

Maryland's Consumer Health Information Hub

Catherine Maybury PhD, MPH





What is the Hub?

2022 Maryland law - HB1082

- Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub
 - Effective July 1, 2022
 - Funding starts July 1, 2023
 - Designates Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as Hub



Key elements of the law

- Requires state & local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, health insurance & social services benefits
- Promotes language access
- Recognizes health literacy as critical public health & health systems infrastructure & essential to health equity





Health Literacy and the Hub

Health Literacy, Defined

Personal

degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others

Organizational

degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others





Hub Products & Resources

Hub products

- Criteria, certifications, best practices
- Recommendations
- Training & educational sessions
- Templates & model language
- Reports



Literacy

- ☐ Write to convey a sense of audience that is inclusive
- ☐ Use personal pronouns to speak directly to the reader, such as "your benefits" rather than speaking about the reader in third person as in "the insured."
- ☐ Use active voice and a friendly, conversational tone. Contractions are okay.
- ☐ Draft paragraphs with short, simple sentences.
- ☐ Avoid jargon and acronyms. Spell out unfamiliar acronyms and define or explain unfamiliar terms.

Calls

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Design

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Select

CDC C

CDC H
<https://>

Federa

Public I
Tool [ht](https://health/)

User-c

*The M
checkli
Horowi
with qu

Maryland Clear Writing and Plain Language Checklist*

The Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub law requires state and local agencies to use plain language in public communications about health, safety, health insurance, and social services benefits information. Plain language is a set of techniques that help the audience understand the first time they read or hear the information.

This checklist will help you see if your content is written in plain language and presented in ways that are clear and actionable. You can use the checklist for any written content. Writing clearly will help the Maryland public understand what agencies are trying to communicate.

Who is the audience for this content?

When reviewing your content, take these three steps.

1. Look Carefully

- Read through the content and the checklist. The more items you can check, the more likely the audience will understand and take action on the content.
- Are there terms that readers don't typically use in every day speech? If so, try and replace these words with more common words.

2. Read it Aloud

- Does the content sound too formal? Adjust the wording to be friendly and conversational.
- Are the sentences long and hard to follow? Shorten the sentences so that only one thought is presented in each sentence.
- Does the writing flow smoothly?

3. Test It (testing is a best practice and especially important for new content and in advance for emergency/time sensitive content that can't be tested in the moment)

- Show the content to a few people who represent the audience you are writing for.
- After reading, can they tell you in their own words
 - what the content means?
 - the recommended action(s)?
 - the main message
- If not, re-write and test again.

Checklist: Use as a guide to be sure your content is clear and actionable for the intended audience.

Audience Focus

- ☐ Choose titles or visuals so readers know **what the content is about** at a first glance.
- ☐ Choose titles, visuals, and introductory words so the audience knows **who the content is for** at a first glance.
- ☐ Begin with the most important message and order topics in ways that make sense to the audience.



Plain language checklist

- Developed by MD workgroup
- Based on public agency experience
- Use guide to ensure your content is clear and actionable for your intended audience

Hub resources



1.1 Actionable items

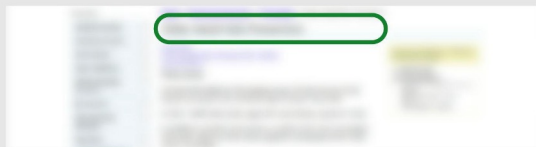
Title

When people scan webpages, they often only read the title to figure out if the content is relevant to them. Make your title as specific as possible to help people know what the content is about at first glance.

Tips to get started

- Create a title focused on the needs and wants of your users.
- Verbs can fuel action and tell your users what to do. Try starting your title with a verb (Example: Find help and treatment for your addiction).

Example of title



Recommendations

Before	After
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Website review

- Developed using research-based health literacy practices
- Use review to inform revision process and ensure your web users can find, understand, and use your information

[Hub resources](#)





➤ Community Health Worker (CHW) training

- Developed with and for CHWs
- Build CHW health literacy knowledge and skills to help community members find, understand, and use health information and services





➤ Professional development opportunities

- Webinars
 - Plain language, January 22, 2024
- Lunch-and-Learn
- Networking





Strategies for Developing Culturally Driven Public Health Communications

Public Health
Communications
COLLABORATIVE



Developing culturally driven communications

- Use guide to get strategies and tools to help you create materials for multicultural audiences

[Culturally driven communications guide](#)





How we can help

Work to date

- Review CHA/CHNA/CHIP docs
- Attend LHIC meetings
- One on one meetings
- Communication resources
- Technical assistance by request
- Plain language checklist
- Language access tools
- Website evaluation tools
- Evaluation plan



Our focus

- Understand information sharing in the state
 - Who has training and tools?
 - Which approaches work best?
- Professional development
 - What information and skills does your organization need?



Discussion

- What are the health, safety, insurance and social services successes and gaps you need to address?
- Which services would be most valuable to you from the Hub?
- What types of training would be most beneficial?





Evaluation

DRAFT Logic model overview

Resources

Human Resources

- UMD SPH Horowitz Center Team
- Partners*
- CommunicateHealth
- Sharp Insight

Legislative Support and Funding

- HB-1082

Physical Resources

- Hub website and tools

Our Approach - A collaboration model for achieving information literacy

Core Value

Information access is a social justice issue

Activities

- **Connect** with LHICs and participate in workgroups

- **Establish and promote** health literacy criteria and best practices

- **Develop** templates and model language

- **Share** information and resources

- **Develop** the workforce

- **Assist** entities with providing materials and media in plain and preferred language

- **Explore** the feasibility for an organizational health literacy certification program

- **Conduct** assessments of barriers to public access of information

Planned Outcomes

SHORT TERM (6 months)

Our Partners will have increased...



- **Awareness** of the Hub, along with its resources and services
- **Awareness** of the need for materials in plain and preferred language as well as resources to support their efforts
- **Knowledge** of how to create materials in plain and preferred languages
- **Confidence and skills** that they can provide materials in plain and preferred languages

MID TERM (6 months - 1 year)

Our Partners will...



- **Assess current materials** for plain and preferred language
- **Develop action plan** for improving consumer access to plain and preferred materials
- **Provide materials using best practices** in plain and preferred languages
- **Seek technical assistance** from the Hub as needed

Our Partner Organizations will...



- **Adopt policies and procedures** around providing materials in plain and preferred languages
- **Earn** organizational health literacy certification

LONG TERM (1 year +)

Maryland residents have access to accurate, consistent, evidence-based, plain-language information that is culturally and linguistically appropriate

Maryland residents use health information to make informed health decisions

Increased health equity in Maryland



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

**FEARLESSLY
FORWARD**



Questions



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

**FEARLESSLY
FORWARD**

**FEARLESSLY
FORWARD**

