

CF OPERATING PROCEDURE
NO. 15-1

STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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Documentation Management

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

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Chapter 1

CORRESPONDENCE GUIDELINES

1-1. Purpose. This chapter provides instructions for preparing Department correspondence for the Secretary's or the Governor's signature to make sure letters and memos follow current and acceptable business writing standards and style. The Department's standard reference guide for preparing correspondence and reports is *The Gregg Reference Manual*, Tenth Edition, by William A. Sabin.

1-2. Scope. This operating procedure applies to all Department employees.

1-3. References.

a. *The Gregg Reference Manual*, Tenth Edition, by William A. Sabin: GLENCOE/McGraw-Hill Book Company.

b. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, Third Edition (1997): Houghton Mifflin Company.

NOTE: These reference books can be purchased from any local bookstore.

c. CFOP 15-7, Decision Memorandum Process.

d. *Plain Language Guide*.

1-4. Document Types.

a. Letters. You can use any of the standard business letter formats described in *The Gregg Reference Manual* for correspondence with people outside the Department. Follow the format described in Chapter 3 of this operating procedure to prepare letters for the Secretary's or the Governor's signature.

(1) When sending a letter outside of the Department, use the color letterhead.

(2) Use black and white letterhead for internal correspondence and reports.

b. Memoranda. You use a memorandum within the Department, but not to send information outside the Department. You prepare all memoranda using the appropriate letterhead.

c. Form Letters. When you compose a form letter, consider its effect on the reader. Be sure form letters are courteous and positive, and written at a reading level easily understood by the reader. Avoid program jargon, acronyms, abbreviations, office symbols, and complex legal or regulatory references, which are meaningless and confusing to people.

d. Approval Letters. Approval letters must stand alone as complete documents. Include all needed information in the letter. Use letterhead, date the approval letter in the originating office, and send it to the appropriate Assistant Secretary for approval.

e. Decision Memos. Decision memos are for issues that require a decision by the Secretary. Procedures and requirements are in CFOP 15-7, Decision Memorandum Process.

1-5. Addresses and Salutations.

a. General. Appendix C shows forms of address. Refer to *The Gregg Reference Manual* for forms of address not in the appendix. Always use a courtesy title (Ms., Mr.) with names of people who

do not have a professional title. Salutations should be formal unless instructed otherwise by the person signing the letter.

b. Titles and Addresses.

(1) All elected officials are addressed "The Honorable . . ."

(2) Prefix titles should be spelled out except for Dr., Mr., Mrs., and Ms. Two titles with the same meaning should not be used. For example, use *Dr. Paul White* or *Paul White, M.D.*, but **not** *Dr. Paul White, M.D.*

(3) If you do not know whether the addressee is a man or a woman, use *Dear Jan Jones*; *Dear G. Walker*; or *Dear Writer*.

(4) Once titled to the title of *Judge* or *Senator* or a similar distinctive title, a person may retain the title forever.

(5) Use either a street address or a post office box, but not both. The post office box is preferred for a mailing address.

1-6. Openings and Closings.

a. When you respond to government officials and others who write many letters, be sure to mention the date of the letter you are responding to, so their staff can easily locate the original letter: *Thank you for your June 12 letter regarding . . .* (Note: Do not include the year in the date if it is the same year as the response.)

b. Never use the phrase *I am in receipt of your letter* in drafts for the Secretary's or the Governor's signature.

c. In the closing, provide the name, title, and telephone number (including the area code) of an appropriate person the writer can call if they need more assistance or have questions.

1-7. Acronyms. Acronyms can make a letter confusing and hard to read. Always define the acronym when it is first used; from that point forward, you can use the acronym throughout the letter. Example: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

1-8. Office Symbols. Office symbols are used only within the Department for interoffice correspondence and mail routing purposes. They are meaningless to people outside the Department and should never be used in letters leaving the Department.

1-9. Word Processors. Word processing programs present some common problems that need to be corrected when proofreading. The wraparound feature can separate some things inappropriately. For example, when typing a date, the month and day should be on the same line; personal titles such as *Mr.* and *Ms.* should be on the same line as the person's name. Also, watch for large blank areas at the end of a line where a long word was moved to the next line; hyphenate the word to fill in the gap.

1-10. Style and Content.

a. Good business letters and memos are accurate, brief, clear, and concise (the ABCs of good writing) and written in a natural style, as if talking to the reader.

(1) *Accurate* means the information in your letter is correct and in appropriate language.

(2) *Brief* means keeping the letter as short as possible while ensuring the message is complete. Normally, the Secretary and Governor prefer one-page letters. Only complex issues require more than one page.

(3) *Clear* means making your writing easy to read and understand. Use short, commonly used words (never use a long word where a short one will do); short, direct sentences; short, well-organized paragraphs; correct, specific and plain language; and correct sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. Avoid big words, bureaucratic language, program jargon, and vague words and language. Clear writing requires planning and often requires rewriting.

(4) *Concise* means making every word contribute to your purpose for writing. Avoid wasting words by repeating what the reader already knows. Make sure everything you write is necessary. When revising what you have written, eliminate unnecessary words, irrelevant information, and wasteful expressions.

b. When responding to a letter or memo, be sure to address all the issues or questions in the writer's correspondence.

1-11. Tone.

a. The tone of your writing should be courteous, respectful, and sincere. When you write to clients who get or have asked for help from our Department, be sympathetic to the circumstances that have made it necessary for them to ask for our help. Keep in mind the Department is a human services agency; project a service attitude in your writing and be as understanding and helpful as possible.

b. The tone of your writing should also be warm, natural, and friendly. Cold, pompous, bureaucratic writing is difficult to read and may offend the reader.

1-12. Responding to Complaints. When responding to a letter of complaint about rude or unhelpful employees, poor services, management, or personnel problems, please try to talk to the complainant and attempt to resolve the problem before preparing a written reply. Apologize and explain any corrective action taken.

1-13. Materials and Print Fonts.

a. Executive Staff will put correspondence in final format on bond paper.

b. Letterhead will be used for reports prepared for the Secretary.

c. Arial 12 font is used for the Secretary's drafts. See Chapter 3 and Appendix A for additional guidance on preparing letters for the Secretary's signature.

1-14. Courtesy Copies. To show courtesy copies to others, type cc: followed by the list of people, rank-ordered, including their full names and titles. Do not include the Secretary as a courtesy copy.

1-15. Proofreading. Proofread carefully and check for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure. Be sure that all issues have been addressed in the response and that it can be read and understood by people with varying skill levels. Refer to *The Gregg Reference Manual* if you are unsure about anything. Always have a second proofreader read your document.

Chapter 2

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY ASSIGNMENTS

2-1. Purpose. This chapter describes the correspondence management procedures and policies of the Office of the Secretary, and briefly explains how to handle various types of assignments for the Secretary and Governor.

2-2. Incoming Mail. Mail addressed to the Secretary is delivered to the Office of the Secretary Executive Staff where it is opened, reviewed, assigned, logged into an automated tracking system (DCFTracker), and delegated to the appropriate office. Executive Staff also receives assignments from the Governor's Office regarding letters to the Governor about our Department.

2-3. Assignment and Tracking Procedures.

a. Mail is assigned to the Assistant Secretaries, Program Directors, Circuit Administrators, or Office of the Secretary Directors.

b. Our goal is to complete all assignments on time. It is important to carefully review all pending assignments. DCFTracker automatically sends overdue notices to the responsible office based on a predetermined time line.

2-4. Correspondence Liaisons.

a. Each Assistant Secretary, Program Director, Circuit Administrator, and Office of the Secretary Director will designate a correspondence liaison.

b. Executive Staff is notified of changes in correspondence liaisons.

c. The liaisons track and review assignments to ensure timely and appropriate completion. They use the DCFTracker reports and notifications to follow up on assignments due from their offices.

2-5. Types of Responses. Instruction codes for Office of the Secretary assignments in DCFTracker are as follows:

- A Prepare Reply for the Secretary's Signature.
- B Reply Directly on Behalf of the Secretary, Attach a Copy in DCFTracker.
- C Reply Directly on Behalf of the Governor, Attach a Copy in DCFTracker.
- D Prepare a Draft for the Governor's Signature.
- E Provide a Background Report.
- F Prepare a Letter for the Secretary's Signature and Provide a Background Report.
- G Prepare Reply for the Deputy Secretary's or an Assistant Secretary's Signature, as noted in the Special Instructions. This may also include a report.
- H Handle Appropriately.
- I Chief of Staff's/Executive Staff Director's Assignment.
- J Prepare information for the Secretary (per Secretary's request).
- K Reply Directly, via email, on Behalf of the Governor, Attach a Copy in DCFTracker.
- S See Special Instructions.
- W Respond to Online Assignment.

NOTE: Information on standard response times may be found in Chapter 5.

2-6. Assignment Preparation. (Instruction Codes A, B, and J)

a. For Instruction Code A, a letter for the Secretary's signature is prepared and submitted to Executive Staff. Once approved by the Deputy Secretary or appropriate Assistant Secretary, the letter is prepared in final and given to the Secretary for signature. Chapter 3 and Appendix A provide additional information on style and guidelines for format and content. (See paragraph 2-10 below for additional guidance on assignments that include a draft letter and a report, Instruction Code F.)

b. For Instruction Code B assignments, a response on behalf of the Secretary is made and a copy is provided to Executive Staff. Most responses are signed by an Assistant Secretary, Program Director, Circuit Administrator, Regional Director, or Office of the Secretary Director. The letter begins with, *Thank you for your (month/day) letter to Secretary _____ regarding . . .* The next sentence should be *Secretary _____ asked me to respond to you on his behalf.*

c. For Instruction Code J assignments, the requested information is provided to the Secretary. These assignments are requested by the Secretary and, as such, special instructions outlining the Secretary's needs are provided.

2-7. Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, and Executive Staff Director. (Instruction Codes G and I)

a. For Instruction Code G, a draft letter for the Deputy Secretary's or an Assistant Secretary's signature is submitted to Executive Staff. If a report is required, prepare the report in the standard report format, addressed to the Deputy Secretary or Assistant Secretary using the approved format online (under the "Templates" heading at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/os/executive-staff/correspondence.shtml>). Executive Staff will put all letters for the Deputy Secretary or designated Assistant Secretary's signature in final. Executive Staff will provide the assignment to the Deputy Secretary or appropriate Assistant Secretary for signature. When signed, the assignment is returned to Executive Staff to complete the processing.

b. Instruction Code I is used for any Chief of Staff or Executive Staff Director's assignment. This may include a draft prepared for the Chief of Staff or Executive Staff Director's signature, as outlined in the special instructions. Reports are addressed to the Chief of Staff or Executive Staff Director.

c. The same format and preferences as outlined for the Secretary are used for drafts and reports prepared for the Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, Chief of Staff, or Executive Staff Director.

2-8. Governor's Correspondence. (Instruction Codes C, K and D)

a. Instruction Code C is used for letters that were written to the Governor, but the Department is asked to respond on the Governor's behalf. In most instances, the letter is signed by an Assistant Secretary, Program Director, Circuit Administrator, Regional Director, or Office of the Secretary Director, and show a copy (cc:) to the Governor. Even though the signed letter shows a copy to the Governor, **do not** send a copy to the Governor's Office. The response should begin with, *Thank you for your (month/day) letter (or email) to Governor Scott regarding . . . Governor Scott asked me to respond to you on his behalf.* The Level 1 delegate will mark the issue complete.

b. For Instruction Code C, Executive Staff provides an update to the Executive Office of the Governor, Citizen's Services.

c. Instruction Code K issues are processed the same as Instruction Code C issues, but the response will normally be by email.

d. For Instruction Code D, a draft response is prepared for the Governor's signature. Letters prepared for the Governor's signature are submitted in draft form, single-spaced.

e. Chapter 3 provides details on format and content for the Governor's letters. Page A-3 of Appendix A includes a checklist for preparing Governor's drafts.

2-9. Reports. (Instruction Code E) Sometimes the Secretary requests background information on a case. Letterhead and headers are used for reports. The format is shown online (at <http://eww.dcf.state.fl.us/os/executive-staff/correspondence.shtml>).

2-10. Letters and Reports. (Instruction Code F) The Secretary may request a report about the information in a letter. Letterhead is used for the report and letter. (For instructions on the preparing drafts, see paragraph 2-6a.)

2-11. Handle Appropriately. (Instruction Code H) This instruction code means the letter has been assigned for appropriate action. The writer should receive a prompt response; i.e., a letter, telephone call, or direct contact if appropriate. Anonymous complaints are logged this way and should be investigated as thoroughly as possible. The action taken regarding Instruction Code H assignments should be documented in the DCFTTracker issue in the Issue Completion section.

2-12. Special Instructions. (Instruction Code S) When an assignment requires a response that does not fit the usual criteria, the Instruction Code S, for special instructions, is used. Instructions are included in the special instructions field of the issue screen. If you have questions regarding special instruction assignments, contact the correspondence liaison. Unresolved questions should be referred to Executive Staff.

2-13. Online Assignments. (Instruction Code W) The Dear Secretary Website is a forum for Department employees to provide suggestions for cost saving efficiencies that the Department can implement. The website may be reached through the Department's Intranet website. The Secretary reviews these suggestions and determines what type response should be made. These assignments are sent to the appropriate office to respond on behalf of the Secretary or to prepare background information for the Secretary to respond. If the employee does not provide contact information, the suggestion will be sent to the appropriate office for consideration.

2-14. Information Copies.

a. Offices that have no role in the preparation of an assignment may still need to be made aware of issues contained in a letter. In this instance, information copies are provided to those offices by email link from the DCFTTracker issue. Questions about information copies should be referred to the correspondence liaison for the office preparing the assignment. Unresolved questions should be referred to Executive Staff.

b. Offices receiving an information copy of an assignment will be provided a copy by email link from the issue. A note will be added to the issue description field indicating the offices that have been provided an information copy. **Do not respond to information copies.** Offices that receive information copies, and believe input from their office is necessary, should contact the assigned office directly.

c. Offices that are required to coordinate on an assignment **also** receive a copy by email link from the issue. The special instructions field will list any offices that require coordination. Questions regarding coordination should be referred to the correspondence liaison. Unresolved questions should be referred to Executive Staff.

d. The DCFTTracker system uses functional areas and mail groups to identify offices or individuals who receive assignments and information copies as follows:

OS	Secretary
OSCS	Chief of Staff
OSES	Executive Staff
OSC	Communications
OSIG	Inspector General
OSIGIA	Internal Audit
OSIGCR	Civil Rights
OSLP	Legislative Planning
OSGC	General Counsel
AS	Assistant Secretary for Administration
ASHR	Human Resources
OP	Deputy Secretary
PDAS	Director of Adult Protective Services
PDCC	Director of Child Care
PDDV	Director of Domestic Violence
PDES	Assistant Secretary for Economic Self-Sufficiency
PDFS	Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare
PDHO	Executive Director of Homelessness
PDRS	Director of Refugee Services
SM	Assistant Secretary for Substance Abuse and Mental Health
PDMH	Director of Mental Health
PDSA	Director of Substance Abuse
OPCLS	Children's Legal Services
OPFAH	Florida Abuse Hotline
OPOTI	Out of State Inquiry Office
C01, C02, C03, etc. are used for the Circuit Administrators.	

Chapter 3

WRITING A LETTER FOR THE SECRETARY'S OR GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

3-1. Purpose. This chapter provides information on preparing letters for the Secretary's or the Governor's signature. A checklist is provided in Appendix A. The guidelines in Chapter 1 also apply to letters for the Secretary's or the Governor's signature.

3-2. Format.

a. All documents and correspondence are based on the *Plain Language Guide* that is available on the Department's and Executive Staff's websites.

b. Letters for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, Assistant Secretaries', Chief of Staff's, or Executive Staff Director's signature are prepared in block style, standard format, as shown in *The Gregg Reference Manual*, except as noted below. Use standard spacing between parts of the letter and set margins to center the letter on the page, with equal side margins and equal margins at the top and bottom. Right-hand margins should not be justified in business letters. Paragraphs are not indented; and, the word *Department*, when referring to our Department, is capitalized. When referring to a specific Circuit, the word *Circuit* is capitalized.

c. Drafts for the Governor's signature are prepared on plain white paper, single-spaced. Use modified block style, standard format.

d. Reports to the Secretary should be on letterhead with appropriate headers and page numbering.

3-3. Printer Font. Drafts for the Governor's, Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, Assistant Secretaries', Chief of Staff's, and Executive Staff Director's signature should be in Arial 12.

3-4. Style and Content. See Chapter 1, paragraph 1-10.

3-5. Openings and Closings.

a. Use openings such as those in Chapter 1, paragraph 1-6.

b. In letters for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, or Executive Staff, the closing will include the name of a person for the writer to contact: *If you have any questions, please call . . .* (Include the name, title, and telephone number, including area code, of an appropriate staff contact.)

c. The exception is for letters to Legislators from the Secretary. In this case, a contact should be given for the Legislator's staff. The preferred closing is: *If you have any further questions, please have your staff contact . . .* In addition, the Secretary is usually given as a contact for the Legislator: *If I may be of further assistance, please let me know. (Do not include the telephone number.)*

d. For the Governor's letters, a typical closing is: *Thank you for sharing your concerns with me. If you need further assistance, please call . . .* (Include the name, title, and telephone number, with area code, of an appropriate staff contact.)

3-6. Confidentiality. Federal and state laws protect client information and restrict its release except as allowed in statute. Care must be taken to ensure that client information is protected and is included in correspondence only as authorized by statute. You should consider review by the appropriate legal staff during the preparation process.

a. Even when an elected official includes a signed release of information from the client, our Department is not released from the statutory requirements for confidentiality

b. Do not use comments such as "statute does not allow me to discuss this information," or "I am prohibited from releasing this information." Say what we can say and stop.

3-7. Signature Block. The signature block for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, and Executive Staff Director begins at the left margin and has four blank lines after the complimentary close. The Governor's signature block begins six tabs from the left margin and has four blank lines after the complimentary close.

3-8. Writer's and Typist's Initials. **Do not** use these initials on letters for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, an Assistant Secretary's, Chief of Staff's, Executive Staff Director's, or Governor's signature.

Chapter 4

ASSIGNMENT COMPLETION PROCEDURES

4-1. Purpose. This chapter describes procedures for preparing and submitting responses to the Office of the Secretary.

4-2. Direct Reply Assignments. (Instruction Codes B and C)

a. The signature level of B and C assignments must be an Assistant Secretary, Program Director (headquarters offices), Circuit Administrator, Regional Director, or Office of the Secretary Director. Although a designee may sign the letter, the signature block must be that of the Assistant Secretary, Director, Circuit Administrator, Regional Director, or Office of the Secretary Director.

b. When you have completed a reply on behalf of the Secretary or Governor, scan and attach a signed copy of the response to the issue in DCFTracker, complete the Issue Completion section, and mark the issue complete.

4-3. Review and Sign-off Procedures. (For drafts for signature by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, Executive Staff Director, or Governor)

a. The Circuit Administrator or Regional Director must approve letters and drafts prepared in the circuits or regions. The Program Director or Office of the Secretary Director must approve letters prepared at headquarters. Executive Staff will coordinate review and approval by the Assistant Secretaries and other offices, as required.

b. The originating office will create a new issue in DCFTracker when submitting a letter or other document for the Secretary's signature that did not originate as an Office of the Secretary assignment. Provide background information or an explanation of why the letter or package has been prepared and the suggested action by the Secretary in the issue description. All required review should be completed and indicated in the audit trail prior to submitting to the Office of the Secretary. Issues that have not been reviewed will be returned to the originating office.

4-4. Enclosures. Be sure to include any enclosures mentioned in the letter and indicate whether those copied are to receive enclosures also. As a rule, copies will be made in Executive Staff, but issues with numerous attachments or missing attachments will be returned through DCFTracker to the preparing office to copy and distribute.

4-5. Envelopes. Do not include envelopes with the draft.

4-6. Coordination. Most correspondence assignments, signature issues, or other issues submitted to the Secretary require some degree of coordination. Assignments can be processed more efficiently if the necessary coordination is completed and documented correctly. To ensure that needed coordination is completed properly, please follow the steps listed below.

a. When an Office of the Secretary assignment is received, review the required coordination listed in the special instructions field of the issue.

(1) When assignments are completed, they are sent to each office requiring coordination through DCFTracker. The coordination listed in the special instructions field must be completed before the assignment is submitted to the Office of the Secretary. Any additional coordination completed by the preparing office should also be listed in the audit trail of the issue.

(2) If you think the suggested coordination listed in the special instructions is incorrect or unnecessary, please contact Executive Staff immediately.

b. When an office submits a draft or other issue to the Secretary that was not an assignment from the Office of the Secretary, it is referred to as a *signature issue*. A new issue is created by the originating office when submitting all signature issues. The preparing office determines the required coordination and ensures that all coordination is complete and is listed in the issue. As with an assignment, required review and coordination is completed prior to submitting the signature issue to the Office of the Secretary.

c. Prior to submission to the Office of the Secretary, the appropriate Assistant Secretary must review all assignments or signature issues from the Program Offices, with the exception of Instruction Code G assignments. All review and coordination must be completed in sufficient time to meet assigned due dates.

d. Reviewing offices will discuss and coordinate any proposed changes with the originating office. The originating office will ensure all changes, updates, or corrections are complete prior to submitting the issue to the Office of the Secretary.

e. Executive Staff will return assignments or signature issues that arrive without the needed coordination and approvals.

4-7. Executive Staff Review.

a. For executive directed assignments, all letters submitted for the Secretary's, Deputy Secretary's, an Assistant Secretary's, or the Governor's signature are reviewed, edited, and put in final form by Executive Staff. Items requiring the Governor's signature must be submitted at least two days before they are due to the Governor. If an assignment or other item has an external deadline, a deadline over which the Department has no control, notify Executive Staff upon submission.

b. The Executive Office of the Governor, Office of Planning and Budgeting (EOG/OPB) must review and approve certain actions relating to budget or grants. This review/approval requires 14 days or more to complete. The issue must be submitted for the Secretary's approval with sufficient time to meet the EOG/OPB 14 day review and approval timeframe.

4-8. Revisions and Corrections.

a. Letters are sometimes returned to the preparing office for revision due to:

- (1) An incomplete response to the writer's issues; or,
- (2) Unclear, vague, or confusing content.

b. When returning a letter to you for revision, Executive Staff will provide you with comments or guidelines for completing the assignment.

4-9. After the Letter is Signed.

a. Letters signed by the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, or the Chief of Staff are returned to Executive Staff for processing.

(1) For assignments, Executive Staff will mail most letters signed by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, Chief of Staff, or Executive Staff Director. If the preparing office wants to mail the letter, put a note in DCFTracker requesting that it be returned for mailing. The

preparing office will be asked to mail letters that are being sent to a large number of people, have courtesy copies (cc:) for which Executive Staff has no address, or have bulky attachments. The preparing office will also be asked to mail all items that require express mailing.

(2) For signature issues, Executive Staff will scan and attach the signed document to the issue in DCFTTracker and save it to the Secretary's reading file. The issue will be returned and the original letter will be sent to the preparing office. The preparing office will finish processing the letter. This includes mailing the original signed letter and any attachments or information copies and marking the issue complete in DCFTTracker.

b. Governor's drafts are reviewed by Executive Staff and given to the Secretary for approval. After approval, Executive Staff puts the drafts in final form and forwards them to the Governor's Office for signature. Executive Staff does not always receive signed copies from the Governor's Office.

c. When the preparing office receives the final version of a draft submitted for the Secretary's signature, after the assignment is completed and closed, please note the changes that have been made to avoid the need to revise future letters for the same reasons. If changes have been made to the original letter submitted, please return it to the person who prepared it, with a copy of the final version, so that the writer can see the changes that were made. Questions regarding the final assignment should be addressed to Executive Staff.

4-10. Rush Items. Rush items must be kept to the absolute minimum and instructions for pickup or return must be included.

a. Do not deliver an item and expect the Secretary to sign the document the same day.

b. Time must be available to allow for any additional review required by the Secretary.

c. Remember, items that do not arrive with sufficient time for the Secretary's review and signature **may not be signed**.

Chapter 5

DEADLINES, EXTENSIONS, AND FOLLOW-UP ASSIGNMENTS

5-1. Purpose. This chapter explains the Office of the Secretary policy for determining due dates on assignments, extending due dates, and requesting follow-up.

5-2. Due Dates.

a. Five working days are given to complete most assignments. Shorter time frames are used for responses to legislators and for other time-sensitive issues. The due date in the issue for Level 1 is the date the item is due in the Office of the Secretary. To meet the due date, all coordination and review must be completed before you submit it to the Office of the Secretary. Assignments that have not been coordinated or reviewed as indicated in the special instructions of the issue will be returned and will remain open.

b. Due dates for assignments are determined in part by the Instruction Code. As a general guide, due dates are assigned as follows:

(1) Standard Timelines.

A	5 workdays or two days earlier than EOG due date
B	10 workdays
C	5 to 10 days or one workday earlier than EOG due date
D	2 workdays earlier than EOG due date
E	5 workdays or fewer
F	5 workdays or two days earlier than the EOG due date
G	5 workdays or two days earlier than the EOG due date
H	10 workdays (1 workday for telephone and 5 workdays for email assignments)
I	5 workdays or as requested by the Chief of Staff or Executive Staff Director
J	5 workdays or as requested by the Secretary
K	5 to 10 workdays
S	5 workdays or fewer
W	5 workdays

(2) Standard Timeline Exceptions.

(a) Letters from legislators are always Instruction Code A or F assignments and always require a draft letter for the Secretary's signature. The Secretary requires that all letters from legislators will have a due date of five days or fewer. Contact needs to be made with the legislator's office within 48 hours of receipt of the assignment and an update provided to Executive Staff.

(b) Assignments from the Secretary frequently have a due date less than the standard timeline. Occasionally, a request from the Secretary will require a change in an established due date. Executive Staff will notify the office preparing the assignment as soon as possible and provide specific instructions for completing the assignment.

5-3. Extensions. Every effort should be made to complete the assignment by the due date to ensure the writer receives a timely response. If you cannot complete an assignment by the due date, request an extension from Executive Staff through the correspondence liaison in your unit. Extensions may be granted in special circumstances, but:

a. Extensions are rarely given on assignments from the Governor's Office.

b. Extensions are not normally given on special requests from the Secretary.

c. Assignments frequently arrive with a due date that is established by an outside agency. Executive Staff sets a due date to ensure that the outside agency's due date can be met. If that date cannot be met, the preparing office must contact the outside agency to determine if the due date can be extended. If the outside agency agrees, the correspondence liaison will contact Executive Staff and provide the outside agency's new due date. Executive Staff and the liaison will set a new Office of the Secretary due date. The liaison will provide written notification to Executive Staff by email link from the issue, and Executive Staff will confirm the new due date by email link.

5-4. Follow-up. Sometimes an assignment will need follow-up after a response has been sent to the writer. With rare exception, the original assignment will be closed, and a new assignment will be made. The correspondence liaison will normally be notified by telephone call or email that additional work is required. The liaison will also be informed of any special instructions and the new due date.

5-5. Incorrect or Misdirected Assignments.

a. In the event you receive an assignment that belongs to another office or cannot be answered by your office, email link Executive Staff immediately and explain the problem. Executive Staff will provide guidance and, if appropriate, will request the assignment be returned to the Office of the Secretary. In all instances, an email link and confirmation from Executive Staff is required.

b. Do not close the issue or forward any assignments to another office.

Chapter 6

PROCESSING EMAIL AND SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

6-1. Purpose. This chapter describes the procedures for responding to email and special assignments.

6-2. Incoming Email. The Department receives email from several sources:

a. Special Requests from the Governor's Office.

(1) Individuals within the Governor's Office will request Executive Staff to take specific action on email they receive. These requests will be assigned through DCFTracker by Executive Staff to the appropriate office.

(2) EOG may ask for a follow-up report on the issue, and an outline of the action taken by the Department. This will be reflected in special instructions "Executive Staff to update EOG."

b. Special Requests from the Secretary. Any request for action made by the Secretary will be sent to Executive Staff for assignment and tracking.

(1) Once received, email is reviewed, input into DCFTracker, and assigned by Executive Staff to an Assistant Secretary, Program Director, Circuit Administrator, or Office of the Secretary Director for a response on behalf of the Secretary.

(a) The source name will be *Secretary* _____.

(b) The individual who contacted the Secretary will be listed as a related person.

(2) Executive Staff will provide updates to the Secretary and EOG as requested.

6-3. Preparing Responses.

a. Email responses are based on the *Plain Language Guide* that is available on the Department's and Executive Staff's websites.

b. Addresses and Salutations. Most email will be responded to via email. Follow the same procedures for salutation as in paragraph 1-5. No inside address should be used on email.

c. Openings and Closings.

(1) When responding to Governor's email, begin with: *Thank you for your (month/day) email to Governor Scott regarding . . . Governor Scott asked me to respond to you on his behalf.*

(2) When responding to email on behalf of the Secretary, begin with: *Thank you for your (month/day) email to Secretary _____ regarding . . . The Secretary asked me to respond to you on his behalf.*

(3) In the closing, provide the name, title, and telephone number (including area code) of an appropriate person who can be contacted if the writer needs more information or has questions.

6-4. Style and Content.

a. Follow the same procedures as in paragraphs 1-7, 1-8, and 1-10.

b. If more than one office or Department will be responding to the same email, indicate in your response that additional information will be provided by another office. Refer the writer to other resources when appropriate.

c. Your response should always be a new message.

(1) Do not forward back the writer's original message.

(2) If you attach or include information you receive from another source, delete any unnecessary information – only send information relevant to the request.

(3) Do not show copies in the cc line unless necessary. Copies to others should be in the blind copy, *bcc*, line.

d. A response to email should usually be made by email. Occasionally, however, the most appropriate response is a telephone call or a written response sent through the mail. This is left to the discretion of the office responding to the writer.

6-5. Tone. Follow the same procedures as in paragraph 1-11.

6-6. Responding to Complaints. Follow the same procedures as in paragraph 1-12.

6-7. Response Level.

a. For Governor's email assignments, EOG has asked that all responses made on behalf of the Governor be made at the highest level possible.

b. Special Requests from EOG. Level of response will vary depending on issue and action requested by EOG

(1) If a direct reply is requested, this should be made from the highest possible level within the assigned office.

(2) A draft response for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Chief of Staff, or the Executive Staff Director may be requested. These will generally also include a request for a report.

c. A draft response may be requested on special requests from the Secretary. These responses will be sent from the Office of the Secretary.

6-8. Courtesy Copies. Do not copy Executive Staff on any email responses, unless you are instructed to do so.

6-9. Due Dates.

a. All Governor's email that requires a response should be responded to in three to five workdays. The expectation is that they will be completed in a reasonable amount of time.

b. Special requests will reflect the desire of the Governor's Office or Executive Staff Director, as appropriate, and a due date will be assigned in DCFTTracker. Generally, the office will be given five business days or less for direct reply and draft responses.

c. Special requests from the Secretary will reflect the desire of the Secretary.

6-10. Confidential Information.

a. Confidential information should not be sent by email unless you are absolutely sure only the intended person will receive the information and that the individual is authorized to receive the information. If you are not sure – don't send it by email.

b. You may want to respond with general information and ask the writer to call, come in, or send a letter through regular mail, if appropriate.

c. Just as with any other correspondence, if you are not sure that the person receiving the information has a legal right to the requested information, check with your legal office.

6-11. Public Records. Email is a public record and is subject to the same laws, rules, and regulations as hard copy documents – Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, the Public Records Law.

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY:

(Signed original copy on file)

KRISS VALLESE
Executive Staff Director

SUMMARY OF REVISED, DELETED OR ADDED MATERIAL

The names and titles used in this operating procedure have been changed. In addition, updates were made to reflect changes in the processing of the Governor's and Secretary's correspondence.

GUIDELINE FOR PREPARING OR REVIEWING LETTERS FOR THE SECRETARY, DEPUTY SECRETARY, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES, CHIEF OF STAFF, OR EXECUTIVE STAFF DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

1. **STATIONERY** – Submit drafts for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, the Chief of Staff, or Executive Staff Director on plain white paper, single-spaced.
2. **FONT TYPE** – Arial in 12 point.
3. **DATE** – Do not date drafts for signature by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, the Chief of Staff, or the Executive Staff Director.
4. **FORMS OF ADDRESS** – Follow guidelines in this operating procedure or *The Gregg Reference Manual, Tenth Edition*. All elected officials are addressed as *The Honorable* . . .
5. **COURTESY TITLES** – (Mr., Ms., Mrs.,) Be sure to use these for people who don't have a professional title.
6. **SALUTATION AND FORMAT** – Use a formal salutation and block style (all parts of the letter begin at the left margin). Side margins should be the same width; 1.25" is standard, but 1" may be used if needed to keep a letter on one page, and wider side margins should be used for short letters. Top and bottom margins should also be equal to frame and balance the letter on the page.
7. **SPACING** – Between parts of the letter (inside address and salutation, etc.) -- follow standard format: three blank lines after the date, two blank lines after the address block, one blank line between each paragraph; four blank lines in the signature block, and one blank line after the signature before enclosures or copies (cc:). The format for drafts prepared for the Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, and Executive Staff Director is identical to the format required for the Secretary.
8. **PARAGRAPH SIZE** – Opening and closing paragraphs should be short -- ideally four lines; others should be kept to about eight lines or fewer.
9. **CLOSING** – See draft online.
10. **SIGNATURE BLOCK** – Begin at the left margin:

Sincerely,

Insert Secretary Name
Secretary

NOTE: Use the same format for the Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, the Chief of Staff, or Executive Staff Director.

11. **TYPIST'S INITIALS** – Do not use typist's initials.
12. **CAPITALIZATION** – Follow the rules in *The Gregg Reference Manual, Tenth Edition* and the guidelines included in this operating procedure, Appendix B.

13. **PUNCTUATION** – Follow the rules in *The Gregg Reference Manual, Tenth Edition*.

14. **ENVELOPES** – Do not enclose envelopes with drafts or letters.

15. **CONTENT**

a. Be sure the tone is courteous, and written in a conversational style (as if you were talking to the writer). Use plain language.

b. Be accurate, brief, clear and concise (the ABCs of good business letter writing). Use specific language and commonly used words. Avoid irrelevant information, unnecessary words, big words, and program or bureaucratic jargon.

c. Respond to all issues raised in the incoming letter. When responding to complaints, talk to the complainant whenever possible and appropriate and try to resolve the problem before preparing the response.

16. **MENTION THE DATE OF INCOMING LETTER** – When writing to someone who handles many letters (public officials, legislators, etc.), identify the date of the letter to which you are responding: *Thank you for your April 13 letter regarding . . .*

17. **WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE, DEPENDING ON THE SUBJECT MATTER** – The writer should know that they can contact the Department for further assistance or information. For citizens or client services issues, give a staff contact, such as *“If you have any other questions or concerns, please call (if you only give a telephone number) or contact (if you give a telephone number and an address), name, title, who can be reached at telephone number (include the area code).”* For responses to elected officials, add a sentence such as *“If I may provide further assistance, please let me know.”*, in addition to providing their staff with a contact.

18. **SUBMITTING VIA DCFTRACKER** – Send the letter to the Office of the Secretary as an attachment in the issue through DCFTracker using the .doc (WORD) format.

19. **REVIEW FOLDER:**

Right side of folder: The draft letter for the Secretary's signature and enclosures.

Left side: If the folder contains an assignment, provide a copy of the letter and/or document generating the letter.

Front of folder: Attach a printout of the issue screen and the audit trail. All necessary approvals must be included before submitting to the Secretary for approval or signature.

GUIDELINE FOR PREPARING OR REVIEWING GOVERNOR'S DRAFTS

Letters for the Governor's signature to people who need services from our Department should express empathy with the writer, even though it may not be possible to provide the requested assistance or resolve the person's problem. Be sure to explore all state and community services that may be able to help.

1. **STATIONERY AND FORMAT** – Prepare letters for the Governor's signature on plain white paper, single-spaced. Governor Scott uses the standard modified block format. Paragraphs are indented. The signature block begins six tabs from the left margin. Do not date the draft.

2. **FONT TYPE** – The Governor's Office uses Arial 12.

3. **DATE** – No date is necessary.

4. **CONTENT**

a. If the writer has requested help in obtaining services from our Department, get in touch with the writer to see if we can provide assistance. The letter should reference any assistance already provided. Whenever possible, try to resolve the person's problem before completing the response. If the writer's address is a Post Office box and the person has no telephone, please send a letter asking the person to write or call a worker. Indicate in the Governor's draft that this has been done and explain why (no telephone or address).

b. When responding to a letter of complaint, talk to the complainant whenever possible and appropriate. Discuss the person's issues and attempt to resolve them before preparing the reply.

c. In the response, always include the name, title, and telephone number (including area code) of the worker who has been asked to handle the writer's request so the writer knows whom to call.

d. Be sure to respond to all issues raised by the writer.

e. Be sure the tone is warm and friendly, unless you believe that this tone is not appropriate; e.g., the writer is suspected of child abuse or some other criminal act. Write in a conversational style and avoid bureaucratic language. Follow the ABCs of good business letter writing.

5. **BEGIN GOVERNOR'S DRAFTS WITH AN APPROPRIATE OPENING LIKE:**

Thank you for your (date) letter regarding . . . or

Thank you for writing to request my help with . . . or

Thank you for writing to share your concerns about . . .

6. **SALUTATION** – Always use a formal salutation.

Dear Mr. Smith:

7. **CLOSING** – See draft online.

8. **SIGNATURE BLOCK** – Begins six tabs from the left margin.

Sincerely,

Insert Governor Name

(Do not put Governor below his name.)

9. **SENDING DRAFTS VIA DCFTRACKER** – Send the letter to the Office of the Secretary as an attachment in the issue through DCFTTracker using the .doc (WORD) format.

10. **REVIEW FOLDER**

Right side: The draft and background report, if included.

Left side: A copy of the incoming assignment and a disk containing the draft in Word.

Front of folder: Attach a printout of the issue screen and the approval trail. All necessary approvals must be included before submitting to the Secretary for approval.

CAPITALIZATION GUIDELINES

Acts & Bills:	The Older Americans Act; but the act. Senate Bill 217; but the bill.
Boards:	Leon County Board of County Commissioners; but the board of county commissioners.
Cabinet:	The Florida Cabinet; the Cabinet; Cabinet member.
Councils:	Adoption Advisory Council; but the council.
Courts:	Except for the Supreme Court, capitalize only the full formal title of the court: Circuit Court of Appeal, First Circuit; but the Circuit court of appeal. The Florida Supreme Court; the Supreme Court.
Department:	Capitalize when referring to our Department.
Circuit/Region:	Capitalize only when referring to a specific circuit or region: Circuit 10; but the circuit.
Federal:	Capitalize in formal names only: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Register; but federal government, federal regulations, federal court.
Legislature:	Capitalize with or without a state name if a specific reference is clear: the Florida Legislature, our Legislature has adjourned. Lowercase when used generically: Many state legislatures are in session now.
Organizations:	Capitalize the full name of organizations: The Florida Medical Association; but the association.
State:	Capitalize in formal names only: Florida State University; but state of Florida, the state.
Titles:	Capitalize formal titles directly before or after a name: Governor John Doe; John Doe, Governor.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

All state and federal Cabinet members and **elected** public officials are addressed as "The Honorable."

1. State Officials

Governor

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
PL 05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable Jennifer Carroll
Lieutenant Governor
PL 05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Lt. Governor Carroll:

The Florida Cabinet

The Honorable Kurt S. Browning
Secretary of State
PL 02 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary: or
Dear Secretary Browning:

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
PL 01 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1050

Dear Mr. Attorney General: or
Dear Ms. Bondi:

Appropriate salutations for agency heads:

Dear Secretary (or other title) _____:

Dear Ms. or Mr. _____: (except where professional titles apply)

2. Florida Legislators

As a rule, use the Tallahassee address for legislators during the legislative session and their business addresses in their Circuits between sessions. However, correspondence on legislative issues to the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and chair of major committees should go to the Tallahassee address at all times.

Leadership

The Honorable Mike Haridopolos
President of the Florida Senate
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Dear Mr. President:

The Honorable Dean Cannon
Speaker
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Committee Chairmen (for correspondence related to committee matters)

Legislators make requests as an individual senator and representative and as members of various legislative committees. Responses to legislators are addressed accordingly. For example, one letter may be addressed to *The Honorable John M. Smith, Senator, Circuit 150*, and another letter may be addressed to *The Honorable John M. Smith, Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families*.

Dear Senator Storms:

Dear Representative Anderson:

Judiciary (chief justice and justices of the Florida Supreme Court)

The Honorable Charles T. Canady
Chief Justice
Florida Supreme Court
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1927

The Honorable R. Fred Lewis
Justice
Florida Supreme Court
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1927

Dear Chief Justice:

Dear Justice Lewis:

3. Federal Officials**Samples**

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Joe Biden
Vice President
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. President:

Dear Mr. Vice President:

NOTE: Although federal level cabinet members are appointed, not elected, they are addressed as
"The Honorable . . ."

4. Florida Congressional Delegation**United States Senators**

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
B40A Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0903

The Honorable Bill Nelson
United States Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0904

Dear Senator Rubio:

Dear Senator Nelson:

United States House of Representatives

Use the following form of address for all. The Zip Code + Four should be used for mailing. The basic Zip Code for all is 20515. The + Four code is 09 plus the representative's Circuit number:

Sample

The Honorable Steve Southerland
U.S. House of Representatives
1229 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515-0902

Dear Congressman Southerland:

A complete listing of legislators may be found at *www.leg.state.fl.us* and *www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/Legislative.shtml*.

SAMPLES, TEMPLATES, AND GUIDES

For a complete list of letter samples, report templates, and correspondence guides, please visit the Executive Staff Intranet website at: <http://ewww/os/executive-staff/correspondence.shtml>