



Hennepin County Minnesota

Plain Language Getting Your Message Across

Clean Water Summit

September 12, 2013

working for you 



What is plain language?

With everything you publish, your audience should be able to:

- **Find** what they need
- **Understand** what they find
- **Use** that information to meet their needs

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Does it work?

- Increased audience satisfaction and understanding of message
- Increased access to services and benefits
- Increased compliance with regulations
- Decreased costs – fewer phone calls and reduced printing and mailing costs

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How to apply plain language

- Define your audience and goal
 - What key information does your audience need?
- Write clear, concise text
 - Avoid acronyms and jargon
 - Include only what your audience needs
- Organize to reinforce your message
 - Put key information in the most obvious location
 - Use headings to make it scannable

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Example – car safety

From the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

This is a multipurpose passenger vehicle which will handle and maneuver differently from an ordinary passenger car, in driving conditions which may occur on streets and highways and off road. As with other vehicles of this type, if you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers, the vehicle may roll over or may go out of control and crash. You should read driving guidelines and instructions in the Owner's Manual, and WEAR YOUR SEAT BELTS AT ALL TIMES.



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Changes to your 2004 Form 1040

Amount due: \$24.60

Based on the information you provided, we changed your 2004 Form 1040 to correct your:

- Filing status to head of household
- Total exemption amount

As a result, you owe \$24.60.

Billing summary

Amount you owed	\$1,076.63
Decrease in tax	– 963.00
Decrease in interest	– 89.03
Amount due by March 23, 2009	\$24.60

What you need to do immediately

If you agree with the changes we made

- Pay the amount due of \$24.60 by March 23, 2009, to avoid additional penalty and interest charges.

Continued on back...



Payment

James Hinds
22 Boulder Street
Hanson, CT 00000-7253

Notice	CP21A
Notice date	March 2, 2009
Social Security number	999-99-9999

- Make your check or money order payable to the United States Treasury.
- Write Social Security number (999-99-9999), the tax year (2004), and the form number (1040) on your payment and any correspondence.

Amount due by
March 23, 2009

\$24.60

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
KANSAS CITY, MO 64999-0010



0000 00000000 0000000000 00000000 0000

Example –
revised
IRS
Account
Notice
P. 2 of 2

What you need to do immediately—continued

If you agree with the changes we made—continued

- If you can't pay the amount due, pay as much as you can now and make payment arrangements that allow you to pay off the rest over time. Visit www.irs.gov and search for keyword: "tax payment options" for more information about:
 - Installment and payment agreements—download required forms or save time and money by applying online if you qualify
 - Automatic deductions from your bank account
 - Payroll deductions
 - Credit card payments
- Or, call us at 1-999-999-9999 to discuss your options.

If you don't agree with the changes

- Call 1-999-999-9999 to review your account. You can also contact us by mail. Fill out the Contact information section, detach, and send it to us with any correspondence or documentation.
- If we don't hear from you, we'll assume you agree with the information in this notice.

If you've already paid your balance in full within the past 14 days or made payment arrangements, please disregard this notice.

If we don't hear from you

If you don't pay \$24.60 by March 23, 2009, interest will increase and additional penalties may apply.

Additional information

- Visit www.irs.gov/cp21a.
- For tax forms, instructions, and publications, visit www.irs.gov or call 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).
- Keep this notice for your records.

If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us.



Contact information

James Hinds
22 Boulder Street
Hanson, CT 00000-7253

Notice	CP21A
Notice date	March 2, 2009
Social Security number	999-99-9999

If your address has changed, please call 1-999-999-9999 or visit www.irs.gov.
 Please check here if you've included any correspondence. Write your Social Security number (999-99-9999), the tax year (2004), and the form number (1040) on any correspondence.

a.m. p.m.
 a.m. p.m.

Primary phone Best time to call Secondary phone Best time to call





Example – jury instructions

Studies show that most jurors do not fully understand instructions from judges.

- Majority thought “malice aforethought” meant a murder must be committed with a mallet

Before: “A preponderance of the evidence”

- More than 50% believed it meant “a slow and careful pondering of evidence”

After: “More likely than not”



Example – 500px photo site

Fine print includes plain language explanations

User Conduct (legal version is 571 words):

“Basically,

You cannot use our site to post pornographic material, harass people, send spam, negatively vote on all photos, and do other crazy stuff. Be reasonable and responsible, don't do anything stupid and you'll be fine.”

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Example – Pollution Control Agency

Calm to light winds will limit pollutant dispersion in Minneapolis-St. Paul, allowing particle concentrations to increase. In addition, a morning temperature inversion has reduced atmospheric mixing. ... These conditions, combined with regional pollutant carryover from previous days, will keep AQI levels Moderate.






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Example – Pollution Control Agency






After

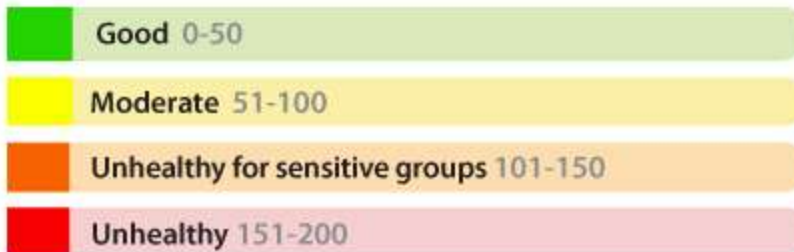
Forecasts

Rochester

Today	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
				
51	50	54	48	50
O3	PM2.5	O3	O3	O3

Twin Cities

Today	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
				
51	50	58	49	54
O3	PM2.5	O3	O3	O3



What do these ratings mean?

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Plain language

Old Absentee Voting page

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Absentee Voting Information

You may find that you are unable to get to your polling place location on Election Day. You will want to vote in the following reasons:

- Illness or disability
- Traveling out of state
- Working on Election Day
- Religious discipline or religious holiday or observance
- Eligible emergency declared by the governor or quarantine declared by the federal or state government

General Absentee Information

There are two ways to vote by absentee ballot:

In Person Absentee Voting

You may vote an absentee ballot in person, at your county auditor's office and in many cases your city or township clerk's office, starting 30 days prior to Election Day. This option is available for weekdays during business hours. In addition, the county auditor's office will be open for absentee balloting from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the election and until 5 p.m. on the day before the election. Contact your county auditor or your city/township administrator for more information.

Absentee Voting By Mail

You may have an absentee ballot sent to you by completing an Absentee Ballot Application and send it to your county auditor or city/township administrator by mail. You, or an agent of the applicant, sign it, sign it, and attach it to an envelope as per the instructions on the application. It is ready to be mailed to the election official if you applied for an absentee ballot in advance. If you apply for an absentee ballot shortly before the election, your ballot will arrive within a day or two of your application being received.

Absentee Ballot Application

Your completed absentee ballot must be received by your county auditor or city/township administrator by Election Day, or it will not be counted.

There are five ways you can return your absentee ballot:

- Mail back your ballot in the pre-paid envelope provided by your county auditor or city/township administrator.
- Up until 7 p.m. on the day before the election, you may deliver your ballot in person to your county auditor or city/township administrator.
- You may also have someone else return your completed ballot, stamped in blue ink, to your county auditor or city/township administrator until 7 p.m. on the day before the election. Delivery addresses include only one to go to the state election center.
- If you are unable about your ballot not arriving on time through the U.S. Postal Service, you may prefer to pay for an expedited delivery service (FedEx or UPS) to return your ballot. Ballots must be received by your county auditor or city/township administrator on Election Day.

Military and Overseas Voters

There are special provisions for voters who are serving away from home in the military, for their spouses and dependents, and for those who are overseas in permanent residence. [Click here to learn more about absentee voting for military personnel and overseas voters.](#)

Delivery of Absentee Ballots by Others

The following voters may authorize an agent to pick up and return an absentee ballot for them:

- Persons in hospitals, residential treatment centers, and nursing homes
- Residents of group homes
- Applicants of temporary housing facilities
- Residents of extended long-term care
- Voters who are disabled
- Voters who would have difficulty getting to the polls because of incapacitating health reasons
- If you are currently living at a sheltered facility but not sure if it meets the qualifications listed above, please ask the administrator of your facility.

In order to have an agent deliver your ballot, you must complete the Request for Agent Delivery of Absentee Ballot Form and the Absentee Ballot Application. The agent must have a preexisting relationship with your agent. The agent will use the completed form to pick up a ballot, bring the ballot to you, and return your ballot to the county auditor or city clerk. Each agent is only allowed to deliver and return ballots for a maximum of three voters. They actively take the voter the voter must precede an election. Ballots can be picked up and delivered to an election day, and voted ballots can be returned by mail prior to Election Day.

Permanent or Ongoing Absentee Ballots

If you are an eligible voter who normally believes that you will be unable to go to your polling place for one or more reasons allowed on an ongoing basis, you may request to receive an application for an absentee ballot ballot sent directly to completing the application for automatically received absentee ballot applications.

Voters Moving From Minnesota to Another State

If you are an eligible voter who moved from Minnesota to another state within 30 days of a presidential election and you are not eligible to vote in your new state, then you should receive the Presidential Absentee Ballot Application. You will need to enter a Minnesota address for the presidential election.

New Absentee Voting page

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Voting & Elections

Also Found In...

Voters

Absentee Voting

If you are unable to get to your polling place location on Election Day, you may be eligible to vote by absentee.

Who can vote by absentee?

You may vote by absentee for the following reasons:

- Absent from your precinct
- Illness or disability
- Serving as an election judge in another precinct
- Religious discipline or religious holiday or observance
- Eligible emergency declared by the governor or quarantine declared by the federal or state government

How to absentee vote

- [By mail, in person or by agent](#)
- [For military and overseas voters](#)

Check the status of your absentee ballot

For a state or federal election, you can visit the Minnesota Secretary of State's [absentee status website](#) to stay up-to-date about the status of your absentee ballot.

Absentee voting FAQs

If you have any questions about absentee voting, read our [frequently asked questions](#).

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Old Juvenile Detention Center page

Stadium View School at IDC

Juvenile Detention Center

The Juvenile Detention Center is an 87-bed secure detention facility for male and female offenders up to age 18 who are awaiting court disposition. In 2010, the IDC admitted more than 2,044 youths and had an average daily population of 40 residents.

In addition to a safe and secure environment, a variety of educational programs and services are provided at the facility.

- Education classes are provided daily through a partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools.
- Chaplains provide counseling and liaison services and conduct non-denominational worship services.
- A full-time medical team provides routine and emergency medical treatment. Hospitalization services are provided by the Hennepin County Medical Center.
- A variety of leisure and group exercise activities are available to residents.
- Psychological evaluation and testing are provided.
- Interns and volunteers provide youth and their families with ongoing support in the community that is necessary to remain law-abiding.

The IDC is a division of the Hennepin County [Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation](#). The IDC is located at 510 Park Avenue about one block west of the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis.

SHARE   

Related Links

- [JDAI News](#)
- [Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative](#)

Contact

Community Corrections and Rehabilitation
Juvenile Detention Center

JDC Administration

[Email](#)
Phone: 612-348-8122
FAX: 612-348-2296
Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm

JDC Volunteer Coordinator Lois Mineau

[Email](#)
Phone: 612-348-3894
FAX: 612-348-2296
Monday through Friday 10:00am to 6:00pm

Community Corrections and Rehabilitation

[Email](#)
Phone: 612-348-6180
FAX: 612-348-6488
Monday through Friday 8am to 5:00pm

Location:

Juvenile Detention Center
510 Park Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55487
[Map It!](#)

New Juvenile Detention Center page

Public Safety Facilities

Juvenile Detention Center



The Juvenile Detention Center (IDC) is a secure 24-hour detention facility for juvenile male and female offenders up to age 18 who have been arrested and are waiting for court disposition or placement.

The facility has a capacity of 87 beds with an average length of stay of seven days. [Learn more](#) (PDF 181kb)



Admissions process

- Parents or legal guardians will receive a call from our intake staff if your child has been arrested and admitted into the Juvenile Detention Center.
- Admission to the Juvenile Detention Center is determined based on detention criteria and the alleged offense.
- A detention hearing is held to determine if a juvenile will be held for future / additional hearings or released.

Visiting residents

- Only parents and/or legal guardians are allowed to visit
 - Due to confidentiality laws, siblings, extended family and children are not allowed to visit
- All visitors must present photo identification
- Parking is available at downtown meters or at the [Hennepin County Medical Center](#) for a fee.

Visiting: first 24 hours after admission

During the first 24 hours after admission, parents and/or legal guardians will be allowed to visit their child one time for half an hour.

Visiting: after the first 24 hours

- Sunday through Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Saturday: 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Programming

In addition to a safe and secure environment, a variety of educational programs and services are provided at the facility.

- **Stadium View School** — Residents 18-years-old and younger who have not graduated from high school or have not earned a GED are enrolled in school in the Juvenile Detention Center. The school offers:
 - High school credits that are transferable to a resident's home school — students can earn .25 credit for every eight hours they walk in one subject.
 - Classes taught by teachers from the Minneapolis Public Schools
 - After school programming to help residents make up credits and/or improve their academic skills
 - a GED readiness program
- **Electronic Home Monitoring** — This community-based program is used for low-risk offenders.
- **Counseling and liaison services** — Volunteer chaplains and spiritual counselors provide counseling and conduct nonsectarian worship services.
- **Medical care** — Corner Health Care provides a full-time medical team for routine and emergency medical treatment.
- **Activities** — A variety of classes of activities are provided within the facility.

Related Links

[Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative](#)

Contact
Community Corrections and Rehabilitation
Juvenile Detention Center

JDC Administration
[Email](#)
Phone: 612-348-8122
FAX: 612-348-2296
Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm

Location:
Juvenile Detention Center
510 Park Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55487
[Map It!](#)



Examples of non-plain language

From a letter to a body donor

Dear _____,

The receipt of your pre-death whole body donation consent form is acknowledged.

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Can you improve it?

A person fueling a motor vehicle must be in close attendance to the dispenser nozzle during the fueling process.

You must remain near the pump while fueling.

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Plain language resources

- www.plainlanguage.gov
Federal plain language information
- www.centerforplainlanguage.org
National organization dedicated to promoting plain language
- www.hennepin.us/plainlanguageguide
Hennepin County resource with tips, examples, and a link to our writing style guide

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Questions?

Brian Lieb, Hennepin County

Brian.lieb@co.hennepin.mn.us

612-543-1276

Keep it simple.

The more you say, the less people remember.

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