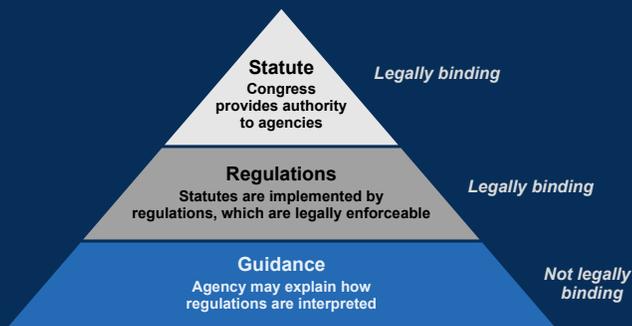


Guidance Documents from Federal Agencies

How agencies clarify legal information, respond to questions, and inform the public

Where Does Guidance Fit In?



Why Do Agencies Use Guidance Documents?



Guidance documents can prompt changes in behavior of regulated parties and the general public.

Include interpretive memos, policy statements, circulars, memoranda, bulletins, and advisories.



Types of Guidance Documents



Agencies issue anywhere from about ten to over a hundred guidance documents each year.

- Agencies consider most guidance documents "non-significant"
- Not subject to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements
- Currently no specific government-wide policies for production



- Agencies consider guidance documents with broad or substantial effects "significant"
- Subject to requirements in OMB's *Final Bulletin for Agency Good Guidance Practices* and some are reviewed by OMB before issuance
- Agencies must have written procedures for internal approval
- Must be listed on a departmental website

GAO examined guidance processes at the departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and selected subagencies within these departments.



How Did Selected Agencies Disseminate their Guidance?



How Can Internal Controls be Applied to Guidance Processes?

- Risk assessment:** Assessing the level of risk helps agencies determine potential legal implications and appropriate levels of review.
- Control activities:** Maintaining written policies and procedures helps ensure that officials understand how to adequately review guidance before issuance.
- Information and communication:** Obtaining feedback from management, internal offices, the public, and other interested parties is essential to ensuring guidance is effective.
- Monitoring:** Ongoing monitoring processes can help ensure that agencies use applicable feedback to improve future guidance and revisions of guidance.