

Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project



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Webinar: Getting to Parity – Language Access

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Readclearly.org and Writeclearly.org and the Role of Plain Language in Meaningful Language Access and the Translation Process

Anna Steele – Director of Consulting, Just-Tech

If we aren't going to present our material in a way that is not readable we might as well as present it in a language they don't even speak.



When approaching a document you want to make sure your audience can understand it quickly and easily. Often people have language issues, or are just too busy to dissect dense legal sounding mumbo jumbo.

Keep sentences short, avoid passive voice, avoid legalize and larger words (wherefore, etc) Also try and display things visually with illustrations, bullet points and short paragraphs.

WriteClearly

This project was created to check your web content for plain language. Simply put the bookmark on your bar and click it to test for readability. Will go through sentence by sentence and tell you to remove certain words, use gender neutral language, shorten sentences etc.

The screenshot displays the OpenAdvocate WriteClearly tool interface. At the top, the text being analyzed is "Should I file for bankruptcy?". Below this, a summary states: "Bankruptcy is usually considered a last resort option. You should only file for bankruptcy after careful consideration of your options. If it is the best way to deal with your financial problems, filing for bankruptcy may be for you. This article cannot explain every aspect of the bankruptcy process. If you still have questions after reading it, you should speak with a bankruptcy lawyer." To the right of the text are buttons for "Print", "PDF", and "Scan".

Below the summary, a section titled "What is bankruptcy?" contains a numbered list item: "#1 Bankruptcy is a legal proceeding in which a person who cannot pay his or her bills can get a fresh financial start. The right to file for bankruptcy is provided by federal law, and all bankruptcy cases are handled in federal court. Filing bankruptcy immediately stops all of your creditors from seeking to collect debts from you, until your debts are sorted out according to the law."

At the bottom, a dark navigation bar shows "OpenAdvocate WriteClearly" and "0 of 25 Go" with navigation buttons for "First", "Previous", "Next", "Last", and "Close". Below the navigation bar, a large green box displays a readability score of "5.94" with the subtext "Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level" and a "Give us Feedback" link. To the right of the score is a "Suggestion Summary: Shorten long sentences. Replace complex words with simpler alternatives. Try using gender-neutral language. Avoid underlines." and a purple "See suggestions" button. At the bottom of the green box is a quote: "If you can't explain something simply, you don't understand it well." – Albert Einstein.

ReadClearly

This is a plain language glossary for websites. Lets you swap out words easily with more simple words and phrases.

What Is A Home Mortgage?

A home mortgage is a debt secured against your house. If you do not make the payments required by your mortgage agreement, your lender can try to take your home. The lender does this by starting a foreclosure action against you in Supreme Court.

What If I Start To Fall Behind on My Mortgage Payments?

Once you miss a few mortgage payments, the lender will contact you to tell you that you are behind (in default). After missing the terms of the mortgage current. If you do not proceed with the proceeding.

At least 90 days before notice. The notice will give you the names and telephone numbers of approved not-for-profit housing counselors.

A pledge of specific property as security for the payment of a debt. The mortgagor is the person who pledges the property. The mortgagee accepts the pledge.

español

How Can A Housing Counselor Help Me?

Housing counselors can give you advice on your options at little or no cost. They may also negotiate with your lender. A list of approved not-for-profit housing foreclosure counselors can be found at the New York State Department of Banking web site (www.dfs.ny.gov/consumer/mortg_nys_np_counseling_agencies.htm). If you want to save your home, it's a good idea to call a counselor for help right away.

The tool also allows you to create a “tooltip” to explain the definition of complicated words both in English and Spanish (for example)

Legal Aid Services in Hawaii

Sergio Alcubilla – Director of External Relations, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii

25.5% of population speak a language other than English at home. At least 130 languages are spoken in the state mainly Tagalog, Ilocano, and Japanese. The most high demand interpreted languages are Chuukese, Ilocano and Marshallese.

The Legal Aid Services org in Hawaii managed to translate some of their legal information videos in several different languages. (Some in Marshallese, Ilocano etc.)

On the Hawaii Legal Services Portal people can go to get directed to the right place. An issue they have had is getting this site read by people in many different languages

Current LEP Projects

Project Goal: The overall impact and goal of this project will be to provide Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities a greater sense of meaningful inclusion in LASH's many access to justice initiatives and technology based resources.

Many of LASH's clients come from LEP communities that are denied access to legal resources due to language barriers.

Improving Online Accessibility to legal resources for the state's growing LEP client populations by increasing language access

Work with the Hawaii state judiciary and it's office on Equality and Access to the courts and other partners to determine the best languages for translation. Translate LawHelp Hawaii website into at least three other languages.

Create Standard Language about legal aid services and available resources that other programs can utilize on their state websites.

conducting outreach and education to increase the LEP community's awareness of these resources through the use of social media platforms

Outreach and Community Surveys

Community navigators: our community respects known advocates, meaning we believe whatever they tell us

Main communication is "word of mouth" through churches, through that extended family events, and Facebook; the most popular media to connect to other fellow COFA members.

Owning an electronic device is a challenge for many of our LEP clients. Majority of the surveyed individuals possess smartphones and very few own a desktop or laptop at home.

Airport Lawyer

Takao Yamada – CO-Founder, Airportlawyer.org

Airport Lawyer helps people sort Visa issues at the airport. It was announced after the travel ban started by the Trump Organization. This tool was created to address issues as airports and to do work that would otherwise need to be done by individuals.



نحن نضمن للمهاجرين معاملة منصفة في المطارات

أوقفت محكمة فدرالية مؤقتًا حظر السفر الغير قانوني الذي أصدره الرئيس ترامب. فأصبح الآن يُسمح لمواطني الدول السبع التي كانت محظورة سابقًا بدخول الولايات المتحدة. محامونا المتطوعون يسعون لضمان معاملة منصفة للمهاجرين لدى وصولهم إذا كنت تعرف أحد المهاجرين أو اللاجئين القادمين الى مطار من مطارات الولايات المتحدة، استخدم تطبيقنا

Since this is a tool specifically for non native users as well as English speakers, the language has to be very simple. The site has to be well translated etc. This had to work both on desktops AND mobile devices. Phones are the biggest user of the site. The site was designed knowing people don't want to enter too much personal information, and designed knowing the more questions you ask the more people you lose in the process.

Immi.org

Zizi Bandera – Community Engagement Coordinator, Immigration Advocates Network

Immi is a free online tool that helps immigrants in the US understand their legal options. Users fill out an online questionnaire that takes 10-30 minutes. They are then provided with personalized results explaining their immigration options that they may qualify for, as well as potential risks.

Problem: Users struggle to quickly access and understand content that is relevant to them

This platform requires so many inputs from users that many do not complete the survey, and it's difficult to find answers for specific questions by browsing the website. It's not immediately clear to users that the site is credible or privacy safe.

Design Challenge: Redesign immi.org to better support user goals

Make it easier to discover personalized recommendations by streamlining user workflows, and optimizing the navigation for quick access to critical content. Emphasize Immi's credibility in order to build trust and confidence among new users.

Methods:

- 2 rounds of semi structured exploratory interviews
- Made design changes with round 1 findings
- Tested changes during round 2
- Implemented round 2 findings

Content Principles

- Build trust with the users
- Set expectations for what Immi does and doesn't do
- Use positive, human language
- Avoid legal jargon – or use only when needed

Key Findings:

- Add information about the organization behind the site to the homepage
- Reassure that their data is anonymous and secure
- Include a physical address for the organization
- Modify the Spanish copy to be simpler and easy to understand
- New tagline was effective

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