AUCD PLAIN LANGUAGE
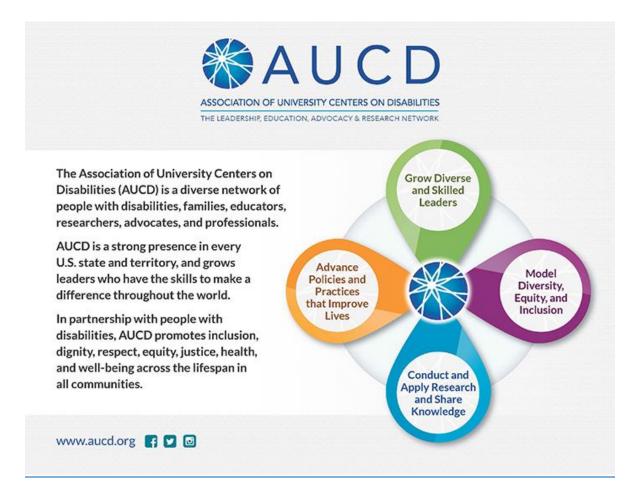
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ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES (AUCD)

Contents

AUCD's Commitment to Language and Communications Access

Communication is how people understand each other. AUCD wants to make sure that everyone knows what is being talked about, either by speaking or writing so all people can be included. AUCD works with people with disabilities, their families, and others around the world, some who prefer to communicate in a different way. This can be people with different abilities to speak and understand English, who do not speak English, who have different reading levels, who learn differently, and who are not familiar with the disability community. We want people to be able to get information easily. This commitment is reflected in AUCD's Strategic map.

Work toward plain language access is also a part of AUCD's Language Access Plan and reflected in the Inclusion Principles and Guidelines.

Terms related to Language Access

There are currently different terms used to describe efforts to provide writtern materials in a way that is accessible. As groups including AUCD work to increase access, practices will continue to evolve. Please be aware that in this work you may see documents decribed as easy read, plain language, easiest language or other terms.

AUCD Plain Language Definition and Practice

Plain Language is one way to make information accessible to everyone. It is communication that is clear, straightforward, and only uses words that are necessary to make sure that all people can understand and participate. AUCD is creating a space where everyone can belong and be a part of the conversation by decreasing barriers for readers and listeners.

AUCD defines Plain Language as:

- Clearly written document with a readability level at or below 6th grade. Attention is paid to being clear at explaining ideas and concepts.
    - Use of clear headings and format supports access. This can include use of bullet lists or short sentences and additional white space.
    - Use of images and icons to support understanding

AUCD also uses Easy Read for some materials- for example the easy-read version of the AUCD Brochure. For Easy Read we follow SARTAC's recommendations (pg 8-18).

Write in Plain Language

To promote continuity across teams, below is guidance for AUCD staff on writing in plain language or making plain language adaptations of existing materials.

1. Follow the ABCs of Plain Language.

The University of Kentucky created a helpful overview of writing in plain language.

   a. Before making any plain language materials:
      i. watch the UKY training on plain language for the URC
      ii. review the ABCs of Plain Language
   b. As you continue to write in plain language, it can be helpful to review A shorter version of the ABCs.

2. Measure readability.

Readbility is a measure of the average syllabules per sentence and the average syllabules per word. It does not measure how clear your message is.

Our goal standard is 6th grade and below for plain language, 4th grade and below for easy-read.

   a. Readable.com
      Readable quickly tests readability, spelling and grammar of your text and shows you how and where to make improvements.
   b. Too few words will give you an inaccurate reading level, so include as much text as possible.
   c. Readable will give suggestions to improve readability.

d. It will give you two grade levels (Flesch-Kincaid and Gunning Fog Index).

e. You may need to remove words that don't have replacements (ie. developmental disability, or Supreme Court) in order to get reading levels to 6th or 4th grade.

3. Use AUCD Icon Library.

Every effort will be made to use the same icons across plain language and easy-read documents. We will achieve this by maintaining an AUCD Icon Library. We will use consistent alt text to maximize access.

a. Common icons can be found in the AUCD Icon Guide

b. When referencing a government agency the agency logo will be used.

c. If you need a new icon that isn't already in the Icon Guide, icons will be selected from thenounproject.com.

 i. AUCD has a yearly paid membership where we don't have to attribute image creator.

d. If you use a new icon, please:

 i. add it to the AUCD Icon Guide

 ii. ensure there is alt text.

  • Additional guidance about alt text can be found in the AUCD style guide

 iii. Update the guide to reflect date of update.

4. Follow AUCD guidance for Formatting/Style in Plain Language

a. Plain Language Document Template-

 i. The communications team has a template for AUCD staff making plain language/easy read materials that you can adapt to your need.

 ii. Using the banner in the teamplate can help us communicate consistently that the materials are in "AUCD plain language".

b. Follow the other accessibility features as described in the AUCD Style guide.

c. For easy-read documents. Additional guidance can be found in the SARTAC definition.

5. Additional Considerations

a. Don't rely just on videos or just on pictures but bring together materials so that someone can easily hear, see, and understand.
b. Mix up the type of visual aids that you use.
c. An infographic with an embedded QR code can link to an audio description of the graphic.

Review Plain Language Materials

1. Prepare materials with a person with an intellectual disability or developmental disability, learning disability, or limited English. Review materials with this person before publication.
2. Be open to receive suggestions on improving readability. Offer opportunities to submit feedback.

Other Tools

Samples of AUCD Plain Language

- [Top 10 Ways to Build Relationships with Your Members of Congress- Easy Read](#)
- Disability Policy News
- [Plain Language: The Flu Shot](#)

Checklist

- [Plain Language Checklist](#) (SARTAC)

Trainings

- [Writing Pure and Simple: Plain Language Communication in the field of Disability](#)
  This is an hour-long webinar presented by the Northeast ADA Center. The video covers:
  o communicating clearly for a broad range of people
  o using legal or policy terms while keeping writing simply
  o keeping communications brief without using jargon or acronyms
- [Plain Language Webinar SARTAC August 22 2019](#)

Resources

- [One Idea Per Line: A Guide to Making Easy Read Resources (ASAN)](#)
- [Getting Your Message Across: Communicating with People with Intellectual Disabilities](#)

- [Plain Language Summaries for Publications](#) (IL UCEDD/LEND)
- [Plain Language Resources](#) (SARTAC)
- [Center for Plain Language](#) to help government agencies and businesses write clearly so that their intended audience understands what they are saying the first time they read or hear it.
- [Creating materials and approaches to training that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the intended audience](#) (Georgetown UCEDD)
- The [CDC Clear Communication Index](#) is a research-based tool that helps you develop and assess communication materials for your intended audience.
- [Disability Alliance BC- Making Sure People with Communication Disabilities Get the Message](#)
- "Tuesday's with Liz" [defining plain language](#).

Other Definitions
- Federal Definition
  - [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)
  - [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#)
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
  - [Easy Read is distinguished from Plain Language](#)

UCEDD Resource Center
A project of AUCD, in partnership with ACL, to strengthen the network of UCEDDs