



CHILD CARE
State Capacity Building Center

Best Practices for Consumer Education Websites: Translation

May 2019

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States and territories are serving more families who speak languages other than English, and the need for child care consumer education materials in multiple languages continues to grow. Providing consumer education materials in multiple language can help more families locate and access child care and other services offered by states and territories.

The importance of providing consumer education materials to the growing population of families who speak a language other than English has been recognized by the federal government. Under federal Child Care and Development Fund regulations, states and territories are required to maintain “a consumer-friendly and easily accessible Web site that ensures the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities.”¹

This resource guide offers best practices, strategies, and examples for states and territories to consider as they work to provide translated materials on their consumer education websites. States and territories will need to consider their capabilities and budgets in order to make decisions that best fit their needs.

Best Practices in Translating Website Content

Before translating a website, states and territories should check to ensure plain language is used throughout the website. Translating materials written in plain language will be easier, faster, and more cost efficient than translating more complex language. Resources such as the [federal plain language guidelines](#) and [examples of style guides](#) from government agencies can help with plain language.

States and territories can consider adopting translation best practices in the following areas:

- Creating a style guide
- Designing website content
- Selecting languages to translate materials
- Working with translators

This section outlines best practices in each of these areas.

Creating a Style Guide

Style guides are created to help writers and editors maintain consistency in design, grammar, and editorial rules. Some states and territories may have preferred fonts and text sizes, and specific rules for writers to follow when designing content for the website, such as using plain language.

If your state or territory does not already have a style guide for its website, consider creating one to help with consistency. The style guide should be shared internally with staff who work on web content and design.

¹ Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.33(a) (2016).

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Once a style guide has been developed, add in additional multilingual content instead of creating a separate style guide. The USA.gov [bilingual style guide](#) is a useful resource to help states and territories think about adding multilingual content. For example, states and territories will need to consider decisions on a number of items, including how to write numbers and dates (e.g., keep the American style of writing numbers—\$1,234.50 not \$1.234,50), and the use of certain punctuation marks within different languages.

Tools from other fields, such as the [Translation Quality Assessment Tool](#), from the Research Institute of United States Spanish, can help assess the quality of written translated materials. While written for the healthcare field, the information is applicable to consumer education and child care material.

Designing Website Content

Designing website content to meet the needs of all potential users—including those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds—may require special consideration. Thinking about how people access information on a website can help prepare and provide translated materials in a way that is accessible to individuals who speak a language other than English. Special considerations for providing translated materials include the following:

- **Differing educational levels among users.** Similar to designing web content for an English-only audience, it is important to be mindful of the educational levels and experiences of people from other countries and cultures who may access the website. For example, writing web content for a more culturally and linguistically diverse audience will require special attention to using plain language in order to avoid jargon that will not translate well.
- **Varying ways in which people understand and learn information from another culture.** The experience of learning or becoming accustomed to a new culture can vary substantially between different groups. Consider what, if any, cultural assumptions your content might include (e.g., who provides child care and what their responsibilities entail).
- **Varying expectations and levels of trust.** People may not be accustomed to using a website to access information that can help them find resources. In addition, some people may have varying amounts of trust in regard to inputting information into a website in order to seek and access information. It will be important to share with trusted advocates in those communities that using these websites can help families access information and resources, and that they are a source of information that can be trusted.

Identifying unintentional assumptions or biases in your own content is extremely challenging. The best way to avoid mistakes or miscommunications is to have someone who is part of another culture provide feedback on your site content.

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There are several additional points to consider when designing website content that will make translation smoother. Planning for these elements will help states and territories communicate the website material to a broader audience. When designing the website, keep in mind the following guidelines:

Guideline	Example
<p>Include mobile devices in your translation strategy. If you are trying to reach populations that may rely on smartphones to access the Internet, your site needs to be responsive. Make sure users on mobile can not only navigate through your site but also easily locate any translation services.</p>	<p>In this example from Deque Systems, the menu text appears small and difficult to use on a mobile device.</p>
<p>Check images and graphics as well as words. Beyond providing text in another language, professional translators should be able to help ensure that any images carry appropriate cultural connotations.</p>	<p>For example, in some cultures an image of an owl represents death, while in other cultures owls represent wisdom.</p>
<p>Think about line lengths. Many languages are not as concise as English, so buttons, teaser text, and so forth may need to be designed around the less concise language first.</p>	 <p>Source: Created by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center using Mural.</p>
<p>Consider different text directionality for languages. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has information on script direction and languages. If elements of your website design rely on text being aligned to one side, consider how this may change with scripts that flow right-to-left.</p>	 <p>Source: Created by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center using Mural.</p>

Considerations in Selecting Languages to Translate Material

There are several considerations when selecting which languages to translate website content. Following are some strategies and tools to consider.

First, check the law or policies in your state or territory before translating materials into different languages. Some states and territories have requirements that address which languages to use when translating materials. For example, in Maryland, if 3 percent or more of the population served by the agency speaks another language, then documents must be translated into that language.

Second, other programs and services, such as maternal and child health; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and special education (Part B and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) may have insight into what languages are most common among their clients. It may be helpful to check with these stakeholders to find out which languages are most common and to potentially collaborate on translation services.

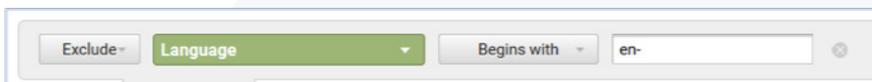
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Third, using web analytics can help determine which languages are the most common for those seeking child care information. One cost-efficient way to determine which languages families are using to access a website is to use data from the browser’s language settings.

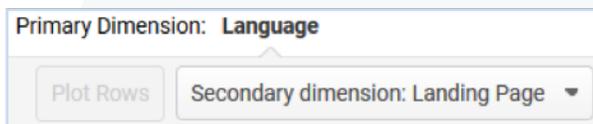
Google Analytics is a free tool that states and territories can use to gather this type of information. While there are other web analytic tools available, Google Analytics is one of the most frequently used and is available for free. If your site doesn’t currently have Analytics installed, [Google has created a guide for getting started](#).

Once installed, use the following steps to determine which languages are most commonly spoken by people using the website:²

1. In the left navigation, select Audience > Geo > Language.



2. Simplify the results by removing English results. At the top of the results table on the right, click the link that says “advanced” and exclude languages that begin with “en-” (if you are interested in international English-language users, you could specify “en-us” to exclude only users with browsers set to American English). You can use these links from W3Schools to look up the [language codes](#) and [country codes](#) if you are unsure of what an abbreviation means.



3. Next, you will want to see what content non-English speakers are looking for on your page. Using the setting on the left of the bar at the top of the results table, add a secondary dimension, “Landing Page.” A landing page is the first page a user sees on your site (e.g, if a user searches Google for your privacy policy and lands on that page first, then the privacy policy would be their landing page).
4. Finally, you are ready to read the results table. The first column shows each language and the following columns show overall statistics such as the number of users, number of sessions, and bounce rate:

Language ?	Landing Page ?	Acquisition			Behavior	
		Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?
		15,629 % of Total: 100.00% (15,629)	14,589 % of Total: 100.00% (14,589)	19,860 % of Total: 100.00% (19,860)	46.47% Avg for View: 46.47% (0.00%)	2.25 Avg for View: 2.25 (0.00%)
1. en-us	/how-can-i-file-complaint-against-child-care-center-or-provider	1,477 (8.49%)	1,444 (9.90%)	1,560 (7.85%)	54.23%	1.98
2. en-us	/licensing/state/pa	718 (4.13%)	635 (4.35%)	818 (4.12%)	58.56%	1.68

²The images provided in these instructions are screenshots generated by the State Capacity Building Center using Google Analytics on Feb. 12, 2019. Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google LLC, used with permission.

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Here are some key terms to understand when reading these results:

- **Landing page:** As mentioned above, the landing page is the first one users visit on your site. The table will show the URL path of the page rather than its title (this is because, as this page from Google explains, you can use [tagged URLs to track campaigns](#) and other metrics).
- **Users:** People who come to your site (in this example, they are grouped by language).
- **New users:** People who likely have not visited before (this number can be slightly inflated if people have changed devices or cleared their cookies).
- **Sessions:** How many visits someone made to your site during the selected time.
- **Bounce rate:** The percentage of users who leave after only seeing a single page.
- **Pages per session:** An average (based on all sessions during the selected time) of how many pages were viewed in a session before leaving your site.

Clicking on the “?” symbol next to any of the terms will provide additional information. The percentages show how much of the total is represented in each cell (in the example above, 8.49 percent of all users viewed information about how to file a complaint).

Keep in mind that there is no absolute rule that higher or lower numbers are better for some of these metrics. A high session duration may mean that users are more engaged, but it also might indicate that users are searching for content they can't find and are becoming frustrated. If possible, talk to users and conduct qualitative analysis to determine the real story that your data are showing.

Linking to External Resources

There may be occasions when you want to link to external resources outside the consumer education website. You won't be able to control the translation policies or functionality of external sites. Set user expectations by labeling the link with language information. If a translation is not provided, consider whether the external materials are valuable enough to add the content to your site or have your phone support provide assistance.

Example: Learn more with this [Example External Resource](#) (PDF, 3.48 MB, English). Also [available in Spanish](#). For [other language support](#), please contact us.

Working with Translators

Some states and territories may decide to hire a professional translator. This option has its benefits, but there are some important tips to consider that will ensure the services meet state and territory needs.

- Choose a qualified translator. The translator should be fluent in the language and familiar with the specific audience for whom the translated material is intended. Consider having translations reviewed for clarity and accuracy by known users (such as parents or child care providers) for accuracy of the translation.
- Check references of the possible candidates. Ask for references from other state agencies or organizations the translator has worked for previously. Ask questions regarding how the translator conducts his or her work. For example, the translator should be able to adapt technical content that might not have a universal term in another language rather than focus on word-for-word synonyms.

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- Check the translator’s certifications. Use resources such as the [American Translators Association](#) for guidance in selecting a translator. This professional organization can help locate qualified and certified translators. In addition, check with other state agencies such as maternal and child health, early intervention services, and others to find out who they use for translation services.
- Be clear on the content that needs translating. For example, the website translation may require both written and spoken translation if there are videos embedded in the website content. This may require two different translators.

Strategies for Providing Translated Material

Each state and territory may want to consider different strategies or a combination of strategies for providing translated material to the consumer education website. Each of the strategies presented in this section has its own benefits and challenges. All of these options meet Child Care and Development Fund requirements, but some may be better suited to state and territory needs.

Fully Translated Website

States and territories may choose to work with a translator to provide a mirrored version of the website in another language. If this approach is used, consider ways to repurpose the designs and templates within the existing site. For example, consider keeping the layout of all pages the same, but adjust the colors or imagery to be more appealing to the intended audience.

States and territories may also consider developing a release plan that publishes or posts the pages as they are completed rather than all at once.

Finally, to make it easy for people to find the link to their language on the English-language site, it is important to ensure the links are prominent (e.g., a list of languages in the footer or an “en Español” link at the top of the page).

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most likely to address the needs of the largest number of people who access the website.• A professional translator can work with the state or territory to ensure the multilingual content expresses what is intended.• If translated content is available before the site is designed, ensure all design elements (such as button size) accommodate languages that are not as concise as English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This option is often the most expensive and complex strategy.• Often, there is a misconception that all site content must be translated before any can be published.

Colorado’s design allows users to easily toggle between languages at the top of the page. All elements of the page, including menus and buttons, are also translated.



Source: Colorado Shines home page (Spanish version). Retrieved from <https://www.coloradoshines.com/es>

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Automated Translations

Services such as Google Translate or Bing Translator can provide an automated translation of the site’s content.

Different tools provide different solutions. For example, Google Translate uses an application programming interface (API) to provide dynamic, automated translations of the content on each web page.

Often, these tools include code and a widget that needs to be entered into your website’s code before users can start seeing translated content.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Automated translations are often inexpensive or free.Most tools are easy to implement and have customer support.May be faster than waiting for rewrites into another language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Machines can introduce errors, especially if a professional translator is not able to check the translation.It may still be necessary to hire bilingual editors to review the translations.Often one-to-one synonyms for terms carry different connotations than what the original text attempts to convey.

DC’s responsive design ensures that all users can easily get to the content they need. In addition, the language selection is limited only to what their users need—a list of six languages, rather than all Google’s offerings.



Source: My Child Care DC home page (Mobile version). Retrieved from <http://childcareconnections.osse.dc.gov/>

Translated Print-Ready Files

Where applicable, states and territories can provide static files such as PDFs that present the website’s content in another language.

When going with this option, remember to help set user expectations by clearly labeling each link with the language of the content. You can also decide to include information about the file type or size.

Here are several examples of potential formats:

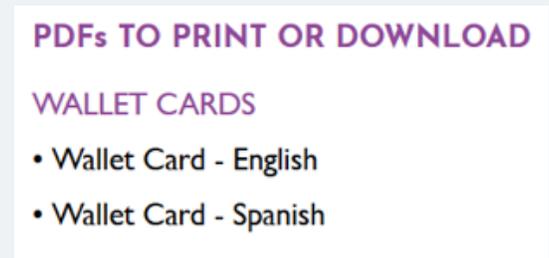
- Example Resource | English
- Example Resource, English
- Example Resource (PDF, 3.29 MB, English)

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Keep in mind when selecting a format that your links should be accessible and descriptive. Make sure that users on assistive devices such as screen readers can easily differentiate between links to resources in different languages.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using PDFs does not require a change to your existing website. PDFs can be made available as they are finished, one page at a time, instead of being released all at once. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Machines can introduce errors, especially if a professional translator is not able to check the translation. It may still be necessary to hire bilingual editors to review the translations. Often one-to-one synonyms for terms carry different connotations than what the original text attempts to convey.

The example from Connecticut’s “Learn How to be Chill” page shows how PDFs can easily provide multilingual content.



Source: Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. (n.d.). Learn how to be chill [Web page]. Retrieved from <https://www.ctoec.org/chill/>

Telephone Support

If states and territories are unable to provide online translated resources for their audience, consider providing multilingual support via other channels, such as a phone line. These services could be contracted out, or states and territories could hire staff to handle these requests.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person can answer specific questions in real time. People don’t have to search for what they need. People know their answers are correct because they’re coming directly from a subject-matter expert. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires additional staff to handle call volume. More staff may need to be hired even if the call volume is low in order to cover all the languages needed. Help is only available to people during specific hours when telephone support is available.

The example below shows how Delaware’s site supplements translated web content with phone support.



Source: Delaware Government Information Center. (n.d.). Translation services. [Web page]. Retrieved from <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Pages/TranslationServices.aspx>

Additional Examples and Resources

As states and territories consider translating their consumer education websites, there are several examples and resources that can help. For example, digital.gov has a resource for creating multilingual websites at <https://digital.gov/resources/top-10-best-practices-for-multilingual-websites/>.

There are several examples of state child care websites that offer translation in other languages:

- **Georgia:** Entire site is available in multiple languages via Google Translate.
- **Colorado:** Entire site (except content produced in search results) is available in Spanish.
- **Maryland:** The main consumer education site is translated into 12 languages.
- **Texas:** The following consumer education sites are available in languages other than English:
 - [Child care search](#) (Spanish)
 - [Texas Health and Human Services Technical Assistance Library](#) (Spanish and Vietnamese)
 - [Texas Rising Star \(quality rating and improvement system\)](#) (Spanish and Vietnamese)
- **Minnesota:** The site is translated into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.
- **Wisconsin:** The site provides phone numbers and email addresses for staff who will provide support in Spanish or Hmong.



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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.