THE COMMONWEALTH FUND

AUTHOR GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING COMMONWEALTH FUND PUBLICATIONS

The Commonwealth Fund produces a variety of publications on health care and health care policy based on the research and analysis conducted by its grantees and program staff. These publications are intended to provide the policymakers, health care leaders, journalists, researchers, and others who constitute our target audiences with timely information that will be useful in their work. To convey this information as effectively as possible—and to help ensure its timely dissemination—the Fund asks authors to adhere to some general and specific guidelines regarding content, style, and format. Although they are not necessarily hard-and-fast rules, following them as closely as possible will help expedite the editing, review, and production processes and minimize the time between manuscript submission and final dissemination.

WHAT DEFINES A FUND PUBLICATION?

The Fund produces publications that it believes will provide new and valuable information to the people who are best positioned to effect positive change within the health care system—whether they are policymakers, health care providers, purchasers, or journalists. It is imperative that Fund publications are conceived and written with this overarching goal in mind. To ensure the usefulness of Fund publications for readers and maximize their potential impact, authors should make certain that their manuscript possesses the following general characteristics:

- It clearly highlights, up front, the study's chief findings and conclusions—the "take-away" for readers—in both the executive summary and main body.
- It is logically and thoughtfully organized, with pithy headings and subheadings.
- It presents all data in a clear, accessible, visually compelling manner, making ample use of simple, clearly labeled charts, graphs, and other figures wherever possible.
- It contains detailed recommendations for future policy or other action that "flow organically" from the findings—that is, they have a rational basis in the study's results.
- It is written in as concise and straightforward a manner as possible and avoids unnecessary repetition of ideas, nonessential background information, and excessive verbiage.

TYPES OF FUND PUBLICATIONS

Following is a general overview of each type of publication the Fund produces. Please refer to "Elements of Fund Publications" for descriptions of the individual components of these publications, and to the Fund's website (www.cmwf.org) for examples of the various publications.

Fund Reports

Fund Reports are a major category of publications produced by the Commonwealth Fund. Often the project's final paper, a Fund Report is usually prepared only after all data collection and analysis are complete. *Ideal length:* 30 pages or fewer (1.25 line spacing), or roughly 12,000 words plus 10 charts/tables.

Field Reports

Field Reports usually focus on an innovative, newly or recently launched program or policy, often state or local. They are often based on case studies, site visits, focus groups, or other qualitative research; sometimes, they discuss preliminary findings from an ongoing study. A Field Report closely resembles a Fund Report in terms of format and style. *Ideal length:* 30 pages or fewer (1.25 line spacing), or roughly 12,000 words plus 10 charts/tables.

Issue Briefs

Issue Briefs usually have a narrower focus than reports. Often they discuss a particular health care program, issue, or policy currently under discussion in Congress or in state legislatures. As their name would imply, briefs are considerably shorter than reports (4 to 12 printed pages, including graphics). *Ideal length:* 5 to 15 pages (1.25 line spacing), or 1,500 to 5,000 words plus up to 7 charts/tables.

Fact Sheets

Facts Sheets, which can be either one or two pages, combine charts, tables, and (usually) bulleted text to provide a data profile of a specific topic in health care or health care policy. The Fund has published Fact Sheets on such topics as: population-based health status and health care disparities; women's health issues such as violence and abuse, preventive care, and caregiving; emergency room use in New York City. *Ideal length:* 1 to 4 pages (1.25 line spacing), or up to 600 words plus 5 charts/tables.

Chartbooks

These references are designed as vertical flip charts, with bulleted explanatory text (on pages facing the charts and tables).

In the Literature

These two-page summaries of articles published in the professional literature are generated by the Fund and submitted to authors for their approval. They often contain graphics and a "Facts and Figures" box.

ELEMENTS OF FUND PUBLICATIONS

Below is a list of elements found in various Fund publications, followed by the type(s) of publication(s) for which the element is required and a description of its components.

1. **Title Page** *(reports and issue briefs).* Includes title, subtitle (if applicable), and authors and their affiliations. The Fund will insert the following standard statement: "Support for this research was provided The Commonwealth Fund. The views presented here are those of the authors and should not be attributed to The Commonwealth Fund or its directors, officers, or staff." This is amended accordingly in instances where the Fund is jointly publishing the paper with another entity. In addition, the Fund provides information about how to obtain both print and electronic copies.
2. **Statement of Fund Support and Disclaimer** *(all publications).* Please add the following language to the title page of your paper:

   Support for this research was provided by The Commonwealth Fund. The views presented here are those of the authors and should not be attributed to The Commonwealth Fund or its directors, officers, or staff.
3. **Table of Contents** *(reports only).* Includes all first- and second-level heads in the text, titles of appendices, list of figures, and corresponding page numbers for all aforementioned elements.
4. **About the Authors** *(reports and issue briefs).* A brief paragraph for each credited author containing: current affiliation and position, principal areas of study, previous major experience and accomplishments directly relevant to the topic, and graduate school(s) attended and degree(s) completed. (Note: In Fund/Field Reports, this information will be included on a separate page following the table of contents; in Issue/Policy Briefs, this information will be included in a footnote on the first page.)
5. **Acknowledgments** *(optional).* List on separate page. In Fund/Field Reports, acknowledgments will be included on a separate page following "About the Authors"; in Issue/Policy Briefs, this information will be included in a footnote on the first page.
6. **Abstract** *(reports and issue briefs).* We use summary-style abstracts (similar to those in *Health Affairs*), not structured abstracts such as those that appear in *JAMA* and other scientific journals. They should not exceed 150 words.
7. **Executive Summary** *(reports only).* The executive summary should contain, in condensed form, all major findings, conclusions, and policy recommendations that are in the main body of the paper. There should be only a minimum of background/introductory text. Include any key charts, figures, or simple tables from the main report. The length of the executive summary will depend on the length and complexity of the report itself but should generally run from one to five pages (at 1.25 line spacing).
8. **Preface** *(reports only; optional).* If one is necessary, it should ideally be one page or less, but certainly no longer than two pages.

9. **Main Body.** Generally, every Fund report should include the following sections, although it may make sense in some cases to combine or eliminate certain sections.

   a) ***Introduction:*** The introduction can be a just a paragraph or two (as in the case of an issue or policy brief) or it can be an entire section. Either way, it should include only background, history, or other contextual information that is essential to the reader's understanding of the topic. The report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations should not be discussed here.

   b) ***Methods:*** Only a brief methodology section should be included in the main body of the paper—two to three paragraphs at most. If a more extensive methodology section is required, it should be inserted as an appendix at the end of the report; however, there should still be a brief explanation of study methods at the beginning of the report. For issue/policy briefs and fact sheets, a methods box will appear on the back page.

   c) ***Findings/Results:*** Please use subheadings to organize the material. For example, you might want to have a section called "Principal Findings" and another one called "Other Findings." This section should include bar or line graphs, pie charts, and/or tables, as appropriate, to illustrate trends and provide supporting data. To maximize the impact of data presented and create visual interest, authors are encouraged, where possible, to use charts instead of tables. Sidebar text boxes can also be included to provide further elaboration on a specific concept, piece of legislation, program, etc.

      - *Charts/graphs:* Figures should be created in PowerPoint in black and white (with grayscale, if necessary). They should be simple, easily readable, and self-explanatory. Each chart should have a descriptive title, and each axis should be clearly labeled. Please provide a data point for each bar, line, pie piece, etc., as well as a complete source line. (Please refer to "Typographical and Design Specifications" when creating figures.)

      - *Tables:* As with other figures, tables should be created with the principle "simple is better" in mind. If a table is becoming highly complicated, it may be better to break it up into two or more smaller tables. Include a source line for each table. (Please refer to "Typographical and Design Specifications" when constructing tables.)

      - *Text boxes:* Authors may want to use text boxes for pull quotes (e.g., in reports on focus group results) or for sidebars (e.g., brief background on a piece of legislation, regulation, or program). Please use Word's text box drawing tool.

   d) ***Implications/Conclusions:*** Study results should be discussed in light of their potential impact on public or private policy.

   e) ***Recommendations:*** The report should provide specific suggestions for policy change, based on the study's findings. Future avenues of research, if applicable, may also be discussed.

10. **Notes/References** *(reports/briefs).* Please use Microsoft Word's automatic endnotes feature. Please do not use parenthetical references within the main text. See "Formatting and Typographical Specifications," below.
11. **Appendices** *(reports only)*. Include as appendices any nonessential and/or supplementary material, such as detailed methodology and list of key informants. Each appendix should have a number and title.

FORMATTING AND TYPOGRAPHICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Authors should submit one paper copy and the electronic file(s) for all publications. We strongly prefer that manuscripts be submitted in Microsoft Word (preferably Word 2000). Charts/graphs should be created in a separate PowerPoint file; the figures can then be inserted into the Word document. Tables should be created in Word. Use the automatic settings provided by the Microsoft Word program. If another software program is used, the following format is preferable. (See Attachment A for formatting examples.)

Line spacing (main text): 1.25

Justification: rag right

Font (main text): Times New Roman, 12 point

Margins: 1" top and bottom; 1.25" left and right; gutter 0"

Main text: Indent first line of paragraph 0.5," except first paragraph below head; separate paragraphs by line space.

Endnotes: Use Word's automatic endnote insertion feature. Times New Roman, 11 point; no indent. ***Important:*** To delete a endnote, please delete the callout number in the main text, not the note itself (not following this procedure creates "ghost" footnotes, which can wreak all sorts of havoc when formatting reports).

Tables: Use Word's table insertion tool. Times New Roman, 11 point (source line: 10 point), single-spaced.

Charts/ Graphs: Create in separate PowerPoint file and insert into Word document. Arial and Arial Black (varying point sizes); black and white only (grayscale if necessary). No 3-D effects, no grid lines. Label x-axis and y-axis.

COPYEDITING STYLE
For all reports, the Commonwealth Fund prefers to follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *14th Edition*. However, the Fund follows its own style on certain points. Below is a partial list of style conventions, which should be followed as closely as possible.

Acronyms: Introduce all acronyms prior to their first stand-alone usage in text. For example: "Hospitals are increasingly using electronic medical records (EMRs), but patient-accessible EMRs are used on a much more limited basis."

Commas: Use a *series comma* after the penultimate item in a text list (the item before "and" or "or"), e.g., "national, state, and local." Also use a comma after introductory words or clauses, e.g., "Unfortunately,…" or "In the 1980s,…."

Dashes: For ranges of numbers in footnotes, tables, and charts (e.g., "pgs. 14–22," "1997–99"), use *en dashes* (found under Symbol in Word's Insert drop-down menu) as in the examples, not hyphens. In main body text, however, do not use en dashes, but spell out: "…from 1997 to 1999."

Use *em dashes* (also found under Symbol in Word's Insert drop-down menu) instead of double hyphens or " – ": "Low-income senior—regardless of whether they had coverage or not—had great difficulty meeting their prescription drug needs."

Endnotes/References: In most cases, the Fund will retain the author's style as much as possible, as long as it is followed consistently throughout the report. However, the *Chicago Manual of Style* is generally preferred. See "Typographical and Formatting Specifications," above, for further detail.

Numbers: Spell out 1 through 9 in text and footnotes, except percentages, dollar amounts, and ages (e.g., "ages 3 to 5," *but* "five years old").

Percentages: Spell out "percent" in main body text and footnote text, but use "%" in parentheticals, e.g., "The majority of those surveyed (52%) lost their health benefits because they or their spouse lost their job. Another 12 percent lost their coverage because…."

References to figures and tables: Enclose references to tables, figures, and appendices within parentheses and place at the end of relevant sentence or paragraph, before the period: "…(Table 1)."; "…(Figure 1)."; "(Appendix 1)."

Spelling/Word List
The Fund follows spellings in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition* in the vast majority of cases. There are exceptions, however, some of which are listed below, along with other special terms commonly found in Fund publications.

AARP (do not spell out)
academic health center (AHC)
African American (n., adj.)
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
Asian American (n., adj.)

Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA)

benefit package
black American
Breakthrough Series
business case for quality

CD-ROM
Child Health Plus (CHP)
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
COBRA (not necessary to spell out)
Congress
congressional
Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (CAHPS)
copay, copayment
cost-sharing (n., adj.)
crew resource management (CRM)

decision-making
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
doctor–patient relationship (use en dash)

electronic medical record (EMR)
employer-based/employer-sponsored health insurance

federal
first-dollar coverage
focus group

group health insurance

health care (n., adj.)
health care provider
health care quality (n.)
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
health maintenance organization (HMO)
health plan (n., adj.)
Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS)
HEDIS measure
Hispanic (*not* Hispanic American)

individual health insurance
Institute of Medicine (IOM)
intensive care unit (ICU)
intensivist
Internet

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)

large-scale (adj.)
listserv
long-term (adj.)
low-income (adj.)

managed care plan/organization
M.D.
Medicare/Medicaid beneficiary (do not use “recipient”)
Medicare-eligible, Medicaid-eligible
Medicare+Choice
Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC)
Medigap

National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)
near-elderly
nonelderly
non-English-speaking
nongroup health insurance
nonpoor
nonprofit
not-for-profit

one-half, one-third, etc.
out-of-pocket

patient-centered care
Ph.D.
Picker Program Grant
policymaker
preferred provider organization (PPO)
primary care physician (PCP)
provider

rollout (n.)

quality of care (n.)
quality-of-care (adj.)

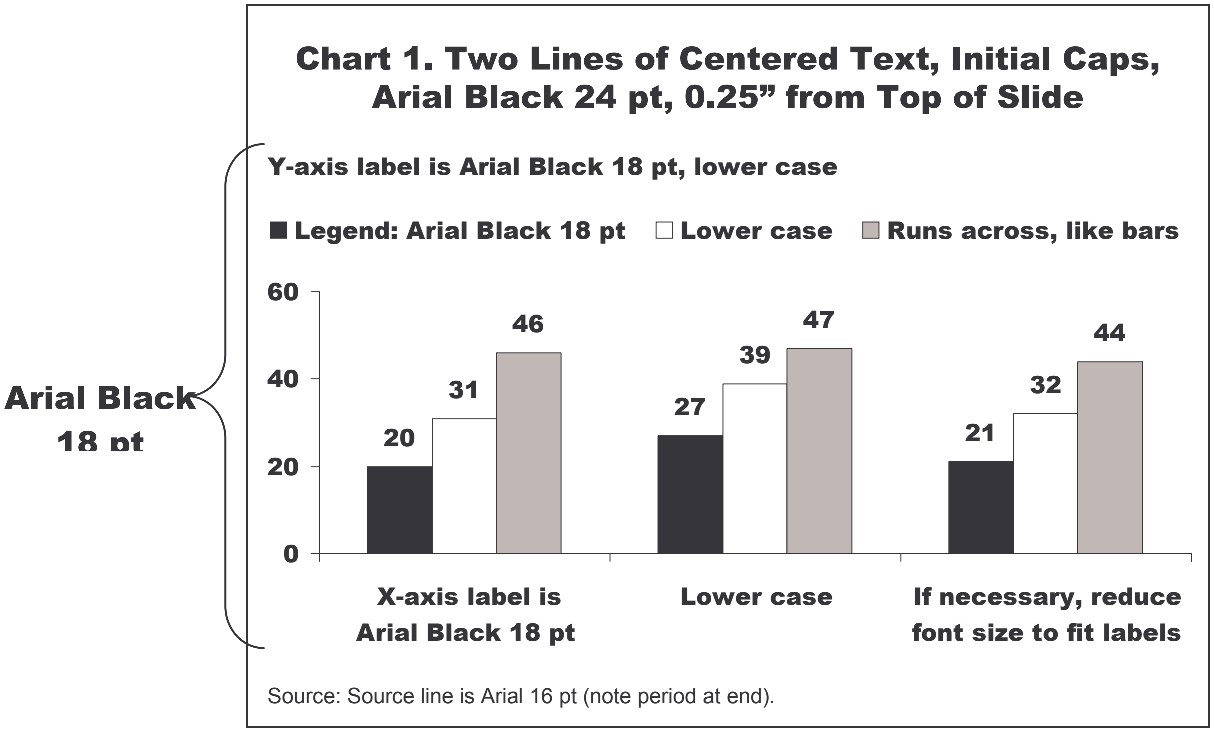
safety net hospital
site visit
Social Security
specialist physician/doctor, specialist
State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
21st century

under way (*not* underway)
the uninsured
upper-income (adj.)

Web site
white American(lowercase)

Attachment A

Sample Chart



- Chart titles are in **Arial Black 24 pt.** If there is a subtitle, it should be in **Arial Black 20 pt.** Chart titles are center-justified.
- Y-axis labels, y-axis tick mark labels, legends, data labels, and x-axis labels are in **Arial Black 18 pt.** Note that when applying fonts inside the chart, the Auto Scale check box should be unselected (when creating a new chart, Auto Scale is selected by default; just click on the box to unselect).
- Explanatory remarks, notes, and source lines are in Arial 16 pt.

Use initial caps in title. Use lower case (except for first word or a proper name) elsewhere.

Multiples of 20 percent (20, 40, 60, etc.) are preferred for the y-axis scale.

When showing percentages in a bar graph, try to use the word percent or percentage either in the title or the y-axis label. This avoids having to add the percent sign to the y-axis tick marks and each of the data points.

When choosing colors for pies and bars, the first choice is always black, the second white. If the pie or bars have more than two components, begin to use shades of gray.

General Note: The above styles are intended as guidelines. There will be many times when the only way to make everything fit is to reduce point sizes or make the y-axis scale smaller. As the chart gets pushed and pulled to make it fit, unselecting the Auto Scale box becomes even more important; don't forget to do it. It's the only way to keep the chart text from becoming distorted.

Sample Table

Table 8. Physician Satisfaction Ratings by Insurance Plan Type, Insured Women Ages 18–64

Physician Ratings	% Total Insured	% INSURANCE PLAN TYPE: Managed Care	Traditional Insurance
Rated Physician Excellent on:			
Provides good health care overall	45	45	45
Cares about your health	46	46	46
Spends enough time with you	40	41	40
Answers all your questions	47	48	47
Makes sure you understand what you've been told	45	45	46
Treats you with dignity and respect	57	55	58
Rated Physician Fair/Poor on:			
Provides good health care overall	7	7	5
Cares about your health	7	8	4
Spends enough time with you	14	14	11
Answers all your questions	8	8	6
Makes sure you understand what you've been told	8	9	6
Treats you with dignity and respect	3	3	2

Text in notes and source lines should be one point size smaller than the table text. In this sample, the note's point size is 10. Also, the note text should start at the far left edge of the table.

- Table titles are in **Arial Black 11 pt.** If there is a subtitle, it should be in **Arial Black 9 pt.** Table titles are center-justified and have initial caps.
- Ideally, a table should be 6 inches wide (to match the single-column width of a standard Fund report) and the table text should be **11 pt.—Times New Roman Bold** for heads and subheads, and **Regular** for the rest of the text (including notes and the source line). The sample table above, however, is 7 inches wide to accommodate the wide first column.
- Heads for the far-left column should be left-justified, and all other heads should be center-justified. Note the use of all caps and initial caps to distinguish major and minor column heads.
- Numbers in columns should be set with decimal tabs in the approximate center of each column. Do not use the center-justify attribute for columns of numbers—the numbers appear uneven when some rows have one digit and others have two.

- Cell borders (rules) for the first and last cells are 1½ pt. Cell borders inside the table are ¾ pt.

For ease of reading, set the Space After (Format>Paragraph) to 2 pt. for the last line of the table title. Similarly, set the Space Before to 2 pt. for the first line of notes or the source line. For all other cells, set both Space Before and Space After to 1 pt. (If this means the bottom of a long table creeps over to another page, disregard the 1 pt. setting.)