# Tips from an ADA Compliance Officer and Key Terms and Definitions

*Institutions will vary in how they allocate policy management responsibilities, but it is crucial to align Disability Services policies with those of the rest of the college/university. Consulting with your colleagues in compliance can be very beneficial in ensuring consistency. Below is some advice from an ADA compliance officer to help clarify the key terms and definitions used when developing polices.*

The “formalized definitions and colloquial meaning of terms relating to policies may vary from institution to institution” so it is strongly encouraged to consult with your institutional compliance and general council staff. “Each institution has different policies, procedures, and practices that govern the establishment of new policies. These procedures and practices may include establishment of a policy committee, submission of a proposal, review of a draft by a general counsel, and/or approval from institution leadership. Prior to embarking on writing a policy consult with leadership about organization specific expectations.” The following information generally summarizes the key terms used in the policy management process and provides an example of how to apply the terms to the reasonable accommodation process (C. Wells, personal communication, March 23, 2021).

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| **Policy-Why Do I Need to Do This?** | **Process-What is Required?** | **Procedures-How Do I Do This?** | **Guidelines-Best Practices** |
| The framework meant to guide the actions of individuals within a system or institution | The actions that facilitate adherence to the policy | The specific instructions for fulfilling the policy’s purpose-Who does what? When do they do it? How do they do it? | Guidelines or practices lack the formality of policies, processes, and procedures and are often used as supplements when established policies and procedures are silent on a particular issue |
| Higher Education policies should clearly communicate the rights/responsibilities of the individuals that make up the university community  | Just like policies, processes must be compliant with any applicable laws and consistent with specific organizational structures  | Procedures are necessary for fulfilling the purpose of the policy and are required for the consistent and equitable implementation of a policy  | Guidelines are like policies in that they communicate expectations and reflect the values of an institution, but are not formalized or mandatory  |

*C. Wells (personal communication, March 23, 2021)*