

CHAPTER I. CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM

1-1 Purpose.

This chapter contains information on how letters and memorandums are written and controlled for general, secretarial, White House, and congressional correspondence.

- A. For details on preparing letters, see Chapter II.
- B. For details on preparing memorandums, see Chapter III.
- C. For details on preparing secretarial correspondence, other than congressional correspondence, see Chapter IV.
- D. For details on preparing White House correspondence, see Chapter V.
- E. For details on preparing congressional correspondence, see Chapter VI.

1-2 Use.

Use of this handbook is mandatory departmentwide. All prior versions are obsolete.

- A. Correspondence may not be prepared contrary to the procedures set forth in this handbook.
- B. The originator and concurring/reviewing officials may not impose their personal style preferences over the handbook standards nor return correspondence for retyping to reflect personal preferences.
- C. This handbook presents departmental policies and procedures for processing correspondence. For internal procedures consult your correspondence unit or point of contact for correspondence.

1-3 Policies for Originators.

HUD's policies for correspondence originators are to:

- A. Answer as much incoming correspondence as possible informally.
 - 1. Use the telephone or email to save time and reduce the document preparation workload.
 - 2. Do not use the telephone or email to answer incoming correspondence which:
 - a. Would affect proposed or existing HUD policies.
 - b. Must be reviewed by, or coordinated with, other offices.
 - 3. Keep telephone calls and emails short, courteous, and to the point.

4. Always make a record of calls used to answer incoming correspondence on a Telephone Inquiry/Response, form HUD-2029. (See Appendix A for a sample of this form.) Always make a copy of the email for the file.
5. If the information requested is available on the Internet, refer the customer to the website. Send only hud.gov website links or other public website addresses to the public. When referring to a website address in the body of a letter or email response, underline the website address. Do not set the address out in any other way; for example, by bolding or parentheses.

B. Form Letters.

Develop and use form letters to respond to requests for publications, blank forms, or other printed material when the same information is requested often. (See Exhibit 1-1 for a sample letter.)

C. Types of Responses to Controlled Correspondence.

1. Acknowledgment Letter. Lets the sender know that their letter was received and will be answered soon. Prepare an acknowledgment when no information can be obtained by the deadline.
2. Interim Letter. A partial response is prepared when some, but not all, of the information is available by the deadline.
3. Final Letter. A full response.

D. Multiple Addressees. Prepare letters using one of the following:

1. An original for each addressee;
2. In response to incoming correspondence with multiple signatures, a single reply to the first person who signed the letter. In the first paragraph, state that the reply is also intended for the other addressees; or
3. In response to petitions or resolutions, a single reply addressed to the person who submitted the petition or resolution, or to the first person who signed it. In the body of the letter, mention the other addressees as a group.

E. Congressional Correspondence.

1. Congressional Constituent Correspondence. When a constituent writes to HUD as well as a Member of Congress on the same subject and the Member refers the letter to HUD:
 - a. Ensure that responses to the constituent and the Member of Congress convey the same information;
 - b. Reference the constituent's letter to HUD in the response to

the Member of Congress; and

- c. Do not reference the correspondence that was forwarded by the Member of Congress in the response to the constituent's letter to HUD.

2. Congressional Multiple Addressees.

- a. When initiating a letter to more than one Member of Congress, prepare an original for each addressee.
- b. When responding to an incoming letter signed by more than one Member of Congress, prepare an original of the response addressed individually to each Member.

F. Opening Text of Letters. Opening sentences influence the tone of correspondence which should display a courteous attitude and attempt to establish rapport with the recipient of the correspondence. Good examples of frequently used opening text are provided below.

1. "Thank you for your letter of [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]." The date of the incoming letter should be included in the opening sentence because this information establishes clear timelines.
2. For undated correspondence, use "Thank you for your letter which was received on [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]."
3. "This is in further response to your letter of [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]."
4. For correspondence addressed to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary and referred for direct reply, use: "On behalf of [Secretary] [Deputy Secretary] [last name], thank you for your letter of [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]."
5. For White House correspondence, see Chapter V, for opening text examples.
6. For correspondence addressed to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary and controlled for the signature of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, use: "On behalf of [Secretary] [Deputy Secretary] [last name], thank you for your letter of [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]."
7. If a direct reply to the constituent is requested by a Member of Congress, use: "[Senator] [Representative] [full name] has asked the Department of Housing and Urban Development to reply to your letter of [date], [concerning...]; [expressing...]; [supporting...]; [on behalf of...]."

G. Plural Pronouns. Use "the Department" or "HUD" instead of

"we," "our," or "us." (e.g., "The Department has intensified its focus on monitoring and program compliance." instead of "We have intensified our focus on monitoring and program compliance.")

- H. Acronyms. Acronyms are good shorthand devices; however, avoid overusing them. An acronym must be spelled out the first time it is used. (e.g., Office of Management and Budget (OMB)).

Exception: Never put the acronym HUD in parentheses after referring to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The use of HUD, Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the Department is appropriate throughout the letter. A list of commonly used acronyms may be accessed in hud@work under Resources.

- I. Correspondence More Than 60 Days Old. If the correspondence is more than 60 days old, do not refer to it as a "recent letter." Instead, use "letter."

- J. Gender-Biased Language. Avoid using gender-biased language. Use the genderless "one," "person," "individual," or the plural "their" in place of gender specific nouns and pronouns when making a general reference to a person.

- K. Enclosures. In the text of letters, identify any accompanying material. Multiple enclosures should be tabbed for easy reference. An enclosure too bulky to accompany the letter may be sent as a separate package. State in the text that it is being sent under separate cover.

- L. Attachments. In the text of memorandums, identify any accompanying material. Multiple attachments should be tabbed for easy reference.

- M. Closing Text of Letters. Closing sentences are also influential in establishing good rapport. Good examples of frequently used closing text are provided below.

1. "Thank you for your interest in the Department's programs."
2. "I hope the information provided is helpful."
3. "I appreciate your interest in (name of program)."
4. "I hope this information is helpful in responding to your constituent." (congressional correspondence)
5. When appropriate, in the last paragraph, include the name, Area Code, telephone number, and extension, as well as the email address, of someone who can answer questions about the content.

- N. Concurrences. Keep concurrences to a minimum and route correspondence to concurring officials only. Obtain concurrences when the content impacts another office or the ACORN control ticket indicates a concurrence is required.

- O. Content. Outgoing correspondence must:

1. Ensure that the concerns expressed in the incoming correspondence are thoroughly addressed and questions adequately answered;
2. Be concise and to the point;
3. Be written in plain English, not technical jargon;
4. Accurately state the Department's policies;
5. Give a good impression of HUD;
6. Present negative information in a tactful way; and
7. Be error free.

1-4 Control of Correspondence.

The Department uses the Automated Correspondence On-Line Response Network (ACORN) to control all correspondence. HUD staff in each program and field office must use ACORN to thoroughly and accurately document the status of controlled correspondence in their office. An ACORN training tutorial package, Introduction to ACORN - Presentation, is available on the Executive Secretariat website at www.hudweb.hud.gov/po/es.

A. Correspondence Units. Each Headquarters program office has a designated correspondence unit chief (CUC) or a point of contact for correspondence matters. Each field office has a designated point of contact for correspondence matters.

B. ACORN Control Ticket. The ACORN Control Ticket establishes all required information needed to appropriately handle incoming correspondence. (See Exhibit 1-2a for a sample ACORN Control Ticket and Exhibit 1-2b for guidance on How to Read an ACORN Control Ticket.)

1. For a definition of the correspondence control type, see Exhibit 1-3.

2. Correspondence Codes are used to direct mail to the proper office. The correspondence codes for all HUD employees may be found in the HUD phone book on hud@work.

C. Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act. Special requirements apply for responding to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and Privacy Act requests. All FOIA requests received in Headquarters must be forwarded immediately to the FOIA Division of the Office of General Counsel for appropriate handling. FOIA requests received in a field office must be forwarded immediately to the field office FOIA Liaison for appropriate handling.

All Privacy Act requests received in Headquarters seeking information contained in personnel records must be forwarded immediately to the Office of Human Resources for a direct

response. Inquiries on information contained in the Privacy Act Systems of Records must be forwarded immediately to the Departmental Privacy Act Officer for appropriate handling. All Privacy Act requests received in a field office must be forwarded immediately to the field office Privacy Act Officer for appropriate handling.

D. Telephone Inquiry/Response, Form HUD-2029. When the telephone is used to answer correspondence controlled by the Executive Secretariat, complete a Telephone Inquiry/Response, form HUD-2029, and forward a copy to the Executive Secretariat. (See Appendix A for a sample of the form.)

E. Email Response. When email is used to answer correspondence controlled by the Executive Secretariat, send a copy of the email response to the Executive Secretariat with the ACORN Control Number and the type of reply, interim or final, written in the upper right corner.

F. Transferring Correspondence.

1. If a program office determines that a piece of correspondence does not fall within its jurisdiction, but does fall within that of another HUD program office, the transfer is handled between the correspondence units or points of contact for correspondence and documented in the ACORN system.

2. To transfer secretarial correspondence, see Chapter IV.

3. To transfer White House correspondence, see Chapter V.

4. To transfer congressional correspondence, see Chapter VI.

G. Correspondence Change Request, Form HUD-149.

The Correspondence Change Request, form HUD-149, is used to request approval of a change in the control of a piece of correspondence such as No Action Required (NAR), an extension and new response date, a downgrade of signature level, or any other change. (See Appendix A for a sample of the form.)

When using a Correspondence Change Request, form HUD-149, complete the form in its entirety and process it through your program area correspondence unit or point of contact for correspondence who will forward the request for a decision. The program area correspondence unit or point of contact for correspondence will be notified if the request is denied or modified.

1. To request a change in the control of secretarial correspondence, see Chapter IV.

2. To request a change in the control of White House correspondence, see Chapter V.

3. To request a change in the control of congressional correspondence, see Chapter VI.

1-5 Questions.

If this handbook does not answer your questions, call your designated CUC or point of contact for correspondence. The CUC or point of contact for correspondence will call the Executive Secretariat if they cannot answer your questions.

Exhibits of a Form Letter, ACORN Control Ticket, and Correspondence Control Types

Exhibit 1-1 Sample Form Letter

Exhibit 1-2a Sample ACORN Control Ticket

Exhibit 1-2b Reading an ACORN Control Ticket

Exhibit 1-3 Definition of Correspondence Control Types

EXHIBIT 1-1
Sample Form Letter

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-3000

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR HOUSING-FEDERAL HOUSING COMMISSIONER

(Date)

Frost E. DeSnowman
President, Snow Plow, Inc.
25 Snow Flake Road
Avalanche, ND 32000+4

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for your inquiry requesting information on HUD's programs. The following information is enclosed:

___ Guide to Single Family Home Mortgage Insurance
___ Rehab a Home with HUD's Section 203(k)
___ 100 Q&As About Buying a New Home
___ Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) - Reverse
Mortgage
 X Title I Property Improvement Loans
___ Title I Manufactured Housing Fact Sheet
___ _____

A HUD-approved housing counseling agency may be able to assist you in evaluating the local housing market and determining which alternatives would best suit your needs. The counseling services are usually provided without cost to the client. You may call 1-800-XXX-XXXX or TTY 1-800-XXX-XXXX, both toll-free numbers, for assistance in locating the nearest agency.

I hope this information will be helpful to you.

P P 07/20/01 08/09/01 00 ? OPEN 07/20/01

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INFORMATION ONLY: AX-1/10139 J/10148

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Concur: J

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Analyst: EMC/SXL Contact Name: KERNS, IRIS Phone: 202 708-3182

Rep. Freq. Xref CS-311121 Xref

→ NOTES

EXHIBIT 1-2b

Reading an ACORN Control Ticket

1. TYP
Type code that identifies the type of correspondence
(See Exhibit 1-3 for a complete list of Correspondence Control Types.)
2. NUMBER
This Number is generated by the ACORN system.
3. ORIGINATOR PA **
Originator indicates the correspondence code of the office that entered the correspondence into the ACORN system.

PA ** indicates the office correspondence code being used to access the ACORN system.
4. SENDER'S INFORMATION
Date of the letter = date on the incoming correspondence
Name = name of the writer
Org = writer's organization
Title = writer's title
City = writer's city
State = writer's state

NOTE: For congressional correspondence, each Member has a special code. When the code is entered in Org field, the writer's name, title, and state field are automatically completed. If the incoming correspondence requests the response is to be sent to the district office, this will be noted in the comment field.

5. SIG. CODE

The Signature Code indicates the signature level of the person who should sign the letter.

EXHIBIT 1-2b

(continued)

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6. DATES

As Of = date the ACORN ticket was printed

HUD Receive = date correspondence was received in Executive Secretariat

Entered = date correspondence was entered in the ACORN system

Acknowledge = date an acknowledgment letter was sent to the writer

Interim = date an interim letter was sent to the writer

Reply = date a final response letter was sent to the writer

7. RE:

Short description of the subject of the correspondence and any other pertinent information and initials of the Executive Secretariat analyst who entered the correspondence into ACORN.

8. COMMENT

Special comments and/or instructions.

ACTION ASSIGNMENTS MADE - This describes items 9 through 17.

9. OFFICE ASSIGNED

Offices are identified in ACORN using the office correspondence codes.

10. OFFICE TYPE

The Office Type codes below show the responsibilities of each office.

O = Originator of the ACORN record.

P = Primary office responsible for preparing a reply or determining how to respond

to correspondence assigned for Appropriate Action.

S = Secondary office(s) receiving information copy and/or signing the reply.

C = Concurrence or clearance of correspondence.

11. RECEIVE DATE

The date is automatically generated when an office enters and/or updates correspondence in the system. ACORN generates the first date when Executive Secretariat or the program office receives

and enters the correspondence. Subsequent dates are generated when the Office Assigned receives the correspondence and accesses ACORN.

12. DUE DATE

Date by which the assigned action must be completed.

EXHIBIT 1-2b

(continued)

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13. Ex

This field shows the number of times the due date has been modified.

14. OFFICE STATUS

This field shows the progress of the correspondence as it moves through the Department. The Office Status codes are:

ASGND	=	Assigned
CLER	=	In Clearance
CLSD	=	Closed
COPY	=	Waiting Copy
CPA	=	Closed Pending Action
CWR	=	Closed Without Resolution
DPCH	=	Dispatched
FWRD	=	Action Forwarded to
INFO	=	Information
NAR	=	No Action Required
OCLER	=	Open in clearance
OPCLS	=	No Forwarding Required
OPCPY	=	Copy Required
OPEN	=	Open
REVV	=	Open for Review
RTRN	=	Returned
TRFM	=	Transfer From (used to show transfers from program offices)
TRTO	=	Transfer To (used to show transfers to program offices)

STATUS DATE

The date in this field is automatically generated when an entry is made in the Office Status field.

15. COMMENT

Brief comments may be entered in this field.

16. INFORMATION ONLY

The program office(s) listed in this field receives a copy of the correspondence for information only. This field also shows the program office room number.

17. CONCUR

This field shows the office codes of officials who must concur on the correspondence.

EXHIBIT 1-2b

(continued)

18. OTHER INFORMATION

Analyst = the first set of system-generated initials indicates the person who initially generates the information in ACORN. The second set of initials are system-generated when changes are made in the action assignment area.

Contact Name = the correspondence contact name in the program area responsible for the response.

Phone = the contact person's telephone number.

Rep. Freq. = Report Frequency - identifies how frequently the Congressional Report (Control Type CR) is issued. Valid entries for this field are listed below:

Enter:	Appears in this field:
1*	*ONE-TIME
10	TEN-YEAR
1T	ONE-TIME
4Y	FOUR-YEAR
5Y	FIVE-YEAR
AN	ANNUAL
AR	ALL-REQ
BA	BI-ANNUAL
BM	BIMONTHLY
MO	MONTHLY
OT	OTHER
QT	QUARTERLY
SA	SEMI-ANNUAL
TA	TRI-ANNUAL
WK	WEEKLY

Xref = Cross Reference - Information that relates to the current correspondence.

19. NOTES

This space is available for handwritten notes. For these handwritten notes to be available in the ACORN system they must be typed into the comment field (item 8 or 15).

EXHIBIT

1-3

Definition of Correspondence Control Types

AA Appropriate Action Correspondence (When this correspondence control type is used, the program area has the responsibility to review the correspondence and determine the appropriate action.)

AG Outgoing Correspondence Generated by Public

Affairs/Scheduling/Executive Secretariat

AI Information Only

AS Action Memoranda

CC Program Area/Office Assignment

CG Congressional

CL Cabinet Level

CR Congressional Reports

CS Controlled Correspondence

DR Action Information

EL Elected Official

FI Freedom Of Information Act Request (FOIA)

FO Field Office Correspondence Addressed to Deputy
Secretary or Secretary
(inactive)

FR Federal Register

GA Government Accounting Office

GO Government Official

HC Program Area/Office Assignment

HF Program Area/Office Assignment

HL Program Area/Office Assignment

EXHIBIT 1-3
(continued)

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HO Program Area/Office Assignment

HQ HQ Correspondence Addressed to Deputy Secretary or
Secretary

HR Program Area/Office Assignment

HS Program Area/Office Assignment

ID Information Directive

IH Deputy Secretary/Chief of Staff Concurrence (CNCR)

IK Invitations for Secretary

IP Program Area/Office Assignment
IS Information Memoranda
JA Judicial Action
JC Judicial Controlled
LA Admin Law Judge Appeals
LC Program Area/Office Assignment
LO Legal Opinion
NC Program Area/Office Assignment
NF Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)
PA Program Area/Office Assignment
PC Program Area/Office Assignment
PM Resumes and Congratulations
RW Regulatory Waivers

EXHIBIT 1-3
(continued)

3

SC Program Area/Office Assignment
SI Program Area/Office Assignment
SP Program Area/Office Assignment
SR Secretarial Report
TO Travel Order
TY Thank You Letter
WB White House Bulk (not currently used)
WF White House Field Offices
WH White House Headquarters