Reaching your readers

A field testing guide for community groups

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Table of contents

Introduction

Who this guide is for

This guide is for community groups, advocacy groups, and self-help organizations that are planning, writing, and designing publications.

You are probably already field testing your publications informally. Asking someone in your office to read a draft of a brochure that you are writing for your organization is field testing. So is sitting down at the kitchen table with a few people and brainstorming about how to design a poster about spousal abuse so that doctors will put it on the wall in their offices.

Field testing is when you show a publication that you are developing to a group of people representing your intended readers. You ask them for feedback about the readability and usefulness of the material. Then, as much as possible, you take their comments into account for the finished version of the publication.

This guide will help you plan your field testing so that you get meaningful feedback from your readers about your publications, no matter what the format, or whether you plan to publish in print or post online.

Field testing will improve your materials and help you reach your readers.

Field testing

Chapter 1

Field testing is a way of checking with your readers to see whether or not the material you are producing is useful to them. Field testing is also sometimes called usability testing or evaluating your material.

Field testing is easy to do, and it can be fun. It is also inexpensive — you don't need a lot of money or complicated equipment to field test a publication in your community. It can be as simple as sitting down at a table with your publication and a group of readers.

While you can field test almost anything, in this guide we focus on field testing publications to be printed and/or put on the Internet. These publications include guides, booklets, brochures, etc.

You may be concerned about what your publication contains. Does it have the right information? Is it confusing? You may also be concerned about its appearance. Does it look interesting? Is the design logical for the reader?

Field testing will help you answer these questions, and more.

Why do you test?

Field testing is an important part of the publication process. When you field test a publication you are developing, you can find out whether the people who are going to use it will get the information they need. You can also field test an existing publication to find out how it is being used, and what changes could improve it.

If you talk to the people who are going to be (or who are) using your publication, they will tell you if it is useful to them. Readers can answer questions to help you assess whether they understand the material. Field testing can also give you information about important audience preferences. For example, readers can tell you whether they prefer to read the publication in print or online. Some preferences may be quite specific, such as a request for a larger font size.

Field testing will also help you figure out if you have offended readers in any way. When you are producing a publication, the tone, the words, or the pictures could inadvertently exclude people. For example, your publication could be racist if it assumes that everyone reading it is white and, as a result, excludes other ethnocultural groups. It could be insensitive to people with disabilities if it doesn't say whether the locations you have listed are accessible. It could be homophobic if you have assumed that your audience is only heterosexual when you are talking about family issues.

Field testing can be empowering for readers. If they are part of the process of developing or revising a publication, they will feel ownership of the publication when it appears in final form. It can also empower you — the process can help demonstrate (to a funder, for example) the results that you have been able to achieve.

What do you test?

Written communication involves more than just words. You will be evaluating the tone and the language of the publication as well as the actual written content. You will also be looking at the organization to find out if the material is in the right order and makes sense to the reader. When you field test, you can find out the following:

- Does your publication look friendly?
- Does it make sense?
- Are there words that are too complicated (or too simple)?
- Does it contain the right amount of information?
- Is it organized in a way that the readers can easily find the information they need?
- Is the tone appropriate for the audience?
- Is the appearance accessible? — the size, the colour, the graphics?
- Is the format appropriate?
- Have you tried to write something for too many different audiences?

Why use this guide?

Successful field testing takes some planning, just as producing a publication does. By the time that you have read this guide, you should be able to:

- understand the advantages and disadvantages of each testing method,
- decide which method you want to use to test your publication,
- conduct the field testing in your community,
- assess the feedback that you receive from the field testing,
- improve your publications, and
- reach your readers.

In summary, if you involve your readers in field testing, you will have a publication that truly meets their needs. Let us show you how.

Where to start

Chapter 2

In this chapter, we talk about how to get started when you have decided to field test a publication.

You will first need to decide which type of field testing you want to do. In this guide, we cover five different methods of field testing. Each of the chapters from 3 to 7 explores one of these methods and elaborates on its advantages, its disadvantages, and the time and resources needed.

In this chapter, we give you a quick overview of the five methods. Then, we discuss the following steps to take, no matter which method of field testing you decide to use:

- identify your target audience,
- find people willing to test the materials,
- do any pre-testing,
- ensure confidentiality, and
- plan your approach.

Methods of field testing

Here is a quick description of the five different methods of field testing. You may decide to use only one of the following methods or a combination of them:

- **Group testing.** You bring together people who represent the audience (the readers) of the publication and have a structured discussion about it, including its organization, appearance, and general content.
- **Individual testing.** You ask individuals to read the material and then talk to them to see if they can understand the specific content of the publication, or find answers within it.
- **Questionnaires.** You prepare a list of questions about the publication and ask readers to answer the questions on paper (or online), or to answer verbally while you write down their answers.
- **Talking aloud.** You ask readers to read the material and describe it in their own words out loud, to identify areas that may be unclear.
- **Site testing.** Usually, this means you photocopy or print limited copies of the publication and try it out in various locations where you intend to distribute it.

Identify your target audience

You first have to identify your target audience. Most likely, you will already have done this when you gathered information before you started writing. Keep in mind that you should have only one primary target audience. You may have one or more secondary audiences.

For example, is your primary target audience:

- women who are separating?
- tenants throughout the province?
- Aboriginal peoples?
- people with low incomes?
- seniors?
- street kids?
- people entering long-term care?

Try to be as specific as you can about your target audience. Think about age, family status, ethnocultural background, historical factors, gender, sexual orientation, geographical location, economic condition, and legal problems. For example, if you are producing a pamphlet about the rights of women with low incomes in Port Alberni, you don't need to include women from Vancouver in your field testing. You may also need to consider the literacy level of the people who participate.

There may be more than one category of people in your primary audience. For example, if you are field testing a sample tenancy agreement, you need to test it on both tenants and landlords.

If you have a primary target audience (e.g., people who are receiving disability benefits) and a secondary audience (e.g., community advocates who serve clients on disability benefits), you may wish to do field testing with both. If you are doing group testing, you need to identify the possible advantages and disadvantages of testing these two audiences at the same time. What you decide will depend on the nature of the audiences — in some cases, such as with self-advocates, the audiences overlap.

While clients can tell you how they use the publication and if they find it useful, field testing with community workers can allow you to explore additional areas. These workers can tell you what clients have said to them about their needs. For example, their clients might have told them they need a booklet that "looks credible" so that they can show it to the person who makes decisions about benefits. Or, their clients might want the information “all in one place” so they don’t lose it. Field testing can also tell you what the community workers themselves prefer. For example, they may have problems downloading a publication from the Internet because they have older computers, or they can’t afford the cost of paper, etc.

Find people

It may be difficult for you to know where to find people willing to participate in the testing. It is very important that you find the people who represent your target audience.

You can contact other community groups, church groups, service organizations, or self-help or advocacy groups to see if they can help you find people. If you are concerned about the difficulty of the language, there may be literacy groups, ESL classes, or refugee organizations who can organize testing groups. If you are writing a pamphlet on welfare rights, a welfare advocacy group in your community may be able to help you.

If other community groups have participated in the earlier planning stages of the publication, it may be easier to ask them to help find people to field test the material. They will have a sense of ownership about the publication if they have been involved from the beginning.

However, if you haven’t already included such groups, it is still possible to involve them in your field testing. We have found that people are quite willing to help improve a publication that will be useful to them or to people who they work with.

It is important to offer to recognize the participants’ contribution in some way. Government and industry often pay groups to give them feedback on publications. As a community group, you may not have any money to offer participants. However, you may be able to offer something else. Do you provide legal information? You could offer the group a workshop on a legal topic relevant to them. Do you have other publications that you have produced? You could provide participants with free resource materials. You very likely have some skills, services, or resources that would be useful to any community group that helps you organize the testing.

Of course, participants must always feel that their involvement in the field testing process is truly voluntary. Never pressure someone to be involved.

Will you need information about the participants?

You may want to get some personal information about the participants so that later you can describe the field testing and review where the feedback came from. This information can help you decide if you have reached enough people, or people from enough different communities, to accurately assess your publication's effectiveness.

You may want a record of the participants' gender, age, education, income, occupation, or where they live, for example. You may choose to collect this kind of data if it will help you make decisions about the publication. For example, age may be relevant to a publication for seniors. You may find that older seniors have different responses to the publication and that their information needs are different from those of younger seniors.

As well, asking people what personal experience they have had with your topic could provide useful perspective when analyzing how well they were able to understand your material.

You can collect information by asking the participants questions, or by giving them a form to fill out. Explain to them that this is voluntary: they should only answer the questions they are comfortable with. Tell them clearly why you need the information, what you will be using it for, and that it will be kept confidential.

Plan when to collect data about the participants. You may want to collect it at the beginning of the field testing, or at the end. People doing the field testing sometimes prefer to collect the data at the end, when trust has been established.

Never collect personal data for its own sake. If you don't know what you are going to do with data, don't ask for it. You may also decide that collecting this data is too formal or too sensitive.

BC's Personal Information Protection Act sets out how BC organizations, including non-profit organizations, may collect, use, and disclose personal information about individuals. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act applies to public bodies in BC. For more information, go to www.oipcbc.org.

Do any pre-testing

Before the field testing, send a letter (or e-mail) to the participants thanking them for agreeing to attend, and letting them know what to expect. You may want to send participants the publication you are testing in advance as well. This is a good idea if you are dealing with a long publication. If you do this, be sure to bring extra copies to the field testing session in case participants forget to bring their copies. If possible, you may wish to send the questions you will ask as well, so they have a chance to think about them. When sending a publication electronically, make sure that the participants will be able to print it out if they want to.

If you wish to pre-test an online publication, make sure the participants know you are focusing on the particular publication, not on the whole website.

In some instances, you may wish to field test a publication that is both in print and online. Depending on how great the difference is between reading the two versions, you may want to test each one separately.

Ensure confidentiality

Community groups work with vulnerable people and sensitive issues, such as women who have been abused, people with AIDS/HIV, and refugees who don't have landed immigrant status. Confidentiality is important in field testing, both when you are contacting potential participants and when you are running the tests. As well, if you are writing up the results of the field testing — for a funder for example — you want to ensure that the participants remain anonymous.

You need to decide how you will protect the field testers' confidentiality. For example, you may want to assign a code to each participant. You can:

- use made-up names, or
- use numbers, letters, or a combination of both.

Write these codes on the front of comments from groups, questionnaires, etc. If participants name people, places, or things that could identify them, protect their confidentiality by removing or changing these references later, especially if you are writing a project report.

At the start of any field testing session, emphasize that:

- what the participants say is confidential,
- the results of the field testing won't identify participants by name — nobody will know "who said what," and
- participants won't be contacted again by your group, and you won't pass on their names to anyone else.

Don't discuss the participants' comments with other participants, or with anyone who isn't directly involved in the testing.

Plan your approach

Give thought to how you can create a comfortable and friendly environment for the participants.

Create a comfortable environment

Make certain that everyone who is doing the field testing recognizes that the participants are the experts. After all, you are asking them to tell you if the material works and how it can be improved, and then acting on their opinion.

When you first approach potential participants, explain the same thing to them as well. There are no right or wrong answers: they are the experts. It is the material being tested, not them! Mention this at the start of testing and again at the end of testing.

When you meet with the participants, also discuss with them what you will do with their comments (but explain that you might not be able to incorporate all of their suggestions into the final publication).

Create a friendly environment

If you can afford it, provide coffee/tea/juice and muffins, or even pizza. You also need a budget to cover the cost of bus fare, parking, and childcare.

In some cases, you may want to acknowledge the contribution of the participants (or their organization) in the publication itself. If you wish to do this, ask the permission of the participants and explain exactly what will happen if they give permission.

Do remind the participants that the copy of the publication being tested isn't final, so it shouldn't be circulated. However, let them know when the material will be published and invite them to sign up for a free copy, or give the telephone number or e-mail address they can contact to request one.

Group testing

Chapter 3

Group testing gives you general information about a group's impressions of a publication. You can gather opinions on such elements as the organization, appearance, and general content of the publication. To test whether or not someone understands the content, you will want to do individual testing (see chapter 4).

How to do group testing

For group testing, you organize groups of people who represent the potential audience of the publication. You then bring them together for a structured discussion about the publication. A facilitator encourages the group to talk about the material.

When you have identified who your testers should be, decide how many people you want in each group. The groups can vary in size.

There is no set rule for the number of groups that you should conduct. You have to be realistic about how many groups you can get together. However, if you find that the response to your publication varies a great deal, you might want to conduct more groups than if the participants' responses seem to be consistent.

Advantages

- Group testing is fairly easy to do; it isn't expensive or too time consuming.
- It provides good information on how the group feels about the publication.
- The group discussion format encourages active participation.
- The process involves members of the target audience in the development process.

Disadvantages

- It doesn't tell you if individual participants understood the publication, or if they could answer specific questions or solve their problems after reading it.
- The process may not capture the views of all the participants; therefore, you have to use your judgment in assessing their comments.

- The members of the group may influence each other's comments. It isn't a natural environment — you don't read a publication in a group.
- This method could be cumbersome for testing online publications.

How to develop the test

You need to write questions for the participants that can best draw out comments and helpful opinions.

When planning the questions, talk to the writer, editor, and designer about their concerns when they were developing the material. This will give you insight into potential problem areas that you may want to discuss with the group. Did the writer or editor have difficulty with the tone of the publication; might it be too patronizing, too bureaucratic? Was the graphic designer concerned about the size of the publication; should it be smaller or a different shape?

You will want to cover all of the different facets of the publication. Categories could include the following:

- **Information**. Does the publication have the appropriate content?
- **Organization**. Is the information structured in the best order?
- **Language**. Are the words and explanations easy to understand?
- **Audience**. Is the tone suitable for the readers?
- **Appearance**. Is the design appealing and accessible?
- **Format**. Is the size of the publication appropriate? Should the publication be in print and/or online?

Organize your questions into the different categories to help guide the discussion efficiently. Remember to phrase questions in an easy-to-answer way.

For specific examples of questions you might use for group testing, see "Appendix A: Questions for group testing."

Conduct the session

Set a time and place for the group to meet to discuss the publication. Allow about two hours per group.

It is useful to have two people conducting each group. One person can be the facilitator, actively involved in asking questions and guiding the discussion. Another person can record the comments of the group on the question sheet and on a draft of the publication.

The recorder will be listening and watching and won't be actively involved.

If you have a tape recorder, it is helpful to also record the discussion because you may miss important points if you rely on your written comments. However, always ask the group for permission before you use a tape recorder. If anyone is uncomfortable, just take notes instead.

The facilitator doesn't have to be an expert on the subject matter being discussed, but it is important that she or he:

- lead the discussion and not be led by the group,
- get responses from the participants without reacting to their opinions, and
- emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers.

Begin by handing out the publication (if you haven't already sent it out). Give the group time to read it. Before they start, acknowledge that people read at different speeds, and that everyone should feel free to take the time he or she needs.

Encourage the participants to mark up their copies of the publication as they read it. Give them these suggestions:

- Circle words you don't like or don't understand.
- Use a question mark where you are confused.
- Give a check mark to parts you like.
- Cross out parts that you think aren't needed.

If you are working with online copy, encourage the members of the group to take notes as they read.

After people have finished reading, you can begin asking your questions. Keep the discussion moving and keep it on track. However, remember that the questions you have developed are mainly a guide for the discussion; you don't have to follow them exactly. Try to be flexible. Relax and enjoy the conversation.

After the discussion

Review the comments using the marked-up copies of the publication, the comments that have been written down by the recorder, and the tape recording if you have one. Even if you have a tape recording, don't wait too long after the discussion to do this. It is much easier when the discussion is still fresh in your mind.

Chapter 4

Individual testing

The purpose of individual testing is to find out if an individual understands the content of your publication. The emphasis in individual testing is on content and organization. You use it to see if people can find the information they need.

How to do individual testing

You can work one-on-one or in a group for individual testing. You can do this testing in the following two ways:

- Make up a story or scenario that includes a problem and ask someone to imagine that he or she is experiencing that particular situation. Then ask the person to use the material to find the answers he or she needs to deal with the problem.
- Have the person read the publication and then ask questions to see if he or she understands it or can find the answers.

In a group, you have two options: you can give different group members different stories, or you can give group members the same story. The groups we have worked with indicated that they preferred to all work on the same story, because that made the discussion afterward more interesting.

In some instances, you may choose to work with people who are actually experiencing the problems your publication addresses. If this is the case, think about whether taking part in the testing will be a positive or negative experience for them.

Advantages

- Individual testing comes closer than other forms of testing to a real situation. In this kind of testing, you focus on the fact that your audience will use your publication in response to specific needs.
- All you need for individual testing is one or more people who are willing to review the material from the user's point of view. You don't have to arrange to bring a group of people together at the same time.
- One-on-one testing works for material in print or online.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to assess to what extent the people testing the material drew upon prior knowledge to deal with the problem, and to what extent they found the information in the material. This is why it can be useful to ask questions to find out what the participants know before reading the publication.
- It can be difficult to capture how the readers will deal with real-life problems. The essential difference between the scenario and the real problem is that the scenario is imaginary. It doesn't encompass the emotional stress a real reader is under when trying to deal with a problem.
- You may find that with individual testing, the participant wants to revert to a discussion of some personal issue that is unrelated to the scenario. For a whole range of possible reasons, the participant may not be ready to enter into the imaginative process of the scenario.
- While equally inexpensive, one-on-one testing may take longer to do than the group testing, depending on the total amount of people you want to involve.

How to develop the test

First, create the scenarios or questions that pose problems to be solved. Then, write follow-up questions to explore how useful your publication was. These questions could focus on specific content, organization, clarity, and overall usefulness. See "Appendix B: Questions for individual testing" for some examples.

Some of the following scenarios were developed to test a booklet about family law. The purpose of the booklet was to explain the services available.

- "My ex took off with someone else and left me with no money to pay the rent and feed the kids. Needless to say, we aren't on speaking terms. I want to know what my rights are for getting money out of him. These are his kids as well as mine, and it isn't right that he should be able to just get out of all responsibilities."
- "We've been together for eight years, and we've gone through some rough patches. Lately, the rough patches seem to be happening more and more often. It's bad for me when my partner gets violent. I can't take it much longer. I think I have to leave. I'm afraid that my partner will hurt the children if I stay."

- “Things just weren’t working out, and we broke up last Christmas. We didn’t make anything legal, but he agreed to give me a cheque each month, for me and the baby. I’m not working at the moment. On what I make when I do work, I wouldn’t be able to afford a sitter, and anyway the baby needs me. Last month he cut the amount of the cheque in half. He’s heard I’ve got a new boyfriend. He says he isn’t going to give me money just so I can party. What can I do?”
- “Last year, I found out that my spouse was having an affair with someone at work. We had a huge argument and I moved out. But now I’ve heard via the grapevine that they’ve broken up. The affair didn’t go anywhere after all. I’ve been thinking we might be able to get back together again. I’m not sure, but I think my spouse might be willing to give it another go, too. I think it would be best if we could get some help to work things out. Where can I go?”
- “My children were apprehended because of problems with my relationship with my husband on the reserve. The band social worker recommended that the children stay with their grandmother on the reserve. I want to move off the reserve, but my husband doesn’t want the children to leave the community. What are my rights?”
- “I’ve left my husband and I am now living with my lover, who is a woman. I have a custody order for the two children who live with my lover and me. My husband has access every other weekend. He has recently found out that I am a lesbian and is threatening to get custody of the children. Can he do this?”

Conduct the session

Explain the purpose of the session. Introduce yourself and explain the roles of facilitator and recorder. If you want to use a tape recorder, ask permission. If you think taping may be inhibiting, have the recorder take notes of the conversation. Explain your rules about confidentiality and what you will do with the participant’s information and responses.

Explain the purpose of the material. Who is it being written for? How do you hope it will help them? What will the readers do with the information?

Describe the scenarios and/or ask the questions you have prepared, and record the responses.

After the session

Review the comments that have been written down by the recorder, and the tape recording if you have one. Even if you have a tape recording, don't wait too long after the session to do this. It is much easier when the session is still fresh in your mind.

Chapter 5

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a set of questions to test the reader's reactions to the publication. You can ask questions about content, organization, and usefulness as in individual or group testing. Usually you distribute questionnaires to people who have agreed in advance to take part in the testing.

How to use a questionnaire

You can administer a questionnaire in two ways:

- You can supply it to people to fill out in their own time.
- You can ask people the questions yourself.

When you use a questionnaire that people fill out themselves, you ask readers to review the material on their own and complete the questionnaire within a specified time. The readers can mail, e-mail, or fax it back; they can drop it off or you can pick it up.

You can prepare a questionnaire for the primary audience for your material. You could also prepare another one for the secondary audience, such as community workers.

Advantages

- You can reach more people with questionnaires than you can with any of the other methods.
- People who fill out the questionnaire don't need to identify themselves.
- Questionnaires don't have to cost much money, especially if you can e-mail them to the participants or if they can be posted on your organization's website.
- They can be a good way of reaching readers who can't come to you. For example, questionnaires can reach more people in rural and remote areas.
- You don't need to invest the same amount of time as with group or individual field testing sessions.
- Questionnaires are suitable for testing print or online publications.

Disadvantages

- You can miss out on gathering unanticipated information.
- The answers may be less detailed than those you receive using conversational methods.
- If you send out a questionnaire, you can't expect that everyone will complete it. Or, it may be returned to you too late. To allow for these gaps and delays, you have to "over-recruit" — ask more people to complete the questionnaire than you think you really need.
- You can have a certain amount of bias in the comments, because they come from people who were interested enough to review the materials, complete the questionnaire, and return it to you. This may take more commitment than showing up for a group that you organize.
- If you just send out a questionnaire rather than conduct a session, you miss out on any interaction among the participants. However, an e-mailed survey can allow for online discussion.

Types of questionnaires

Questions can be worded in various ways and responses can be made different ways. These include open-ended questions, closed questions, and scaled items. You can use just one approach, or a combination of them.

For a sample questionnaire using all three approaches, see "Appendix C: Sample questionnaire."

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions ask for the reader's opinion; the reader can write in any answer that he or she wants. Open-ended questions take more time for the participant to fill out. They can also be more time-consuming to categorize when you analyze the results. The following are examples of open-ended questions:

- How do the pictures make you feel?
- Which sections are difficult to understand?

Closed questions

Closed questions ask the participant to choose from a set of responses. It is easier to analyze a questionnaire with closed questions. However, you limit what you will find out about the publication because you may not be able to anticipate all the responses. The following are examples of closed questions:

- Do you like the colour of the cover? ❑ Yes ❑ No
- Do you find the publication difficult to read?
  - ❑ Yes
  - ❑ No
  - ❑ Some sections

Scaled items

Scaled items present a choice of responses on a scale of excellent to poor. By allowing for different degrees of response, they offer a fairly accurate assessment of someone's opinion.

The usual format is a statement or question followed by a scale of potential responses. You usually provide five responses from high to low with one that is neutral or in the middle category. The following is an example of a scaled-item question:

- This publication is:
  - ❑ Too difficult
  - ❑ Difficult, but I can understand it
  - ❑ Just right
  - ❑ Easy to read, but appropriate
  - ❑ Too easy

How to develop the questionnaire

You need to decide what you want to know about your publication. Those of you who are involved in the writing, editing, and production of the material may each have different questions. List the major items; then, develop a set of questions and number them. Make sure you ask what you need to know, and no more.

Decide if you want to use open-ended or closed questions or scaled (ranked) items.

- What do you want to hear opinions and suggestions about (open-ended questions)?
- What do you want to hear "yes" or "no" about (closed questions)?
- What do you want to hear ranked opinions about (scaled items)?

Go over each question again. Is each question clear? Is it one question only? (Don't combine two questions in one.) Take out or rewrite those questions that are unclear, repetitive, or unnecessary.

Administer the questionnaire

Decide how you are going to distribute your questionnaire. Do you want people to come to where you are and fill it out there? Will you ask the questions and write down the answers? Do you want to drop it off with your readers or mail it out? Can you e-mail it, or provide it on your website?

If you distribute printed questionnaires, think about how people will return them. If you are sending them in the mail, you may want to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. If you are dropping them off, picking them up yourself may make for a better return rate. Providing a fax number for the participants is another option. Follow-up phone calls or e-mails may also increase the number of returns.

You may distribute your own questionnaire by e-mail or you may want to consider using one of the many tools available for creating an online survey. With these programs, you design the survey online, which can be as simple as adding your own questions to a template. Then you can either post the survey on your website or e-mail the link to your participants. One advantage of these programs is that they can sort the results; for example, you can choose to have the survey responses grouped by question. However, you need to have an adequate e-mail list or a well-frequented website to be able to benefit from online surveys.

Pre-test the questionnaire

Before you distribute your questionnaire to all your readers, try it out with a sample of participants. This is your pre-test.

To do this, locate some people with characteristics similar to those who will fill out the questionnaire.

After the pre-test, interview the people doing the pre-test and find out if they understood each question. People may understand the material they are reviewing but not your questions! Discuss what you found out in the pre-test. Remove and add questions as needed.

Analyze your response rate

Once you have sent out your questionnaire, you will want to have a response rate of greater than 50%. A response rate of 70% is very good for a questionnaire. Consider whether the responses of the people who failed to return the questionnaires would change your results. Usually, if your return rate is over 60%, the questionnaires of the non-respondents wouldn't have affected the results.

Talking aloud

Chapter 6

Talking aloud is a way to see how readers read the material, and how they respond to specific sections of it. This method asks readers to read the publication and describe in their own words anything that isn't clear in the publication.

How to use talking aloud

For this method, you ask participants to read sentences, paragraphs, or sections, and talk to you about passages that could be better written. You can use this method with individuals, but groups can be more informative, as people can interact with one another.

Advantages

- Talking aloud can provide clear information about parts of the material that make too many demands upon the reader. It can also draw out advice about what parts of the material are unnecessary or misleading.
- This method is fairly easy to prepare and not expensive.
- Talking aloud group testing doesn't have to be too time consuming.
- If you are working with participants individually, this method is fine for testing online publications.

Disadvantages

- For participants to have a good time using the most detailed version of this method, they need to be comfortable talking about language. If your readers would feel intimidated, this isn't the best testing approach.
- You can only look at fairly small pieces of the material at a time.

How to develop the test

You need to identify the key words, sentences, or sections that you want to test. Your writer will likely have useful ideas about possible problem areas with the wording. Others involved in the creation of the publication may have helpful concerns about potentially sensitive or difficult areas of the material.

Conduct the session

Set a time and place for the group to meet to discuss the publication. Allow for about two hours per group. It is useful to have two people conducting each group. One person can be the facilitator, and one person can record the comments of the group. If you have a tape recorder, it is helpful to record the discussion with this method because you may miss important points if you rely on your written comments. Ask permission to tape the session.

In the small group, point out the key passages that you want them to check. Ask the group to look at a passage and to paraphrase it, or to identify troublesome sentences. Emphasize that this is an oral method, and that people should “think out loud.”

Remind the members of the group that they need to consider each word, phrase, and sentence carefully. Your main challenge will be to get people to slow down. As soon as people get into the rhythm of considering the meaning carefully, you will be surprised at how much they come up with.

After the session

Review the comments that have been written down by the recorder, and the tape recording if you have one. Even if you have a tape recording, don’t wait too long to do this. It is much easier when the session is still fresh in your mind.

Site testing

Site testing is also called location testing or beta testing. You can use this method to test a publication in development or to test an existing publication, that is either in print or on the Internet.

How to do site testing

For this method, you test your publication by placing it in a location where you intend to distribute it. After actual users find and read your publication, you interview them to find out if it was useful for them.

If you are testing a print publication in development, you will need to print some copies of your publication. If you are testing an online publication in development, you will need to post it on the Internet, typically on a password protected site. This is an opportunity to find out if your navigation to the publication works.

Here are some examples of site testing:

- A transition house may decide to do site testing to test their own publication on services for women who have been abused. The transition house staff would photocopy or print some copies of the publication and watch to see if women who came to the transition house found it useful.
- A youth shelter may site test their own publication on youth rights when in contact with police. The staff would ask youth in the shelter who read the publication how helpful it was to them.

Advantages

- It is relatively easy to implement and monitor, although you need to be vigilant to follow up with those who read your material.
- It provides reliable information on how the publication is actually used and understood.

Disadvantages

- If you are testing print materials before publication, there is added cost if you want to produce good quality copies in order to conduct the testing.
- If you are testing online publications before launch, you need to have a secure site.

How to implement the test

Choose the location or website where you are going to test the publication.

If you are testing a publication before you print it or finalize it on the Internet, introduce it in the same way as you would an existing publication. For example, if the publication is going to be placed in racks at the entrance of a transition house, put the sample copies there. If the youth in a shelter use an on-site computer, let them know the publication is available on the Internet.

Monitor the test

After the publication has been on the site for the desired length of time, interview as many people as possible who have been using the publication (both your primary audience and those who work with them, if you can). Find out how the publication was useful to them. The questions in "Appendix A: Questions for group testing" and "Appendix B: Questions for individual testing" about content, organization, language, audience, appearance, and format are a helpful guide.

Consider asking where else the reader might have gone to get this information. Answers could range from talking to a friend, using the Internet, visiting a government agency or public library, to calling a lawyer. This may help you determine other ways or other sites for distributing your publication.

After the field testing

Chapter 8

Over a period of many weeks, you may have contacted groups, conducted some group tests, written questionnaires, interviewed your primary audience and community workers, or done some individual testing. Now you have to decide how to analyze the information and make decisions about how your publication could be changed.

Sort out the information

It can be exciting and fun to take the information that you have gathered and use it to improve your material. However, it may seem like a daunting task to wade through the piles of feedback and make sense of different comments and opinions.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- set up a meeting to discuss the field testing results,
- conduct the meeting to decide what changes should be made,
- understand the different kinds of information that you have gathered in the field testing and the ways to make changes, and
- decide what to do with conflicting comments or information.

Remember that field testing helps you write and design publications that will be more useful to your readers. Don't let field testing overwhelm you. It should help you improve the publication; however, it won't give you all the answers. You will have to use your own judgment when you analyze the results of the various field testing methods.

We are suggesting an approach that has worked for us for publications that we have produced for the Legal Services Society. Adapt it to your own community group. The important step is to begin to use the information you have gathered to improve your publication.

Arrange a review meeting

When you sit down to review the results of the field testing, it is important to include the people who have worked on the publication in the planning, writing, and designing stages: the writer, the editor, the designer, content experts, and anyone else who was involved. These people will vary from project to project. The people who conducted the field testing should be there as well.

At the meeting, discuss the results of the field testing and begin to make decisions about changes to the publication. It may not be possible to decide on all the changes in the meeting. You can refer problems back to the writer, editor, or designer for additional consideration.

In the meeting, you can discuss the different aspects of the publication by analyzing the general and specific comments you received during field testing. Remember that the different methods will give you different types of comments. If you used more than one field testing method, discuss what information you got from each method.

Analyze general comments

Discuss the comments on the overall publication: how it looks, what it says, what could be improved. The comments from the group testing will be most useful in analyzing the general approach you took with the publication; this method provides information about attitudes and perceptions. Site testing may also give you good general information about the publication's overall usefulness.

After you have discussed the general comments about the publication, you can decide whether there are any changes that should be made. Here are some general comments that have been made about publications:

- "The size of the publication should be smaller. Most women will want to have something that they can put into their purse. They don't want it to be so big that they have to carry it around."
- "The pamphlet looks friendly. However, the title doesn't really say what it is about — can it be clearer?"
- "It is important to have graphics, but the one on the cover is very confusing — what is it supposed to be? It doesn't look very inviting."

Analyze specific comments

At this stage, you talk about the various aspects of the publication — the content, the organization, the language, the audience, the appearance, format, etc. It is easier to deal with these topics separately.

Individual testing and talking aloud sessions will tell you whether or not the readers understood the specific content. They will tell you if the readers had a difficult time locating information, understanding the material, or finding solutions to their problems. Questionnaire results may also be very specific.

Here are some examples of comments made about various publications that have been field tested by the Legal Services Society.

Information

- "You were missing information about certain free services available for people on welfare — it should be included."
- "I couldn't figure out the difference between what services legal aid provides and what family court provides. Can this be explained more precisely?"
- "The chart on current rates for welfare is difficult to understand. I couldn't figure out what I would be getting if I was single with two children."

Organization

- "Table of contents needed. I wouldn't be able to find anything inside it. Should be easier to locate material."
- "The section on what to do in an emergency shouldn't be in the middle. It should be right up front."
- "The brochure refers to the application form. Then I found it at the back, but there was no reference to where it was."
- "The pamphlet explains four different services, but they seem to be in the wrong order — why don't you put them in the order of where you would start and then end up?"

Language

- "It needs to have the words explained somewhere. There are too many legal words."
- "If this is for people on welfare, it's too wordy. They need a one-page pamphlet that can be given to them in lineups."

Audience

- "It needs a stronger statement of support for people on welfare up front. Do you know how degrading it can be to go to the welfare office? This sounds as if it is written by someone in government."
- "The section on Emergency Services should be written more directly to women. It should be more supportive. If they are going to pick up the phone and call a Transition House, they need to feel that the pamphlet is giving them support."

Appearance

- "Is this the best colour? Remember many people on welfare have poor eyesight and can't afford glasses."
- "Put FREE on the cover. People need to know they can take it without paying."
- "Need to highlight some of the information. It now just all blends together."
- "The type was too small. I found it difficult to read."
- "The forms at the back were very confusing. Is there some way to help me know how to fill them out and what to be careful about? There was no point just having reprints of the forms."
- "The table of contents helped, but I couldn't find the section on FMEP — what did you call it in the table of contents?"

Graphics

- "I don't like the cover. Is this what an office looks like?"
- "There should be a picture of a woman with kids in here."
- "The pictures are too cartoony. I like ones that are more realistic."

Decide what to change

Once you have analyzed all the comments, you may:

- Agree with the comments and decide how the publication can be improved. If you can't come up with a good alternative, refer the comments back to the writer, editor, or graphic designer to think about.
- Disagree with a comment if, for example, only one person raised a particular criticism. Be cautious about generalizing from group testing.
- Agree with the comments, but find it difficult to come up with a solution. The solution may have to be a compromise. You have to decide whether or not you can realistically incorporate the changes into the publication.
- Decide that the comments warrant further field testing. You will sometimes get conflicting opinions. Someone may love the graphics; someone else may hate them. If your group can't decide, it may be necessary to examine that question again in the field testing. It may require further probing to find out if something should be changed and how to change it.

Make the changes

Naturally, each publication can be improved in different ways. There are no rules about what you should change or how to make those changes. Ideally, you will be able to make the necessary revisions to solve any problems raised by the field testing, and make other refinements that further improve your publication.

In “Appendix D: Examples of results,” we provide some of our own examples of publications that we changed after field testing.

Final steps

Chapter 9

At this stage of the publication process, you have decided on what changes to make and revised the draft that you field tested. You may have had a content expert go over the revised draft for the final legal check and had to incorporate suggestions for legal accuracy. At some point, you have to decide to stop revising and get the publication to the printer or prepared for the Internet.

There are a few things to think about before you wrap up your field testing.

Make a record of your testing

It is useful to keep the material that you have gathered during the field testing process. You can keep comments from group testing, questions that you asked, sample scenarios, and possibly a few selected tapes. Keep copies of the various drafts of the publication, the decisions that you made based on the field testing, and the final product. You may refer to this information again if you test other publications. It will help you remember what you did and how you want to improve the process.

If you have the time, it is also useful to have a meeting about the field testing process. If you are too busy, try to have everyone write down their comments about the process instead. Were there any problems or unresolved issues? When you sit down to plan your next publication, these comments will be valuable.

Test again

After the publication has been in print or online for a while, you may want to field test again to evaluate its effectiveness, and to determine if the publication reached the people who were your target group of readers. A second phase of field testing is also very helpful if you plan to revise the publication. You can incorporate concerns that you had in the initial field testing into any following tests. Other questions to ask could include:

- Are people finding it? Are the service providers distributing it?
- Is it proving to be useful to the readers?
- Are there other publications that are needed?

- Are there ethnocultural groups that need your publication in their own language?
- Is there a need to revise the publication to make it appropriate for other cultures?
- Is there a disability rights group that wants the publication tailored to their specific needs?
- If the publication is only online or only in print, does it need to be in the other format?

Reaching your readers

We wrote this guide because we couldn't find any information about how to test a publication without spending a lot of money. We realized that if we were in this position, other organizations would be as well!

We have been able to use each of these field testing methods described in this guide and they have all worked for us. Depending on your organization and your type of publications, we hope that you will find that at least one method suits your needs.

Field testing has become an informative, satisfying, and enjoyable part of our publishing process. We know we have improved our publications because of it. We hope you can benefit from our experiences and also find field testing to be useful for reaching your readers.

For more information about field testing, you may contact the fieldworkers at the Legal Services Society (LSS). E-mail them at outreach@lss.bc.ca. If you have questions about producing your publication, you can send them to the LSS publishing team at publishing@lss.bc.ca. Ask us about the other publications we have about getting your material into print or online.

Questions for group testing

Appendix A

Group testing provides you with general information about the different aspects of your publication such as its information (content), organization, language (tone), audience, appearance, and format.

Sample questions

Here are some sample questions that could be used in group field testing. Some of these questions may be useful for your group, but you will want to develop your own that relate specifically to the publication you are testing.

Information

- Does this publication answer your questions about the topic?
- Does it contain too much information? Too little?
- Is there any specific information that you wanted to know that is missing?
- Is there any specific information in it that you don't need? Any information that was misleading?
- Does the publication provide helpful information about where to go if you have a problem?

Organization

- What was the first thing that you read?
- Is the information easy to find?
- Can you find your way around easily? What would make it easier?
- Does the order make sense? Is it organized the way you would use it?
- Do the headings help you find the information?
- Does it need an index or a table of contents?

Language

- Are there words or sections that you didn't understand?
- Are there words that could be simpler?
- Are the definitions clear?
- Are the procedures clear?
- Is the language culturally appropriate?
- Is the publication interesting to read?

Audience

- Who do you think this publication was written for (male/female, cultural background, type of problem, rural/urban)?
- Are there ways it could be more inclusive?
- Describe the writer (such as, someone from government; someone who has been an advocate; someone who is poor or who works with people who are poor; someone who has been through this problem).
- Why do you think this person wrote it?
- Did you feel the writer was on your side?
- What sort of "feel" did you get from the writing?
- Does it seem too formal? Too familiar?

Appearance

- What do you think of the appearance of the publication? Would you read it if someone gave it to you?
- Would you keep it to refer to later?
- What does the cover say to you about the publication?
- Does the inside reflect what you thought when you saw the cover?
- Is it easy to read? Is the font size okay?
- Is it an appropriate size and shape?
- Are the page numbers easy to find?
- Do you like the colours?
- What do you think about the illustrations, photographs, etc.?
    - Are they interesting? Are they relevant?
    - Do they reflect the people who will likely be reading this?
    - Which ones do you like or dislike? Why?
- Would you change the appearance in any way? Why? How?

Format

- Do you think this publication is in the right format for you? For other people most likely to use it?
- Is it the right size and shape?
- If you were in charge of this publication, would you produce it in print or put it on the Internet? Both? Why or why not?
- Do you look for information like this in print or online? Where else?

Overall rating

- What is your overall rating of the publication?
- What would you suggest be changed?
- Do you have any other comments?

Questions for individual testing

Individual testing provides you with information about how well readers understand your publication and how useful it is. Questions for this method of testing focus on organization and specific content.

Sample questions

Here are some sample questions that you could use for field testing with individuals. These questions were used to test a booklet on family law. You can modify these questions to suit your own materials.

- Did you find the information you were looking for?
- What part of the publication did you look at first? Did it tell you what you wanted to know?
- Did you have to flip back and forth while looking for answers? If so, why?
- Did you find complete answers or did you identify gaps in the information? What were those gaps?
- What would make it easier for you to find the answers?
- How would you rate the organization of information: clear; somewhat clear; somewhat confused; confused? Are there some difficult words and phrases?
- Did the publication seem appropriate for the person described in the scenario (in tone and appearance)?
- Overall, would somebody who was actually in the crisis described in the scenario be able to use this publication? What is the main change that might make it better?

Sample questionnaire

Appendix C

This sample questionnaire is based on one that was developed by the National Literacy Secretariat when they were testing their handbook *Creating a Plain Language Zone*. It has good examples of the different formats for questions. Note also that it is concise in length.

Questionnaire for Creating a Plain Language Zone

The following questions ask for your opinions on the attached handbook. Please feel free to add any other comments on the back of the questionnaire or on a separate page.

The following questions are about the handbook in general.

1. Is the handbook enjoyable and/or interesting to read?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

2. Does the handbook follow its own advice on writing clearly and simply?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

3. Will this handbook likely achieve its goal of helping the readers to use plain language?

   ☐ Very likely ☐ Somewhat likely ☐ Somewhat unlikely ☐ Very unlikely

   If unlikely, please explain:

   ____

4. How would you rate the organization of the handbook?

   ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

   If fair or poor, please explain:

   ____

5. Do you feel that the handbook contains all the information that readers need to help them use plain language?

   ❐ Yes ❐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

The following questions are about the content of the handbook. The questions relate directly to the different sections in the handbook.

6. Does the section "What is Plain Language Writing?" clearly explain what plain language writing means?

   ❐ Yes ❐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

7. Does the section "Plain Language in Practice" clearly identify the information you need to know and where to get this information before you begin to write in plain language?

   ❐ Yes ❐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

8. Does the section "Now You're Writing" help you identify ways to apply plain language writing techniques to your material?

   ❐ Yes ❐ No

   If no, please explain:

   ____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your input will help us produce a better handbook.

Examples of results

Here are two examples of publications from the Legal Services Society's publishing section before and after field testing. In both cases, we received useful comments about improving appearance and overall tone.

Original

Assault —
Violence Against Women in Relationships

Revised

Speaking of Abuse —
Violence Against Women in Relationships

The cover of this brochure about spousal abuse wasn't appealing to its audience. The title was too graphic and there was little to invite a personal connection. Changing the title and adding a photograph changed the tone of the publication.

Original

Guidelines for Legal Aid

Household size	Monthly income after deductions				
1 person	$ 0 – 644	$ 645 – 678	$ 679 – 775	$ 776 – 872	Over $ 872
2 people	$ 0 – 923	924 – 972	973 – 1,111	1,112 – 1,250	Over 1,250
3 people	$ 0 – 1,129	1,130 – 1,189	1,190 – 1,359	1,360 – 1,529	Over 1,529
4 people	$ 0 – 1,283	1,284 – 1,350	1,351 – 1,543	1,544 – 1,736	Over 1,736
5 people	$ 0 – 1,396	1,397 – 1,469	1,470 – 1,679	1,680 – 1,889	Over 1,889
6 people	$ 0 – 1,489	1,490 – 1,567	1,568 – 1,791	1,792 – 2,015	Over 2,015
7 or more people	$ 0 – 1,584	1,585 – 1,665	1,666 – 1,903	1,904 – 2,141	Over 2,141
Contribution	**None**	**$25.00**	**$50.00**	**$75.00**	**$100.00**

This table applies to all offices and to all applicants who qualify financially for legal aid.

Note: If you get any money from your case, the legal aid office will reassess your eligibility for legal aid, and may ask you to repay some or all of the costs of the case. The lawyer may also be able to start privately billing you for the work he or she has done for you.

You do not have to be financially eligible to get pamphlets, legal information, or summary advice from your legal aid office.

What kind of legal problems are covered by LSS guidelines?

Different guidelines apply to each kind of legal problem, depending on the type of case. Here are some guidelines for criminal, family, child apprehension, human rights, poverty, and immigration law matters.

Is my criminal case covered by legal aid?

Legal aid will cover your criminal cases if you are financially eligible and you (if convicted):

- are likely to go to jail
- will lose your job (e.g., if you are a taxi driver and will have your licence suspended)
- will face an immigration proceeding that could lead to deportation from Canada

You *may* also get legal aid if you:

- have a mental or emotional illness that makes it impossible for you to represent yourself
- are aboriginal and the case affects your ability to follow a traditional livelihood of hunting and fishing

Can I get legal aid if I'm the victim of crime?

If you are the victim or witness of a crime, you can get legal aid if the defence lawyer wants to see your personal records, such as counselling records. Legal aid provides lawyers to act for you at the hearings where a judge decides if the defence can see these records. You do not have to be financially eligible to get this kind of legal aid.

The following pages from the publication Legal Aid Can Help show how information from the original version above has been presented in a more effective way. The use of scenarios to describe services, attractively designed tables, and wider, more open columns all work together to make an appealing publication. The format of this publication has evolved from stapled, black and white letter-size sheets to a saddle-stitched booklet with colour. The title was also changed to be both more informative and personal.

Revised

Legal Aid Can Help

A lawyer to represent you

LSS will pay for a lawyer to represent you for serious legal problems if you qualify financially.

Family law

Legal representation is available when you have an emergency situation — for instance, if you:

- need an immediate court order to make sure you or your children are safe, or because you cannot get access to your children, or
- have to go to court for a maintenance enforcement hearing (because you have not paid the support payments you owe), and you are very likely to go to jail as a result.

Depending on legal aid funding and your situation, you may also get legal representation if you have:

- to solve serious legal issues in a high conflict case, or
- tried everything else to solve the case — including a written settlement offer to the other party — and solving the case will make a significant difference to you or your children.

If you are not eligible for representation by a lawyer in court but your case is a significant one and there are barriers that keep you from solving it on your own, you may get help from a lawyer with other services that could help you solve your case.

Contact legal aid to find out if your situation qualifies you for these services.

Child protection law

Legal representation is available when:

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development has taken, or has threatened to take, your children away from you.
- The Ministry for Children and Family Development is taking care of your child and there are custody and access issues that need to be settled right away.

Criminal law

Legal representation is available when:

- You have been charged with a crime, and, if you are found guilty, you are likely to go to jail, get a conditional sentence that includes house arrest, lose your job, or be deported.
- You have been found unfit to be tried in court or be considered legally responsible for committing a crime because you have a mental disorder, so you need a lawyer to represent you at a BC Review Board hearing.

Immigration law

Legal representation is available when:

- you need help with a refugee claim or you have an immigration problem that could cause you to be deported from Canada to a country where you would be in danger, and
- your case has a reasonable chance to succeed.

Mental health law

Legal representation is available when you are being held against your will under the Mental Health Act, and you need a lawyer to represent you at a review panel hearing.

Financial eligibility

You qualify for legal representation if you have very few assets and a net household income (after tax and other deductions) that is at or below the following amounts:

Household size	Net household monthly income
1	$1,349
2	$1,888
3	$2,427
4	$2,967
5	$3,506
6	$4,046
7+	$4,585

Your household income usually includes all money or benefits that everyone in your family who lives with you earns or receives. Contact your local legal aid office or the LSS Call Centre to find out if you qualify. You need to have proof of your income, proof of the value of your assets, and any papers about your case. Bring these documents to the legal aid office or have them with you if you apply by phone.

February 2007

Legal Aid Can Help — 3

Revised

Legal Aid Can Help

Help with family law problems

Here are a few examples of common family law problems and how legal aid helped solve them. They give you an idea of our legal representation, advice, and information services. These examples are based on actual situations, but the details are fictional.

If you have a family law problem, contact legal aid for help.

Protection from violence

A woman in Victoria who was abused by her husband went to a transition house. The transition house worker gave the woman LSS booklets about protection orders and sent her to the legal aid office. She applied and qualified for representation by a lawyer. The lawyer represented her in court, where she got a restraining order. After she got the restraining order, the woman's husband applied for custody of the children and had trial dates set. Because this was a high conflict case and the woman and her children were in danger, her lawyer was able to represent her at the trial, and she was given permanent custody of the children.

Children could be taken away

A single mother working for minimum wage at a fast food restaurant contacted a poverty law advocate in Salmon Arm when the Ministry of Children and Family Development threatened to take away her children. The advocate gave her the LSS publications *If Your Child Is Taken by the Ministry of Children and Family Development* and *Parents' Rights, Kids' Rights: A Parent's Guide to Child Protection Law in BC*. The advocate also sent her to the local legal aid office, where staff decided she qualified for lawyer representation. The lawyer met with the woman and found out that the ministry was worried about her children's behaviour at school and about their being left at home on their own. The lawyer contacted the ministry to arrange for mediation. In the mediation meetings, the mother, the lawyer, and the ministry were able to find solutions that would satisfy the ministry without taking the children out of the home.

The right to live on reserve

A woman who lived on reserve outside Fort St. James phoned the local legal aid office to find out if she could stay in the family home after her husband had left her. Legal aid staff discussed the issues with her and sent her the LSS fact sheet *Can You Stay in the Family Home on Reserve?*

Child might be moved out of province

A Burnaby woman who was afraid she would lose custody of her young son called LawLINE after a multicultural group told her about this phone service. She and the child's father were separated, but she did not have a custody order. The son usually lived with her, but had been living with his father for a few months. The father had just told her that he was going to move to another province and take their son with him. LawLINE staff told her to apply for legal aid because, if she qualified financially, she could get a lawyer to represent her in court to apply for a non-removal order to stop the father from taking the child to live outside BC.

Uncontested divorce

A Prince Rupert man wanted to get a divorce and his wife was not going to fight it. He phoned the local legal aid office and the legal information outreach worker told him about a self-help guide on the LSS family law website called "Do Your Own Uncontested Divorce in the Supreme Court of British Columbia." He used the guide to fill out and file the necessary documents at the court and got his divorce.

Father's access to children

More than 10 years ago, an Abbotsford man who has difficulty speaking English got a court order that gave him the right to visit his

4 — Legal Aid Can Help February 2007