

Webinar Presentation:

November 10, 2015

Drop the jargon

Use plain language to connect with your audience



Webinar Presenters

- **Moderator: Jessica Beyer**

- Communications Manager/Business Analyst, Blue Earth County
- National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO) President



- **Featured Speaker: Brian Lieb**

- Plain Language Coordinator, Hennepin County



Webinar recording and evaluation survey

- This webinar is being recorded and will be made available online to view later
 - Recording will also be available at:
 - www.naco.org/webinars
 - www.nacio.org
- After the webinar, you will receive a notice asking you to complete a webinar evaluation survey. Thank you in advance for completing the webinar evaluation survey. Your feedback is important to us.

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- The questions box and buttons are on the right side of the webinar window.
- This box can collapse so that you can better view the presentation. To unhide the box, click the arrows on the top left corner of the panel.
- If you are having technical difficulties, please send us a message via the questions box on your right. Our organizer will reply to you privately and help resolve the issue.

About NACIO

- NACo affiliate group – County Public Information Officers
 - www.nacio.org
 - www.facebook.com – search for National Association of County Information Officers
 - Twitter – nacio66





Hennepin County Minnesota

Drop the jargon
Use plain language to connect with your audience

Brian Lieb
Hennepin County

Recent U.S. history

1970 IBM memo

1979 Carter executive order

1998 Clinton memorandum

2010 Plain Writing Act



Warren Buffett approves

What is plain language?

With everything you publish, your audience should be able to:

- **Find** what they need
- **Understand** what they find
- **Use** that information to meet their needs

Does it work?

Yes. Results include:

- Increased reader satisfaction
- Increased access to services and benefits
- Increased compliance with regulations
- Decreased costs

Example – drug labels

Drug Facts	
Active ingredient (in each tablet)	Purpose
Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg.....	Antihistamine
Uses temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies: ■ sneezing ■ runny nose ■ itchy, watery eyes ■ itchy throat	
Warnings	
Ask a doctor before use if you have	
■ glaucoma ■ a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis	
■ trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland	
Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives	
When using this product	
■ drowsiness may occur ■ avoid alcoholic drinks	
■ alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness	
■ be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery	
■ excitability may occur, especially in children	
If pregnant or breast-feeding, ask a health professional before use.	
Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.	
Directions	
adults and children 12 years and over	take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours
children 6 years to under 12 years	take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours
children under 6 years	ask a doctor

Drug Facts (continued)	
Other information ■ store at 20-25°C (68-77°F) ■ protect from excessive moisture	
Inactive Ingredients D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch	

<h2>Allergy Tablets</h2> <p>INDICATIONS: Provides effective, temporary relief of sneezing, watery and itchy eyes, and runny nose due to hay fever and other upper respiratory allergies.</p> <p>DIRECTIONS: Adults and children 12 years and over—1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 6 tablets in 24 hours or as directed by a physician. Children 6 to 11 years—one half the adult dose (break tablet in half) every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 3 whole tablets in 24 hours. For children under 6 years, consult a physician.</p> <p>EACH TABLET CONTAINS: Chlorpheniramine Maleate 4 mg. May also contain (may differ from brand): D&C Yellow No. 10, Lactose, Magnesium Stearate, Microcrystalline Cellulose, Pregelatinized Starch</p> <p>WARNINGS: May cause excitability especially in children. Do not take this product unless directed by a physician, if you have a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis, or if you have glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to enlargement of the prostate gland. May cause drowsiness; alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase the drowsiness effect. Avoid alcoholic beverages, and do not take this product if you are taking sedatives or tranquilizers without first consulting your physician. Use caution when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. As with any drug, if you are pregnant or nursing a baby, seek the advice of a health professional before using this product. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental overdose, seek professional assistance or contact a Poison Control Center immediately.</p> <p>Store at controlled room temperature 2°-30°C (36°-86°F).</p> <p>Use by expiration date printed on package.</p> <p>Protect from excessive moisture.</p> <p>For better identification keep tablets in carton until used.</p>	 <p>N 3 111111 11111 8</p>
Made in U.S.A.	

Example – jury instructions

Studies show that most jurors do not fully understand instructions from judges.

- Majority thought “malice aforethought” meant a murder must be committed with a mallet

Before: “A preponderance of the evidence”

After: “More likely than not”

Example – visiting County Home School

Before (530 words with corrections jargon)

- “Custodial adults and other approved visitors ...”
- “Visits shall be subject only to limitations necessary to maintain order and security ...”
- “A temporary visitors badge will be displayed on each person ...”

Example – visiting County Home School

After

- Concise (289 words)
- Clearer language
- Scannable

Getting there

Metro Transit bus route 664 provides access to the facility.

Who can visit?

Visits are limited to:

- Parents
- Step-parents
- Legal guardians
- Custodial adults
- Children of residents

Visiting rules

- Visitors may check in 15 minutes before the start of the visit.
- Visitors must present a valid picture identification (e.g., driver's license, state-issued ID card, passport, or a photo ID issued by social services, employer, military or school).
- All visitors must go through a screening process (metal detector and pat search) to enter the facility beyond the lobby.
- No one may wait in vehicles on County Home School property.
- Personal items such as purses, wallets, and cell phones are not permitted in visiting areas:
 - Lockers are provided for storage during visits.
 - Items brought for a resident will be searched and inventoried by correctional staff.
- Visitors are restricted to designated visiting areas.

Example – 500px photo site

Fine print includes plain language explanations

User Conduct (legal version is 571 words):

“Basically,

You cannot use our site to post pornographic material, harass people, send spam, negatively vote on all photos, and do other crazy stuff. Be reasonable and responsible, don't do anything stupid and you'll be fine.”

Example – revised IRS account notice

Changes to your 2004 Form 1040

Amount due: \$24.60

Based on the information you provided, we changed your 2004 Form 1040 to correct your:

- Filing status to head of household
- Total exemption amount

As a result, you owe \$24.60.

What you need to do immediately

What you need to do immediately

If you agree with the changes we made

- Pay the amount due of \$24.60 by March 23, 2009, to avoid additional penalty and interest charges.

Continued on back...

 **IRS**

Payment

James Hinds
22 Boulder Street
Hanson, CT 00000-7253

Notice CP21A
Notice date March 2, 2009
Social Security number 999-99-9999

- Make your check or money order payable to the United States Treasury.
- Write Social Security number (999-99-9999), the tax year (2004), and the form number (1040) on your payment and any correspondence.

Amount due by March 23, 2009 \$24.60

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
KANSAS CITY, MO 64999-0010
|||

0000 0000000 0000000000 00000000 0000

What you need to do immediately—continued

If you agree with the changes we made—continued

- If you can't pay the amount due, pay as much as you can now and make payment arrangements that allow you to pay off the rest over time. Visit www.irs.gov and search for keyword: "tax payment options" for more information about:
 - Installment and payment agreements—download required forms or save time and money by applying online if you qualify
 - Automatic deductions from your bank account
 - Payroll deductions
 - Credit card payments
 Or, call us at 1-999-999-9999 to discuss your options.

If you don't agree with the changes

- Call 1-999-999-9999 to review your account. You can also contact us by mail. Fill out the Contact information section, detach, and send it to us with any correspondence or documentation.
- If we don't hear from you, we'll assume you agree with the information in this notice.

If you've already paid your balance in full within the past 14 days or made payment arrangements, please disregard this notice.


If we don't hear from you

If you don't pay \$24.60 by March 23, 2009, interest will increase and additional penalties may apply.

Additional information

- Visit www.irs.gov/cp21a.
- For tax forms, instructions, and publications, visit www.irs.gov or call 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).
- Keep this notice for your records.

If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us.

 **IRS**

James Hinds
22 Boulder Street
Hanson, CT 00000-7253

Notice CP21A
Notice date March 2, 2009
Social Security number 999-99-9999

Contact information

If your address has changed, please call 1-999-999-9999 or visit www.irs.gov.

Please check here if you've included any correspondence. Write your Social Security number (999-99-9999), the tax year (2004), and the form number (1040) on any correspondence.

Primary phone a.m. p.m. Best time to call Secondary phone a.m. p.m. Best time to call

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
KANSAS CITY, MO 64999-0010
|||

Examples of non-plain language

From a letter to a body donor

Dear _____,

The receipt of your pre-death whole body donation consent form is acknowledged.

Why does plain language work?

1. Lifestyle – we are busier than ever
2. Biology – we read in patterns

It doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter are in the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem.

How to apply plain language

The goal is **clear**, **concise** and **scannable**

- Include only what the audience needs
- Organize so key information is featured
- Use descriptive headings and white space
- Avoid acronyms, jargon and odd capitalization
- Use personal pronouns

Clear, concise and scannable

Texas.gov



Texas Department of Public Safety
Driver License Division
Driver License Renewal and Change of Address



Welcome

Welcome to the Texas Driver License Renewal and Change of Address system.

Services

- Renew your driver license and/or identification (ID) card
- Change the address on your driver license and/or ID card

What You Need



A printer to print your temporary driver license or ID, which is valid for 45 days. If you do not have a printer, you can renew by phone: 1-866-DL-RENEW (1-866-357-3639)

- A valid credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express)
- Your current Texas driver license or ID card
- Your Social Security number

Fees

- Renewal of driver license (with or without changing address): \$25
- Renewal of ID (with or without changing address): \$16
- Renewal of driver license with motorcycle (with or without changing address): \$33
- Change of address only for driver license or ID: \$11

This online service is provided by Texas.gov, the official website of Texas. The price of this service includes funds that support the ongoing operations and enhancements of Texas.gov, which is provided by a third party in partnership with the State.

[Continue](#)

Information

Steps to Complete

1. Welcome
2. Login
3. Select Services
4. Enter Address
5. Select Options
6. Review Order
7. Submit Payment
8. Receipt

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility
Where's My License or ID?
En Español

Clear, concise and scannable

Hennepin.us

Absentee voting

You can vote early by using an absentee ballot, instead of voting in person at the polling place on Election Day.

[Check absentee ballot status for state or federal elections](#)

[Online absentee ballot request](#)

Contact

hc.vote@hennepin.us

Phone: 612-348-5151

Fax: 612-348-2151

300 South 6th Street

012 skyway level - Government

Center

Minneapolis, MN 55487

M-F, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

[Map](#)

[Expand all information](#)

+ Vote by mail

+ Vote in person

+ Vote by agent

+ Military and overseas voters

+ Frequently asked questions

[Collapse all information](#)

Clear, concise and scannable

Suburban
Hospital
Johns
Hopkins



Clear, concise and scannable

Suburban Hospital Johns Hopkins

my health care notebook

Why?

Being an active part of your health care team helps you feel better and helps you get even better care. Starting on Day 1, you can keep track of important information and questions. **My health care notebook** helps you stay informed about your care and prepares you for going home.

Who?

This is your notebook, so start using it right away. If you don't feel well, your family care partner can start using it. Ask your nurse if you need help with information you do not know.

When?

Use **my health care notebook** from the start to help staff get to know you and to record important information.

How?

- **Fill out my health care notebook** where you can.
- **Talk** to your health care team.
- **Write down** any questions you have.
- **Use** the back pocket of this folder for important information sheets, such as your



What's Inside?

My health care team 3

my medicine while i am in the hospital

When you are in the hospital

- Ask your nurse about any medicine you don't recognize.
- If you want, your nurse can give you a list of the medicines you are taking in the hospital. The list may include medicines you will not take when you go home.

When you go home

- The medicine you take may change.
- Look at your **After Visit Summary (AVS)** to know what medicine you must stop and what you must take.
- Only take medicine listed on your **After Visit Summary (AVS)** until you talk to your primary care physician.
- Before you leave, review your medicine with your nurse and ask questions.

My medicine questions for my nurse, physician or hospital pharmacist



Is it jargon?

If the county agency finds that an individual has received a payment to which the individual was not entitled, whether or not the payment was due to the person's fault or misrepresentation, the individual shall be liable to repay the county the total sum of the payment to which the individual was not entitled.

Is it jargon?

Rewritten:

If the county agency finds that it gave you money you were not meant to have, you must pay it all back.

How to develop an effective program

- **Make a commitment**
 - Official policy and dedicated staff

- **Build capacity**
 - Resources and training for front-line staff

How to develop an effective program

- **Interact with your audiences**
 - Promote program and encourage feedback

- **Keep the ball rolling**
 - Continue to engage front-line staff
 - Evaluate and improve

Plain language resources

- www.plainlanguage.gov
Federal plain language information
- www.centerforplainlanguage.org
National plain language organization
- www.hennepin.us/writingguide
Hennepin County resource with writing tips and information on plain language

Questions

- You may ask a question using the questions box on the right side of the webinar window



Thank You for participating

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