National Council Editorial Style Cheat Sheet

The National Council boilerplate, downloadable logos and preferred language are available in our [Media Kit](#).

Style Overview

- Our style is based on the [Associated Press Stylebook](#).
- We use the [Merriam-Webster dictionary](#).
- Use abbreviations sparingly and consistently. Define abbreviations the first time you use them, using this format: *Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).* If you don't use a term three or more times, spell it out rather than using an abbreviation. Once you've introduced an abbreviation, use it exclusively. Do not alternate between spelling a term and abbreviating it.
- We are *the National Council for Mental Wellbeing* on first mention, and *the National Council* on following mentions. Do not refer to the organization as *NCMW, NC* or *the Council*.
- Some specific word choices are part of our style. For example, we choose *mental health challenge* over *mental health disorder* when we don't know if a person has a diagnosis.
- We choose person-first language. For example: *person with depression* rather than *depressed person* or *depressive*.
- We choose nonstigmatizing language. For example: *person who uses drugs* rather than *drug abuser*.
- To check the clarity of text, consider using a [Flesch Kincaid calculator](#) or the Editor tool in Microsoft Word. (Once you're in the Editor tool, click "Document stats" under "Insights.")

CCBHCs

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic is always capitalized. It may be abbreviated as CCBHC.

Dates and Times

- The National Council expresses times in Eastern Time (ET).
- Use numerals for dates. (Do not use ordinal numbers, such as 15th.)
- If you have a specific date, abbreviate the month (except March, April, May, June and July). If you're just referencing a month or using a month/year construction, always spell it out.

Headings and Titles

In composition titles and top-level headings, capitalize all words of four or more letters and all verbs and pronouns, no matter how short (i.e., title case). In subheads, capitalize only the first letter and any proper nouns (i.e., sentence case).

Location Names

Spell out state names in text when using them in conjunction with a city, town or military base.

Numbers

- Spell out numbers under 10 and use numerals for 10 and higher. Exceptions:
  - Use numerals for percentages (2%), money ($5), scores (we won 8 to 5), ratios (1 in 5), dimensions (3 square feet, 2 inches), ages (5-year-old girl), temperatures (45 degrees), speeds (5 mph) and distances (5 miles).
  - Use numerals in headlines.
- Percentages are expressed as a numeral and the percent sign (4%).
- Use dashes in phone numbers: 202-684-7457.

People's Names

- On second mention, refer to the person by their last name. Don't use courtesy titles (such as Mr. or Ms.), except for Dr.
  - Only use Dr. after you've noted the person's credentials (PhD, MD, etc.). Do not use periods when citing credentials.
  - For example: *Amanda Smith and Joe Parks, MD, collaborated on a paper. Smith wrote the introduction, and Dr. Parks wrote the conclusion*.

- When using a job title to identify a person, capitalize it when used before their name, but not after their name. Do not capitalize a job title if you're not using it with a person's name.
  - For example: *President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia*; *Chuck Ingoglia, president and CEO*
  - For example: *The association president wanted members to vote*.

Punctuation

- The National Council uses the serial (Oxford) comma only when it adds clarity. The exception to this is in Mental Health First Aid curriculum materials.
- With some exceptions, we do not use the ampersand (&).