

Tips for Evaluating Written Health Education Materials

As a Family PACT provider, you want your clients to have high-quality, easy-to-read, and culturally appropriate health education materials. You want to choose and use materials that meet the standards set down in the PPBI. Ordering the materials from the Family PACT catalog is a good first step. But how can you be sure that the materials you are considering using will really work with your clients? Here is a four step process that you can follow:

- Step One:** Check the reading level of the proposed material.
- Step Two:** Evaluate for content accuracy.
- Step Three:** Determine its cultural relevance and appropriateness for the populations you serve.
- Step Four:** Ensure that it meets the personal and emotional needs of the individual client.

STEP ONE: Check the reading level of the proposed material.

At least one out of four Californian adults read at or below the 5th grade level. Yet many health education materials are written at the 10th grade level or above. This means that your Family PACT clients may not understand the information you are giving them. There are various ways you can assess the reading level of a written material, including the Fry Graph Reading Level Index and the SMOG Readability Formula. [Click here](#) to get a copy of the Fry Graph and its instructions. [Click here](#) for an easy-to-use version of the SMOG formula.

Think about these questions:

- Are the words used easy for most people to understand? Is the vocabulary familiar to the clients you serve? Does it avoid medical jargon or other technical language?
- Are the sentences simple, short, and conversational?
- Are the main ideas clear?

Family PACT providers can get dozens of materials for free by ordering them through the Family PACT catalog or by downloading them online. The reading level of each of these materials is noted in the Family PACT catalog.

STEP TWO: Evaluate for content accuracy.

Your Family PACT clients need health education materials that are up-to-date and medically accurate. Clients need to feel secure that the information is clear and credible. You can use clinical staff to help evaluate the material for medical accuracy.

Think about these questions:

- Is there any bias on the part of the producer of the material?
- Does it fit the needs of the population you serve?
- Does it reflect the latest research and clinical practice?

All Family PACT materials are reviewed by content experts.

STEP THREE: Determine its cultural relevance and appropriateness for the populations you serve.

The importance of recognizing and honoring the cultural backgrounds of the people you serve cannot be overstated. The ideal education material would include examples and images of people from the cultures, ethnic groups, and age groups you serve. The best way to assure that the materials will resonate with your clients is to ask them to preview the materials for appropriateness and appeal.

Think about these questions:

- Are the messages offered and images portrayed positive and inclusive?
- Are they based on the strengths and values of the cultural groups you serve?
- Are the illustrations and messages appealing to and respectful of the populations you serve?

Most materials in Family PACT catalog have been field-tested extensively with Family PACT clients statewide. All are available in English and in Spanish and many are also available in other languages, including Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

STEP FOUR: Ensure that the material meets the personal and emotional needs of the individual client.

When faced with a health problem, people often experience physical or emotional stress. This makes it harder for clients to process complicated written information. Thus, it is important to reduce the amount of information presented at one time and to arrange the information in a logical and easy to comprehend way.

Think about these questions:

- Is the type size and style easy to read?
- Do the illustrations relate to the information being shared?
- Is the layout well-organized and easy to follow?
- Does it include only the information the client needs to know at this stage?

You can make a difference!

By using these steps you can carefully select your written materials and use them effectively in your clinical practice as well as in your outreach efforts.