



Client-Centered Communications: SNAP E&T Messaging that Makes Sense

Speakers:

Andrea García, Senior Technical Advisor, Westat Insight

Miles Patrie, Senior Technical Advisor, Westat Insight

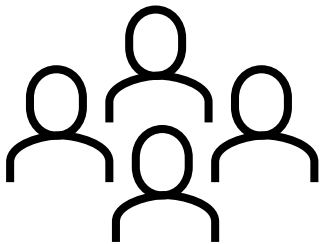
Amanda Weaver, Policy Support Specialist, Arizona Department of Economic Security

Client-Centered Communication: A Framework

Client-Centered Communication: A Framework

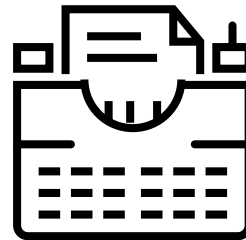
Audience

- Who is your audience?
- What do you know about them?



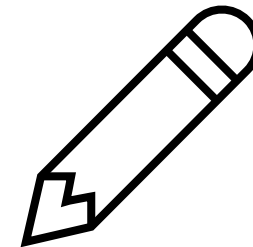
Message

- What is your message?
- What are you trying to communicate?



Purpose

- Why are you communicating with your audience?
- Why would someone need to pay attention?



Know Your Audience



Hardship



Literacy Skills



English
Language
Proficiency



Questions

Plain Language: A Definition

“

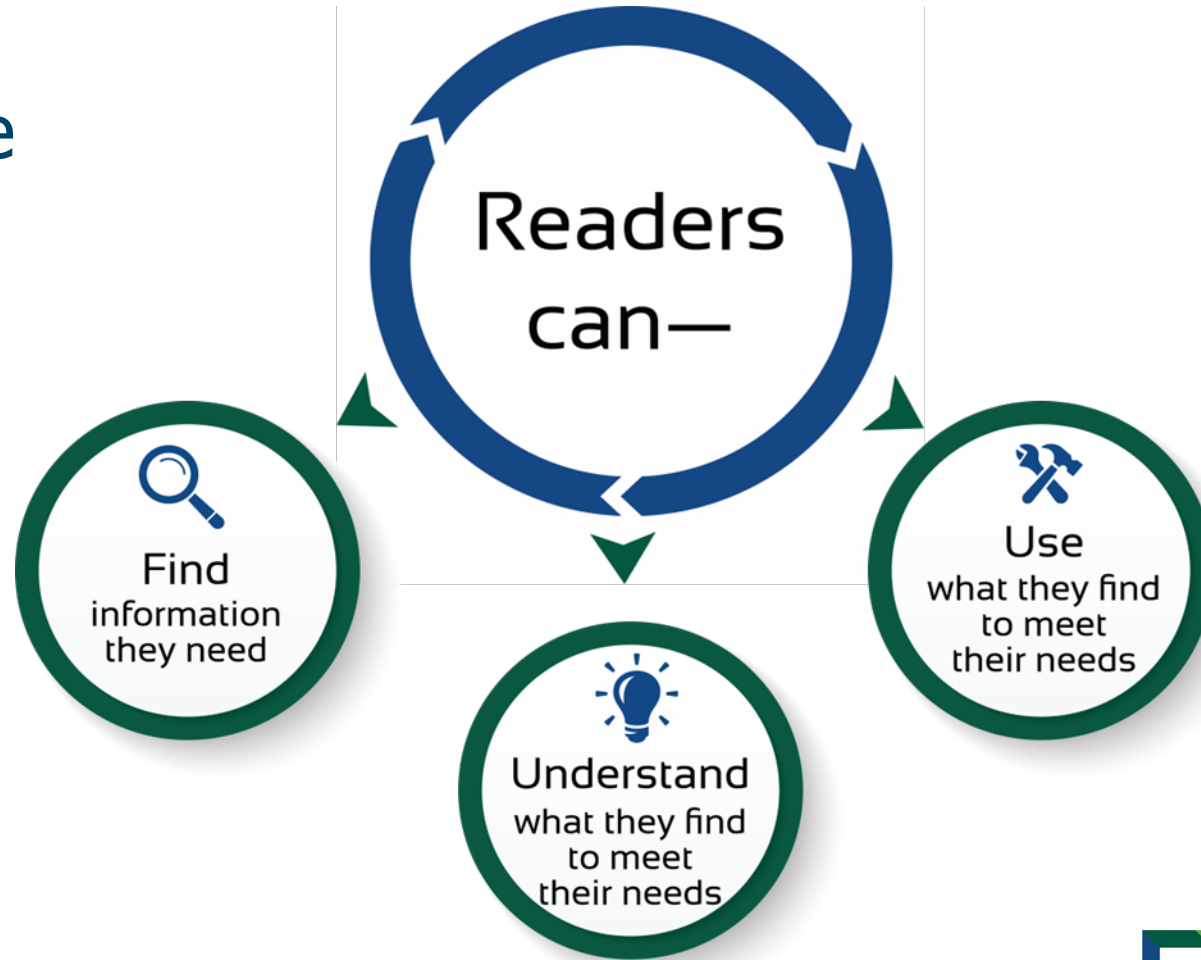
Plain language (also called plain writing or plain English) is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it

- Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)

”

Why Use Plain Language?

- When materials are written in plain language...



SNAP Model Notice Toolkit

- Published by FNS
- Provides resources to States to improve SNAP notices and communications with clients
- www.fns.usda.gov/snap/model-notice-toolkit



U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

Introduction to the SNAP Model Notice Toolkit

What is the Model Notice Toolkit?

The Model Notice Toolkit is a set of tools designed to help State agencies improve the notices they send to clients regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

SNAP notices are the primary way State agencies communicate with SNAP applicants and current participants. In many cases, these notices include time-sensitive information and instructions about what the household needs to do to receive (or continue to receive) benefits.

Developing effective SNAP notices can be a challenge. It can be difficult to clearly convey SNAP decisions to clients, the reasoning behind them, and required actions, especially when the household's situation is complex. In addition, notices must meet Federal and State policies and State automated systems may impose constraints on the tone, content, and appearance of client notices.

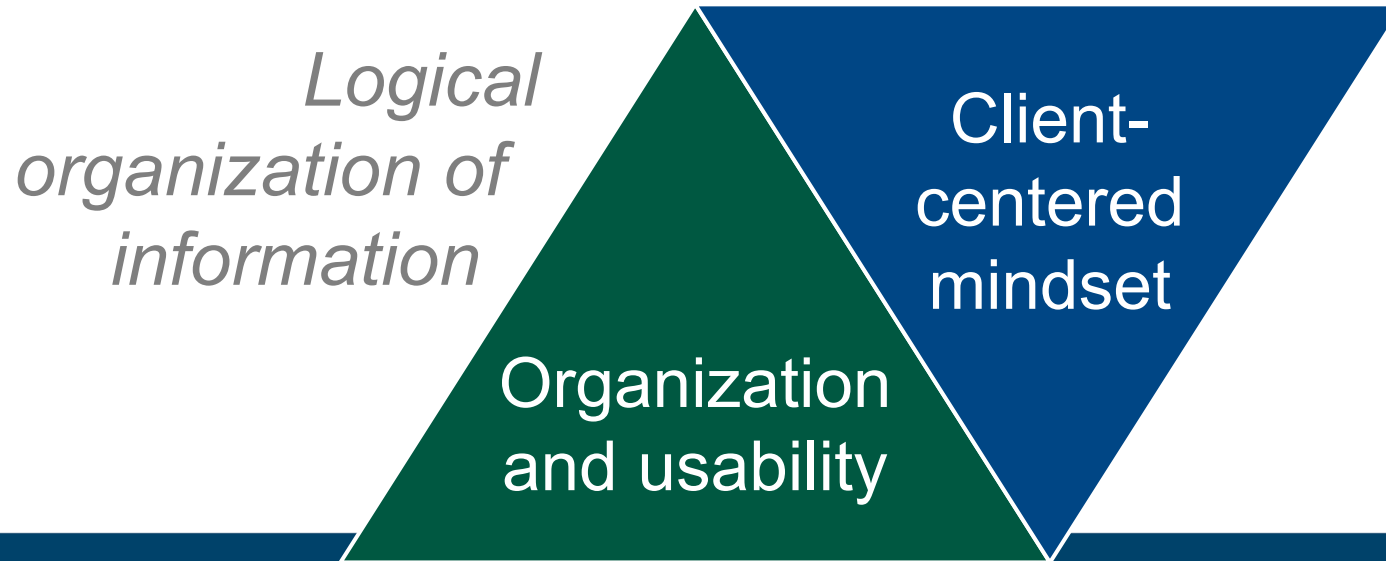
The toolkit is designed to help State agencies evaluate their SNAP notices and make targeted improvements that fit the needs of their clients, work within system constraints, and comply with Federal policy. The toolkit includes model notices with examples of plain language and formatting that State agencies can adapt to fit their own needs. The toolkit also provides customizable tools to help

Best Practices for Clear and Effective Communications

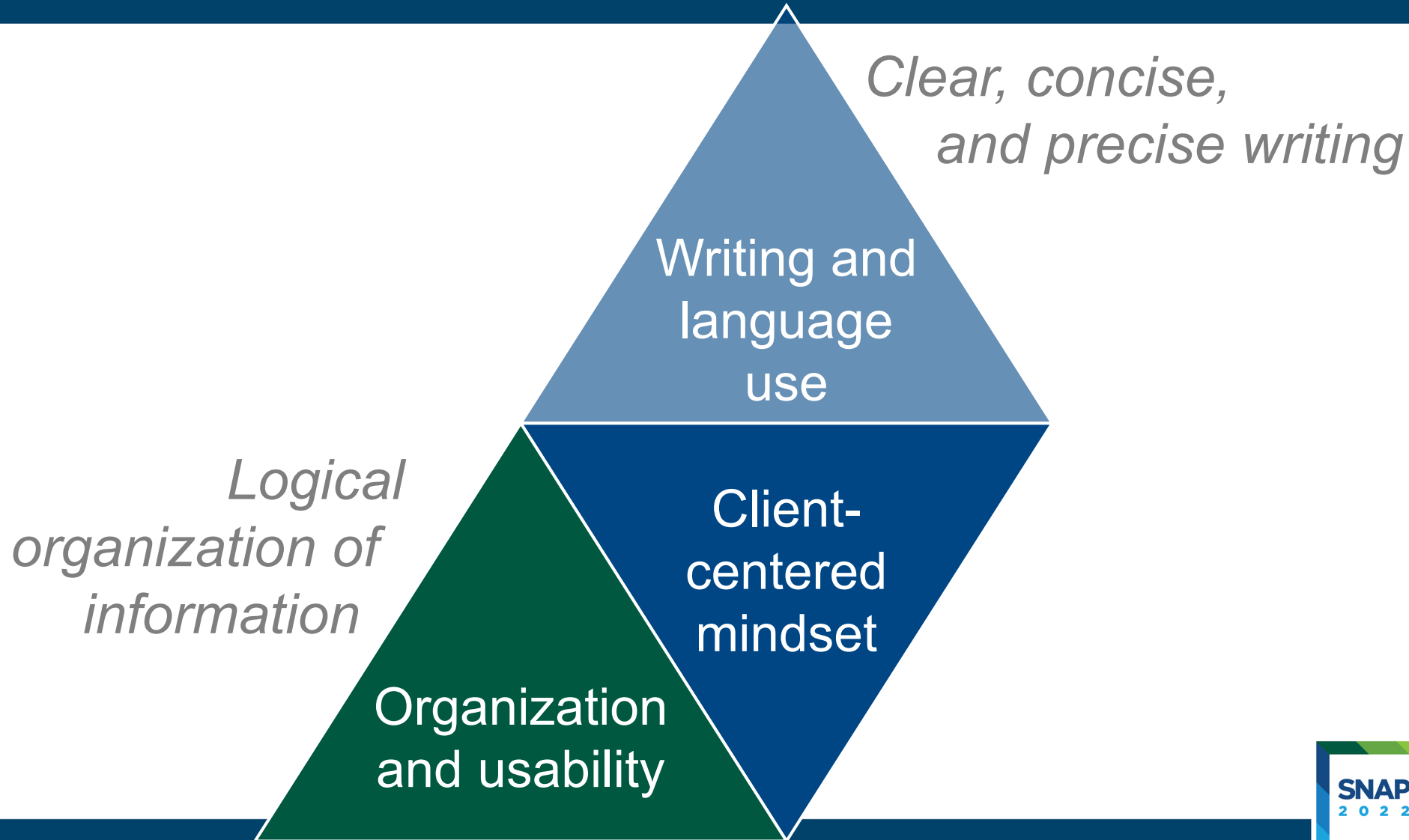


Client-
centered
mindset

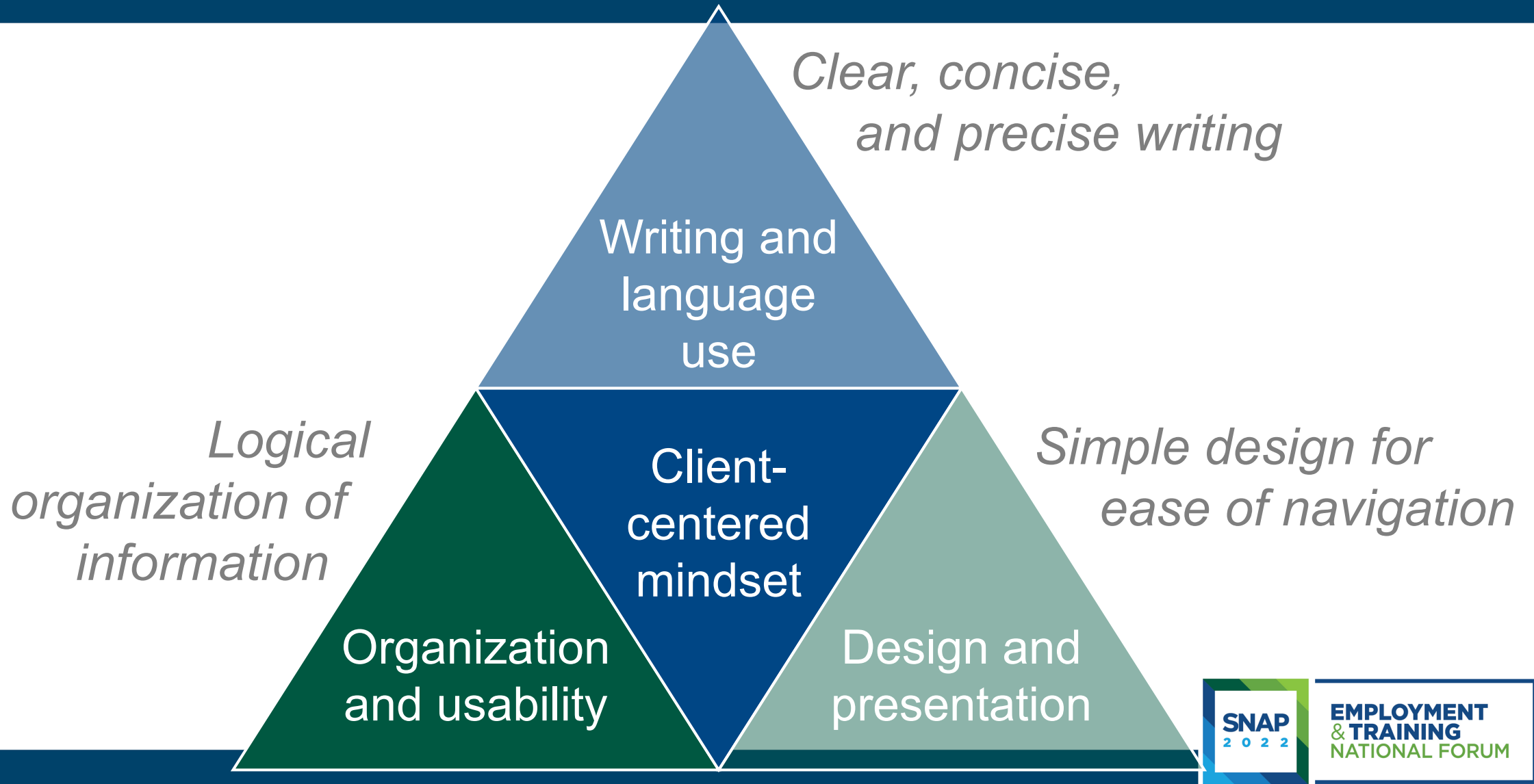
Best Practices for Clear and Effective Communications



Best Practices for Clear and Effective Communications



Best Practices for Clear and Effective Communications



Tools for SNAP E&T Messaging

Challenge of Communicating to Individuals


Household example:

- Joe, age 55
- Donna, age 48
- Mandatory E&T applies to all work registrants in the area
- ABAWD time limit applies in the area
- How do you inform the household members of the specific work requirements that apply to them?
- How do you properly communicate to ensure they know what they need to do?

Consolidated Work Notice

- 2021 USDA Rule
 - States must provide “consolidated work notices”
- The Consolidated Work Requirements Model Notice
 - A reference for states, offering best practices for what this type of notice could look like

FNS SNAP Model Notice Toolkit
Notice Type: Work Requirements



State Department of Human Services
123 Main Street
Hometown, ST 12345-6789

Case ID Number: 12345A
Notice Date: October 1, 2021
Program: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP Work Rules

You Must Follow These Rules to Receive SNAP Benefits

Dear [Name 1], [Name 2], and [Name 3],

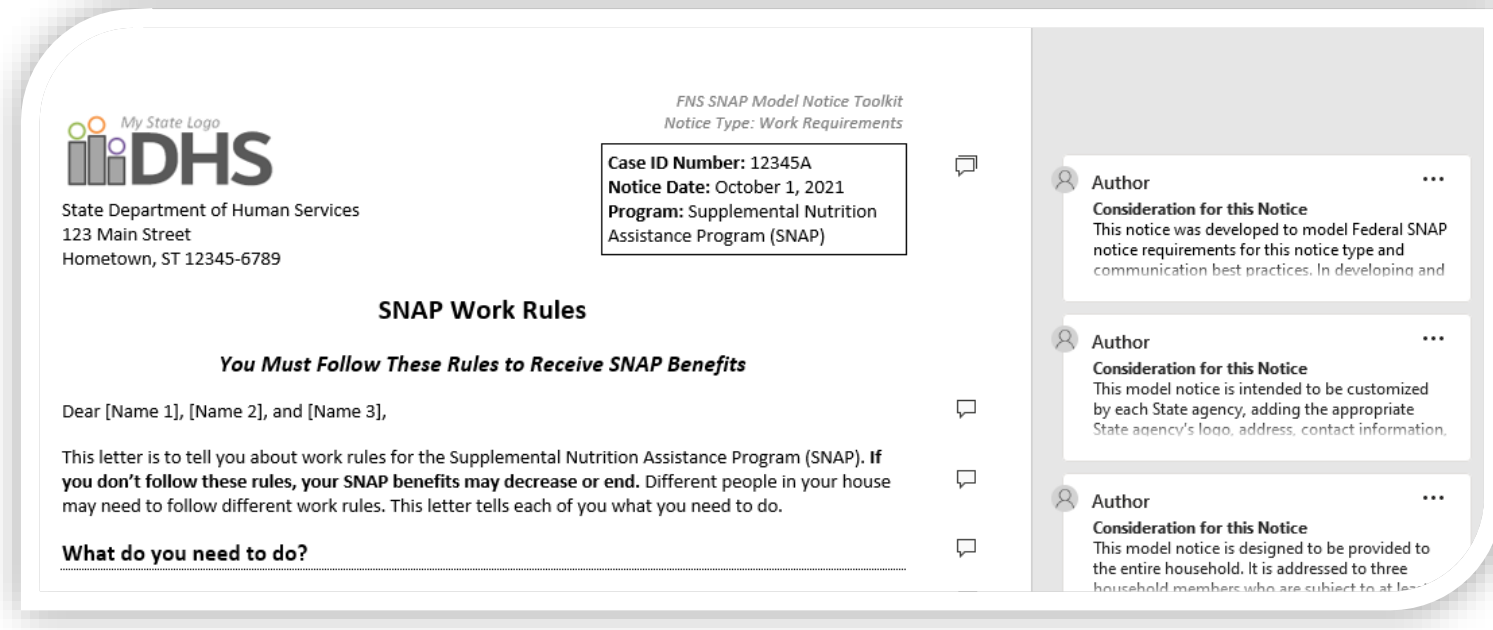
This letter is to tell you about work rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). **If you don't follow these rules, your SNAP benefits may decrease or end.** Different people in your house may need to follow different work rules. This letter tells each of you what you need to do.

What do you need to do?

.....

Annotated Model Notice

- Explains how to meet federal policy standards
- Exemplifies how States can customize notices



The image shows a model notice for SNAP Work Rules, annotated with various elements. The notice is titled "SNAP Work Rules" and includes a section titled "You Must Follow These Rules to Receive SNAP Benefits". The notice is addressed to "Dear [Name 1], [Name 2], and [Name 3],". The text explains that the letter is to inform recipients about work rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and that if they don't follow these rules, their SNAP benefits may decrease or end. The notice also includes a section titled "What do you need to do?".

Annotations:

- Top Left:** "My State Logo" and "DHS" logo. Below it, the address: "State Department of Human Services, 123 Main Street, Hometown, ST 12345-6789".
- Top Right:** "FNS SNAP Model Notice Toolkit" and "Notice Type: Work Requirements".
- Case Information Box:** "Case ID Number: 12345A", "Notice Date: October 1, 2021", "Program: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)".
- Right Side:** Three "Author" annotations with "Consideration for this Notice" text, explaining the purpose and customization of the notice.

Notice Review Tool

NOTICE REVIEW TOOL (NRT)							
Notice of Consolidated Work Requirements							
Policy Requirements							
ID	CRITERIA	GENERAL WORK REQUIREMENTS	MET?	MANDATORY E&T (IF APPLICABLE)	MET?	ABAWD REQUIREMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)	MET?
1	Is provided to the household during the certification process, when a previously exempt household member or new household member becomes subject to SNAP work requirements, and at recertification. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)	Is provided during the certification process, when a previously exempt household member or new household member becomes subject to the general work requirements, and at recertification. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)		Is provided during the certification process, when a previously exempt household member or new household member becomes subject to mandatory E&T, and at recertification. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)		Is provided during the certification process, when a previously exempt household member or new household member becomes subject to the ABAWD work requirement and time limit, and at recertification. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)	
2	Identifies which household member is subject to which work requirement(s). 273.7(c)(1)(ii)	Identifies all of the household members subject to the general work requirements. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)		Identifies all of the household members subject to mandatory E&T, if any. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)		Identifies all of the household members subject to the ABAWD work requirement and time limit, if any. 273.7(c)(1)(ii)	

1. Policy Requirements
2. Comprehension & Readability
3. Usability & Presentation
4. Electronic Notices
+
◀

Oral Communications

- The 2021 USDA Rule
 - States must provide an oral explanation of the work requirements to clients
- The Consolidated Work Requirements Oral Script
 - States can customize for eligibility workers

Work Requirements Script for Eligibility Workers

Overview for States

What is the purpose of this script?

This script is meant to serve as a resource for an eligibility worker (EW) to explain the work requirements a household must follow in simple and user-friendly language. It includes plain language terms used in the *Consolidated Work Model Notice* to explain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work requirements to households that include work registrants, mandatory E&T participants, and able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs).

When should EWs use this script?

EWs use this script after the EW has screened for exemptions to determine which requirements apply to which household members at certification and recertification, and after any previously exempt household member becomes newly subject to a work requirement during the certification period (for example if the household reports a change that causes a household member to lose exemption status).

Do State agencies need to customize the script?

Yes, States need to customize the script to reflect their State procedures. The script includes annotations to signal where State customization is required.

The sample questions and answers included in the script should also be customized to reflect preferred responses for each State.

SNAP E&T Messaging: A State's Perspective

Arizona Department of Economic Security



Agenda

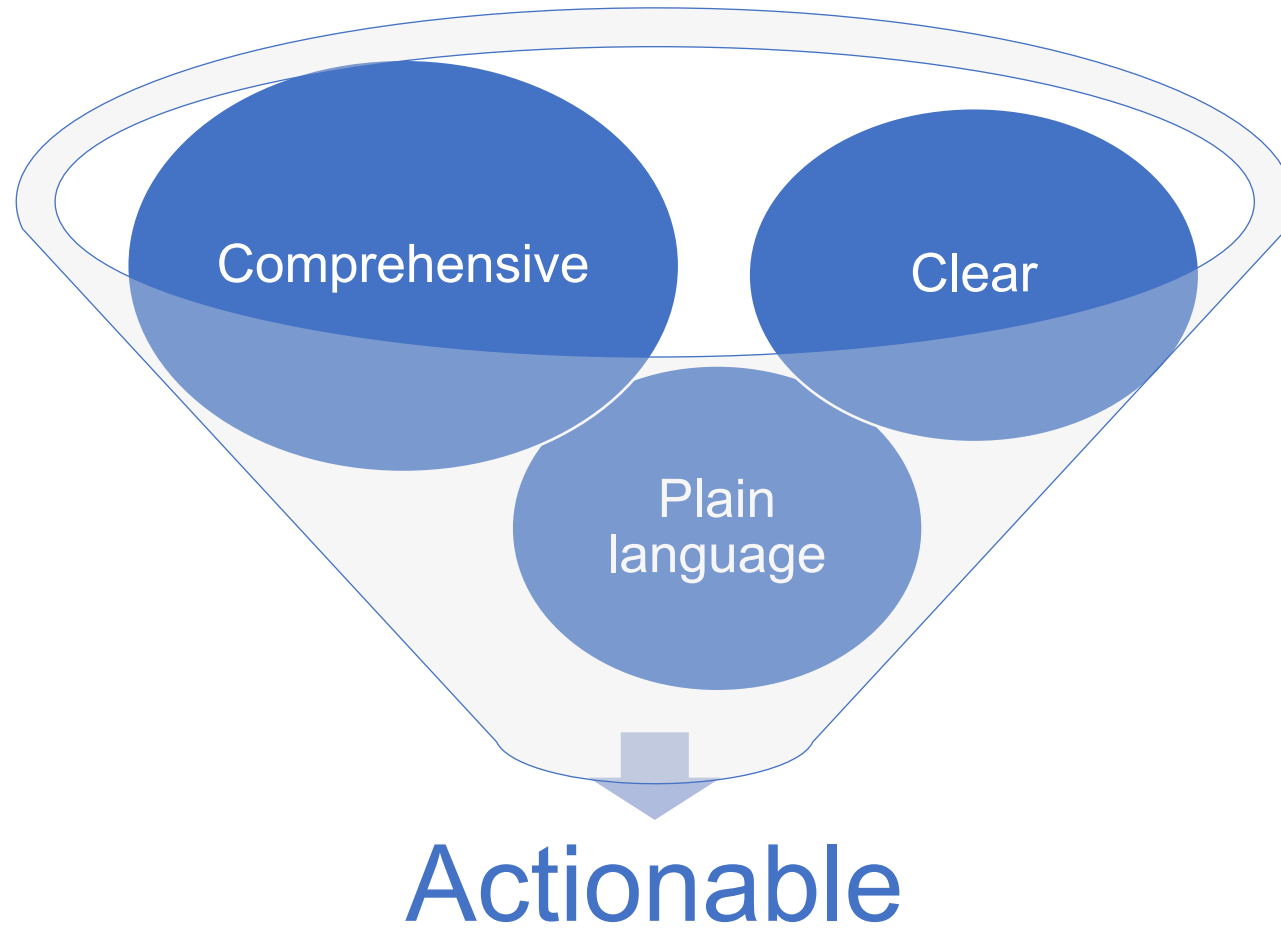
- Communicating in a virtual environment
- The evolution of our notices
- The future of our notices
- Best practices
- Challenges
- Successes

Notice Simplification

Arizona's Goal:

- Increase timeliness
- Improve customer experience
- Lessen client contact
- Improve quality
- Decrease churn

Task



Review

THIS DECISION IS ABOUT YOUR NUTRITION ASSISTANCE (NA) APPLICATION

NA APPROVED: We approved your NA application received on &&APPREC&&

The following persons in your household are approved. The income, resources, and expenses of these persons are used to determine if you are eligible for NA benefits and the monthly amount you will get.

Name	Date of Birth
Amy Smith	01/01/1981
Brad Smith	01/01/1983

BENEFIT AMOUNT

Starting &&BENMON&& all persons listed above are eligible for &&BENFIT&&.

For the next month you are eligible for &&BENF02&&, and after that you are eligible for &&BENF03&&.

Your first month's benefit may be less than the monthly benefit listed above because your benefits started the day we received your application.

NOTE: If you turned in your application after the 15th of the month you may get your first and second month of benefits at the same time. You will not receive your next benefits until the third month.

These amounts may change if there is a change in the number of people in your household, income and/or expenses for the 2nd and 3rd months. We will send you a separate notice if this is the case.

Research Study

Does the reader understand?

- Next steps
- Responsibilities
- Where to go for help

Cast and Hue study was completed with our clients

Feedback

Interviews and surveys showed:

- Confusing
- Overwhelming
- Unclear
- What do I do next?

Appearance

- Bullets
- Lists
- Headings
 - Question
 - Statement
 - Topic
- White space

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE (NA) - WORK REQUIREMENTS

** We now offer all services by telephone **

IMPORTANT

This notice is to tell you about the Work Requirements for the Nutrition Assistance (NA) program. You do not need to respond to this Notice.

|xx| The household member(s) listed below need to follow the NA Work Requirements. When the NA Work Requirements are not followed, your NA benefits may decrease or stop.

Name	Date of Birth
Mark Smith	01/01/1991
Amy Smith	01/01/1993

Language Examples

- Active voice
- Common words
- Tone
- Pronouns
- Verbs

LEGAL AUTHORITY

or

RULES WE USED TO MAKE OUR DECISION

YOU

or

PARTICIPANT

Results

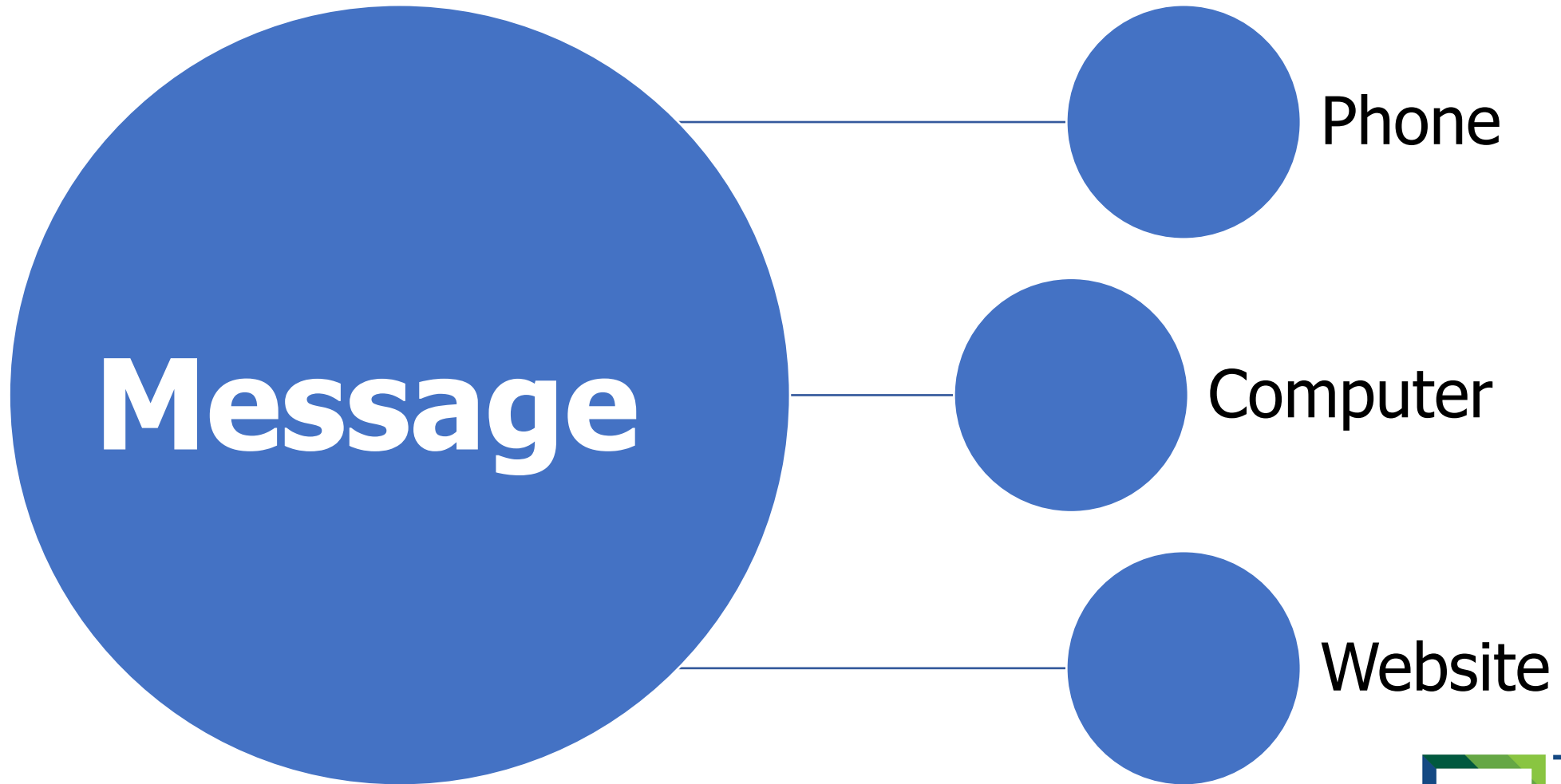
Changes made resulted in:

- Easier reading
- Decreased word count
- Decreased contact with the agency regarding unclear notices

Clients reported:

- Increased satisfaction
- Increased comprehension

e-Communication



Challenges

- Using a legacy system to generate notices
- Informing ABAWDS during a state-wide waiver
- Mandatory to Voluntary E&T program
- Reverse referral process
- Screening for appropriateness of a referral to E&T

2022 Approval Notice

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE (NA) APPROVAL NOTICE

WE NOW OFFER ALL SERVICES BY TELEPHONE

BENEFITS APPROVED

We processed your application turned in on **&&APPREC&&**. We have approved you for Nutrition Assistance (NA) benefits.

You will get NA benefits from **&&BENMON&&** to **&&RECERT&&**.

YOUR BENEFITS AMOUNT

|%%| Your household will get **&&BENFIT&&** for **&&BENMON&&**. Starting in **&&BENTWO&&**, you will get **&&BENF02&&** on the **&&EBDATE&&** day of the month.

|%%| Your household will get **&&BENFIT&&** for **&&BENMON&&** and **&&BENF02&&** for **&&BENTWO&&**. Starting in **&&BENTRI&&**, you will get **&&BENF03&&** on the **&&EBDATE&&** day of the month.

|%%| The amount of your benefits listed above may change without notice if your pending Cash Assistance (CA) application is approved.

HOW TO GET YOUR BENEFITS

Your NA benefits will be placed on your Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. If you do not have an EBT card, you can call 1 (888) 997-9333 to ask for one.

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE (NA) APPROVAL NOTICE

WE NOW OFFER ALL SERVICES BY TELEPHONE

BENEFITS APPROVED

We processed your application turned in on 01/05/2022. We have approved you for Nutrition Assistance (NA) benefits.

You will get NA benefits from 01/2022 to 12/2022.

YOUR BENEFITS AMOUNT

|xx| Your household will get \$100 for 01/2022. Starting in 02/2022, you will get \$120 on the 5th day of the month.

HOW TO GET YOUR BENEFITS

Your NA benefits will be placed on your Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. If you do not have an EBT card, you can call 1 (888) 997-9333 to ask for one.

Evolution of the Approval Notice

2019

- 5 pages
- Full break down of budget
- Legal terminology
- Benefit amount not at the top

2022

- 3 pages
- Simplified budget breakdown
- Simplified language
- Benefit amount moved to the top

Resources

DES Website

- <http://des.az.gov>

Plain language

- <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

FNS Toolkit

- <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/model-notice-toolkit>

FNS Policy Memo 07/13/2022 SNAP E&T Screening and Referral Guidance

- <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/et-screening-and-referral-guidance>



Discussion

Takeaways