

# INDIAN AFFAIRS MANUAL

- 1.1 Purpose.** This chapter identifies the goals of correspondence management and assigns responsibilities for meeting these goals.
- 1.2 Scope.** The provisions of this part apply to all employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs.
- 1.3 Goal.** The goal of correspondence management is to provide timely, accurate responses that reflect official Departmental policies to written communications sent directly to Indian Affairs or referred to Indian Affairs by the White House or the Department.
- 1.4 Handbooks and Reference Documents.** Employees should use the publications listed below for guidance on format and style preferences for official correspondence:
- A. Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook** that is available from the Indian Affairs Executive Secretariat staff;
  - B. Secretarial Correspondence Procedures Handbook**, issued by the DOI Executive Secretariat; and
  - C. U. S. Government Correspondence Manual**, published by the General Services Administration. Order from the U.S. Government printing Office at [202]512-1800: order number: 022-000-00212-1.
- 1.5 Controlled Correspondence.** The following types of communications will be tracked for timeliness and responses will be reviewed for appropriateness:
- A. Freedom of Information Act;**
  - B. Privacy Act;**
  - C. Referrals from the White House and the Office of the Secretary;**
  - D. Correspondence** from Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries of other Federal Departments, Members of Congress, Governors, Tribal Leaders, and Heads of National Indian Organizations.
- 1.6 Responsibilities.**
- A. Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, Regional Directors, Superintendents, Education Line Officers, and Heads of Field Offices** will ensure that an effective system is in place to track controlled correspondence that is received at their location.
  - B. Executive Secretariat:**
    - (1) Assigns controlled correspondence received in headquarters to the appropriate office for response;
    - (2) Reviews correspondence prepared for the signature of the Assistant Secretary, the Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and the Deputy Commissioner for conformance to DOI and BIA guidelines;
    - (3) Serves as liaison between the DOI Executive Secretariat and the Indian Affairs program offices in tracking White House and DOI referrals;
    - (4) Coordinates with other bureaus and assistant secretariats to clear correspondence that is of interest to multiple bureaus;

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- (5) Maintains accurate data in the automated correspondence tracking system; and
- (6) Notifies senior management of significant problems in correspondence management.

**C. Office Directors and Heads of other Organizational Units** establish internal procedures to ensure that staff prepare:

- (1) Appropriate responses to correspondence that is not controlled;
- (2) Timely, accurate responses in the proper format for controlled correspondence; and
- (3) Up-to-date status reports on controlled correspondence that is not answered within the prescribed time frame.

**D. Staff Assigned to Write Correspondence:**

- (1) Follow established style guidelines (see Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook);
- (2) Identify other Indian Affairs or external organizations that should review the correspondence; and
- (3) Meet established due dates.

**E. Secretaries and Staff Who Prepare and Assemble Correspondence:**

- (1) Follow established format standards for letters, memoranda, envelopes, and clearance packages (see Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook);
- (2) Carefully review documents for grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and
- (3) Maintain current information on the status of any overdue correspondence.

**1.7 Reassignment of Controlled Correspondence.** All incoming correspondence must be reviewed within 24 hours of receipt to determine if the correspondence has been misdirected. Correspondence that is not controlled should be forwarded directly to the appropriate office. Reassignment of controlled correspondence requires the following actions:

**A. Between Headquarters Offices.** The receiving office notes the appropriate responding office on the incoming correspondence and hand carries the letter to the Executive Secretariat for reassignment. The Executive Secretariat corrects the information in the automated tracking system and reassigns the correspondence to the appropriate office.

**B. From Headquarters to a Regional Office.** Proposed reassignments require the concurrence of the Deputy Commissioner. Directors must prepare a short memorandum of explanation and forward it with the incoming correspondence to the Deputy Commissioner. If the Deputy Commissioner concurs, the Executive Secretariat will assign the correspondence to the appropriate Regional Office. If the Deputy Commissioner does not concur, the correspondence will be returned to the headquarters office for response.