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Effective Communication Access

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What is Effective Communication Access?

Effective communication access ensures information in a written, spoken, or alternative mode of communication is clearly understandable and actionable for the whole community.



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Who Needs Effective Communication Access?

- ▶ Deaf or hard-of-hearing
- ▶ Blind or those with low-vision
- ▶ Cognitive or intellectual disabilities
- ▶ Limited literacy
- ▶ Those with limited English proficiency (LEP)



Types of Effective Communication Access

- ▶ Access/Accommodations
- ▶ Alternative Formats
- ▶ Conceptual plain language
- ▶ Accessible messaging



Issues Related to Effective Communication Access

FEMA must develop standards to ensure effective communication access across the Agency.

Aside from ASL interpretation, other compliance criteria must be considered:

► 504 and 508 compliance

- Video products, for example, should include captioning, voiceover, ASL interpreting, and if appropriate, foreign language and audio description.



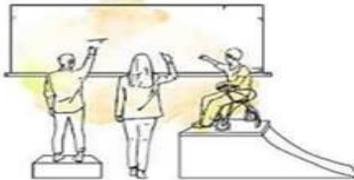
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Reminder...

Equality



Accommodation



Accessibility



Accommodation is not the same as accessibility.

- Accommodations are for **individuals** and are **reactive**.
- Accessibility is for **populations** and is **proactive**.
- Accessibility should make content **available to all**, in equally effective ways, at the **same time**.
- Accessibility is the goal, accommodations are just tools to reach it.

Literacy Competency

- ▶ Most Americans have difficulty reading products released by FEMA and other government agencies
- ▶ The average hearing American reading level is 5-7th grade. For the average Deaf/Hard of Hearing American, it can be as low as 3rd-4th grade reading level.



Accessible Language Competency

- ▶ *Gravis ideo patet rationis usu linguam aequè quisque obviùs.*
- ▶ This is why it's important to use plain conceptual language so everyone can access it equally.

Plain Language

Providing information in plain language does not mean the message content is fully understood.

- ▶ If you send out a message in English, someone who is fluent in ASL, has a cognitive disability, or cannot read or write, may not understand the message content.
- ▶ If you send a message in English for local authorities to translate into another language, the content may be changed in a way that it is not fully understood.



What is Conceptual Language?

- ▶ Practice of taking Plain Language and drilling the messaging down to its basic conceptual meaning
- ▶ Implicit vs. Explicit
- ▶ Perfect marriage between Plain Language and Conceptual Language



Making Messages Conceptual

- ▶ Review your message and look for context.
- ▶ Is the meaning of the message clear and simple?
- ▶ Avoid words with multiple meanings or interpretations



Making Messages Conceptual, cont'd

- ▶ Use words that rely on imagery to make a point.
 - *Example: "Insurance will cover the property listed in your insurance policy." The word "cover" is figurative— we are using it to suggest in a general sense that needs will be taken care of, but we aren't specifying how that will happen.*
- ▶ Use words with terms or phrases that are descriptive and literal.
 - *Example: "Insurance will pay for the things that you listed on your insurance policy." This makes it clear what exactly insurance will literally do in this scenario.*



Put yourself in the shoes of a disaster survivor and read the two messaging examples on the following slides.

Which one is clearer?



Example #1

The possibility that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation you and your family do today.

While everyone's abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of disasters and emergencies including fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and severe weather. By figuring out your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your family can be better prepared.

This guide gives simple things individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, the people who assist and support them, can do to start preparing for emergencies before they happen. Preparing ahead of time makes sense for everyone.



Example #2

How well you and your family prepare for a disaster before it happens will impact how quickly you recover.

While you and your family have different skills and needs, everyone can take steps to prepare for all types of disasters and emergencies including fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and severe weather. You and your family can be better prepared when you know what your needs are and how to make an emergency plan that fits those needs.

This guide will give good tips for people with disabilities and those who help them how to best prepare for a disaster or emergency before they happen. Preparing ahead of time makes sense for everyone.



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Your turn to try!

How can you apply plain language to the following statement?

The applicant will be the primary source of information regarding his circumstances for the purposes of determining eligibility and need. If the Secretary needs to secure information from other sources, the Secretary will ask the applicant to authorize the release of information. The Secretary will inform the applicant of the kinds of information needed and the source to be used.



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First level answer:

This is how plainlanguage.gov changed it into plain language:

You will be the primary source of information regarding your circumstances for the purposes of determining eligibility and need. If we need to secure information from other sources, we will ask you to authorize the release of information. We will inform you of the kinds of information needed and the source to be used. You will be the main point of contact for your disaster assistance application.



Next level answer:

This is how I changed plainlanguage.gov's answer into plain conceptual language:

You will be the main point of contact related to your application and eligibility. If we need more information from other agencies, we will ask you to authorize releasing your information from them to us. We will let you know what information we need from those agencies.



Accessible Videos – Why do we need them?

Let's ask some key questions before we answer this question:

- ▶ What are accessible videos?
- ▶ Who is our audience?
- ▶ What is our message for them?
- ▶ How are we sending them our message?



So you want to make an accessible video – now what?

- ▶ Ask, “What is the purpose of making this video?”
- ▶ Check the accessible videos library to see if a similar video exists
- ▶ Work with the HQ Communication Access Specialists to help determine if this video is needed



How to make an accessible video

Key components to making an accessible video:

- ▶ Work with the program requesting the accessible video on accurate content
- ▶ Incorporate plain conceptual language when developing the script
- ▶ Include a Certified Deaf Interpreter/American Sign Language Interpreter
- ▶ Include captioning
- ▶ Include a spokesperson from the program to narrate the video



Developing the accessible video script

- ▶ When developing the accessible video transcript, make sure you are writing in a conversational tone (think of this as if you were trying to explain the topic to your neighbor) and use plain language.
- ▶ Review the materials provided by the Program and look for key information that your target audience needs to know. Summarize the information in a clear, concise set of sentences or short paragraphs. Keep the content brief, simple, and informative.
- ▶ Ideally, the transcript length should be about a half page of typed content, which results in less than 2 minutes of film time. Keep the transcript length to less than a full page at any time; this promotes greater attention from the audience.



Distributing the accessible video

Now the accessible video has been filmed and edited – how do you plan to distribute it?

- ▶ Work with your social media team to push the video on the FEMA Facebook page and Instagram account
- ▶ Share the accessible video with stakeholders in the region that would benefit from this video and ask them to share with their stakeholders
- ▶ Make sure this is added to the accessible videos library maintained at HQ by the Communication Access Specialist



Question time!

Questions now? Ask away!

Questions after the presentation?

Contact us at:

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