



## Consumer and Community Participation Fact Sheet M08: Writing or Commenting on Documents

### What documents are we referring to?

Consumers and community members could help with writing or commenting on:

- Information sheets and consent forms.
- Pamphlets and brochures.
- Plain language summaries.
- Reports.
- Documents about the dissemination of research results.

### Why get consumers and community members to write or comment on research documents?

If consumers and community members cannot understand the information on these documents, then it is likely a potential participant of the project may not understand them either. The easier a consent form is to understand the easier it is for someone to decide if they, or their child, will take part in the research project.

### Who can write or comment on research documents?

- Members of the consumer and community group the research is focused on.
- Organisations which represent the consumer and community group.
- Carers or carers of children in the consumer and community group.

### Planning considerations

- What type of document is being reviewed?
- Are consumers and community members involved enough in the project to be able to write one of the documents which explain it?
- Will the consumers and community members require any training e.g. are the consent forms required to contain legal information?
- Provide clear instructions of what is expected of consumers and community members.
- Will consumers and community members be paid? Discuss this with them.
- Do consumers and community members know the privacy/confidentiality requirements?
- Consider meeting with the consumers and community members to discuss your requirements (Fact Sheet P05).

### Examples of questions that could be asked about the document

- What is the purpose of this document?
- Who is the audience of the project?
- Does it provide all the information required by participants about this research project?
- Is there anything that is not easy to understand such as jargon, acronyms, and technical words?
- Is the information in plain language?
- Does the format suit the audience e.g. do pamphlets for children contain illustrations?
- Are there alternate formats or languages available?
- Would this information encourage me to take part in the research, or put me off? Why?

Consumer and Community Reference Group members of the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project (2006-08) at the Telethon Kids Institute, offered their comments and perspectives on all documents associated with the project such as: consent forms and information sheets; topic guides for focus groups; educational resources for health professionals; reports and PowerPoint presentations; and grant applications for future research. Researchers considered consumer and community participation gave the project credibility and was vital for the development of educational resources.