

Reference Guide: Communications Requirements

For all Rural Health Transformation (RHT)
Program–funded public materials

Purpose

This document is intended to assist recipients of the Washington RHT funding in complying with requirements from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Background

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), in accordance with the Stevens Amendment award terms and conditions, requires all the recipients of RHT funding to acknowledge federal funding when publicly discussing any projects or programs funded entirely or in part by the program. Intentionally public materials must comply with the Stevens Amendment, which requires a disclaimer and preapproval. **Failure to comply could result in loss of funding.**

There are different approval processes for prime recipients of the RHT award and sub-awardees. In Washington, the Health Care Authority (HCA), Department of Health (DOH), and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are the prime recipients of the RHT award.

- CMS will review prime recipient materials.
- Prime recipients (HCA/DOH/DSHS) will oversee and review their sub-awardee materials.
- Sub-awardees are expected to oversee and review materials for any further sub-awardees that receive a share of their RHT funding.
- Keep reasonable track of significant approved documents such as reports and toolkits. Ask for guidance from the HCARuralHealthTransformationProgram@hca.wa.gov.

Review process

Follow this process: Send your **final document** to your appropriate contact with the subject line “Public materials review: [project name].” PDFs are preferred. Indicate if this is a time-sensitive announcement by adding “EXPEDITE” to the subject line.

Plan for the process to take **at least one to two weeks—no turnaround time is guaranteed.**

HCA/DOH/DSHS only

Require review by CMS

- Send to HCA RHT inbox: HCARuralHealthTransformationProgram@hca.wa.gov
- Allow one to two weeks

- HCA RHT team will forward to CMS and share responses

Direct sub-awardees, contractors, and external recipients

- HCA/DOH/DSHS project officer/manager reviews and responds to sub-recipients
- Allow one to two weeks
- Wait for approval

Sub-awardees' sub-awardees, contractors, and external recipients

- Sub-awardees review materials for their sub-recipients according to their process
- Check for correct disclaimer usage
- Use the check list that follows
- Track approved documents

Check list

When reviewing RHT public materials, check that the document:

- Requires review under the Stevens Amendment (see [“What needs review”](#))
- Provides accurate information, including amounts, dates, and restrictions
- Includes an accurate Stevens Amendment disclaimer
- Avoids suggestion that CMS endorses the awardee or has a special relationship with the awardee
- Adheres to logo guidelines (request guidance if necessary)

What is the Stevens Amendment?

The Stevens Amendment is a federal requirement in the RHT Program Notice of Award (NOA) Terms and Conditions. It requires that when issuing statements, press releases, publications, requests for proposals, bid solicitations, and other documents—such as toolkits, resource guides, websites, and presentations—describing the projects or programs funded in whole or in part with Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) funds, the recipient must clearly state:

- The percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the program or project funded with federal money
- The percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program funded by nongovernmental sources

The full disclosure (percentage and dollar amounts of federal and non-federal funding) is the standard requirement. See the following section for exact language to use.

Required disclaimer language

All publications must include an acknowledgement of support, also called a **disclaimer**. Use the exact language below, selecting the version that applies to your funding structure.

If funded entirely with RHT funds

Use this **exact** disclaimer, fill in required sections

Disclaimer: This [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [is/was] supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$181,257,515.06 to the Washington State Health Care Authority with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CMS/HHS or the U.S. Government.

When you use an initialism, defining it in the first usage is best practice. If you have not previously explained what RHT, CMS, or HHS mean in the document, spell them out the first time they appear. After that, use only the initialism.

If partially funded with other non-governmental sources

Disclaimer: This [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [is/was] supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$181,257,515.06 to the Washington State Health Care Authority with XX percentage funded by CMS/HHS and \$XX amount and XX percentage funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CMS/HHS or the U.S. Government.

Condensed disclaimer for time- or character-limited formats

For formats like radio ads, podcasts, or social media (e.g., X/Twitter), a condensed funding statement may be used if paired with a clear reference to federal funding and a website where the full disclosure is available. Examples:

- Funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Learn more at [website].
- This program is supported by CMS. For full funding details, visit hca.wa.gov/rhtp.

The full disclosure must be posted on a public-facing webpage that is clearly accessible. Directly link to the webpage from the ad or post (when feasible) or spell out the webpage.

The disclaimer language must include all required elements: the **funding source** and the **percentage** and **dollar amount** of the program supported with federal funds.

Spanish-language disclaimer

For publications translated to Spanish, use this disclaimer when work is funded entirely with RHT funds:

Descargo de responsabilidad: Este [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [es/fue] financiado por los Centros de Servicios de Medicare y Medicaid (CMS) del Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (HHS) como parte de premio de asistencia financiera por un total de \$181,257,515.06 otorgado al Health Care Authority del Estado de Washington, con financiación del 100% por parte de CMS/HHS. El contenido es responsabilidad del autor y no representa necesariamente las opiniones oficiales ni constituye un aval por parte de CMS/HHS ni del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

When work is partially funded with other non-governmental sources, use this Spanish disclaimer:

Descargo de responsabilidad: Este [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [es/fue] financiado por los Centros de Servicios de Medicare y Medicaid (CMS) del Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (HHS) como parte de premio de asistencia financiera por un total de \$181,257,515.06 otorgado al Health Care Authority del Estado de Washington, con financiación del X% por parte de CMS/HHS y financiación del \$XX y X% por fondo(s) no gubernamentales. El contenido es responsabilidad del autor y no representa necesariamente las opiniones oficiales ni constituye un aval por parte de CMS/HHS ni del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

What needs review

CMS or HCA/DOH/DSHS must review any planned external public communications that use RHT Program funds and describe the projects or programs funded in whole or in part with HHS funds. This includes written or scripted public-facing material.

Materials requiring review

- Publications that report results from or describe information obtained through this award
- Any external formal presentation of any report or statistical or analytical material based on information obtained through this award (papers, articles, professional publications, speeches, and testimony)
- External presentation-related material, such as abstracts, PowerPoint presentations or other slide decks, posters, and videos
- All public materials specific to the program, including, but not limited to, brochures, recruitment materials, informational materials, advertisements, website copy, website pages, videos, and op-ed articles

Indicate urgency:

- Any press release or media advisory concerning the outcome of activities supported through this award
- All media interviews, media requests, releases of information, filming, and broadcasts

Also requires review:

- Statements, requests for proposals, and bid solicitations
- Websites and website copy
- Toolkits and resource guides
- Training materials
- Public relations pieces
- Radio ads, podcasts, and social media posts (these are considered “statements” and “other documents” describing federally funded programs)
- Press releases drafted by the state (written and scheduled in advance)
- Detailed agendas for public meetings

Webinars: If the slides have been approved and the webinar is being recorded, acknowledge the disclaimer in the webinar.

Post-award requirement: For one year after completion of the project, the recipient must continue to submit for review and comment all publications, presentations, and communications resulting from this award or based on information obtained through this award, including papers, articles, professional publications, PowerPoint presentations, posters, speeches, announcements, and testimony in any format, including digital technology.

What does **not** need CMS review

Per the NOA, specifically excluded from the review and comment process are:

- Internal communications (e.g., emails between state agencies and funding recipients)
- Verbal communications
- Responses to media inquiries (press inquiries that come into the states for their reply)
- Internal presentations, informal discussions, class lectures, and informal meetings and conversations with community leaders

However: if an internal presentation or slide deck is later repurposed for a public event, it will need to be submitted in advance for CMS review.

Funding percentage calculation

Per the Notice of Award (NOA) for the RHT Program, it is the policy of HHS that the recipient must communicate to CMS how the dollar amounts and funding percentages are calculated, including whether indirect costs have been incorporated. Submit this information to CMS for review and comment for each applicable type of result/accomplishment according to the timeline outlined in the [materials requiring review section](#) of this document.

Final progress report for award recipients

Official guidance states that one copy of each publication resulting from work performed under the HHS collaborative agreement must accompany the final progress report. We recommend each approving entity retains a record of approved documents to be available if requested.

Logo usage

Only the state is authorized to use the Washington RHT Program logo on RHT Program materials. See the CMS RHTP State Logo Guidance to learn more.

Learn more

- [Public Law 115-31, Division H, Title V, Section 505](#), page 428
- [CMS FAQ](#) p. 4 IV #2
- [DOL Stevens Amendment Desk Aid](#)

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