

MEMO ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

INITIAL STEP: Select a topic. This step was completed earlier in the semester. You **must** use the topic you selected to complete this memo assignment.

WRITING THE PAPER... A PROFESSIONAL MEMO: In this final assignment, students will write a 3-4 page memo to an individual who has a decision-making role in the field of Maternal and Child Health. Students will identify the appropriate person as the audience for the memo, depending on the nature of the topic selected. Students do not need to address the entire issue selected, but identify a specific activity that is under the control of the recipient of your memo.

Students should review the guidelines below in order to write an effective memo. There is also an excellent source of information on memo writing at this website: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/01/>.

Memo Writing

There are two reasons for writing a memo: the first is to bring someone's attention to a problem, and the second is to solve a problem. Memos are formal documents and need to be written in a professional manner. Writing a memo is different than the writing a term paper. Memos are read by busy individuals, and they do not want long background sections and flowery language. Memos are short and very specific. The purpose of a memo is to persuade an individual to do something. The person writing a memo has a number of responsibilities, as the recipient may act based upon the information provided. If a superior acts upon a memo that is based in error or does not consider the consequences of the action recommended, that person's career may be at risk and harm may be done to his or her constituents. Thus, the writer needs to provide a short and clear analysis of the situation that is balanced and the writer need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of any recommended action before making recommendations.

Although memos are short, usually no more than 3-4 pages, they need to address the key issues, provide a framework for understanding these issues, and include a specific recommendation for taking action. The writer needs to consider the audience and not make recommendations beyond what that person can do. For example, it would be foolish to recommend that a teacher change the length of the school day when that decision is in the hands of the school board and furthermore needs to take into account state and federal regulations. A memo recommending that a large team of individuals be assigned to a specific task may be ineffective if the recipient does not have the resources to assign individuals. Thus, the memo writer needs to clearly consider the recipient of the memo, and the practicalities of any recommendations.

There are distinct parts to a memo: a) heading, b) body of the memo, c) attachments.

Heading: The heading identifies who wrote the memo, who it was sent to, the date, and the subject.

TO: Recipient's name and title

FROM: Your name and title

DATE: Current Date

SUBJECT: The purpose of the memo

Body of the Memo

This section provides a description of the purpose of the memo, and includes any important background information, as well as the specific recommended response. You should describe the background as succinctly as possible but provide sufficient detail. The challenge is to provide only as much information as is necessary but enough detail so the recipient can understand the problem. If relevant, you can indicate what you have done so far. You need to close the memo with a polite ending that clearly indicates what action you want the recipient to take.

Attachments: You can attach any documents needed to provide detailed information that the recipient may need. Be sure to identify any attachments in your memo under the closing. It should be listed as follows, under the body of the memo.

Attached: List the name of the attachment

CONTENT REQUIREMENT FOR THE MEMO: The student must answer the following questions in his/her memo:

- 1) What is the problem? Define and explain its significance as a public health problem.
- 2) How big is the problem (e.g., magnitude, overall trends, statistics)?
- 3) Who does it affect the most, and why?
- 4) Why is this problem important to MCH?
- 5) What policy change and/or program intervention do you propose to address this problem, and why?
- 6) What specifically do you want the person reading the memo to do? Why should this person/group care and why is this topic important to this individual or group of people? Make your objectives and intended outcomes clear.

The concise answers to these questions will help the student make a persuasive argument within the memo, to move his/her specified decision maker to action. This argument must be research-based; students should review the research literature (using at least 3 scholarly journal articles and his/her choice of other sources, such as the CDC website). The information learned from those research studies and publications should be used to inform and support the student's argument and thoughts.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES:

References: You must use at least 3 articles that are from peer-reviewed scholarly journals (articles must be published in 2001 or later). Use databases such as PUBMED, OVID, CINAHL, Google Scholar, or other databases in the social sciences to find appropriate articles. It is strongly recommend that students take the following short tutorial from the HSC Library, for details on how to conduct a literature review and seek peer-reviewed scholarly publications using these databases: <http://www.health.usf.edu/library/education/firstpom/>.

Grammar, spelling, structuring: It is highly advised that you consult the USF Writing Center for assistance in constructing your paper: <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/learning/writing/index.htm>

*** Never submit a first draft as a final draft. Always have someone else read your paper to review for content (are you answering the questions above) and grammar. ***

Formatting, page length and other requirements: The page length must be between 3 and 4 pages, *not counting the reference page*. This means the minimum length must be 3 full pages (2-¾ pages will not meet the length requirements). Regarding formatting, for full points, use 12 point font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced. Use a separate reference page. Cite your articles within the body of the memo and write your reference page using the American Psychological Association (APA) format. Please see the APA guidelines in your textbook and on Canvas; it provides the basics of APA style that you must follow without having to purchase the APA book.

DUE DATES AND SUBMISSION: An **optional** first draft of the Memo is due on **Sunday, November 3rd by 5:00 pm EST**. The instructor will review all student draft memos, and provide detailed individual feedback by **Sunday, November 17th**. Students will not receive a grade for their draft, only feedback. Students will have the opportunity to revise the paper according to the instructor's feedback. **ALL** students must submit a final version for grading by **Wednesday, December 4th by 5:00 pm EST**.

Do not email the papers to the instructor. Students must submit both the optional draft and the final memo through Canvas using the "Memo Assignment" submission link. Papers will be checked for plagiarism (make sure you read the plagiarism guidelines listed on the syllabus and posted on Canvas). Late papers will be lowered by one letter grade for each day it is late.

Grading Rubric for Final Paper (100 points)

Expectations	No Credit	Partial Credit	Full Credit	Possible Points
Length: 3-4 pages	Less than 2 pages	2-3 pages (1 point)	3-4 pages (3 points)	3
Separate cover page and references page	No separate cover AND reference pages	One, but not both (1 point)	Both included (3 points)	3
Formatting: Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1" margins	No formatting requirements met	Some formatting requirements met (1 point)	All formatting requirements met (3 points)	3
Grammar, spelling, sentence structure	Poor grammar, spelling, sentence structure	Some errors in grammar, spelling, sentence structure (3 points)	Well-written with few or no grammar issues (8 points)	8
Statement of the problem	Absent or less than two sentences	Stated partially (8 points)	Completely stated with explanation, reasoning, statistics (15 points)	15
Magnitude of the problem, trends, statistics	Inadequate research-based support for the extent of the issue	Some research-based support for the extent of the issue (5 points)	Excellent, research-based explanation of the extent of the issue, (10 points)	10
Who does this issue affect and why is it important to MCH?	Inadequate description of the population and the relevance to MCH	Adequate description of the population of interest and the relevance to MCH (5 points)	Excellent description of the population and the relevance to MCH (10 points)	10
Policy or Program Intervention Proposed	Inadequate or no description of the program intervention or policy change proposed.	Program intervention or policy partially stated. Lacking evidence of an understanding of the impact on MCH (5 points)	Excellent description of the intervention or policy. Evidence of understanding the potential to improve MCH (10 points)	10
Connection to intended audience and description of the objectives and intended outcomes	Does not make the issue relevant to the intended audience and/or objectives and intended outcomes are unclear	Some connection to the intended audience, but the objectives/intended outcomes remain unclear. (5 points)	Clear connection to the intended audience. Excellent description of the objectives/intended outcomes related to the audience (10 points)	10
Body of paper: Thoughtfulness and Clarity	Did not provide a thoughtful and/or clear summary and analysis of issue	Somewhat clear and thoughtful summary and analysis (5 points)	Very thoughtful and clear and synthesized information to write a well-written memo (10 points)	10
At least 3 peer-reviewed academic journal articles (2001-2013)	No academic journal articles used	1-2 academic journal articles used and/or too old (published prior to 2001) (3 points)	3 or more timely and relevant academic journal articles used (8 points)	8
In-text citations and reference page in APA style format	No references and no in-text citations provided	In-text citations given but not in APA style or not properly cited. Reference page provided but not in APA format. (5 points)	In-text citations in APA style. Reference page in correct APA format. (10 points)	10