

Training Overview

Workforce Wednesday: Creating Welcoming and Effective Written Communication, May 28 and June 4, 2025

w/Clear Language Lab at Literacy Works

Hello! We are excited to present a 2-part virtual training series on applying plain language practices to your work.

Who is this for? This training series is for workforce development staff who want to more effectively share written information with the students and community members they serve.

Do I have to attend both sessions? No, but these sessions are designed to build on each other. You'll get the most out of our time if you are present and engaged in both sessions. If you miss a session, you'll be able to review the slides from this document. You can [email Sarah](#) with any questions.

Who are we? We are a Chicago-based non-profit passionate about equitable access to everyday information. [Learn more about our work.](#)

About the trainer:

Sarah Glazer, MA, is the Sr. Program Manager for the Clear Language Lab at Literacy Works. She has over a decade of experience teaching in schools and community-based organizations.

Her role in the Clear Language Lab focuses on developing and facilitating learning opportunities for folks who want to communicate more effectively. Every year she trains hundreds of professionals in plain language practices to make content their audience can navigate, understand, and use.

Training Agenda

This 2-part training is designed to help workforce development practitioners communicate more effectively with the communities they serve. Participants will learn practical skills to create welcoming and safe communications that their audience can understand and use.

Part 1 Objectives

[Part 1](#) will introduce participants to basic plain language strategies and explore how they apply to workforce development.

In this session, we will:

- Identify what plain language is and isn't
- Explore strategies for centering their audience
- Apply plain language strategies to sector specific examples

When: Wednesday, May 28 from 10:00-11:30 am

Where: Zoom

Part 2 Objectives

[Part 2](#) will explore how Trauma-Informed Design applies to communication.

In this session, we will:

- Define Trauma-Informed Design
- Explore why this matters in workforce development
- Breakdown Trauma-Informed Design principles and examine what they look like in practice

When: Wednesday, June 4 from 10:00-11:30 am

Where: Zoom



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1 Part 1 Training Materials + Resources

Part 1: Introduction to plain language

Training Materials + Resources

Session materials

- [PowerPoint Slides](#)
- [PDF Slides](#)
- [Plain text version of training examples](#)
- [Clear Language Lab Training Evaluation](#)

Contact Sarah with any follow-up questions:

- Email: sarah@litworks.org
- Call or text: 773-901-4060



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Summary of key ideas

About plain language

Plain language is communicating so your **intended audience** can easily:

- **Find** the information they need
- **Understand** what they find
- **Use** that information to do what they need to do

Reasons for using plain language:

- **Practical:** what's the point of sharing information that doesn't work for our audience?
- **Ethical:** why would we want to communicate in a way that makes people feel dumb or alienated?
- **Equitable:** how does unnecessary complexity harm folks already struggling to access services and information?

Strategies and tips

Centering your audience:

- ☐ Start with a clear purpose
- ☐ Work with your audience, formally + informally to understand their needs and background knowledge
- ☐ Try to anticipate and proactively address questions
- ☐ Check for the Curse of Knowledge

Helping readers **find** what they need:

- ☐ Organize information in a logical way
- ☐ Limit information to 1 idea per paragraph and 1 topic per section
- ☐ Use descriptive headings and subheadings to create easy to navigate sections



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Helping readers **understand** what they find:

- ☐ Use images to support meaning
- ☐ Write in simple, active sentences
- ☐ Use everyday language and friendly tone
- ☐ Define technical terms and jargon when you have to use them
- ☐ Check for understanding

Helping **readers** use what they find:

- ☐ Start with a clear main idea and purpose
- ☐ Test processes
- ☐ Use active verbs for instructions
- ☐ Make it clear how to get help

Additional resources

Examples of plain language documents

- [Clear Language Lab Projects](#): look at the letter for the Cook County Assessor's Office for an example of a formal government letter that uses images and other visual elements
- [2025 ClearMark Awards – Winners](#): see award-winning documents from Center for Plain Language's ClearMark Awards
- [Contract Design Pattern Library](#): look at tons of examples of legal documents that incorporate plain language design strategies and visual elements

General Plain Language

- [Plain Language Self-Reflection Checklist](#)
- [Grammar & Clarity Practice](#)
- [Plain Language Resources](#)
- [Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#)

From the Clear Language Lab

- [The Lab Library](#) - read our blog and cheatsheets, and watch previous webinars
- [Professional Development Trainings](#) - register for upcoming webinars and workshops (most are free)
- [Skill-Builder Videos](#) - 30 workshops on specific tools and skills to support clear communication



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Language + Writing Style Guides

- [Cambridge Plain Language Guide](#) - to download the guide, look for the link that says “Download” under the picture of the “Language Justice” flyer
- [About the writing guide | Design System \(hennepin.us\)](#) - this is a language and style guide for a county in Minnesota
- [Conscious Style Guide](#) - a collection of article and guides about communication
- [Language Please](#) - “a free, regularly updated resource for anyone seeking to thoughtfully cover evolving social, cultural, and identity-related topics”
- [Bias-free language \(apa.org\)](#) - similar to “Language Please” but from the APA



1. Plain text version of training examples

Plain text version of training examples

Part 1: Introduction to plain language

Intro example

Version 1

Further Ways We Can Assist You With Your Career Search

Each participant is assigned a job counselor. They will reach out to you within a week of starting the program to set up a time to discuss how they can best support you.

Digital literacy is critical for most jobs. We have robust digital literacy classes we offer several nights a week. Join us on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays at 6pm.

On Mondays, our Job Club meets. You can get support from others job hunting just like you! Participants hone their resumes, share leads, and discuss interview strategies.

Version 2

What To Do Next

Meet with your **job counselor**. They will call you within a week to make an appointment.

Attend our **computer classes**. They meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 6pm-8pm.

Attend our **Job Club** held Mondays at 10 am.



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Summer job flyer

Version 1

Looking for a summer job?

Mayor's summer youth employment program is now accepting applications!

Apply today

<http://www.sundale.gov/youth-jobs>

Applicants must be

- Sunnydale Resident
- 16-25 years old

Applications Accepted Until:

- Friday, March 3
- Family Service Department (Sunnydale Mall)

For more information call Buffy Summers at 123-456-7890

Version 2

Looking for a summer job?

Apply for the mayor's summer youth employment program!

About the jobs

- Earn \$15 an hour
- Part-time and full-time opportunities
- You could work at a city office, park, or a local business

Applicants must be:

- Sunnydale Resident
- 16-25 years old

How to apply

- Submit your application before 5 pm on Friday, March 3
- Visit sunnydale.gov/youth-jobs or scan the QR Code

For questions or support, you can call or text Buffy Summers at 123-456-7890



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Career fair flyer

Version 1

Bookville Area Career Fair

A wide variety of local employers will be present - bring copies of your resume and dress for success!

BOOKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

12345 MAIN STREET

BOOKVILLE, IL

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2022

10AM TO 4PM

No registration required.

Questions? Contact Dorothy Gale

at 773-555-1234 or

email dorothy@bookvilleWD.org



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Version 2

Start your next chapter!

Bookville Area Career Fair

presented by Bookville Workforce development Center

Details

- Friday, May 4, 2022
- 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Bookville High School, 12345 Main Street, Bookville, IL
- You **do not need to register** for this event.

How to prepare

- Dress for success
- Bring copies of your resume
- Be ready to talk to employers in health care, manufacturing, sales, hospitality, and more

Questions

Contact Dorothy Gale at 773-555-1234

dorothy@BookvilleWD.org



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Long sentence example

Original

Services offered to employers include referral of job seekers to available job openings, include assistance in development of job order requirements, matching job seeker experience with job requirements, skills and other attributes, assisting employers with special recruitment needs, arranging for Job Fairs, assisting employers analyze hard-to-fill job orders, assisting with job restructuring and assists with closures and downsizing.

Split it up

We offer many services to employers.

We can help develop job order requirements as well as match job seekers to job openings that match their skills and the job's requirements.

We can also assist employers with special recruitment needs, job fairs, hard-to-fill job orders, job restructuring, closures, and downsizing.

Use a list

We offer many services to employers:

- Develop job orders that attract qualified candidates
- Connect job seekers to job openings that match their qualifications through case management and job fairs
- Assist with other needs such as restructuring, closures, and downsizing



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Use Q&A

How can we help employers?

We can help develop job orders that attract qualified candidates.

We can also assist with other needs such as restructuring, closures, and downsizing

How can we help job seekers?

We can help connect job seekers to job openings that match their qualifications through case management and job fairs.



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Jargon + academic language example

Original

What are some of the services offered by ABC Community Center?

- Orientation and Job Club, a job readiness program
- Vocational assessment, basic education, and vocational skills training
- Job search
- Work experience opportunities
- Supportive Services, such as childcare, transportation and school and work-related expenses
- Specialized Supportive Services for mental health, substance use disorder, and domestic violence victims
- Post-Employment Services to help those employed retain their jobs

Alternative with images

We can support you in finding a job in many ways...

- Job club, a class to help you learn more about work in the U.S.
- Job training or classes
- Job search help
- Resources you might need to work, like a daycare for your children or a way to get to a new job
- Support in other parts of your life if you are having a hard time
- On-going support to help you keep your job - or get a better job in the future

Job seeker email

ATTENTION: JOB SEEKERS

Statewide Revenue Virtual Recruitment

Join the State Department of Revenue for a Free Virtual Workshop.

Learn about current job openings, future job openings, application process, and how to get started!

Friday, October 14, 2022

10:00 am

Register

[QR Code]



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Part 2 Training Materials + Resources

Part 2: Communicating with a Trauma-Informed Lens

Training Materials + Resources

Session materials

- [PowerPoint Slides](#)
- [PDF Slides](#)
- [Plain text version of training examples](#)
- [Example RESEA slides](#)

Contact Sarah with any follow-up questions:

- Email: sarah@litworks.org
- Call or text: 773-901-4060

Summary of key ideas

Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Safety

Think about:

- Our tone + word choice
- How we layout and decorate spaces
- Removing uncertainty
- Setting clear expectations

Trust + transparency

Think about:

- Explaining “why”
- Explaining how personal information will be used
- Being honest about our limitations
- Using plain language in legal documents + forms
- Keeping information up-to-date + accurate

Peer Support

Think about:

- Staff opportunities to learn from and support each other
- Connecting participants who have similar experiences

Collaboration

Think about:

- Using language that feels inviting, rather than authoritative
- How we collect and use feedback
- Engaging participants in program design
- Developing meaningful connections with community partners



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Empowerment, voice, + choice

Think about:

- Offering meaningful choices
- How we document and address common questions and challenges
- Asking for consent in plain language
- Intentionally creating space for questions and concerns

Humility + responsiveness

Think about:

- How images and content reflect the communities we serve
- Exploring and challenging our own biases
- How to stand by diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives and codify practices that lead to concrete outcomes in these areas
- Systematically reflecting on your work identifying and ways to adjust and improve processes

Developing a reflective practice

- **Remember:** find a way to remember what you do in a concrete way so you can consider it later
- **Reflect:** think about the ways you've been doing things and then consider if they're still effective
- **Act:** try it a different way and then record your results - then start the process again

Strategies for Trauma-Informed Communication + Processes

- Provide clear instructions + signage
- Explain all the steps
- Give clear timelines
- Close the loop
- Offer multiple ways to engage
- Outline what people need to prepare or bring
- Make sure information is accurate
- Create space for questions + support

Ideas for normalizing plain language

- Schedule regular document reviews
- Use templates for your most common types of communication
- Encourage staff to use writing checklists
- Develop an internal glossary with plain language terms everyone is expected to use
- Have a plan for keeping processes + communications aligned and all staff informed

Additional resources

- Clear Language Lab Library resources on [Trauma-Informed Communication Practices](#)
- Community Centric Fundraising essay: [Making DEI Unshakable](#)
- Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice [Trauma-Informed Workplace Toolkit](#)
- Scottish Government [Trauma-Informed Practice Toolkit](#)



2. Plain text version of training examples

Plain text version of training examples

Part 2: Communicating with a Trauma-Informed Lens

Job description

Version 1

Description: Personal Care Aides

Assist the elderly, convalescents, or persons with disabilities with daily living activities at the person's home or in a care facility. Duties performed at a place of residence may include keeping house, making beds, doing laundry, washing dishes and preparing meals. May provide assistance at non-residential care facilities. May advise families, the elderly, convalescents, and persons with disabilities regarding such things as nutrition, cleanliness, and household activities.

Version 2

Personal Care Aides

If you like helping people, being a personal care aide might be a good job for you.

Who would I help?

You might help many different people:

- An older adult
- A person with a serious illness or who had recent surgery
- A person with a disability



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Where would I work?

You might work in:

- A person's home
- A day program
- A nursing home where people live

What would I do?

There are many parts of this job. You might:

- Do chores like making beds, doing laundry, or cooking
- Talk with families about important topics like healthy eating



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Survey example

Version 1

I worry I have had difficulty finding or keeping a job due to:

- ☐ English is my second language
- ☐ Childcare
- ☐ A visible or invisible disability
- ☐ My education
- ☐ My age
- ☐ No Phone
- ☐ Limited transportation
- ☐ No email
- ☐ Limited work experience
- ☐ My computer skills
- ☐ Justice involvement
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ None of the above



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Version 2

I think this could help me find a job faster:

Choose as many options as you need and we will do our best to connect you to resources.

- ☐ Going back to school
- ☐ Learning more English
- ☐ Learning more computer skills
- ☐ Finding childcare
- ☐ Getting a phone
- ☐ Getting better transportation
- ☐ Getting email
- ☐ Getting more work experience
- ☐ Talking about my age or experiences differently
- ☐ Talking about a disability
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ None of the above



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Employment services intake process

Version 1

Information will be gathered on the client's work experience, education, and barriers to employment. The initial intake will inform the client about the program and its services and the appropriateness of services for the client. A more detailed assessment of the client's barriers will be made during the completion of the Employment Services Intake Form and a Strength/Needs Assessment. Client will participate in the intake process by sharing information and assessing their strengths, needs, and skills.

Version 2

What happens at the intake meeting?

We want to make sure that this program is a good fit for you. We will go over your goals and how this program could help you.

We will also talk about:

- What you are good at and the types of work you enjoy
- What support you think you need and how we might be able to help you
- Why you are unemployed so we can help you talk about this with employers
- Any questions you have about this program

This meeting usually takes about 1-2 hours. If you have questions before your meeting, respond to this email or call Hugo at 123-456-7890.



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