

Appendix C: Testing Protocol

Breakdown of Interview Time

Introduction **5 minutes**

[Make the interviewee comfortable and orient the interviewee to the task (e.g., getting accustomed to a “think aloud” process)]

Think Aloud Review **25 minutes**

[Introduce the guide and observe the consumer as they read and comment on the guide using a “think aloud” process. Researcher observes the order of approach to the document, time spent on various parts of the document, and notes items for follow-up questions. We have one version of the guide specific to each county and some alternative data displays.]

Report Design Discussion **25 minutes**

[Probe with questions aimed at eliciting comprehension and identifying specific features of the guide that work and don’t work.]

Wrap-up **5 minutes**

[Ask respondents for summary opinions, verify demographic information, thank them for their participation, and pay them.]

Introduction

“Thank you for coming today. Your participation is very important. I’m [first name]. I’m working on a research project for the California Health Care Foundation. They are a non-profit organization committed to improving health care in California.”

Project Objective

“We’re holding discussions like these for the agency that oversees the Medi-Cal program. Medi-Cal wants to give you more and better information to help you understand and choose a Medi-Cal plan. We do not work for your health plan or for the Medi-Cal program.”

“To make a plan choice [to get the best health care from your plan] you want several types of information like what benefits are covered and whether your doctor is in the plan. For today, we’ll focus on other information you may also want to take into account when you make a plan choice.”

“Today I’m going to show you parts of a booklet being developed. This is a draft but before we finalize it we want to have people review it and get their reactions.”

“Please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers. It’s not a test. You’re helping us learn how people will use the booklet and how we can improve it.”

“You won’t hurt my feelings, no matter what you say about the booklet. So please feel free to say everything you think.”

“What you say will be completely private. We won’t connect your name with anything you say. Your Medi-Cal benefits won’t be affected in any way, no matter what you say. Do you have any questions before we get started?”

[Hand out consent forms. Explain a little about it. Have respondent read and sign it. Collect it.]

Background Questions

- “How long have you been a member of the Medi-Cal plan that you are in now?”
- “How did you pick this plan?”
- “When you picked this plan, what kind of information did you want to know about the plan before you made your decision?
OR “If you were to have to pick a new plan today, what would you want to know about a plan before you join?”

Think Aloud Review

“For today’s discussion, I’ll ask you to read through a draft of the booklet that we are putting together for people on Medi-Cal. This booklet is a draft. The plan names are not real names. When it is finished, Medi-Cal will put the real information in the booklet and send it to everyone on Medi-Cal in this county and many other places throughout the state.”

“Please read at your own pace, as if you were reading at home. After you have read the brochure, I will ask you some questions about what you read, what you liked and didn’t like, and how you understood it.”

“I want you to talk out loud as you read. That helps me know if we’re on the right track.”
[Demonstrate think aloud techniques.]

“Please read through this booklet thinking out loud as I have shown you. Take as much time as you like to look it over.”

[During think aloud, observe closely.]

- What order do they read through the booklet?
- Do they skip any sections?
- What text or features do they pay attention to?
- Do you observe any misunderstandings or incorrect interpretations?
- Is there any body language or physical behavior that indicates problem areas?

- Please note if the reading level of the Spanish text seems to be appropriate for the audience. Note any alternative language that might be more easily understood.]

“Without looking back through the booklet, tell me what different kinds of information about Medi-Cal plan(s) you remember seeing in this booklet?”

“When you think about the different kinds of information in this booklet, which one is most important to you in choosing a health plan?”

Cover

[If any of the following questions were obviously answered during the think aloud, they do not need to be repeated. If there is any doubt—especially about comprehension or interpretation—Ask.]

- “When you first looked at the cover, what did you think the guide was about?”
- “Is the guide appealing?” [Are they interested in opening the guide and reviewing the content?]
- “Did they notice the table of contents at the bottom? What did they think would be in each section of the guide?” [Particularly probe about what they thought would be in the programs to help you stay healthy and quality data.]
- “Do you think anything on the cover would be unclear or confusing to others? [Take a moment to review it again to see if anything is unclear]

Inside First Fold

- “What did you notice or skip on these pages?”
- *How this guide can help you.* “Is this helpful? Is anything unclear?”
- *Language services.* “Can you accurately read the table? How important is this topic? Do you have trouble making the leap between the differing content? What kinds of information about language services are important to you or to people on Medi-Cal?”

- ***Programs to help you stay healthy.*** “Are you interested in this information? What would make this more interesting? Would you call the plan to get more information? Where it says “This information comes from the plans and not from the Medi-Cal program.” What does that mean to you? Does it change the way you think about the information?”
- “Do you see the navigational cue? Is it helpful?”
- “Take a moment to review these pages again to see if anything is unclear. Do you think anything on pages would be unclear or confusing to others?”

Inside Second Fold

- “What did you notice or skip on these pages?”
- “Do you notice the legend? Do you recognize that it defines what the buttons mean? How do you interpret highest/higher/same/lower?”
[Does their interpretation match with the definitions of meaning in the key? Do they seem to understand the buttons or have trouble interpreting the buttons?]
- “Are there topics that you don’t care about? Are there topics you really care about? If we had to drop one or two measures because of space considerations, which one would you prefer to drop?”
- “If you were using this information to choose a plan, which plan would you choose?” [Not applicable in Orange County.]
- “Why did you choose this plan?” [or another questions that requires interpretation of the tables such as, “Tell me which plans had the best customer service?”]
- “How do you relate the information in the first fold (services) to the information behind the second fold (quality)?”

- “Take a moment to review these pages again to see if anything is unclear. Do you think anything on pages would be unclear or confusing to others?”

Back Cover

{Note during observation if they look at the back cover. What did they notice or skip on these pages?}

- “Take a moment to review these pages again to see if anything is unclear. Do you think anything on pages would be unclear or confusing to others?”

General Questions

- “When you first looked at this brochure, did you think it looks like something that would be easy or hard to understand?”
- “What do you think of the photos that are used in the guide? Does the photo of an obviously Asian family next to the language service information in the 7-plan version seem incongruous or stereotyping from the interviewee’s perspective?”
- “What do you think about the (font) size? Is it too big, too small, or about the right size?”
- “How would you see yourself using this guide?” OR “If it came to you in the mail, what would you do with it?”

Report Design Discussion

Quality Displays

[Show word icon version. Allow the respondent to study for up to a minute. Ask these (or similar) probing questions:]

- “You’ll notice that in this guide, we used buttons or symbols to tell you how the plans scored on quality of care.”
- “What elements on this page did you use to figure out what the graph was telling you about?” [Note if they refer to the legend, the question content wording, the symbol, the color cues, etc.]
- “Which plan do you think is doing better or worse on this measure of (getting care that is needed)?”
- “How did you decide which plan was doing better or worse?” [Try to get a sense of what they are using most to interpret— words, shapes, colors.]

[Show single-color and color-coded star versions. Allow the respondent to study for up to a minute. Ask these (or similar) probing questions:]

- “Now I’m going to show you another way of displaying quality information. The stars mean exactly the same thing as the buttons: plans receiving four stars scored among the highest plans in the U.S., plans receiving three stars scored higher than the average for plans in California, plans receiving two stars scored about the same as the average for plans in California, and plans receiving one star scored lower than the average for plans in California.”
- “If you were given a choice of seeing this quality information (point to quality labels in the appropriate language) displayed as stars or buttons, which would you prefer?”

Health Improvement Program Displays

[Show column-aligned circle display version. Allow the respondent to study for up to a minute. Ask these (or similar) probing questions:]

- “You’ll notice that in this guide, we used colored circles to tell you what kind of programs the plans offer to help you stay healthy. Let’s take a look at this page a little more closely.” [Can they accurately interpret the table? Ask a question that requires interpretation, such as, “Tell me which plans offer support groups for people with diabetes.” or “What kinds of programs does Evergreen Health Plan offer?"]
- “If you were to pick a plan for yourself, using just the information on this page, which plan would you pick. How did you decide which plan was the best one for you?” [Try to get a sense of what they are using most to interpret; e.g., number of circles per plan, content of programs, use of a particular learning method.]
- “What elements on this page did you use to figure out what the graph was telling you about?” [Note if they refer to the legend, the descriptive text, the table headings, etc.]
- “What do you think the empty circle means?”
- “There are other ways to show this information, and we would like to show them to you and get your reaction.”

[Show text only version. Allow the respondent to study for up to a minute. Ask these (or similar) probing questions:]

- “Is this page telling you the same things that the page in the booklet tells you? What is different about this page?”
- “This page (text page) lists all of the programs to help you stay healthy that each plan offers, while the page in the booklet only has room for a few of the programs that plans offer. The page in the booklet tells you more about how each plan runs their programs even though it only has room to tell you about a few programs. Which is more important to

you—to know a little about all of the programs or more about a few of the programs?”

[Set text page aside for a moment and show page with left-aligned circles. Again, allow the respondent to study for up to a minute. Ask these (or similar) probe questions:]

- “What’s different about this page from the page in the booklet?”
- “Does that make it easier, or harder to figure out what this graph is trying to tell you?”
[Can they accurately interpret the table? Ask a question that requires interpretation, such as, “Tell me which plans offer support groups for people with diabetes.” or “What kinds of programs does Evergreen Health Plan offer?”]
- “If you were to pick a plan for yourself, using just the information on this page, which plan would you pick. How did you decide which plan was the best one for you?” [Try to get a sense of what they are using most to interpret; e.g., number of circles per plan, content of programs, use of a particular learning method.]

[Show all three page options.]

- “Which of these options would you prefer to see in a guide like this?”

Wrap-up

- “Looking back at the guide, do you have any final comments that you would like to make about it?”
- “Do you have any suggestions for ways that we can make the guide easier to read and understand?”
- “That’s all of the questions I have for you today. Thank you very much for your time.”

[Hand them the thank you letter and honorarium, and walk them to the door.

Questions for the interviewer to answer after the interview is over:

- Overall, how interested did the respondent seem to be in the draft materials?
- Overall, how well did you think the respondent understood the materials?
- Based on this interview: what words, concepts, or other things seem likely to confuse people?
- Did you get any ideas from this interview about other things that should be tested?
- Did you get any ideas from this interview about revisions to make in the document (including things to add or delete)?]