

# VIRGINIA REGISTER NEWS

NEWS YOU CAN USE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 10 JULY 2009

## Regulation Writing: Drafting a Definitions Section

Definitions clarify terms used within a regulation and allow the regulation writer to control the meaning of a word. Definitions also save space in the body of the regulation. For example, "department" may be defined to mean the Department of Social Services and "TANF" to be the acronym for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Here are some guidelines for writing a good definitions section:

### DOS

- Place definitions at the beginning of the regulation, generally as the first numbered section.
- Use the following language for the first paragraph: "The following words and terms when used in this chapter shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:"
- Arrange the words or specific terms in alphabetical order.
- Uppercase the first letter of the first word in each definition. All subsequent words in each definition should be lowercase, unless words are proper nouns.
- Place the word or term being defined within quotation marks (use "straight" quotes; avoid "curly" quotes).
- Insert the word "means" immediately after the word or term being defined. In some instances, it may be appropriate to use the word "includes" instead of "means" for a specific clarification of meaning.
- Define agencies (e.g., "Board" means the

Charitable Gaming Board) and officers (e.g., "Director" means the Director of the Department of Environmental Quality).

### DON'TS:

- Do not define a term unless its meaning is important and the word or term is used more than once in the regulation.
- Never define words or terms not used in the regulation.
- Do not state an operative provision of law in the form of a definition. For example, "executive secretary" may be defined in the definitions section, but do not include the duties as part of the definition. The duties must be the subject of a separate section.
- Avoid using dashes, slashes or parentheses in a term being defined. For example, use "Individualized education plan" or "IEP" means... instead of "Individualized education plan (IEP)" means....

## REGULATION BREAKDOWN

Totals by stage published in:

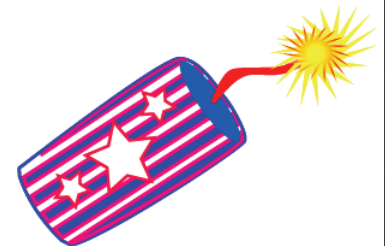
### JUNE

NOIRA	17
Proposed	17
Final	31
Fast-Track	7
Emergency	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>

2009 marks the 25th anniversary of the *Virginia Register of Regulations*.

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The Virginia Register of Regulations is published biweekly under the authority of the Virginia Code Commission.

Virginia Register of Regulations, 910 Capitol Street, 2nd Floor, Richmond, Virginia 23219, (804) 786-3591.

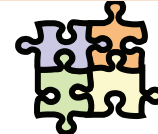
For comments and questions contact Terri Edwards at [tedwards@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:tedwards@dls.virginia.gov).

# Getting to Know You

**Elaine Yeatts** is the agency regulatory coordinator for the Department of Health Professions (DHP). Elaine began her career in education. A former director and teacher for a church preschool program and high school history teacher, Elaine came to state government as a writer for a Senator at the General Assembly. She then became a legislative assistant for a Delegate (where she said her experience in working with constant interruptions and chaos as a preschool teacher proved invaluable).

During the “off-Session,” she began her work at DHP, concentrating on studies that were assigned to the department by the General Assembly. She gradually took on more policy responsibilities, including the drafting of regulations and preparation of regulatory packages for the 13 health regulatory boards at DHP. Elaine became the Agency Regulatory Coordinator in 2002.

Elaine is married to a District Court judge in Henrico County and they will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary this summer in Montana and Canada. They have two married daughters and three young grandchildren.



## WRITING CATCHLINES AND TITLES

The title given to each section is called a catchline. It should briefly and accurately describe the subject matter contained in that section. The catchline should indicate to the reader everything covered by that section. If it does not, expand the catchline or divide the section into multiple sections.

- Avoid catchlines like “General” and “Miscellaneous”; they are not specific enough.
- Place the section number and section catchline together on a separate line in order to make it easier to locate and use. Capitalize only the first letter and proper names. Separate items in a catchline with semicolons. End each catchline with a period.

- A change in a catchline requires an amendment in the same format as required for body text (i.e., stricken text for deletions and underscored text for new language).
- The catchline is not part of the text of the regulation but helps to locate the subject, just like a table of contents. Draft the text of the section so that its meaning is clearly independent of the catchline. This means that essential information contained in a catchline must be repeated in the body of the section.

### VIRGINIA REGISTER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

Documents Filed by Noon on	Will be Published on
July 1	July 20
July 15	August 3
July 29	August 17
August 12	August 31

### RETURNING PROPOSED LANGUAGE TO EXISTING FORM

How do you return language to its existing form when an agency decides not to adopt a proposed amendment at the final stage? Use the following example as a guide:

- Existing Language: The bear crossed the creek.
- Proposed Language: The ~~bear~~ deer crossed the creek.
- Final Language: The [ bear ~~deer~~ ] crossed the creek.
- AVOID: The bear [ ~~deer~~ bear ] crossed the creek.