



MEMORANDUM

To: Alison Jaenicke

From: Caroline Zielinski

Date: September 8, 2010

Re: Analysis of an “Application for Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities”

The purpose of this memo is to analyze an application produced by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. It is a document that allows people who have been injured previously or are currently injured to apply for medical assistance if they are still working. The document will be interpreted and analyzed to determine whether or not this is an effective piece of technical writing according to the six major characteristics of technical writing.

1: Addresses a Particular Audience

The primary audience of this document is English speaking people who live in Pennsylvania. This was determined because it was created by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and the whole document is in the English Language. The document was created to allow workers to apply for medical assistance, so anyone using the document had to have been previously injured in some way or currently injured but are continuing to work. There is also a list of specific qualifications that show that anyone applying must have a low income.

Although the primary language is English, at the top of the document there is a section where an explanation of the document is given in 10 other languages, indicating that a secondary audience may be someone who speaks a different language. However, there is no where that states where to get the rest of the document in those languages. A way to improve this could be to have a statement explaining how to get assistance in another language.

The people filling out the application are the main audience, but are not the only ones who would be dealing with the application. The tertiary audience could be anyone who has to process the application after it had been filled out.

2: Help the Audience Solve a Problem

This document allows people who need help paying for medical bills to get help. One qualification that must be met is that the worker has been injured or disabled previously to the time of applying or is currently injured while continuing to work. These people need to work to sustain their lifestyle and an injury may be preventing them from doing that. The medical bills they are paying may be decreasing the amount of money they have left for important things like food and clothing. Therefore, by filling out this application, it allows them to pay a small price each month to have their medical bills paid for or mostly paid for, instead of the burden of the large bills being on their shoulders.

3: Reflects the Goals and Cultures of the PA Department of Welfare

Seeing the goals and cultures of the Department of Welfare is difficult to do on an application such as this. The primary audience, however, knows that the department is there to help them if they truthfully need it. This idea is reflected in the document because it asks for certain information, and then asks for proof of that information. The Department clearly is unwilling to

hand out money to whoever asks for it, so the fact that proof has to be provided displays that their organization is legitimate and professional. In another light, the document also says that if proof cannot be provided, help is available to ensure that if the money is deserved they will receive it. This again shows that the department actually wants to help people who really deserve the medical assistance.

4: Collaborative Effort

There is definite evidence that the document was produced as a collaborative effort by people in different areas of expertise. The different languages at the top had to have been written by someone who speaks or writes those languages. Someone had to design the layout of the document, putting different colors, headings and fonts in the design. This person may not have been a part of the rest of the document in any way. There also had to have been input from the people who will be allocating the money to the applicants. They have to know if they are eligible to give the applicants the money, and they will know that from the application. There had to have been someone to draft the application before it was put into its final layout, as well. All of these different aspects of the document were most likely not created by one person; therefore there is evidence that the application was produced collaboratively.

5: Uses Design to Increase Readability

Applications are often very troublesome and hard to decipher. However, this document is very clear. It lists qualifications that must be met by the applicant very explicitly and clearly. The font sizes and colors also point out the important parts of the document. The document is set up in four steps – all highlighted by large font and a green accent color. The fact that the color is green makes it seem less intimidating than it would be if it was red. Towards the bottom, the words do get a little cluttered, but they have to be there so I'm not sure what else could be done. The way that the document is set up is standard. Personal information is first at the top, and at the end there is information about what will happen after the information is filled out and sent in. In this aspect it is very logically organized and even though it is an application and not a paper, it makes it seem as though there is a conclusion.

6: Effective Use of Words and Graphics

Considering this is an application that is professional, there are no graphics on it. However, there are a lot of words. The words used are minimal because they are just there to give direction, but the words are appropriate. For example, the heading "EXPENSES" is in all capital letters, a larger font than the others on the document, and in a green color, not black. Underneath there is an explanation that says, "List any expenses necessary in order to be eligible for or continue receiving this income," in a smaller font and in black. The way this is set up shows that this section is about expenses, but if you are not sure what to write down it tells you. It shows that it is important and must be filled out in order to get the result the applicant is looking for. The rest of the document is assembled in the same manner.

Summary

The application has few flaws in my opinion. It is easy to navigate, the colors make the important information stand out, it has a logical flow and is very specific to the audience it is addressing. It adheres to the six major characteristics of technical writing as much as it can as an application.