

Component Assessment: Plain Language Forms

Key Elements

The responses in this assessment provide a snapshot of Plain Language Forms in your state. All responses are meant solely to inform assessment of this component.

Key elements of **Plain Language Forms** include:

- Create a user-centered design that is grounded in process-mapping by case type;
- Ensure there are embedded plain language instructions;
- Ensure there is universal implementation and adoption of standardized plain language forms;
- Provide field testing for comprehensibility and usability;
- Ensure integration and alignment of data elements and process between forms, court and legal aid case management systems, and e-filing systems;
- Create protocols for ongoing assessment and updating of forms and related materials;
- Provide a statewide standardized plain language glossary of legal terms; and
- Provide both printed and automated versions.

Need

1. Are Plain Language Forms available in your state?

Yes No Unsure

Additional information:

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

2. Are Plain Language Forms available at the county level?

Tips: Suggested sources of information include available forms, surveys of civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff.

No counties Few counties Half of counties Most counties All counties

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

3. What is your best estimate of the demand for Plain Language Forms?

Tips: Suggested sources of information include court caseloads, case types. Please provide a brief explanation of the calculation below under "Additional information".

Number: _____

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Response

4. How much of the Plain Language Forms demand is met?

Number of Plain Language Forms: _____

To calculate the percentage below =
Number of Plain Language Forms *divided by*
Need for Plain Language Forms (question 3).

Please provide a brief explanation of your calculation below under “Additional information”.

Percentage: _____

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

5. What case types use Plain Language Forms? (select all that apply)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include available forms, surveys of civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff. Notes should indicate any distinctions within contract cases.

- Contract (includes landlord/tenant, debt collection & mortgage foreclosure)
 - Small Claims
 - Tort
 - Probate
 - Real Property
 - Mental Health (includes civil commitment, guardianship)
 - Family (includes divorce, protection orders)
 - Other _____
-

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



6. At what stage in the case are Plain Language Forms provided? (select all that apply)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include available forms, surveys of civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff.

- Pre-filing
- Post-filing, uncontested
- Post-filing, contested
- Through entry of judgment
- Post-judgement
- Appellate
- No case stage data is collected
- Other _____

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Technology Integration

7. Are Plain Language Forms available online?

Tips: Suggested sources of information include court and self-help websites. Please identify any barriers in the notes below.

No counties Few counties Half of counties Most counties All counties

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

8. Is technology being optimized (e.g., technology utilized to the extent possible where practicable and feasible)?

Tips: Suggested sources of information include court, self-help websites; surveys of civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff, self-help center staff and user focus groups and interviews. States might also identify additional technology examples. Please discuss any limitations in broadband access and infrastructure challenges below under “Additional information”.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Administration					
Creation tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Autofill (guide & file)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Form sharing tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Education/Information					
Communication tools (email/text notices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information-sharing tools (websites)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service Delivery					
Remote fill/submission tools (Guide & File, A2J Author)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Language

9. Are language access services and supports provided?

Tips: Respondent might replicate this question for “hard copy” and “automated” or discuss any distinctions below under “Additional information”. Suggested sources for information include language access plan, Plain Language Forms policies and protocols and language services available. The Justice Index: Language Access Index might also inform responses to this question.

Services & Supports	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Interpretation (in-person, certified)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Translated materials (signage, orders, general information)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bilingual employee support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Special Populations

10. Do Plain Language Forms comply with disability access requirements?

Tips: Respondent might replicate this question for “hard copy” and “automated” or discuss any distinctions below under “Additional information”. Suggested sources for information include state accommodations compliance and rules, evaluations and reports on compliance. The Justice Index: Disability Access Index might also inform responses to this question.

Access Requirements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
ADA ¹ Title 1: Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADA Title 2: State and Local Government Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADA Title 3: Public Accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADA Title 4: Telecommunications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADA Title 5: Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rehabilitation Act, Section 504	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

11. Are safeguards in place for vulnerable populations? (For example, individuals with trauma, cognitive impairment, learning disabilities, homebound, etc.)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include opinion surveys from civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff, user focus groups/interviews and community/social service provider interviews/focus groups.

Safeguard	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Trauma-informed responses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodations for remote appearances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriate modalities to support user comprehension and participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional time for client review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confidentiality practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

¹ Americans with Disabilities Act. For more information on ADA access requirements see, <https://www.ada.gov/>.



Ecosystem Ties & Voice

12. Are principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion being applied to content development and/or service delivery? (e.g., Do Plain Language Forms practices reflect cultural sensitivity? Is language gender-neutral? Is the impact of bias being considered?)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include opinion surveys from civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff, user focus groups and interviews and community and social service provider interviews or focus groups. Respondents may discuss content development and service delivery separately.

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

13. What financing structures are in place to support Plain Language Forms? (select all that apply)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include interviews with court leadership, civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff.

- Budget line items
- Fees
- Private funding
- Grants
- Endowment
- None
- Other _____

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

14. Is financing for Plain Language Forms sustainable (able to be maintained at a certain level)?

Tips: Suggested sources of information include interviews with court leadership, civil legal aid, pro bono coordinators, court staff and self-help center staff.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



15. How does the access to justice governance/leadership support Plain Language Forms? (select all that apply)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include opinion surveys from private attorneys, legal aid, court staff, judges, and self-help center staff; access to justice commission strategic plans.

- Promoting Plain Language Forms
- Funding
- Marketing
- Support legal aid initiatives

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Measurement

16. What data do you collect on Plain Language Forms? (select all that apply)

Tips: Suggested sources of information include legal aid program data, court administration and court case management data.

- Number of cases with Plain Language Forms
- Plain Language Forms use by case type
- Outcomes in cases with Plain Language Forms
- Case length for cases with Plain Language Forms
- No data is collected
- Other (can add multiple options): _____

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:

16 .i. How is the data used to inform access to justice strategy/policy?

16.ii. Who sees the data?

17. Are there accepted practices for documenting Plain Language Form existence and use?

Tips: Examples of accepted practices include uniform data definitions, collection techniques and collection frequency.

If yes, please explain practices below under “Additional information”.

- Yes No Unsure

Additional information (such as country/region distinctions):

Remarks on strengths and gaps:



Cumulative Component Assessment

Please score your overall progress on Plain Language Forms based on the compiled information and additional data used to inform this assessment. The scoring should use the following scale:

None: In this category, component key elements, content or services are not available; no data is being collected; there is no sustained funding and there are many gaps to providing this service or content.

Minimal levels: In this category, very little demand for component key elements, content, or services is estimated to be met, potentially only in a few counties. There may be only a few (1-2) case types or litigation stages in which component key elements, content, or services are available. The majority of responses focusing on technology, language supports, access requirements, and safeguards, are 'Rarely' with a few 'Sometimes' selections. There are limited examples of diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as weak, unsustainable financing structures and data collection practices.

Partial: In this category, it is estimated that between a quarter and half of the demand for component key elements, content, or services is estimated to be met. Component key elements, content or services may not be statewide and in less than half of all counties. There may be only three to four case types and few litigation stages in which component key elements, content or services are available. The majority of responses focusing on technology, language services, access requirements and safeguards are 'Sometimes' with a few 'Rarely' or 'Often' selections. Additionally, only a few examples of diversity, equity and inclusion are present. Financing structures are somewhat stable while data collection is sporadic and rarely informs strategy or policy.

Sufficient: In this category, it is estimated that more than half of the demand for component key elements, content or services is being met. The component key elements, content or services may exist statewide and if not statewide, in many of the counties. Component key elements, content or services are provided to most case types and at multiple stages in the case. The majority of responses focusing on technology, language supports, access requirements, and safeguards are 'Often' with a few 'Always' or 'Sometimes' selections. Additionally, there are more than 2-3 examples of diversity, equity, and inclusion present. Stable and sustainable financing structures are listed; data collection may be established and occurring but there is room for advancement in how it informs the design, delivery and sustainability of the component.

Advanced: In this category, greater than 75% of the demand for component key elements, content or services is being met. The component key elements, content or services are statewide and are provided to almost all cases and at every feasible stage in the case. The majority of responses focusing on technology, language services, access requirements and safeguards are 'Always' with a few 'Often' or 'Sometimes' selections. Additionally, there are numerous examples of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Financing structures are described as robust and sustainable. Data collection and sharing occur regularly to inform component design and delivery with strong feedback loops in place to guide future development.

Overall progress on Plain Language Forms:

None Minimal levels Partial Sufficient Advanced

