MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM

EDITORIAL AND STYLE GUIDE

2020

MHS Military Health System
health.mil

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MHS RULES ON READABILITY

Writers and editors should follow the most recent edition of the Associated Press Stylebook, except as noted in this Style Guide.

Where there are questions about branding or trademarks, please see the individual brand's branding guide.

All writing should follow established plain language guidelines and practices in compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010.

The readability scores according to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test and Flesch Reading Ease test should follow the below guidelines to meet plain language standards:

- Passive voice: 10% or less

- Reading ease: 50.0 or higher

- Grade level: 9.9 or lower

You can enable readability statistics in Microsoft Word. Once enabled, Word will display these readability scores once it finishes checking the spelling and grammar.

Learn more about plain language at www.plainlanguage.gov.

When creating new or updating existing content, you must use these style elements. **You are not required to go back and update content for the sole purpose of aligning to these style elements.**

MHS

24/7
Should appear as above using numerals.

aboard
Aboard a ship, not on board, on-board, or onboard a ship.

academic degrees
Use an apostrophe for bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc. However, there is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science (also note initial cap of degree in this instance). It is redundant to use both a title and academic/medical degree.

For example: It is redundant to use Dr. John Jones, MD. Use either Dr. John Jones or John Jones, MD.

acronyms
In general, to keep writing clear and unambiguous, avoid acronyms. If used, use acronyms sparingly. Establish any acronym used on first reference. Only begin using acronyms on subsequent references. There are some exceptions for highly recognizable acronyms. Punctuate acronyms according to AP style unless specified otherwise in this guide.

For example: TDD/TTY, MRI, HIV

active vs. passive voice
Always strive to write in the active voice.

active duty family member

active duty service member

addresses
Use the abbreviations Ave., Blvd., and St., and the 2-letter state postal abbreviation when listing addresses. Use periods with P.O. Box. Spell out street and state names in the text when used without a specific address.

For example:
- The parade began on Elm Street in New Haven, Connecticut.
- Naval Hospital Jacksonville is located at 2080 Child St., Jacksonville, FL.

affect vs. effect vs. impact
Affect as a verb means "to influence." *The game will affect the standings.* Affect as a noun is occasionally used in psychology to describe an emotion, but there is no need for it in everyday language.

Effect as a verb means "to cause." *He will effect many changes in the company.*

Effect as a noun means "result." *He miscalculated the effect of his actions.*

Impact as a verb means "strike with a blow" or "to pack firmly together." *The wisdom tooth impacted the molar.* Impact as a noun means "a collision." *The constant impact of the two gear mechanisms on each other eventually produced metal fatigue in several sprockets.* Do not use **impact** as a verb in place of "to affect." Do not use **impact** as a noun in place of "effect."

ages
Always use numerals. When writing an age range, use an en dash (with no spaces) between the numbers. Do not use a hyphen or an em dash.

For example: Ages 11–14 and 15–17.

and/or
Do not use. Choose the most appropriate option for the situation or use "a or b or both" construct.

armed services or Armed Services
The armed services should always appear in the following order: U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. See *military services and uniformed services.* Initial caps only in proper names.

For example: U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee

all-inclusive

automatically enrolled

Never auto enrolled or auto-enrolled.

branded names and lowercase vs. uppercase

Refer to products, brands, etc., as they are branded, even in headlines or at the beginning of a sentence.

For example: eCorrespondence, milConnect, iPad, MHS GENESIS, TRICARE

breastfed, breastfeed

bullets

Bullets should align with inside hanging indents. Use solid round bullets for the first tier and solid square bullets for the second tier. Begin text at the next tab. There should be breaks before and after bulleted lists.

First example:

- This is an example of how to use bullets correctly in Word document drafts. Make certain your second line and subsequent lines are flush left with your first line as shown. Use a period if it is a complete sentence.

Second example:

- Flossing twice a day
- Brushing your teeth after every meal

Bulleted lists should be initial capped (first word only). Do not put periods after phrases or clauses—use periods after complete sentences only.

Note: It is OK if some items in a bulleted list have a period at the end and others do not.

bullets (sub)

Use solid square bullets for sub-bullets. Indent so the bullet marker is directly beneath the first letter of the primary bullet above it.

Example:

- This is how you use a first tier bullet. See above for more information.
  - This is an example of how to use sub-bullets correctly in Word document drafts.

campaign titles

Titles of campaigns appear in quotes.

For example: "Take Command."

civilian titles

Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. unless requested by the named person. Other formal titles such as Dr., Sen., or Gov. should be used where applicable. Do not use such titles on second reference unless necessary to differentiate two people with the same last name.

coinsurance

commas

Always use serial comma, also known as Oxford comma.
This is a deviation from AP style.

For example: "Learn about medical, pharmacy, and dental options."

command-sponsored

Always hyphenate.

command sponsorship

Only hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

compound words

Compounded modifiers that precede a noun are usually hyphenated.

For example: brand-name drug, TRICARE-eligible coverage.

Congress

Initial cap the U.S. Congress and Congress when referring to the legislative branch of the U.S. Government that includes both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

congressional

Lowercase
For example: congressional committee
Unless it is part of a proper name.
For example: Congressional Directory, the Congressional Record.

contact information

Contact information (websites, phone numbers, email addresses) is bolded.
For example:
Visit the Health Net Federal Services, LLC website at **www.tricare-west.com** or call **844-866-WEST (844-866-9378)**.

continued articles and charts

When working with an article or chart that begins on one page and continues on a different page, use "(Continued on page X)" It should appear flush right at the bottom of the article or chart on the first page. Use "(Continued from page X)" on the continuing page, appearing flush left at the top of the article or chart.

CONUS

All uppercase. Generally refers to the 48 contiguous United States. With TRICARE, use CONUS only for TRICARE dental products. CONUS service area includes the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also, see *OCONUS* and *stateside*.

copayment

Never copay or co-payment.

costs

Because health care costs change on a regular basis, don't include costs in MHS-produced materials (for example, articles, fact sheets, and handbooks) unless necessary. Instead, refer reader to www.tricare.mil/costs or www.health.mil for the most current cost information.

cost-effective

cost-share

Never cost share.

country specific

court-martial

Plural is courts-martial.

dashes

Em dashes (—) in sentences: Use the em dash (instead of a hypen or en dash) to connect phrases within a sentence. The em dash should have no spaces before or after it. To make an em dash, hold down the alt key and type "0151."

En dashes (–) for intervals of any kind (for example, ages, time): Use the en dash to indicate an interval or in place of "to" in periods of time, for example, 1999–2019, Monday–Friday, ages 18–64. The en dash should have no spaces before or after it. Do not use the en dash when the words "from" or "between" are used. For example from Jan. 1, 2002, to March 10, 2003; between ages 18 and 64. To make an en dash, hold down the alt key and type "0150."

dates

Months with specific date: Follow AP style. When months are used with specific dates, abbreviate months with six or more letters (Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.). Spell out when used alone, or with a year alone.

Months with specific date and year: When a phrase refers to a month, day, and year, set off the year with commas.
For example: It is known that Feb. 8, 1964, was a great day in history.

Ranges: Insert an en dash between the dates with no spaces.
For example: Oct. 15–Nov. 28.

Years: Only use years with dates when a range of dates crosses years or when the date is not in the current year.

Calendar: Always use the complete four-digit number for a year.
For example: 1999, not '99

Fiscal: Spell out the fiscal year in text at first mention followed by (FY); then FY on all mentions that follow.

demonstrations and pilots

Always use the full name of a demonstration or pilot at first mention. If possible, shorten all mentions that follow.
For example: TRICARE Comprehensive Autism Care Demonstration; Autism Care Demonstration.

dependent

Don't use when referring to a TRICARE-eligible family member of a sponsor. Use family member or beneficiary.

diagnosis-related group

dingbats

These include the little star (★) that indicates the end of a TRICARE newsletter article. There should be one space between the final punctuation of the article and the dingbat. When a footnote follows an article, the dingbat should appear at the end of the article, not at the end of the footnote.

disenroll/disenrollment

Department of Defense, DoD vs. DOD

Use Department of Defense on first reference. Defense Department or the acronym are acceptable on second reference. Use DoD in internal communications and correspondence. Use DOD for publications posted online or to the media.

DMDC

Formerly Defense Manpower Data Center, now just DMDC.

drug categories

Not drug tiers when referring to prescription drugs in the TRICARE Pharmacy Program. TRICARE groups prescription drugs into four categories: generic formulary drugs, brand-name formulary drugs, non-formulary drugs, and non-covered drugs. Describe drug categories by their name, not level.
For example: "non-covered drugs" instead of "tier four"

drug v. medication

Preference is to use drug for plain language purposes, but medication is acceptable to avoid overly repetitious wording. Never use medicine to mean drug or medication, as it most commonly means "the science or practice of the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease."

effect

See *affect vs. effect vs. impact.*

ellipsis

In general, do not use ellipsis, unless indicating part of a quote was removed. An exception is when it's used as part of a styled name, such as "The Dentist is In ..." column for the *TRICARE Dental Program Health Matters Newsletter*. Treat ellipsis as a word with spaces on either side.

email

Never e-mail.

for example, e.g., and i.e.

Do not use e.g. and i.e. Instead use "for example" or provide the exact intended information or definition with no lead. Examples:

- TRICARE offers numerous program options.
  For example: TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select, and TRICARE Reserve Select.
- Adjunctive dental services (dental care that is medically necessary in the treatment of an otherwise covered medical—not dental—condition).

emergency room

U.S.: emergency room; overseas: emergency care facility.

end-stage renal disease

Lowercase and hyphenate end-stage.

MHS

explanation of benefits (EOB)

Lowercase. Plural is explanations of benefits.

Express Scripts, Inc. (Express Scripts)

The TRICARE Pharmacy Program contractor. Spell out as above the first time it appears in text; use Express Scripts thereafter.

fax

Never facsimile.

federal

Use lowercase for adjectival references: federal employees, federal agencies, federal taxes. Do not capitalize "federal," per AP style, except when used in a proper name such as Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Federal Benefits Open Season

Use only for the open season managed by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management for enrollment in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Also see *open season*.

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)

Note it is "Employees" not "Employee." First reference use Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Second reference use FEDVIP.

footnotes and disclaimer symbols

The standard is to apply symbols in the following order:

Asterisk (*)

Dagger (†)

Double Dagger (‡)

Section Mark (§)

Symbols should not appear in italics, but their associated disclaimers appear in italics. Use endnotes (not symbols) in charts and when citing sources in newsletters.

In text, disclaimer symbols follow all punctuation except a dash.

Examples:

... for a period of more than 30 days*

... for a period of more than 30 days,*

... for a period of more than 30 days.*

(... for a period of more than 30 days).*

... for a period of more than 30 days* —and...

*   Make certain the second line and subsequent lines following a symbol are indented to align with the first word in the first line as shown.

form titles

Always render in italics. Always use the full title of the form at first mention. Verify that the form title is accurate by consulting a hard copy or navigating to and opening an electronic copy. Do not initial cap or italicize the word "form" unless it is part of the form's title. For example, *TRICARE Patient Referral and Authorization Form, Waiver of Non-Covered Services* form (DD Form 1234). Note that the form number is not rendered in italics when used with the form title. However, when used without the form title, render stand-alone *DD Form 1234* in italics.

Note: Some form titles vary by region. Always verify by accessing the actual form and using the name on the form itself.

government

Initial caps in direct reference to specific governments or agencies (U.S. Government), but not for governmental. Use lowercase for adjectival references: government employees, government agencies, government taxes. (Do not capitalize "government" and "federal" per AP style, except when used in a proper name, for example, Government Accountability Office).

headlines

Capitalize the first and last words of a title, verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions. Don't capitalize articles, prepositions, or conjunctions that have fewer than four letters.

health care

Always two words whether used as an adjective or a noun, except in instances of proper names.

Health Insurance Marketplace

Health Net Federal Services, LLC (HNFS)

The TRICARE West Region contractor. Spell out as above the first time it appears in text; use HNFS thereafter.

Humana Military

The TRICARE East Region contractor.

home page

hyphen

Use the hyphen to connect grammatical elements, such as compound modifiers, for example, out-of-pocket costs, full-time student.

impact

See *affect vs. effect vs. impact*.

"Inc." and "Ltd."

Use comma before entries, but not after: "The Company, Inc. will sponsor the trip."

inpatient

insure/ensure

To insure means to take out insurance on something; to ensure means to make certain or guarantee. For example: People should insure their vehicles to ensure they can get a replacement in case of an accident.

International SOS Government Services, Inc. (International SOS)

The TRICARE overseas contractor. Spell out as above the first time it appears in text; use International SOS thereafter.

internet

Lowercase internet.

italics

Titles of publications should appear in italics: *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook*. However, article titles should appear in quotation marks: "What to Know Before TRICARE Open Season."

Form names should appear in italics. The word "Form" should only appear in italics if it is officially part of the form name.

For example:
- *TRICARE Prime Enrollment, Disenrollment, and Primary Care Manager (PCM) Change Form (DD Form 2876)*
- *Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP) Application Form* (DD Form 2837)

DD Form numbers should follow the full name of the form in a non-italic parenthetical.

For example: *TRICARE Prime Enrollment, Disenrollment, and Primary Care Manager (PCM) Change Form* (DD Form 2876). Subsequent references to the form number should appear in italics.

For example: "When filling out *DD Form 2876*, take your time to read all instructions carefully."

intrafallopian

Not intra-fallopian.

intrauterine

Not intra-uterine.

Joint Commission, The

Initial caps.

late-enrollment premium surcharge

legislature

Initial cap when preceded by either the name of a state or the word state used in reference to a specific legislature: the Virginia Legislature; the state Legislature. Capitalize legislature after the first reference when the reference to that specific

state's legislature is clear: the Legislature, referring to a previously cited state legislature.

legislative titles

In the first reference, use Rep., Reps., Sen., or Sens. before one or more legislators' names in correspondence or text: Rep. Mary Smith, Sens. Jennifer Warner and Joseph Johnson. Drop legislative titles in the second reference unless it is a direct quotation. Spell out representative and senator in lowercase when they stand alone.

line breaks

Always leave at least two lines of text in a paragraph at the end of a page and carry at least two lines over to complete the paragraph on the next page.

Do not split shorter paragraphs across pages.

Always turn off hyphenation in design programs.

Avoid hyphenating words at the end of lines (for example, paragraphs, columns).

Avoid splitting dates or separating numbers from their nouns across two lines.

For example: Jan. 31, 2009, 30 days, 115%.

Avoid widows. A widow is typically a single word or the end of a hyphenated word at the end of a paragraph or column. A widow is poor typography because it leaves too much white space between the paragraph it ends and the start of the next paragraph. Fix by editing the paragraph or adjusting character spacing.

Avoid separating an introduction to a bulleted list from the bullets it is introducing. This applies particularly for non-newsletter publications.

Avoid using directionals (for example, listed above, shown to the right, outlined below). Instead use: the following list, the list provided, etc.

When possible, avoid splitting a bullet across a non-spread. Never split a phone number across two lines.

Avoid splitting a URL if it will fit on a single line. Flow it to the following line to avoid splitting. When it is necessary to split a long URL, split it at an intuitive point (at a forward slash) rather than in the middle of a word or term. URLs in electronic documents should hyperlink to meaningful text that describes the link.

- Do not hyperlink qualified URLs as www.google.com
- Hyperlink to meaningful text, such as search for anything, and not click here (where here is the hyperlink)
- This ensures your links are accessible for users of assistive technology.

Lou Gehrig's disease

Also called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS.

managed care support contractor (MCSC)

TRICARE term is outdated. MCSCs are now regional contractors. See *regional contractors*.

Medical Assistance number

Refers to the regional numbers managed by the TRICARE overseas contractor that provide 24/7 support for TRICARE overseas beneficiaries when they need urgent or emergent care or request medical assistance. Not Medical Assistance line.

Medicare-approved

Medicare-entitled

Medicare non-participating provider

Medicare participating provider

Medicare-wraparound

mental disorder

Not mental condition.

mental health

Not behavioral health. Do not use interchangeably with behavioral health.

MHS GENESIS

All caps. Not MHS Genesis. Never use GENESIS on its own.

milConnect

military dental clinic

Lowercase. "Dental treatment facility" is outdated.

Military Health System Nurse Advice Line (MHS Nurse Advice Line)

First reference use Military Health System Nurse Advice Line. Second reference MHS Nurse Advice Line. Always spell out Nurse Advice Line. Do not use NAL.

military hospital and clinic

Lowercase. Within the DHA, military medical treatment facility (MTF) is commonly used. However, for external use, military hospital and clinic is used. When appropriate, can also use military hospital or clinic.

military pay grade

Not military rank; hyphenate grades, for example, E-4, not E4.

military ranks

Use AP style for news releases, website articles, and other external products. For internal products, see the Military Ranks section of this document.

military services

Lowercase unless part of a program name. Use only in reference to the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. National Guard, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Note: TRICARE includes non-military services. See uniformed services.

military medical treatment facility (MTF)

Do not use in external communications. See *military hospital and clinic*.

National Guard and Reserve

Initial caps and use only in the above order. When appropriate, can also use National Guard or Reserve. Never "Reserve and National Guard." Also, never National Guard/Reserve (with a slash). Use to reference service members in any one of the seven National Guard and Reserve services in this order: Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve. Note: The list should always appear in this order.

nonavailability

Only hyphenate when part of a proper form name.

for example: the *TDP OCONUS Non-Availability and Referral Form.*

non-certified

noncoital

non-covered

For prescription drugs, see *drug categories*.

nonemergency

non-formulary

For prescription drugs, see *drug categories*.

non-network

A type of TRICARE provider. Lowercase and hyphenate.

nonparticipating

A type of TRICARE provider. Lowercase, no hyphenation.

non-surgical

numbers

Write out the numbers one through nine. For numbers 10 and higher, use numerals. If a sentence begins with a number—a construction to avoid—then write out the number. For ages and percentages, always use numerals. When one through nine appear in the same sentence as a number where you would use a numeral, use the numeral for both. Also see *ages; percentages.*

numbers at beginning of sentence

Initial cap and spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. If using large numbers, consider rewording the sentence so that the number does not begin the sentence. There are exceptions for charts and bullets.

OCONUS

All caps. Generally refers to areas outside the 48 contiguous United States. With TRICARE, use OCONUS only for TRICARE dental products. The TRICARE Dental Program OCONUS service area includes areas not in the CONUS service area (the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and covered services provided aboard a ship or vessel outside the territorial waters of the CONUS service area. Also, see *CONUS* and *overseas.*

out-of-pocket, out of pocket

Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

- Her lab tests were an out-of-pocket expense.
- She paid for her lab tests out of pocket.

outpatient

overseas

Lowercase. With TRICARE, overseas includes U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and all other nations outside the U.S. Use OCONUS only for TRICARE dental products.

open season

Lowercase, unless using as part of a proper name, like TRICARE Open Season or Federal Benefits Open Season. Never open enrollment period, open period, annual open enrollment season, etc. Open season refers to the annual period where one may enroll in or change a health care plan for the upcoming year. See also Federal Benefits Open Season and TRICARE Open Season.

Pap test

Render as above (not Pap smear).

participating

A type of TRICARE provider. Lowercase.

payer

Not payor.

per diem

percent, percentages

Use the % when pairing it with a numeral. Do not use a space between the number and the % (for example, 12%, 3.6%). Spell out percent in casual use (for example, "She has a zero percent chance of winning the game.") Use decimals rather than fractions, and precede numbers less than 1% with a 0 (for example, 0.6%).

periods

Use a period after a complete sentence only. Do not use periods after sentence fragments in bulleted lists. One space follows the period. Note: It's OK if some items in a bulleted list have periods at the end (because they are complete sentences) and others do not (because they are fragments).

physician assistant

Not physician's assistant

point-of-service option

Do not capitalize.

postoperative

post-traumatic

Hyphenate except when used in a proper name, for example, National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)

post-traumatic stress disorder

pre-activation

pre-authorization

Never prior authorization.

preexisting

preoperative

preventive

Never preventative.

primary care manager (PCM)

Refers to an assigned health care professional who provides all routine, non-emergency, and urgent health care to those enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Young Adult Prime. Lowercase. Use acronym in subsequent references.

primary care provider (PCP)

Refers to an assigned health care professional who provides all routine, non-emergency, and urgent health care to those enrolled in the US Family Health Plan. Lowercase.

Prime Serve Area (PSA)

Initial caps. Use acronym in subsequent references.

professional titles

When identifying a service member with a professional title, such as a chaplain or physician, add the professional title in lowercase after the rank and name of the subject.
- U.S. Army Major Bill Smith, a chaplain conducts a religious service.
- U.S. Navy Commander Jane Jones, a physician, examines a patient.

publication titles

Render in italics. Verify that the publication title is accurate by consulting a hard copy or navigating to and opening an electronic copy.

punctuation

All punctuation marks, including parentheses, brackets, and superior reference figures, are set to match the typeface of the words they adjoin. A lightface dash is used after a run-in boldface sidehead followed by lightface matter. Lightface brackets, parentheses, or quotation marks shall be used when both boldface and lightface matter are enclosed.

For example:
- Note: The book is here.
- Note: The book is here. The pen is there.
- Note: The book is here—not there.
- Note: The book is here—not there.

Qualifying Life Event (QLE)

Uppercase. Use acronym in subsequent references.

ranges

Connect numeric ranges with an en dash and no spaces on either side of it (for example, ages 11–14). Do not use a hyphen or em dash.

ranks

See *Military Ranks* section of this document.

reenroll/reenrollment

region

Initial cap when used with east and west (for example, East Region beneficiaries, West Region beneficiaries).

regional contractors

See *TRICARE regional contractors.*

retired

Do not use (Ret.) when describing a retired service member. Use the word retired before his or her service, rank, and name. For example: Retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major Joe Smith, left, delivers a speech.

MHS

spacing

Sentences should be single-spaced with one space after periods. Use one space after colons as well.

Social Security

Initial cap Social Security. When used with other terms follow these examples:
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Social Security Act
- Social Security number (SSN), card, or benefits

stateside

Lowercase. With TRICARE, stateside includes the 50 United States and the District of Columbia. Use CONUS only for TRICARE dental products.

telephone numbers

Use figures in this format: 212-621-1500. If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension.

For Example: 212-621-1500, ext. 2.

Overseas number:

- Pubs and tricare.mil list international numbers in this style:

+65-6338-9277 (+ followed by country code and phone number) and always use hyphens (per AP style)

titles

Follow AP style. Lowercase unless the title directly precedes the office holder's name:
- Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper was appointed in 2019.
- Esper was appointed secretary of defense in 2019.

time

Use a 12-hour clock. Use figures, except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 9–11 a.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

time zones

When referencing time zones in short format without a time, use "Eastern Time," "Central Time," "Mountain Time," or "Pacific Time." Be sure to capitalize region "Eastern," as well as the word "Time." Always use Eastern Time unless the event is local to somewhere else. When using a specific time, abbreviate the time zones used within the continental U.S., Canada, and Mexico: 12 p.m. ET, 11 a.m. CT, 10 a.m. MT, 9 a.m. PT. Do not set off the abbreviations with commas.

For example:
- Call center representatives can be reached worldwide between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET.
- The assistant secretary will arrive at Evans Army Community Hospital at 9 a.m. MT.
- Stop by the San Diego conference booth from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. PT.

toll-free

Always hyphenated.

trademarks and registrations

Some brands in the MHS are registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and Institute of Heraldry. Please refer to those brands' style guides for when and how to use registration marks.

TRICARE

All caps. Must appear with a registration mark at first mention in a header. No registration mark is used at first mention in body text. In the following URLs, "TRICARE" is rendered in all caps: www.TRICARE4u.com, www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE, and www.myTRICARE.com. However, www.tricare.mil and most other TRICARE URLs render "tricare" in lowercase.

TRICARE-allowable charge

TRICARE-authorized

Render as above.

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP)

This is a voluntary premium-based dental program for certain TRICARE beneficiaries.

TRICARE-eligible

TRICARE For Life (TFL)

Medicare-wraparound coverage for TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and Part B, regardless of age. Capital case all words in TRICARE For Life when spelled out, including "For."

TRICARE Open Season

Use only for open season managed by the Defense Health Agency for enrollment in applicable TRICARE health plans. Also see *open season*.

TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery

Render as above when referring to the specific program. Otherwise, use home delivery when discussing receiving prescription drugs via mail.

TRICARE Pharmacy Program

TRICARE Prime

Always TRICARE Prime. Never Prime alone. On first reference in a publication's title or heading, include the registration mark (TRICARE Prime®).

TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP)

Render as above on first reference. Second reference is TOP, never T.O.P.

TRICARE plan names

Always precede plan with TRICARE: TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select.
Note: Prime and Select alone are not acceptable.

TRICARE regional contractors

Refers to stateside contractors. Use full name at first mention.

- East Region: Humana Military
- West Region: Health Net Federal Services, LLC (HNFS)

TRICARE regions

First reference: TRICARE East Region, TRICARE West Region.
Second reference: East Region, West Region.

TRICARE retail network pharmacies

Render as above.

TRICARE Select

Always TRICARE Select. Never Select alone. Overseas, the program is TRICARE Overseas Program Select. *See TRICARE Overseas Program.* On first reference in a publication's title or heading, include the registration mark (TRICARE Select®).

uniformed services

Lowercase unless part of a program name, like Uniformed Services ID card or Uniformed Services University. Preferred term over armed services, since it includes TRICARE-eligible members of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, in addition to the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard.

Uniformed Services ID card (per above entry)

Not military card.

United Concordia Companies, Inc. (United Concordia)

TRICARE Active Duty Dental Program and TRICARE Dental Program contractor. Use full name at first reference.

use vs. utilize

The difference between *use* and *utilize* can be found in the purpose for which you are employing something.

To *use* something means to employ it for its given purpose:

- Can I use your computer?
- Would you like to use my phone?

To *utilize* something is to turn it to a practical use. When you utilize something, you give it a new use that it may not originally have had.

- You can utilize Microsoft Word to draw pictures.
- We try to utilize as many of our existing tools as possible to create new innovations.

To choose between *use* and *utilize*, you need to assess whether the item you are referring to is usually employed in the manner to which you are attributing it. Here's an example with a pencil:

- You can *use* my pencil for the sketch if yours is blunt.
- The airport security confiscated her pencil because they were concerned it may be *utilized* as a weapon.

U.S.

Use in place of United States as a noun or an adjective, except in headlines. In headlines, use "US" without periods. Do not abbreviate in proper names where it is spelled out.

Note: Spell out United States when it appears with a quantifying number, for example, "50 United States and the District of Columbia."

US Family Health Plan (USFHP)

Always US Family Health Plan, never U.S. Family Health Plan or Uniformed Services Family Health Plan. US stands for "Uniformed Services."

U.S. territories

Following the first mention of "U.S. territories," list the territories in alphabetical order as follows: American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Please adhere to the same usage rules for the *acronyms* entry in the Style section of this guide.

veteran

Lowercase unless part of a program name (for example, Department of Veterans Affairs).

Veterans Affairs, Department of

No apostrophe with Veterans. Never Veterans Administration. Full name is the Department of Veterans Affairs. Second reference is VA.

web

Lowercase web when referring to the internet.

web page click-on navigation

When directing the reader to a web page that requires click-on navigation, render that navigation in quotes.

For example: Go to www.tricare.mil, then click on "Beneficiary."

website

One word. Only uppercase at the beginning of a sentence.

well-being

well-child

Hyphenate when used as an adjective. For example, well-child care, well-child exam.

well-woman

Hyphenate when used as an adjective. For example, well-woman exam.

World Wide Web

Dated term. Use web, online, or internet instead.

X-ray

ZIP code

COMMON ACRONYMS

ACA: Affordable Care Act

ACD: Autism Care Demonstration

ADA: America Dental Association

ADFM: active duty family member

AMA: American Medical Association

ASD: autism spectrum disorder

BCAC: Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator

BWE: Beneficiary Web Enrollment

CAC: Common Access Card

CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CHCBP: Continued Health Care Benefit Program

CMS: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

COBRA: Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act

DEERS: Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System

DoD: Department of Defense (this is a deviation from AP style)

DVBIC: Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

ECHO: Extended Care Health Option

EFMP: Exceptional Family Member Program

EHR: electronic health record

EOB: explanation of benefits

FDA: Food and Drug Administration

FEDVIP: Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program

FEHB: Federal Employees Health Benefits

HHS: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

HMO: health maintenance organization

HPV: human papillomavirus

LOD: line of duty

MHS: Military Health System

MTF: military treatment facility, use military hospitals and clinics, military hospital or clinic

NCI: National Cancer Institute

NIH: National Institutes of Health

NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OHI: other health insurance

PCM: primary care manager

PHI: personal health information

PII: personally identifiable information

PPO: preferred provider organization

PTSD: post-traumatic stress disorder

QLE: Qualifying Life Event

SSA: Social Security Administration

TAMP: Transitional Assistance Management Program

TBI: traumatic brain injury

TDP: TRICARE Dental Program

TFL: TRICARE For Life

TOL: TRICARE Online

TOP: TRICARE Overseas Program

TPR: TRICARE Prime Remote

TRR: TRICARE Retired Reserve

TRS: TRICARE Reserve Select

TYA: TRICARE Young Adult

USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

USFHP: US Family Health Plan (Note: "US" stands for Uniformed Services, not United States.)

USPHS: U.S. Public Health Service

VA: Department of Veterans Affairs

VHA: Veterans Health Administration

WHO: World Health Organization

WIC: Women, Infants, and Children

MHS

MILITARY RANKS

For external documents, use AP style for military ranks. For internal documents, use the abbreviations listed below.

ARMY		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-10	General	GEN
O-9	Lieutenant General	LTG
O-8	Major General	MG
O-7	Brigadier General	BG
O-6	Colonel	COL
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	LTC
O-4	Major	MAJ
O-3	Captain	CPT
O-2	First Lieutenant	1LT
O-1	Second Lieutenant	2LT
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer	CW5
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CW4
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CW3
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CW2
W-1	Warrant Officer 1	CW1
E-9	Sergeant Major of the Army	SMA
	Command Sergeant Major	CSM
	Sergeant Major	SGM
E-8	First Sergeant	1SG
	Master Sergeant	MSG
E-7	Sergeant First Class	SFC
E-6	Staff Sergeant	SSG
E-5	Sergeant	SGT
E-4	Corporal	CPL
	Specialist	SPC
E-3	Private First Class	PFC
E-2	Private	PV2
E-1	Private	PVT

NAVY		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-10	Admiral	ADM
O-9	ViceAdmiral	VADM
O-8	Rear Admiral	RADM
O-7	Real Admiral	RADL
O-6	Captain	CAPT
O-5	Commander	CDR
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	LCDR
O-3	Lieutenant	LT
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	LTJG
O-1	Ensign	ENS
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CWO4
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CWO3
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CWO2
W-1	Warrant Officer	WO1
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy	MCPON
	Master Chief Petty Officer	MCPO
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	SCPO
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	CPO
E-6	Petty Officer 1	PO1
E-5	Petty Officer 2	PO2
E-4	Petty Officer 3	PO3
E-3	Seaman	SN
E-2	Seaman Apprentice	SA
E-1	Seaman Recruit	SR

MHS

For external documents, use AP style for military ranks. For internal documents, use the abbreviations listed below.

MARINE CORPS		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-10	General	Gen
O-9	Lieutenant General	LtGen
O-8	Major General	MajGen
O-7	Brigadier General	BGen
O-6	Colonel	Col
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	LtCol
O-4	Major	Maj
O-3	Captain	Capt
O-2	First Lieutenant	1st Lt
O-1	Second Lieutenant	2nd Lt
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer 5	CWO-5
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CWO-4
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CWO-3
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CWO-2
W-1	Warrant Officer 1	CWO-1
E-9	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps	SgtMajMC
	Sergeant Major	SgtMaj
	Master Gunnery Sergeant	MGySgt
E-8	First Sergeant	1Sgt
	Master Sergeant	MSgt
E-7	Gunnery Sergeant	GySgt
E-6	Staff Sergeant	SSgt
E-5	Sergeant	Sgt
E-4	Corporal	Cpl
E-3	Lance Corporal	LCpl
E-2	Private First Class	PFC
E-1	Private	Pvt

AIR FORCE		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-10	General	Gen
O-9	Lieutenant General	Lt Gen
O-8	Major General	Maj Gen
O-7	Brigadier General	Brig Gen
O-6	Colonel	Col
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Lt Col
O-4	Major	Maj
O-3	Captain	Capt
O-2	First Lieutenant	1st Lt
O-1	Second Lieutenant	2d Lt
E-9	Chief Major Sergeant of the Air Force	CMSAF
	Chief Master Sergeant	CMSgt
E-8	Senior Master Sergeant	SMSgt
E-7	Master Sergeant	MSgt
E-6	Technical Sergeant	TSgt
E-5	Staff Sergeant	SSgt
E-4	Senior Airman	SrA
E-3	Airman First Class	A1C
E-2	Airman	Amn
E-1	Airman Basic	AB

MHS

For external documents, use AP style for military ranks. For internal documents, use the abbreviations listed below.

COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-10	Admiral	ADM
O-9	Vice Admiral	VADM
O-8	Rear Admiral	RADM
O-7	Rear Admiral	RDML
O-6	Captain	CAPT
O-5	Commander	CDR
O-4	Lieutenant Commande	LCDR
O-3	Lieutenant	LT
O-2	Lieutenant Juinor Grade	LTJG
O-1	Ensign	ENS

COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION		
Pay Grade	**Full Title**	**Abbreviation**
O-9	Lieutenant General	LTG
O-8	Major General	MG
O-7	Brigadier General	BG
O-6	Colonel	COL
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	LTC
O-4	Major	MAJ
O-3	Captain	CPT
O-2	First Lieutenant	1LT
O-1	Second Lieutenant	2LT

MHS

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the MHS Style Guide, have suggestions for items to include, or need to report an error, <u>send a message</u> to the MHS Marketing and Branding team.

Send an email to:

dha.ncr.comm.mbx.mhs-marketing-and-branding@mail.mil

The Military Health System is America's largest and most complex health care system and the world's preeminent military health care delivery operation. We save lives on the battlefield, combat infectious disease around the world, and care for 9.6 million TRICARE beneficiaries, the nation's largest health benefit plan.

The MHS is more than just combat medicine. We are a system that provides health care delivery at home, medical education, public health, and innovative medical research and development.

While our system is complex, our goals are clear:

- Ensure America's active duty and reserve component personnel are healthy so they can complete their national security missions

- Ensure that all active and reserve medical personnel in uniform are trained and ready to provide medical care in support of operational forces around the world

- Provide a medical benefit to uniformed service members, retirees, and their families that is equal to the service and sacrifice they give to our country.

Our unique patient needs related to combat readiness and recovery means the MHS has experience and conducts research others will not. Readiness goals–not profit margins–drive how we provide care and conduct research. Because of this, many MHS treatments and discoveries have been adapted for use in the private sector.

MHS