any specific consequences to the person for refusal to provide the personal information
(III) Your right to inspect, amend, or correct personal records, if any;

(IV) Whether the personal information is generally available for public inspection; and
(V) Whether the personal information is made available or transferred to or shared with any entity other than the official custodian.

• We do not give, share, sell or transfer any personal information collected on this site to a third party, unless otherwise specified.

• You are not required to provide information to us. If we request information and you refuse to provide it to us, you refusal will not be held against you or prejudice our relationship with you.

• When inquiries are e-mailed to us, we store the question and the e-mail address information so that we can respond electronically. Unless otherwise required by statute, we do not identify publicly who sends questions or comments to our web site. We will not obtain information that will allow us to personally identify you when you visit our site, unless you chose to provide such information to us.

• Information that you consider confidential should not be sent to us over the Internet.

Questions about DHMH privacy policies should be sent to the DHMH Web Administrator at 410-767-5101
E-mail: DMWhite@dhmh.state.md.us

general recommendations

Design Fundamentals
A good website is functional and aesthetically pleasing. Design with the user in mind. A well-defined structure and useful, easy-to-access content are valued more than lots of complex images and flashy "special effects".

Color is important in every design. However, colors that work well in print don't always transfer successfully to web designs.

Size/Color
We recommend designing all pages to a screen setting of 800 x 600 pixels. Design should be based on 256 colors.

Load Time
Do not exceed 50 K per page (including all elements). This means your maximum load time should no be more than 20 seconds with a 28.8 K modem or 10 to 12 seconds with a 56 K modem.

Frames
Whether to use frames in your site design is up to you. A frame-based design lets you split the browser screen between navigation and the material you want to display. This can facilitate site maintenance. On the other hand, frame-based pages don't function as an integrated unit. They can also impose interface and design limitations as well as problems with the search engine indexing. If you use frames you must provide an alternative non-framed version.

Cookies
A "cookie" is a small piece of information, which a web server can store temporarily with your web browser and retrieve later. For example, when you shop at an "online shopping mall" and add items to your "shopping cart", your browser stores a list of the items you've selected so that you can pay for everything at one time when you're finished shopping. It's much more efficient for each browser to keep track of this information than for the web server - especially if there are many people using the server at once. DHMH does not use cookies, however, if you use cookies you must provide a statement with your cookie-policy to your visitors.

Images

Please use pictures sparingly - only where they make sense, not just for the sake of it. Keep in mind the limited bandwidth many of our customers have to work with and the loading time pictures require.

Animations

Use animations only if they help to explain the information you present. Do not use animations just because it's fun. Keep the page size in mind.

Writing Style

People rarely read web pages word by word. Instead, they scan each page, picking out individual words and sentences. Studies show that 79 percent of test users always scanned any new page they came across; only 16 percent read word by word.

Navigation Hints

Help users find their way:
- Show users where they are and where they can go
- The easiest to navigate information pages have a high density of self-explanatory text links
- Minimize the number of clicks needed to reach final content: try to make sure users can get to useful information in no more than four clicks.
- Users do not mind scrolling pages if necessary, but beware of pages, which appear complete on a small screen while hiding important buttons or links just off the bottom.

Make Web Pages Easy to Scan

- Highlight keywords with typeface variations, color or hypertext links
- Choose meaningful sub-headings (not "clever" ones)
- Use bullet points and lists
- Stick to one idea per paragraph (readers won't absorb more)
- Write in the inverted pyramid style, starting with the most important point
- Be concise

We think that creditability is important for web users, since it is unclear who is behind information on the web and whether a page can be trusted. High-quality graphics, good writing, and use of outbound hypertext links can increase credibility. Links to other sites show that the authors have done their homework and are not afraid to let readers visit other sites.

Indexing

Help users find your site by indexing the important topics and names of key people. To facilitate indexing by search engines:

- Provide search topics using the appropriate META tags (keywords, description, language) in the page heading.
- Include the main search topics in the first few lines of the test on the home page.
- Fill in the submission forms for search engines
- Consider using an automated submission tool or submission agency, however, you should submit to the "big ones" (altavista, yahoo) yourself.

Maintenance

Plan and review the site structure as it grows. Review user needs and make sure the site continues to meet these needs.

Monitor feedback from users

Monitor the words used when searching the site

Monitor where people first arrive on the site, and support these pages as entry points.

Check for broken links

Compare your site to other comparable sites as web browsers and web design evolve.

Feedback/E-mail

Each E-mail should be answered within 72 business hours.

dhmh requirements

Home Page
Each Administration is required, at a minimum, to have a home page that indicates that it is part of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's hierarchical structure.
Example: Department, Administration, Governor, Secretary, Administration's Directory

TDD Number
Each DHMH Administration's home page should also include the Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) number referenced visible on the page.

Last Update Date Display
Each Administration is required to keep an up-to-date date displayed on all pages.
Example: (Page Last Updated Jan 1, 2001)

Content/Web Contact E-mail Address
Each program within each Organization Unit that will be included on the website will be responsible for their information content. An e-mail address, or a link to an email form, must be displayed to help the user contact a person responsible for the page(s) content. Program or project managers are encouraged to established generic Internet email addresses for public use instead of using personal address.
Example: irma@dhmh.state.md.us rather that jdoe@dhmh.state.md.us

There should be a content./web contact email address and process in place for each administration/program web page before the page is posted to the Internet. Information Resources Management Administration (IRMA) will not be responsible for supplying information to the public for individual administration sites. Each administration/program should also supply a technical/development contact (individual coding the pages) to IRMA.

Internal Web Quality Assurance Committee
Each DHMH Organizational Unit must set up an internal Web Quality Assurance Committee. This committee is designed to set up guidelines within each DHMH Administration and serve as the internal review process.

content guidelines

Design Guidelines

DHMH currently has a set of design guidelines (see Appendix A) for the design and development of web sites for DHMH Administrations/Agencies/Offices/Programs. Any design or redesign of a site should incorporate these guidelines.

Site Planning

Each DHMH Administration should assign at least one (no more than three) Web contact person(s) to be responsible for the technical (HTML editing) and/or content (text) when designing or revising a Web site.   It is recommended that each program have one or more persons to review all documents for quality, accuracy, and adherence to existing guidelines on a regular basis. Special care should be exercised where there is a potential to disclose private confidential or other sensitive matter (e.g., internal department policies). When a publication is changed, its title page or home page should include the modification date. On-line information will correspond to its counterpart (printed material). IRMA will provide some technical support, and training related to Web development for your site; however, IRMA staff will not be responsible for the content and/or daily site maintenance for your administration's Web pages. (see Appendix B)

Site Maintenance

Site maintenance will be the responsibility of each Administration's Web Administrator, however, there will be some assistance provided by the DHMH Web Team (where applicable). All content information should be tested and approved by each individual Administration Head (or designee) before Web site is published to the Internet. IRMA will not be responsible for editing outdated, misquoted, or misspelled information published to the Web site. (see Appendix E). IRMA will be responsible for publishing directories, files, images, etc. for Administration's pages to the Internet (see Appendix D).

Content Management

Web pages will be tested using multiple browsers. Include a character-only browser, such as Lynx, (http://www.crl.com/~subir/lynx.html) to ensure compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).   All information provided on the Internet should be current, accurate, complete, and consistent with DHMH policy.

Acronym Use

When referring to the Department and not using the full title, only the official acronym, "DHMH," should be used. Other acronym use should be kept to a minimum and should include those identified on the site or those which are appropriate to the information disseminated--as long as the acronym definition is stated.

Copyright

A copyright is the "right" of an author or publisher to control the use of an original work that the author or publisher has produced. However, a copyright cannot be obtained for information in the public domain. (see DHMH Policy Governing the Release, Sharing, and Disclosure of DHMH Non-Protected, and Proprietary Information, Copyright Protection). DHMH staff cannot copy and use any copyrighted materials from Web sites outside the Department. Not all sites may have copyright or trademarked language visible on their site. So when in doubt **DO NOT USE.**

Accuracy

Each Administration should strive for complete accuracy in presenting all online information. Effective customer service and the credibility of DHMH depend on the information's timeliness and accuracy and appropriateness. Out-of-date information must be removed and updated when the new information is available.

External Links Disclaimer

Administration's Web pages containing links to external Web pages should include a statement that releases the Department (DHMH) from responsibility for the material included. It is important to avoid giving the impression that the Department is endorsing external Information or products. For example:

"This site contains links to other Internet sites. Such links are not endorsements of any products or services in such sites, and no information in such site has been endorsed or approved by Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene."

Privacy Policy/Terms of Use Statement

All organizational units must link to the DHMH Web Privacy/Terms of Use Statement located at http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/privacystatement.htm to advise the public of intended use of information learned about site visitors.

Search Engines

Each DHMH Administration home page should contain the site search capability. Adding access to additional collections of documents to the central departmental search engine is strongly encouraged. To add a link for the departments search engine, use the following URL: http://search.mdarchives.state.md.us/index_dhmh.html

accessibility guidelines

All pages should provide graphic and table information in an alternate text format to ensure the content is accessible and readable for users with disabilities. Additionally, formatting should be considered because of various browser software packages and those with low-bandwidth access. Department pages should be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations: http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm, http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/newregs.htm, http://TheArc.org/ada/adaindx.html.

Multiple Language Options

If your online market includes people from non-English speaking backgrounds, selected information on the website could be offered in a variety of language options. For this to be achieved however, one would have to make available the fonts for the nominated languages, which should then be downloaded by the user before anything can be read.

A less complicated solution to this problem includes supplying this text as a graphic file. This will avoid the problem of having to download any fonts, but will itself be limited as graphics tend to be large files, and the larger they are, the longer they take to display onscreen.

A good example of effective use of this method can be found on the DHMH Website at: http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/secretry/html/span-plg.htm

META Tags

Accessibility need not only be an issue once someone has entered a site. It can also be an issue for those seeking a particular site to enter. To enhance the availability of a site to those seeking it, the use of META tags is highly recommended.

As such, effective use of META tags can vastly increase the proper listing of a website in search engines, and thus make the site more available for access. These META tags are placed within the HEAD tags on the first page of your website, and the purpose of these tags is to be read by the search engine, but not to be visible to the person viewing the website (unless the person looks at the underlying code).

A good example of an effective META tag description is seen below.

```
<HEAD>
<TITLE>DHMH: (Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)</TITLE>
```

As most search engines give more emphasis to words found within the TITLE tag, it is important to make the title as descriptive as possible. One way of doing this is by adding a description after the title, which would incorporate some of the keywords. As some search engines don't recognize META tags, the example below is added so that these search engines will have the appropriate description available to them also.

<!---Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is the site for the Maryland State Health Department. The purpose of this site is to provide information about the various public health programs and initiatives initiated by DHMH. This new electronic service will give each visitor 24-hour access to a wide range of informational and educational health care-related topics from local, state and federal sources.-->

The next example shows the description that we give the META tag capable search engines to display whenever our site comes up in a search. This should not be too long (4 or 5 lines max) as all search engines have a limited area for the description.

<META NAME="description" CONTENT="Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This service provides a range of various health-related issues.

Finally, you need to tell the search engines what keywords you would like to be found under. These keywords assist in placing your website higher up the selection list of a search.

<META NAME="keywords" CONTENT=" Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, public health programs, medicaid services, information resources, marriage certificates, death certificates, health facilities, local health departments and Maryland State licensing services through various commissions."></HEAD>

Now our entry in the Alta Vista results should look something like this:

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
[URL: www.dhmh.state.md.us/]
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This service provides a range of various health-related issues.
Last modified 12-Jan-99 - page size 6K

Mixed Font Sizes

The use of Drop Capitals makes some pages hard to read by screen readers and browsers that do not support the FONT tag.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
(The 'M', 'D' , 'O', 'H', 'A', 'M' and 'H' are font size +3, Header 2)
The above however would be read by a screen reader as:
M D O H A M H
aryland epartment f ealth nd ental ygiene

We recommend you use (**MDHM &H**) as uppercase characters. The end result will look like this: **M**aryland **D**epartment of **H**ealth and **M**ental **H**ygiene

client featured variations guidelines

Document authors should be aware of the variations in features available on different clients (Web browsers) and should author their documents accordingly. For example, before using <TABLE> markup, the author should be aware that Lynx versions 2.6 and higher support table markup; however, earlier versions may render a table as an unreadable string of text. Knowing that the author may decide to use <PRE> markup, which is less powerful but permits Lynx users to read tables narrower than 80 columns. In general, there is a substantial variation among clients in their interpretation of the HTML standard for newer, more complex features such as forms. Even though Lynx supports tables and forms, the screen appearance to the end-user may differ from the appearance the author intended. Keep in mind that clients also vary in how they render seemingly straightforward markup such as <CITE> and <BLOCKQUOTE>. Avoid using client-specified markup. WWW pages produced by DHMH and its' subsidiary administrations should be usable by all major clients to ensure equitable access to the information.

In other words, avoid marking up a document in such a way as to enhance its elegance when viewed within one browser, while degrading its usability under other browsers.

resources

Technical Support

Each DHMH Administration should assign key staff (Web Liaison) in the design, development, and implementation of sites. The roles of this team should be to:

1. Determine office roles in the development process in accordance with the Web Workflow Process Chart (see Appendix G)

2. Help office create a design plan – discuss site contents and offer suggestions for layout, accessibility, and possible enhancements (animation, forms, and interactive media)

3. Set a time for development

4. Assist office in completing a Web Site Plan Checklist (see Appendix B)

5. Assist office in completing a Web Site Content Checklist (see Appendix C)

NOTE: Though the DHMH Web Administrator is assigned to the task of facilitating the entire DHMH Web Site, the administrator will not be responsible for troubleshooting content within each individual DHMH Administration. Web developers are encouraged to attend HICC Internet/Intranet Workgroup and the Web Quality Assurance Sub-workgroup. For further details, please contact the DHMH Web Administrator at (410) 767-5101 or DMWhite@dhmh.state.md.us

Training

Web authoring requires a working knowledge of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), as well as the ability to use an HTML Editor (Hotdog, FrontPage 98, 2002) and image editor (MS Image Composer, Corel Draw etc.) You must use the DHMH/IRMA approved HTML Editor (currently FrontPage 98, 2002) in order to be included under the DHMH Root Web. Everyone will demonstrate proficiency in Web authoring and site administration before you are permitted to post files directly to the Web site. Criteria will be determined as follows:

If an administration has a designated Web representative he/she can post directly to the Internet, providing that they can demonstrate his/her ability to develop and publish Web-based materials to the satisfaction of the DHMH Web Administrator. Posting sites to the Internet requires the proper use and implementation of the Department's

Internet Web Guidelines and security policies. Further, the Web representative will demonstrate the ability to concisely and skillfully develop consistent HTML files. He/she will also demonstrate a proficiency in the use of the Department's Standardized HTML editor, FTP (file transfer protocol), and HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol).

Everyone designing department Web pages should have the following experience or training in HTML:

Formal Training – Staff are encouraged to attend Web-based (i.e., HTML – Web authoring/design, FrontPage, etc.) training available through Information Resources Management Administration (IRMA) or an outside vendor.

Informal Training – limited, informal consultation, is available by contacting the DHMH Web Administrator at (410) 767-5101 or DMWhite@dhmh.state.md.us .

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Web Site Design

This document was produced for use in DHMH Administrations as a general resource towards designing individual Web sites. This document is not intended to answer all design questions nor as a training manual. If you have questions regarding web site design please direct them to the Web Administrator at 410-767-5101.

Below you will find useful Web links to sites that can be referenced for technical information:

Yale Style Manual – http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/
Beginner's Guide to HTML – http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimer.html
Web Access Guidelines – http://trace.wisc.edu/docs/html_guidelines/version8.htm
Domain Names – http://www.register.com

File Names
All file names and file references should be made in lowercase. The Internet server does not support uppercase file names. Though modern technology enables most browsers to support long file names try to use eight character file names as often as possible. Keep in mind that some of our customers are unable to read long file names. All HTML files should have an *.htm extension (not *. html).

File Formats
Content material should be submitted to your designated Web Master (Administrator) in electronic form (i.e., via email or diskette). Materials may be left in their original format (i.e., WordPerfect 6.1, MS Word, MS Excel, Lotus, MS PowerPoint, Freelance, etc.) However, keep in mind that desktop applications within Microsoft Office, and Corel WordPerfect allow you to convert files to HTML and that process should be used as much as possible (if applicable).

Image Files
Image files should be in (*.jpg or *.gif) format. Most images should be submitted in (*.gif) format: use *.jpg for photographs and *.gif for other types of images.

Movie Files
Movies may be added to an HTML file with the <A HREF= "http://pathname/filename.mov"> tag for a QuickTime Movie and <A HREF= "http://pathname/filename.mpg"> tag for MPEG movies. This will create a link from your HTML document to the movie file. Your browser should automatically launch the correct player for you. It is

important to remember a few things when creating a movie file for use over the Internet via the World Wide Web. MPEG movies currently do not have audio. However, they may be played on all computer platforms (Macintosh, UNIX and PC).

- QuickTime movies may have audio. However, they only play on Macintosh, PC and some SGI platforms.

- Any movie file is going to be large. Make sure it's not too large for the network connection of your user to handle, and make sure the end result is worth the wait.

- Because of the problems of platform compatibility and file size it is often a good idea to offer two versions of the movie file, QuickTime and MPEG.

Audio Files
Audio files may be added to an HTML file in the same manner as Movie files.

<A HREF="http: //pathname/filename.aiff">

The only thing that changes is the file extension. File formats that are accepted by NCSAMosaic are:
AIFF sound---------- .aiff
AU sound------------ .au

Image Maps
- When using image maps (or when using a cluster of graphical links), always provide an alternative text list of the hyperlinks.

- Usually the alternative text lists of hyperlinks (text anchors) are provided just under the image map.

- Another measure includes providing a separate text-only page, which translates all of the links within the image into text links.

Graphics
Provide an alternate text (ALT tag) description for ALL graphics on the website. The ALT-tag allows for a text description of a graphic to reside beneath the actual graphic. This text description is not visible to the user of a graphic-enhanced Web browser (unless positioned by the mouse), but is invaluable in describing the image to a text-based user. *Example: <img src="graphics/shaw_.jpg" ALT="Picture of Jeffrey Shaw">*

When using banners with animated text (or any graphics or movies that need lengthy descriptions), the use of description tags (D-tags) are a good alternative to the length restrictive ALT-tag.
A D-tag is a capital "D" that appears next to or below an image, that is a link to a page with a description of the graphic. Because D-tag descriptions appear on their own page, they can be as long as the author needs them to be. Therefore, users can receive more information about the physical description of a graphic image than the ALT-text allows.

Tables
Special concerns need to be considered whenever using tables. Try to display textual information (as much as possible) in a linear format (by limiting word wrapping). This is because when word wrapping occurs within columns of a table, this creates problems for browsers such as Lynx (a text browser used by the sight-impaired) as it reads across the screen in a way that runs all of the text on a line together. If an entry in a cell occupies more than one line, the first line of each cell would be read, then the second etc.

If word wrapping in a table cannot be avoided, the same information can be presented on an alternate text-only page without tables.

Frames
When using frames, always provide an alternative non-framed version of the content.
This can be achieved by incorporating the no frames tag , which is the default for browsers that cannot view frames. Even though current versions of Lynx have limited frames capabilities, it is still prudent practice to offer non-frame alternatives to avoid a host of other possible problems.
To incorporate the no frames tag, the following should be done:

For a Webpage (parent page) that consists of two frames (frame1 and frame2), the content of frame1 and frame2 should be combined. This information should then be supplied within the no frames tags of the parent page.

Example: The parent page will consist of the following information.
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Example Page</TITLE>
</HEAD>
<!-----the frame names and dimensions should be contained here------>
<NOFRAMES>
The content contained within frame1 and frame2 should be contained here. Some information would have to be adjusted to fit within this format.
</NOFRAMES>
</FRAMESET>
</HTML>

Forms

Provide an alternative form that can be downloaded, filled in, then mailed or faxed. A phone number or an email link can be another option whereby the person may request the forms.

Standard Resolution

800 X 600 should be the resolution used when developing websites.

Hit Counters

We do not recommend the use of hit counters. Hit counters are inaccurate, can slow down page loading, and the public does not need to know this information.

A "hit is not always as accurate as it seems. Sometimes the website architecture can artificially inflate or deflate the actual numbers. When you visit a website, your browser "caches" a local copy of the page and graphics on your hard-drive. The next time you visit the site, the browser will pull as much from the local hard drive cache as it can. Therefore, the first time you go to the page, it may count 5 or 10 hits. The next time it could be half that, it could be one, or it could be zero (and pull everything from the cache). This means that you can visit a site without registering a single hit, if it gets pulled from the cache, since nothing at all gets loaded from the server (the site). More common is that the images are pulled from the cache, but the page will be pulled from the server – meaning you are back down to a single hit. The most accurate counters are server hit counters, which analyze the log-file on the server itself.

If you absolutely must use a counter, Maryland State Archives, our Internet Service Provider can run statistical reports, which actually analyze the log-file on the server itself for a monthly fee. Please contact Donna White at 410-767-5101 to request this service.

Background Colors

DHMH style guidelines suggest color schemes that are optimum for use by all browsers and users. When defining color schemes in the body tag, ensure that all color schemes are defined on each page.
This includes:

• background image (if using a background image)
• background colors (always define, even when using a background image)
• color link
• color of activating link
• color of visited link
• text colors

Without a complete definition of all the colors in the color scheme, the final rendering of colors could be a mix of the pre-defined colors and the defaults from the reader's browser. This could result in a combination of colors that create a low (possibly unreadable) contrast.

A typical body tag should resemble the following:

```
<BODY BACKGROUND="image.gif" BGCOLOR="#ffffff" LINK="#990099" VLINK="#009999" ALINK="#000099" TEXT="#000000">
```

Ensure that both the specified background color and the specified background image contrast well against the foreground text.   This contrast will enhance the readability of the information. A good test for such a contrast is to view your pages in black and white mode.

Non-Standard Formats

If using non-standard HTML formats or higher-level features such as javascript or java, always provide an alternative text-only page, which translates as much of the information included in the original page as possible to text only. Such formats often cause problems for Braille translation, text-to-voice screen readers, and many browsers. Users should be able to switch back and forth between text-only and enhanced versions of the page. For downloadable documents (such as Microsoft Word documents), always provide an online HTML version, or at the very least an ASCII downloadable version of this file.

Adobe Acrobat PDF files (Portable Document Format) are becoming more and more common on the Web, primarily because they offer a design richness to documents that HTML currently does not provide. These documents however are on the whole inaccessible to the vision-impaired, and as such, it is vital to provide alternative html or text versions of these pages.

For PDF documents to be viewed by the sighted user, one will first have to download and then implement the Adobe Acrobat Reader plugin. Once the plugin is loaded, PDF files can be viewed from within one's Web browser. However, unlike HTML, PDF files are not composed of accessible text-like components. As such, reading the text in between the coding is impossible.

If Adobe Acrobat documents are a requirement for your website, there are some measures that can be taken to increase their accessibility.

- Provide your own HTML alternative to the document.
- Provide an alternative HTML converted copy of the PDF document.

- The most commonly used method for providing the PDF document viewer, is to provide a link to the Adobe website at http://www.adobe.com (Note: this application is available for free)

The following is a method in which to achieve an alternative HTML converted copy of the PDF document:

Greater accessibility can be achieved by using a special proxy server located on the access.adobe.com computer. When you set up your browser to use this server, the server will seamlessly convert any PDF documents to HTML.

Warning, this solution can be rather cumbersome for some, and has distinct limitations.   For instance, when browsing from behind the firewall, this method will not work.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Web Site Planning Checklist

Do Your Homework
Surf the Net! Check out Web sites that house similar information so that you have an idea of what the "competition" may look like.

Think Web
During the normal course of developing informational materials, consider any possible Web applications and design them with the possibility of posting to the Internet in mind.

Organize
It's important that the information on your site is organized in a logical, easily accessible fashion. Categorize and group content materials.

Create a Site Map
To view the flow of your site, create an organizational chart that corresponds to the way you've organized your contents.

Resources
Evaluate your office's resources to better facilitate site development. Are their people in your office who know Web authoring? Do you have a copy of FrontPage or any other Web Content editor? Do you have brochures, reports, photographs, statistics or other information that you could include on your site?

Site Enhancements
How do you want your site to look? Would you look to include drop down menus, forms, site maps, image maps, other images?

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Web Site Content Checklist

Below is a checklist of the items that should be outlined for your Web page. Please use this as a tool to assist in the development of your web site. The DHMH Web Team and the Web Quality Assurance Sub-workgroup will use this list as part of their page review.

When gathering this information, ask your associates what type of information they typically need to provide, and to whom. What information do you give to your clients? What about other health professionals? Do you have any outreach materials? Do you have approval from program director(s) to release this information to the public?

Program Description
A brief and friendly, easy-to-read (i.e., non-bureaucratic) description of your program is a great way to explain who you are to your Web visitors.

Eligibility Requirements
Who's eligible for the program? Are there income limitations? Is there any adjunctive eligibility criterion?

Contact Information
An e-mail address, phone number, directions to each office, names and numbers of local offices around the state.

Reports & Statistics
What information do you frequently send out in paper format? Could you start using the Web to make this information available? Would publishing your statistics be advantageous?

Related Links
Include the Web URL's (Web addresses) for other agencies that you work with or that may provide further related information.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)
What are the questions most often asked about your program? What kind of calls do you get, and what information do you find yourself always giving out? A list of these questions and answers could be very helpful to your site.

Site Feedback
What comments or suggestions could be submitted to the site, (Example: electronic form)

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Web Site Servicing & Posting Requirements

Servers and Browsers

The Web comes down to two things--browsers and servers. Webs are like the mythic figure Atlas, holding up all the sites that make up the World Wide Web.

The Department's current Internet Service Provider (ISP) is the Maryland State Archives (as of August, 2004). Hardware and Software applications installed on the server are as follows: Unix Solaris 2.6 Operating System and Apache Server with Microsoft FrontPage 2000 Server Extensions.

As you may be aware there is a long list of Web Browsers available to the growing market. Though there is not a standard in place for the Department on which browser to use, typically Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer are preferred.

The look of Web pages varies from not only one brand of browser to another (ex. Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer), in some cases, the result can also be different if you are using the same browser but a different version (i.e., Netscape 4.5 vs. Netscape 4.78). For this reason we strongly recommend that you design your static Web pages selecting the following groups:

Netscape 4.78
Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 and above

Because information technology is rapidly changing, there will be a need to upgrade and to encourage your users to upgrade their browsers to the most current version.

NOTE: Both Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0, and Netscape Communicator 4.5 can be downloaded to your desktop for no cost (see the above URL for specific specifications that apply to your current environment).

Domain Name

The Domain Name (DNS) for the Department is http://dhmh.maryland.gov Any Administration requesting a separate domain name must follow the standardized format, which will consist of the Department domain name http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ followed by the Administration acronym. The following is an example of an administration domain name: http://dhmh.maryland.gov/fha/

All requests for domain names must be submitted via the Online DNS Request Form located at http://dhmh.maryland.gov/forms/dnsrequest.html. Tammy Sanders and Kevin Naumann are the Agency designees authorized to request domain names on behalf of the Department. Any requests for domain names other than those made by Tammy and Kevin are **not permitted**.

Directory Structure

The current directory structure for the Department's Web site has 4 levels and are as follows:

Root Directory (This level contains 3 folders and the primary home page (ex. index.htm)

    html (folder contains all *.htm files (ex. faq.htm)

    images (folder that contains all *.gif or *jpg files (ex. button.gif or michael.jpg)

    pdf (folder that contains all *pdf files (ex. attachm.pdf)

Site Posting

Posting or what is commonly known as publishing to the Web can be both time consuming and require a lot of overhead maintenance if taken lightly. Since our server is running with Microsoft FrontPage 98 server extensions it is required that you use the HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) as the primary method for posting to the Department's Internet Web site

Information Resources Management Administration (IRMA) has full rights to this process and access will be given to others on a case-by-case basis. Administrations will not be given publishing access to the server at anytime without using the DHMH/IRMA approved HTML Editor (FrontPage 98). As previously stated, everyone will demonstrate proficiency in Web authoring and site administration before being permitted to post files directly to the Web site.

Administrations will also have to agree to follow the Roles and Responsibilities before direct access be allowed to publish their site. (see Appendix E)

roles and responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of the DHMH Web Team

General Support
The DHMH Web Team will facilitate the development and promotion of Department-wide Guidelines (attached) in cooperation with other DHMH Administrations. These Guidelines are to assure that best practices are maintained.

Internet Services
The DHMH Web Team is responsible for Department-wide operation(s) Internet services. The DHMH Web Team will conduct the day-to-day Web administration in accordance with Guidelines, and DHMH policies. The DHMH Web Team will maintain an agreement with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) (currently Maryland State Archives) that is adequate for DHMH needs.

Quality Assurance
The DHMH Web Team along with the Quality Assurance Sub-workgroup will be responsible for overall site quality assurance and will assure that Departmental Web Guidelines are followed.

Web Development
The DHMH Web Team will provide in-house Web development services as specified, if needed.

Web-based Training
If necessary, the DHMH Web Team will provide facilities/instructors for Web-based training as specified in the DHMH Web Development Guidelines.

Security
The DHMH Web Team agrees to ensure proper security measures are taken to provide a stable environment for Web development, posting and servicing.

Site Posting

The DHMH Web Team will be responsible for providing an avenue/platform for uploading sites and updates for posting to the Department's Internet site, unless posting is done by the designated Web representative for a specified organizational unit.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Content Development

As stated within the DHMH Web Development Guidelines, the DHMH Web Administrator will facilitate, and administer the entire DHMH Web Site, however, the Web Administrator will not take on the responsibility for Web Page Content (language).

Monitoring of Content

The DHMH Web Team will have no obligations with respect to the content available on or through any site hosted on department's Internet Service provided hosting services, including, but not limited to, any duty to review or monitor any such content. The DHMH Web Team, at sole discretion, may elect to electronically monitor Administration's Web site, as necessary to satisfy any law, regulation, or other governmental request to protect any of its customers.

Roles and Responsibilities of Departmental Administrations

Web Standard Compliance

The Administration agrees to follow established IRMA protocol as set forth in the DHMH Web Guidelines for the Internet, in development of any and all of its Web sites. Further, The Administration agrees to comply with changes mandated by the DHMH Health Information Coordinating Council (HICC).

Internal Web Development

The Administration agrees to create its own or utilize an existing template in Web development in order to insure site continuity. Further, The Administration will be responsible for the implementation of new or existing internet technology (i.e. java, javascript, style sheets, DHTML).

Security

The Administration agrees to abide by Departmental security, data use, confidentiality and other security-based policies. Further, the Administration will maintain the security of any and all access granted as part of Web development. Any passwords, encryptions or other information used to preserve the security of the Department's network; internet or intranet will be properly maintained.

Accountability

The Administration will also be responsible for ensuring compliance with this Agreement by employees who are authorized to access and update the Administration's Web site. In the event of a breach of password security, the Administration will notify the DHMH Web Team immediately so that corrective security measures may be taken.

Deletion of unauthorized materials or any other site reparations will remain the responsibility of the Administration. As the result of such a security breach, a Web site may be blocked until such time as it has been repaired.

Site Content

The Administration will be solely responsible for all content available on or through their Web site.

Intellectual Property

The Administration warrants that its Web site hosted by DHMH :(i) will not infringe and will not contain any content that infringes on or violates any copyright, U.S. and Canada patent or any other third-party right; and (ii) will not contain any content which violates any applicable law, rule or regulation.

Non-Adherence to DHMH Web Guidelines for the Internet

The Administration agrees to adhere to DHMH Web Development Guidelines. Upon notification that all or part of a site is not in compliance with approved Guidelines, the administration will bring the site up to Guidelines within 14 business days or the site may be blocked until it meets Department Guidelines.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality

The Administration agrees to maintain data confidentiality, and respect departmental data use policies in Web development.

GENERAL

Contractors

Any Contractors (i.e. independent Web developers) will be subject to this agreement. The hiring administration will be responsible to insure that any contractor adheres to this agreement as well as any applicable departmental policies.

internet definitions

CGI
Common Gateway Interface. An interface-creation-scripting program that allows one to develop WWW pages.

Client Server
A network architecture in which each computer or process on the network is either a client or a server. Servers are powerful computers or processes dedicated to managing disk drives (file servers), printers (print servers), or network traffic (network servers). Clients are PCs or workstations on which users run applications. Clients rely on servers for resources, such as files, devices, and even processing power.

Document
An information set presented as a single resource item; on the WWW it may be comprised of many pages.

Document Collection
A set of logically related documents

Domain Name Server (DNS)
Unique alphabetic representation of a computer's location within a network. Compare with IP Address.

Frames
Frames divide a Web browser's window into separate regions, each of which can display a separate, scrollable page. A group of frames is called a frames page. A frames page is a special Web page that defines the size and location of each frame it contains.

FTP
File Transfer Protocol – The primary means by which to transfer files from one computer to another through the Internet. This protocol provides fast and efficient file transfer.

Gateway
Computer system/software that allows connectivity and information exchange among separate network protocols

Gopher

A text browser used through the Internet to view files in ASCII format, which may include the ability to download the files to your machines, and it may be able to invoke an image viewer.

Home Page

Table of content(s)/initial page presented – the entry point to a document collection.

HTML

HyperText Markup Language. Text that links to other text.

Interlace Images

One advantage of using GIFs is that they can be interlaced. Interlaced images appear first in a low-resolution format and the image becomes sharper as it is loaded. This means that the user can continue to browse while the image is downloading.

Internet

A worldwide electronic system of computer networks which provides communications and resource-sharing services to organizations, state government, businesses, researchers, scholars, librarians and students as well as the general public.

Intranet

Intranet is simply an Internet that limits access to a closed group of people or resources. In other words, an Intranet uses the same communication protocols as the Internet, but access to this linked network is limited to a specific group of people. The biggest difference between a local area network (LAN) and an Intranet is the open Guidelines, which allow individuals within the local area network to use different computer hardware and software packages.

IP Address

A computer's unique numerically represented address within a network, comprised of four sets of numbers separated by a period. Example 167.102.181.0

JAVA

Graphical Object Oriented programming language designed from the ground up to be secure. Including data collection, exception handling, and lots more (with a hint of C++, flavored windows programming syntax).

JAVA Scripting
A short program written in JAVA that is attached to a Web page and executed by the computer on which the Web browser is installed.

Link
Pointer to a user-selectable WWW resource.

META Tags
The meta tag is used by search engines to allow them to more accurately list your site in their indexes.

PERL
Perl is a programming language developed, especially designed for processing text. Because of its strong text processing abilities, Perl has become one of the most popular languages for writing CGI scripts. Perl is an interpretive language, which makes it easy to build and test simple programs.

Progressive Images
An image created using the JPEG suite of compression algorithms that will "fade in" in successive waves of lines until the entire image has completely arrived. Like the interlaced GIF, a progressive JPEG is a more appealing way to deliver an image in these early days of relatively low bandwidth.

Protocol
A well-defined set of data-exchange rules that allows communication between computer systems.

Telnet
A means by which to connect and run programs on a computer. Some of these programs on a remote computer. Some of these programs are tools for locating Internet resources, and some provide other functions, such as providing an interface to database or to an on-line catalog of a major research library. Many computers are freely available for remote log-in via the Internet.

URL
Uniform Resource Locator. WWW location/address of information resource.

Web Administrator
System administrator for an Internet or Intranet server.

Web Page

Subject program/project informational page; i.e., subset of a home page. Pages/collection of Web pages (documents), developed in HTML Web format standard, may be accessed via Internet connections using a WWW browser.
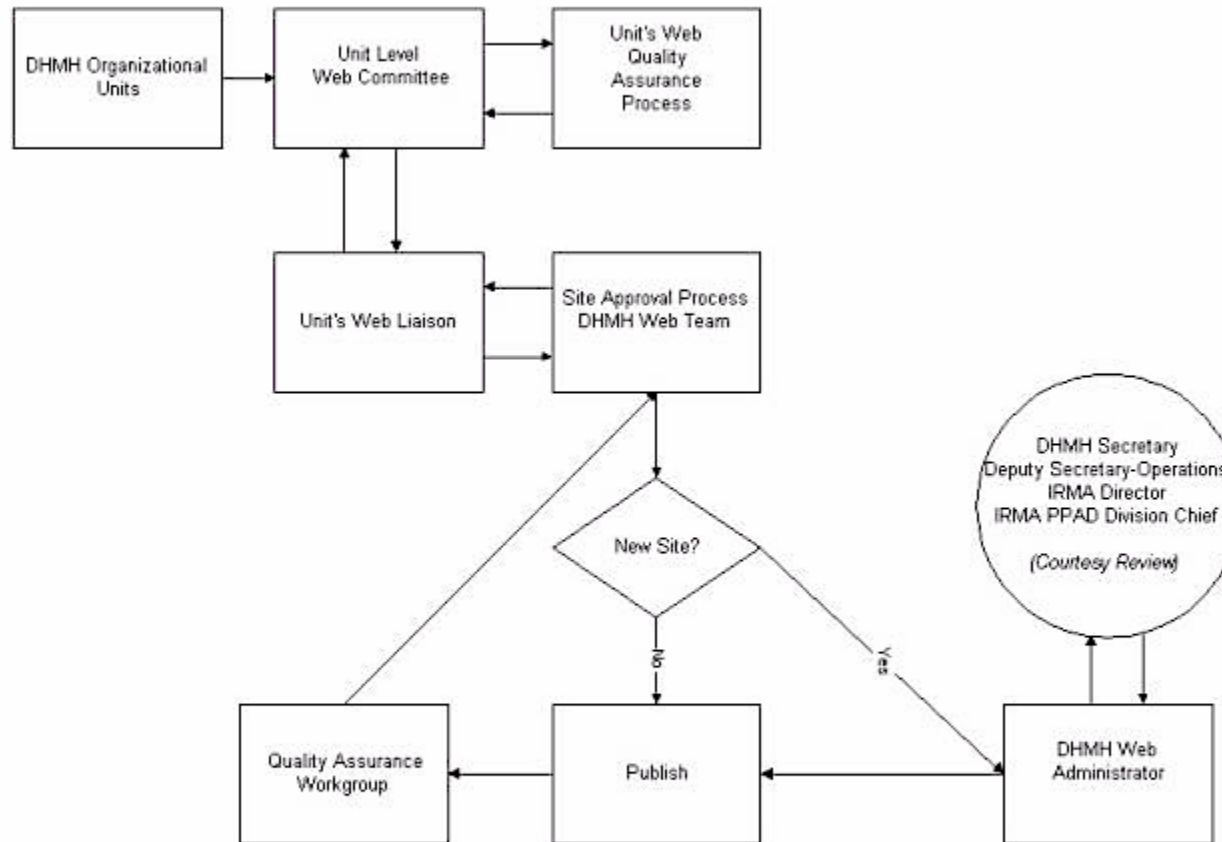
World Wide Web

WWW or Web. Entire collection of resources that can be accessed via the Internet and URLs.

WWW Server

A computer that provides access using the hypertext transfer protocol to Web applications and documents. Each server has a main Home Page as the entry point.

workflow process for establishing or revising websites

Workflow Process For Establishing Or Revising Websites

08/06/2000

workflow process for establishing or revising websites (narrative)

When developing or significantly updating a website, the process should include five areas of concentration:

- Unit's Web Committee
- Unit's Web Liaison
- Unit's Web Quality Assurance Review
- DHMH Web Team -- Site Approval
- Revisions

Unit's Web Committee
Each unit should establish a committee to focus on website development.

- This committee should reflect a vertical slice of the unit which includes management, program and support staff

- This committee should have a person who is familiar with website development, or a person from the DHMH Web Team who can provide needed guidance.

**In the event the committee has a unit person familiar with the technical aspect of website development, a representative from the DHMH Web Team should be invited to an organizational meeting of the committee to present the "DHMH Web Development Guidelines and Operational Policy".

- The DHMH Web Team representative will offer technical assistance should the need arise.

Unit's Web Liaison
Each unit must appoint a web liaison who will act as the contact person between the unit and the DHMH Web Team.

- This person will serve as a single point of contact to communicate all website information to the DHMH Web Team.

- This person should have some web-related technical experience.

Unit's Web Quality Assurance Review

Each unit shall be responsible for the accuracy of all information on its website.

- The current version of the "DHMH Website Development Guidelines" shall be used to develop and maintain the unit's website.

**Each unit is responsible to ensure that all information is timely, accurate and appropriate.

**Each unit shall ensure that all out of date material is removed promptly.

- The quality assurance process shall follow an approval path to the highest level of authority within the operational unit, or their designee.

DHMH Web Administrator -- Site Approval

New websites or significantly altered websites must be approved by the DHMH Web Administrator.

- Nothing shall be posted to the DHMH website without the approval of the unit's web liaison.

- Once material has been approved through the unit's quality assurance process, the unit's web liaison will give the material to the DHMH Web Administrator for appropriate approvals and posting to the DHMH website. For those units that have website posting capabilities, the material will be given to the unit's technical person for posting to the DHMH website.

**New websites or significantly altered websites shall follow the site approval process that may include approval from the Information Resources Management Administration and/or the DHMH Secretary. This approval process for significantly altered websites also applies to units that have in-house website posting capabilities.

Revisions

Any significant change or alteration to the unit's website must follow the "Workflow Process for Establishing or Revising Websites."