CMS **Brand Strategy & Graphic Standards** Guide

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Introduction

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) strives to provide our audiences with a consistent communication and brand experience. This document provides visual identity guidelines to achieve this goal.

CMS interacts with different audiences in different ways—providers and other stakeholders who participate in our programs know and recognize CMS as an Agency, while consumers know and trust us through our health care programs. We communicate consistent, accurate, and usable information when, how, and where people need it to take advantage of CMS program benefits and comply with CMS rules.

All of our audiences experience CMS and its programs through our messages, information, customer service, and visual identity. These guidelines aid in making that experience positive and consistent.

Brand Architecture

CMS is part of the larger family of Agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services. Our branding strategy, messages and visual identity are organized in a way that acknowledges our place in the Department, and works collaboratively with the DHHS Identity Program.

CMS must be strategic around the positioning and creation of its unique programmatic, organizational, and short-term project-based brands:

Programmatic brands are tied to strong independent programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and the Health Insurance Marketplace®. They have a strong direct relationship with customers who directly benefit from the programs. These brands are often used independently of CMS because they're easily recognized and understood by our customers.

Organizational units serve CMS and must be tied closely to CMS to strengthen and reinforce the CMS brand. Visit page 12 for more information on organizational branding guidelines.

Short-term brands mostly represent time-limited initiatives tied to one or more independent programs. An example would be a 4-month initiative with a specific color palette and wordmark.

This Guide outlines visual identity standards for the CMS brand and provides communications resources to guide other activities.

Tone of Voice

CMS communications should always sound the same. Our language can change to reflect an audience-appropriate level of content (partner, provider, consumer, etc.), but our tone of voice (TOV) should be consistent across all media and products and across CMS programs. Users should have the same CMS experience whether they visit our websites, call a toll-free line, get a notice in the mail, see a television commercial, talk to a caseworker, or read a CMS publication. The tone of voice should be consistent whether it's CMS speaking, or one of CMS' programs (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Health Insurance Marketplace®).

We know that people want CMS to be reassuring, helpful, stable, and trustworthy. We know they value the ideas of fairness and accuracy. Our goal is to create a consistent, rewarding experience that encourages commitment to CMS as the official source for program information. For more specific guidance, view the **Guidelines for Effective Writing** on **CMS.gov**.

Logo

While some people think of a logo as a brand, it's really just one small part of the overall visual identity. The CMS logo should never be recreated. If you believe your program or initiative needs its own distinctive brand, send a request to **MultimediaServices@cms.hhs.gov**.

Full Color Logo

The logo is composed of the letters CMS and a two-color graphic image. The preferred use in most cases also includes the words "Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services."

Reverse Logo

If you are not using color, use black. You can also use a negative logo, which is reversed out in white. Make sure you use a background color that contrasts sufficiently with the logo.

Size and Placement

120 pixels

Minimum Size

The CMS logo should be no less than 120 pixels wide so that it is legible. An option without the agency signature is available for templates where space is limited, such as business cards and social media banners.

Bleed-Edge Indicator

The logo should not bleed off any edge. It should sit at least 1/8 inch inside any item's edges.

Clear Space Allocation

The clear space around the CMS logo prevents any nearby text, image, or illustration from interfering with it. Any type of graphic components must be at least "x" distance from the logo, where "x" is the height of the "C" in the logo.

Incorrect Use

The CMS logo must be used correctly. Deviation from the guidelines can weaken the impact of the CMS identity and program branding efforts.

Do not alter the position of the elements.

Do not alter or change the typeface.

Do not combine with other elements to create a new logo, symbol, etc.

Do not rotate.

Do not stretch, distort, or otherwise alter the aspect ratio.

Do not add texture or alter the color.

Use of CMS Logo with DHHS Logo

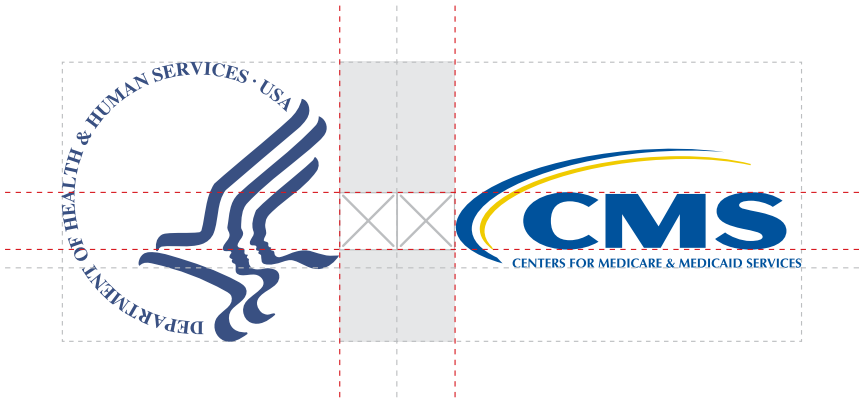
If the CMS logo and DHHS logo are used on the same page, the DHHS logo must be more prominent in the layout. When placed side by side, the DHHS logo and CMS logo should follow a set relationship, referred to as a lockup.

DHHS and CMS logo lockup

The DHHS logo must always be placed to the left.

Spacing

There should be a minimum of two "X's" between the logos, where "X" is the height of the letters CMS. The bottom should align with the beak and tail of the HHS logo.



Reverse lockup

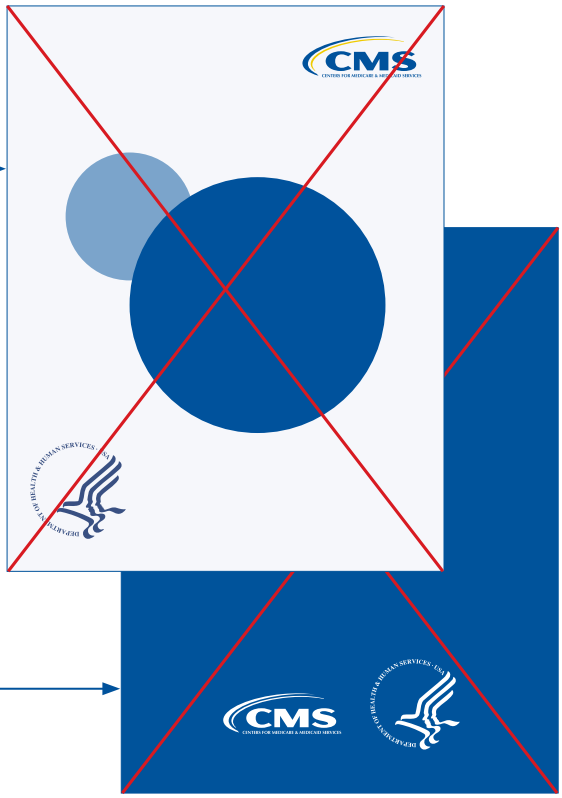
Examples of Acceptable Use

This is a **good** example of DHHS logo and CMS logo placement since the DHHS logo is more prominently placed on the upper right side of the cover layout.

The DHHS logo appears to the left of the CMS logo when placed side by side, and follows the appropriate spacing guidelines.

Examples of Unacceptable Use

This is a **bad** example of DHHS logo and CMS logo placement. The CMS logo should be less prominent than the DHHS logo.



Avoid the improper placement of logos. Here the CMS logo is on the left and DHHS logo is on the right. The DHHS logo must always be placed to the left of CMS logo when side by side.

Using the CMS Name Line

CMS encourages the use of the full CMS logo on all communications products. For situations where the name line is used without the logo, it should always appear in the official brand typeface, Optima bold, maintaining consistent spacing and capitalization:

All letters are uppercase in at least an 8 point font in **Optima bold** with an ampersand (&) instead of "and."

English and Spanish name lines are available for download in CMS blue and black, as well as CMS gold and white for dark backgrounds.

English Name Line Example

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

Spanish Name Line Example

CENTROS DE SERVICIOS DE MEDICARE Y MEDICAID

Branding Centers, Offices, and other Organizational Units

The CMS logo is the Agency's primary organizational brand. Agency components within CMS should use their respective CMS organizational branded logo developed for their unit.

Individual Offices/Centers/Regions that had developed and may currently be using a consistent and recognized individual mark should only use the CMS logo. The Office of Communications/Division of Multimedia Services will use only the DHHS logo and CMS logo in the materials it develops for CMS components. Organizational levels below the component level (e.g., groups or divisions) should not use any subordinate organization logos.

Component Logo Example

The component name will appear centered beneath the logo in blue, all caps.

Note: the component name should not use an ampersand in place of "and."

Branding Items within CMS or HHS Initiatives

There are times when CMS develops products or other items as part of a long-term Department level initiative or project, where the initiative has its own specific set of branding guidelines.

Examples of this are the Birthing-Friendly Designation and the Million Hearts campaign. When this is the case, the initiative's branding guidelines may supersede the rules and procedures contained in this guide. If this is the case with your product, the CMS Office of Communications can help you determine the guidelines to follow.

The Office of Communications won't approve the development or use of a unique logo for new CMS-level initiatives that are expected to be short-term or of limited scope. If you believe the development of a special logo is warranted, send a request to **MultimediaServices@cms.hhs.gov** and the Office of Communications will make this determination.

Branding Internal CMS Initiatives

There are occasions when components need to communicate and promote information across the entire employee base. These situations typically involve office, consortium, or center-level sponsored programs or initiatives that are temporary in nature and affect the majority of CMS staff members. Logo development for such programs undergoes individual evaluation on a case-by-case basis. CMS Life serves as the agency's internal brand identity, and all new logos must adhere to the established brand guidelines available on the CMS intranet. The evaluation process considers the scope of employee impact from the program and the duration of the initiative. When OC determines that a request fails to meet the established criteria, the Division of Multimedia Services will decline to create a new logo for that particular initiative.

Branding Items Produced by CMS Contractors

Presentation slides, publications, videos and other external-facing deliverables produced by third-party organizations under contract to CMS should be branded only as CMS and/or DHHS products, using the CMS identity mark according to the rules listed above. Third-party contractor logos should NOT be included on these products, although the contractor may be acknowledged by name for their input or support at the appropriate point, e.g, a closing slide, appendix, or notes page. Acknowledgement should not be included in a title slide or page. CMS contractors are prohibited from creating logos and/or brands for initiatives without the permission and involvement of the CMS Office of Communications. Send requests to **MultimediaServices@cms.hhs.gov**.

Permission: License Agreement Policy and Procedures

You must get approval to use CMS logos or brand marks. Once you have a sample of your product, e-mail **Logos@cms.hhs.gov** at least two weeks before production for approval. Approval requests are effective for the initial production period (for tangible products) or 6 months (for advertising).

If you have a contractor, partner, or other stakeholder who wants to use any element of our identity program, they must have a licensing agreement with CMS. Some contractors - like Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) and Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) - have license agreements incorporated into their CMS contracts.

To get a licensing agreement, send a request with the following information to **Logos@cms.hhs.gov**:

- Name and address of requestor
- CMS contact name and number
- Project name
- Which identity program element(s) you want to use
- Why you want to use it
- How long you want to use it

You can't use Agency logos to promote private for-profit entities or to promote one service over another within CMS programs. Products with CMS logos on them generally should not be sold for profit. Only CMS and partners authorized to do so may use the CMS identity materials on products they distribute. In addition, these products must follow the National Gifts provision, which states that the gifts may be offered to the public as long as the gifts are of nominal value and are provided whether or not the individual is enrolled in a CMS program.

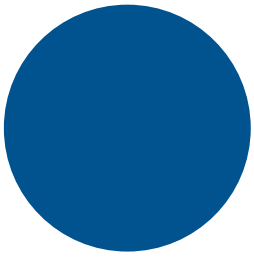
Be aware that our logos are protected by law. For example, Section 1140 of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. §1320b–10, prohibits the use of the Department and Agency names, acronyms, stationery, cards, logos/marks and other identity materials in a manner which would convey the false impression that such item is approved, endorsed, or authorized by CMS or DHHS, or that such person has some connection with, or authorization from CMS or DHHS. For more information on prohibition of misuse, visit **SSA.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title11/1140.htm**. If you notice unauthorized use of the CMS mark, e-mail **Logos@cms.hhs.gov**.

Color Palette

The CMS brand is made up of two primary colors and a secondary accent color. The two primary colors are used in the CMS logo. The secondary color complements the primary colors and adds more visual interest to layouts. The secondary color is also used in other internal and external CMS brands as a way to tie them together.

Primary Colors

CMS Blue



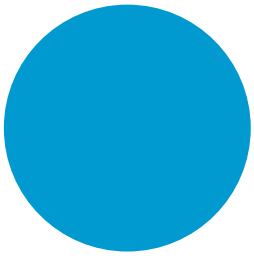
CMYK 99/74/16/3
RGB 1/83/144
HEX #015390

CMS Gold

CMYK 5/16/88/0
RGB 244/206/59
HEX #f3ce3b

Secondary Color

CMS Bright Blue

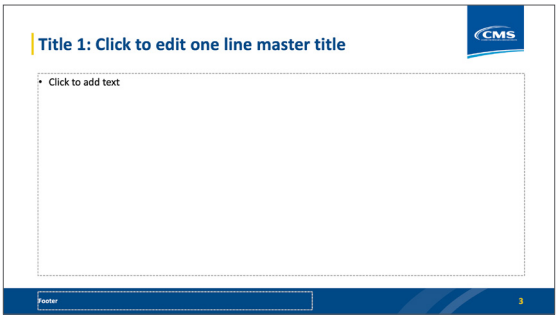


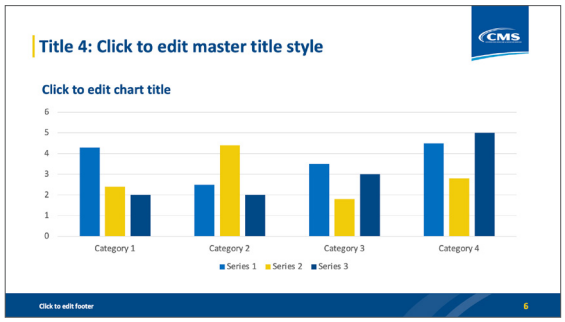
CMYK 78/14/0/9
RGB 0/154/208
HEX #009ad0

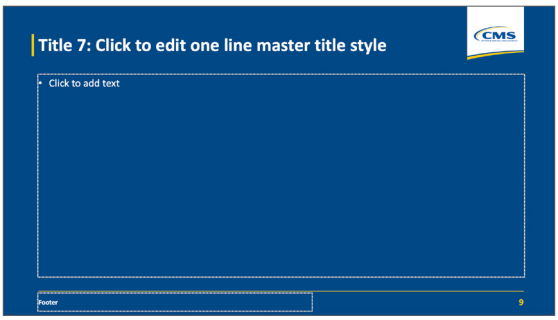
Standard Business Templates

To ensure CMS presents a consistent brand to our external audiences, we strongly encourage the use of approved templates for standard communications, including Microsoft PowerPoint® presentation slides, business cards, and listserv e-mail messages. If you need a template, email **MultimediaServices@cms.hhs.gov**.

Standard PowerPoint® template (multiple templates available):

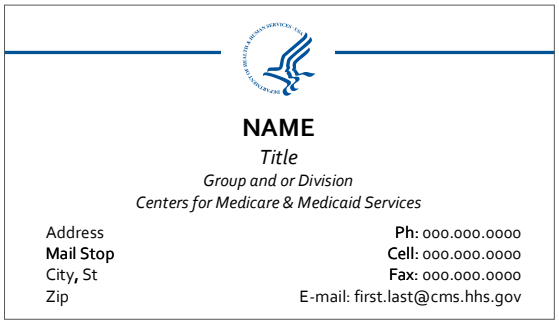






Business card templates

DHHS Logo

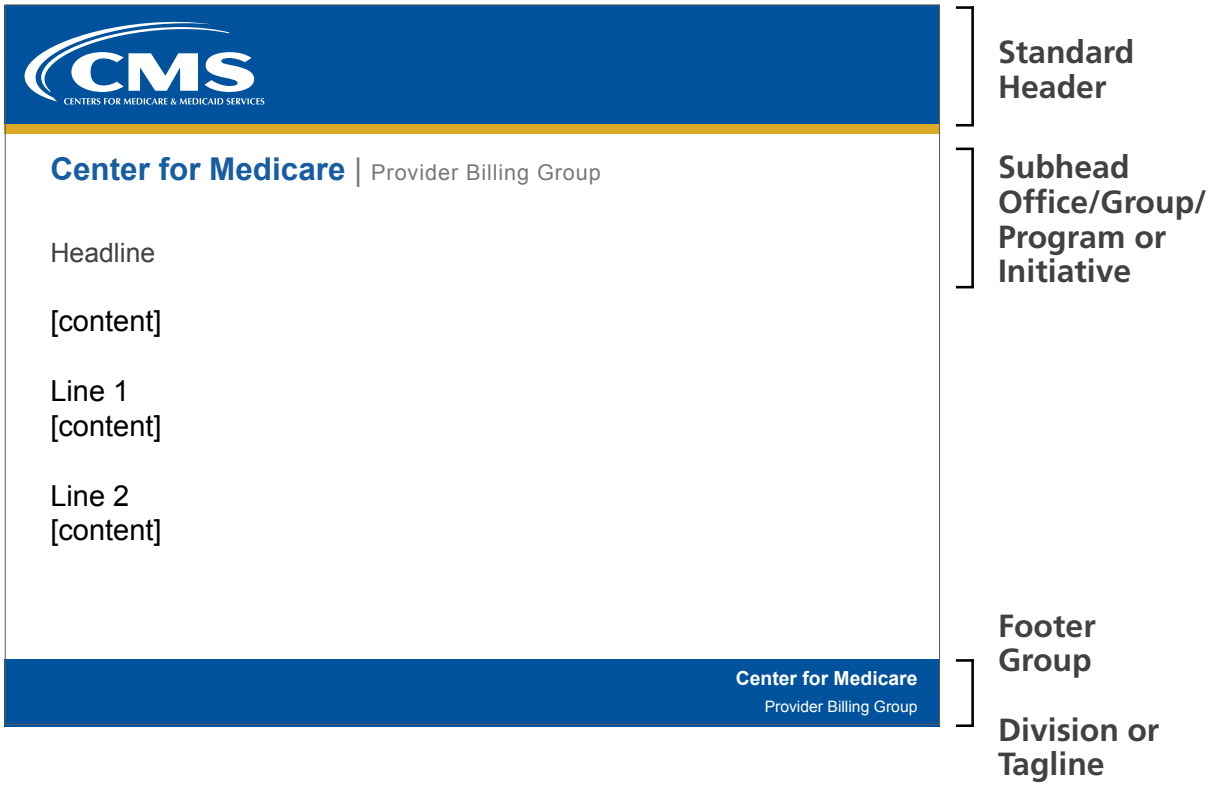


CMS Logo

Digital business card templates

The digital business card uses a branded, reusable vCard landing page template designed for PowerPoint presentations, events, and other professional settings. A direct vCard QR code guides users to a mobile-friendly landing page where they can quickly view contact details and save them to their phone with a single tap.

Standard listserv e-mail template



Newsletters

OC does not support components creating their own, unique newsletters for dissemination across the agency to ensure consistency in branding, messaging, and alignment across all communications. Allowing multiple, independently created newsletters can lead to discrepancies in design, tone, and content that may confuse or alienate audiences. Centralized communications like the weekly Things to Know newsletters and the monthly publication, The Pulse, enable more efficient resource allocation, as the agency can consolidate efforts into a single, cohesive product rather than duplicating efforts across multiple teams. Additionally, centralized communications reduces the risk of misaligned or conflicting information being shared, ensuring all communication adheres to the agency's standards and priorities. This approach promotes a unified voice and helps maintain the agency's credibility and professionalism.

Components may create their own communications for distribution only within their respective components.

More Information

The Office of Communications, Creative Services Group oversees the CMS brand architecture and visual identity guidelines. Please direct requests to use the CMS logo or questions regarding the proper use to **Logos@cms.hhs.gov**. Requests for logo development and other multimedia services should be sent to **MultimediaServices@cms.hhs.gov**.

Other resource documents on communications include:

Guidelines for Effective Writing
CMS.gov/training-education/learn/find-tools-to-help-you-help-others/guidelines-for-effective-writing

Writing for the Web
CMS.gov/files/document/writing-web.pdf

Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X User Guides
Available upon request from **newmedia@cms.hhs.gov**

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