



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.