



# Colorado Access **Editorial Style Guide**



FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

# Editorial Style Guide

If there is something not referenced in this style guide, always defer to Associated Press (AP) Style. Please note this is different than Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) styles, as these are used mainly for literary or academic writing, which we don't do.

If you need help creating a document or presentation, please submit a marketing request. You can do this through SharePoint.

- Remember, all materials that are to be widely distributed to members and providers (template letters, etc.) need review and approval from the marketing team. Submit a marketing request to start this process.
- All materials that are to be distributed to members need to be written in plain language. When in doubt, submit a marketing request to have the readability of your material confirmed.

Current PowerPoint and letter templates, our brand guide and other helpful resources can be found on the [marketing SharePoint page](#) and on the Content HUB.

*This style guide is for internal reference only.*

## Why is this style guide important?

Everything you write reflects on and represents the organization, and it's important that we present a cohesive brand through consistency in voice, tone, spelling, and word usage.

## Questions?

If you have questions about this style guide or about the review process, please email [marketing@coaccess.com](mailto:marketing@coaccess.com).

# Layout and General Typography Do's and Don'ts

The following guidelines for typography and document design have been developed in order to enhance readability and accessibility.

Line Spacing	Adjust to Multiple 1.15
Style Sheets	<p>Use the Styles feature (under the Home tab) in Microsoft Word to create a style sheet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark headings with Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.</li> <li>• Documents should be written at most with three levels of heading.</li> <li>• Mark all body copy as normal.</li> <li>• Define styles for bulleting and numbering.</li> <li>• Do not use the Enter (or return) key to create space between paragraphs. Use the space before and the space after properties within the Microsoft Word Paragraph dialog box.</li> <li>• Adjust before and after spacings to 6 pt.</li> <li>• Adjust line spacing to Multiple 1.15.</li> </ul>
Copy Font	<p>Calibri or equivalent sans serif font. Do not use decorative scripts or display fonts such as Comic Sans.</p>
Copy Size	<p>12 point or equivalent. Default to 18 point font for large print.</p>
Font Color	Use only black within documents.
Heading Sizes	<p>Heading 1 – at least 2 points larger than the body copy. Heading 2 – at least 1 point larger than the body copy and at least 1 point smaller than Heading 1. Heading 3 – typically Heading 3 is the bold face of the body copy.</p>
<b>Do This</b>	<b>Not This</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>bold</b> face in headings.</li> <li>• Align text left.</li> <li>• Use one space at the beginning of a sentence.</li> <li>• Write all website URLs and email addresses in lowercase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use excessive bolding, italicizing, or underlining in body copy.</li> <li>• Right align, center, or justify paragraphs of text.</li> <li>• Split words over two lines using a hyphen.</li> <li>• Stretch or condense lines of text.</li> <li>• Use text boxes.</li> <li>• Use www. and/or https:// in front of a website URL.</li> </ul>

# Colorado Access Lines of Business

The following are the correct terms to use when referring to our lines of business to an external audience (members, providers, community organizations – anyone outside of Colorado Access).

As a general rule, do not abbreviate the lines of business names when addressing an external audience. The exception to this rule is CHP+.

Use This	Not This
<p>Child Health Plan <i>Plus</i> (CHP+) offered by Colorado Access <b>or</b> CHP+ offered by Colorado Access <b>or</b> Child Health Plan <i>Plus</i> offered by Colorado Access*</p> <p>*to note: always italicize the <i>Plus</i> in Child Health Plan <i>Plus</i>, per the State’s writing of their program.</p> <p>Only use CHP+ HMO when the name is necessary and there are multiple usages.</p>	<p>Child Health Plan Programs, Child Health Plan, CHP HMO, or any other variation</p>
<p>Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program)* on first use, then Health First Colorado on every use after</p> <p>* to note: make sure to lowercase program per the State’s preferred style.</p>	<p>HFCO, HFC, Health First, Colorado’s Health First, etc.</p>
<p>Colorado Access (COA)</p>	<p>Colorado Access Medicaid, Co Access, Colo Access or any other variation of Colorado Access COA’s</p>
<p>Region 4</p>	<p>RAE 4/RAE 4, RAE Region 4/RAE Region</p>
<p>the programs of Colorado Access</p>	<p>COA’s, Colorado Access’s or Colorado Access’s programs</p>

## Proofreading Guidelines

<p>Acronyms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the expanded name with the acronym in parentheses for the first occurrence only. Then use only the acronym for all occurrences following.</li> </ul>
<p>Addresses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spell out numbered streets nine and under.</li> <li>Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd., and St. only with a numbered address. If there is no number, spell them out and capitalize.</li> </ul>

Capitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not capitalize job titles.</li> <li>• Do not capitalize department titles.</li> <li>• Always capitalize “Region” when referencing Region 4 of the RAE.</li> <li>• Do not capitalize “offered” in CHP+ offered by Colorado Access.</li> <li>• Do not capitalize disease names unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They are part of a title, program or someone’s name.</li> <li>- They are named after a person or geological area.</li> </ul> <p>Only capitalize the proper name(s) in this instance. <i>Ex. Lou Gehrig’s disease; Ebola virus; Alzheimer’s disease.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are different types of the disease. <i>Ex. Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The only exception is COVID-19, which is an acronym, and thus the entire name should be written in all caps.</li> </ul>
Dates, Months, and Days of the Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always spell out the full month. <i>Ex. September; not Sept.</i></li> <li>• When a month is used with a specific day, always use the “st” or “th.” <i>Ex. September 1st or January 10th.</i></li> <li>• Always spell out days of the week. <i>Ex. Saturday; not Sat.</i></li> <li>• When writing out a full month, day, and year for a specific date, use a comma after the day. <i>Ex. August 29, 2020.</i></li> <li>• When referring to a specific decade, use numerals. <i>Ex. The 1960s.</i></li> <li>• When referring to a date range, the years referenced should be obvious. Beyond five to 10 years, use full numerals. <i>Ex. 2019-20; 2000-2020.</i></li> </ul>
Numerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, spell out one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above.</li> <li>• Spell out numbers at the start of a sentence. <i>Ex. Forty years was a long time to wait.</i> An exception is years: <i>Ex. 1992 was a very good year.</i> When possible, rewrite the sentence to avoid starting with a year. Numeral and letter combinations are accepted: <i>Ex. 401(k) plan.</i></li> <li>• Spell out numbers in indefinite and casual uses.</li> <li>• Spell out numbers in fanciful usage or proper names. <i>Ex. The Four Tops.</i></li> <li>• Spell out numbers in formal language, rhetorical quotations, and figures of speech.</li> <li>• Spell out numbers in fractions less than one that are not used as modifiers. <i>Ex. Reduced by one-third; he made three-fourths of his shots.</i></li> </ul>

Numerals (continued)

Exceptions for numerals:

- Use numerals before a unit of measure.
- Use numerals when referring to ages.
- Use numerals when referring to statistics, decimals, percentages, and fractions with numbers larger than one. *Ex. 7.2 magnitude earthquake, 3 ½ laps, 3.7% interest, 4 percentage points.*
- Use numerals to indicate dimensions (depth, height, length, and width). *Ex. 5 feet, 6 inches tall; the 5-foot-6 man.*
- Use numerals in mathematics. *Ex. Multiply by 4, divide by 6.*
- Use numerals for military terms. *Ex. Office 2nd Class, 1st Sgt., 9 mm pistol.*
- Use numerals and words for millions, billions, and trillions. *Ex. 1 million people, \$2 billion.*
- Use numerals for monetary units. *Ex. 5 cents, \$5 bill.*
- Use numerals for odds, proportions, and ratios. *Ex. 9-1 long shot, 1 chance in 3.*
- Use numerals for rankings. *Ex. No. 1 choice, Top 40 hits.*
- Use numerals for grades 10 and above. Spell out for first through ninth grades.
- Use numerals for sequential designations. *Ex. Page 1, size 4.*
- Use numerals for political districts. *Ex. 9th Precinct, 3rd Congressional District.*
- Use numerals for recipes. *Ex. 2 tablespoons of sugar, 1 cup of milk.*
- Use numerals for speeds. *Ex. 7 mph, winds of 5 to 10 mph.*
- Use numerals for sports scores, standings, and standards. *Ex. 5 under par, 10-3, 6-1-2 record.* In narrative, spell out nine and under except for yard lines in football, and individual and team statistical performances.
- Use numerals for temperature, except zero. *Ex. It was 8 degrees below zero or minus 8.*
- Use numerals for votes. *Ex. 6-4 vote.*

Other exceptions:

- Roman numerals may be used for wars and to establish personal sequence for people and animals, as well as certain legislative acts. *Ex. World War I, King George V, Title IX.* Otherwise, limit usage.

Numerals (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro football Super Bowls should be identified by the year, rather than the Roman numerals. <i>Ex. 1969 Super Bowl, not Super Bowl III.</i></li> <li>• Ordinal numbers are numbers used to indicate order, such as first, second, 10th, etc. Spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10 and higher.</li> <li>• Cardinal numbers are numbers used in counting or showing how many. Use numerals for cardinal numbers. <i>Ex. 4 miles, 3 ounces, 28 minutes, etc.</i></li> </ul>
Quotation Marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never use single quotation marks (‘ ’). Always use double quotation marks (“ ”).</li> </ul>
Telephone Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use dashes when listing phone numbers; do not use parentheses or periods.</li> <li>• Do not use any prefixes before the area code. <i>Ex. +1, 1-.</i></li> </ul>
Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use numerals for time of day, except for noon and midnight. <i>Ex. 1:00 p.m., 10:30 a.m..</i></li> <li>• Spell out numbers less than 10 standing alone and in modifiers. <i>Ex. I’ll be there in five minutes, two seconds left.</i></li> <li>• Use a.m. and p.m. not AM, not A.M. or P.M.</li> <li>• Do not specify Mountain Standard Time.</li> <li>• Do not use 12 noon or 12 midnight. Use noon or midnight. Do not capitalize either.</li> </ul>
Ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use numerals for ages. <i>Ex. 6-year-old, 5 years old.</i></li> <li>• Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun.</li> </ul>
Percentages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the % sign when paired with a numeral, with no space, in most cases.</li> <li>• For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero.</li> <li>• Try to avoid using a percentage at the start of a sentence. If necessary, spell out both the number and the word percent.</li> <li>• “Constructions with the % sign use a singular verb when standing alone, or when a singular word follows an of construction. It takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an of construction.” <i>(From AP Stylebook)</i></li> <li>• Use decimals in percentages, not fractions.</li> <li>• Percentage ranges can be expressed as: 12% to 15%, 12%-15%, or between 12% and 15%.</li> <li>• Use the word percentage when not paired with a number.</li> </ul>

Weights and Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally, use numerals and spell out measurements like “inches,” “feet,” “yards,” etc.</li> </ul>
Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a physician is referred to in an article the first time their name will include first name, last name, and title. After that, the physician will be referred to as Dr. [Last Name].</li> <li>For member names, first reference in an article will be their complete name, first and last. After that, the member can be referred to by their first name (if the piece is informal).</li> </ul>

## Common Errors

there, their, and they’re	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>there</b> when referring to a place, whether concrete or abstract. <i>Ex. Niki is over there by the table. It must be difficult to work there.</i></li> <li>Use <b>their</b> to indicate possession. It is a possessive adjective and indicates that a particular noun belongs to them. <i>Ex. The marketing department lost their minds.</i></li> <li><b>They’re</b> is a contraction of the words they and are. It can never be used as a modifier, only as a subject (they is the subject – who or what does the action) and verb (are is the verb – the action itself). <i>Ex. They’re such nice people.</i></li> </ul>
your and you’re	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>your</b> to express ownership. <i>Ex. Your house is beautiful!</i></li> <li><b>You’re</b> is a contraction of the phrase “you are.” <i>Ex. You’re hired!</i></li> </ul>
its vs. it’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>its</b> to express possession. <i>Ex. The plant lost its leaves.</i></li> <li><b>It’s</b> is a contraction of the words it and is. <i>Ex. It’s cold outside.</i></li> </ul>
affect vs. effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Affect</b> is a verb. <i>Example: Colorado Access affects people positively.</i></li> <li><b>Effect</b> is a noun. <i>Example: Colorado Access has a positive effect.</i></li> <li>Tip: If you change the tense of a word in a sentence then you should use affect. If you cannot change the tense, you should use effect. <i>Ex. You can change the tense of affect: “That affects me” “That affected me” “That will affect me.” You cannot change the tense of effect: “It has a positive effect” cannot be changed to “It has a positive effected.”</i></li> </ul>

except vs. accept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Except commonly means with the exclusion of, or only.</li> <li>• Accept commonly means to take or receive, or to agree.</li> </ul>
awhile vs. a while	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awhile is an adverb (she will stay with him awhile). The two-word form is preceded by a preposition (she plans to stay for a while).</li> </ul>

## Commonly Used Words and Phrases

Use This	Not This
acknowledgment	acknowledgement
advance directives	advanced directives
all- (all-clear, all-around, etc.)	all around, all clear, etc.
and	&
annual	<p>first annual</p> <p>Only use the word “annual” if an event or program has been held for at least two successive years.</p>
well visit	annual check up or annual physical
a lot	alot
a part of	apart of
battling cancer	Use neutral, precise descriptions. <i>Ex. He/she has cancer.</i>
behavioral health provider	mental health provider
bimonthly, bipartisan, bilateral	bi-monthly, bi-partisan, bi-lateral
board of directors, board of trustees	Board of Directors, Board of Trustees
brand name	brand-name
cellphone	cell phone
checkup	check up or check-up
child care	childcare or child-care
co-	Only when forming nouns, adjectives and verbs that indicate occupation or status. Or as part of a formal title before a name. Use no hyphen in other combinations.

Use This	Not This
<p><b>Formal usage writing to the State:</b> Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (The Department) or the Department</p> <p><b>Informal writing and writing where the audience is not the State:</b> HCPF or Colorado Department of Health Policy and Financing (HCPF)</p>	---
copay	co-pay or co pay
day care	daycare or day-care
deaf	hearing impaired or hard of hearing
decision-maker, decision-making	---
disabled	handicapped or impaired
doctor	primary care provider, PCP, primary care physician, or any other variation (in member communication)
email	e-mail or uppercase (unless punctuation dictates)
et cetera or etc.	Etcetera Do not place a comma after etc. when it occurs in the middle of a sentence.
explanation of benefits or EOB	voucher or check
health care	healthcare or health-care
Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid program) on first reference and then Health First Colorado thereafter	Colorado Medicaid HFC HFCO
Members have Health First Colorado	Members are not “part of” Health First Colorado
<p>HEDIS®</p> <p>*Always required by NCQA to include the footnote: <i>HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)</i></p>	---
homepage	home page
ID card	identification card or ID
<p>If you have questions, please contact...</p> <p>If you have questions, please email...</p> <p>If you have questions, please call...</p>	Got questions? or For questions, please contact...
intranet	Intranet
Medicare	medicare
medication	drug
nonprofit	non-profit
OK	okay or ok

Use This	Not This
online	on-line
onsite	on-site
out-of-network	non-participating, etc.
member	client or customer or Member
person or people with [disease]	asthmatic, diabetic, etc.
plans	managed care organization, program or service
preventive	preventative
programs	plan or service
the programs of Colorado Access	Colorado Access's or Colorado Access's programs
Regional Accountable Entity (RAE)* (on provider communication) Regional organization (on member communication)  *On first reference for provider communication, use "Regional Accountable Entity (RAE)" and switch to RAE for every use after.	---
Region 4	RAE 4
someone who has experienced homelessness	homeless person
subcontract, subcontractor, subcontracted	delegate, delegator, delegated
substance use disorder	substance abuse disorder
toll-free	toll free or tollfree
website	web site
well child check	well-child check

