

Clear Language & Design Checklist for Client Resources

The following points are guidelines only. Use check marks or n/a (not applicable) in the blanks provided. Extra space may be inserted for comments as needed. General writing guidelines and a reference list are also attached.

A. Content

- ___ Title clearly identifies the topic or content
- ___ Purpose clearly stated at the beginning
- ___ Divided into short sections
- ___ Logical, easy to follow sequence of information
- ___ Evidence and best practice based
- ___ Limited to necessary information
- ___ Includes actions recommended for clients
- ___ Encourages clients to take an active role in health
- ___ Most important points are highlighted or summarized
- ___ Other sources of information or support are listed

B. Writing Style

- ___ Familiar language suited to target population
- ___ Sentences average about 10 to 15 words
- ___ No run-on sentences
- ___ Gender neutral, inclusive wording
- ___ Technical or medical terms are avoided or defined
- ___ Acronyms and abbreviations are avoided or defined
- ___ Active voice
- ___ Positive tone

___ Conversational rather than formal or clinical

___ Redundancy is avoided

C. Clear Design

___ Format suited for intended use

___ Font styles simple and easy to read (see identity guidelines)

___ Larger font size for headings

___ No block capitals or underlining

___ Point form with bullets when possible

___ Typical line length is 75 – 100 characters

___ Minimum 1 inch margin

___ Columns used as appropriate

___ Text is left-justified, without hyphens

___ Adequate white space

___ Important text may be emphasized with bold font or in a box

___ Dark font on light background

D. Illustrations

___ Captioned and labeled as needed

___ Simple, clear lines

___ Appropriate to target audience

E. Development Process

___ Content reviewed by Clear Language & Design Committee

___ Material tested with clients whenever possible

- ___ Final version approved by department manager; clinical forms approved by SHR Clinical Forms Committee: <http://infonyet.sktmhr.ca/clinicaldocumentation/Pages/Resources.aspx>
- ___ Form number assigned
- ___ Final version shared with Clear Language & Design Committee and saved in forms folder on i/public health general by department

This checklist has been adapted with permission from: Hamilton Health Sciences. (2008). *Writing Health Information for Patients and Families*, 3rd Edition.

Appendix 1 - General Writing Guidelines

Acronyms

- Never use acronyms in the first reference or in a headline
- Do not use 'SHA' – use 'Saskatchewan Health Authority' in the first reference; then 'the Authority' or 'the Health Authority' may be used

Capitalization

- Capitalize Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- Capitalize formal names of programs and services
- Do not capitalize a title that is descriptive

Numbers

- Use words for numbers 9 and under
- Use digits for numbers 10 and over

Punctuation

- Use one space after a period
- Colons indicate that a list follows
- Use commas between items in a list
- Use semi-colons between items only if there are commas in one or more of the listed items
- Use apostrophes for contractions or possessives only
- *It's* is the contraction for it is; *its* is possessive

Spelling

- Use U.K. spellings for most words (e.g., colour, behaviour)

Gender

- Use gender neutral wording whenever possible

Visual Identity

- Purpose is consistency and branding
- The official font of the Saskatchewan Health Authority printed documents is Calibri
 - Calibri Bold is used for all headlines, titles, and sub-headings
 - Calibri Regular is used for main body text

Source:

[Saskatchewan Health Authority Writing Style Guide, 2017](#); [Saskatchewan Health Authority Visual Identity Guidelines, 2017](#)

For further information:

The Canadian Press Stylebook and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling Guide* are available from the Population and Public Health Library for further reference.

Your Health Authority Communications Department may be able to assist with questions regarding content, writing style, grammar, design and illustrations.

Appendix 2- Links to Key Documents

Clear Language & Design InfoNet Page (accessible within SHA only)

<http://infonet.sktnhr.ca/Clear-Language/Pages/home.aspx>

SHA Visual Identity Guidelines

<https://sharepoint.ehealthsask.ca/sites/saskhealthauthority/about/Brand/Documents/Saskatchewan-Health-Authority-Visual-Identity-WebVersion.pdf>

SHA Writing Guidelines

<https://sharepoint.ehealthsask.ca/sites/saskhealthauthority/about/Brand/Documents/SaskatchewanHealthAuthority-WritingStyleGuide.pdf>

Appendix 3- Other Resources

Writing Health Information for Patients and Families

http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/workfiles/PATIENT_ED/Writing_HI_Edition4.pdf

CLAD Thesaurus

<http://clad.tccltd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CLAD-Thesaurus.pdf>

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

<https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/pcmh-crosswalk.pdf>

Health Literacy 101 (handout for patients/clients and families)

https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/locations_services/Services/Health-Observatory/Documents/Resource-Centre/Handout%20Combined.pdf