



Reaching Floridians With Legal Information

*Feedback from Focus
Groups and User Testing*

July 2018

Jessica Rae and Laura Quinn,
Florida Justice Technology Center



**FLORIDA JUSTICE
TECHNOLOGY CENTER**
coordination | collaboration | innovation

Executive Summary

In May 2018, the Florida Justice Technology Center's FloridaLawHelp.org gathered feedback and input from community members, social services organizations and legal services providers. Through a series of focus group discussions as well as individual user tests, we explored ways to present content on FloridaLawHelp.org, gaps in legal content, and methods to reach low income clients and social service organizations with this information.

Key Findings

- Well-written, accurate and understandable information is needed on a wide variety of legal issues.
- While identified legal issues varied across the state, the impact of limited access to critical legal and other information was identified as having a profoundly negative impact in communities.
- There's no one "right" way to present information to maximize understanding, confidence, and the participants' preference.
- Ongoing user testing is necessary to determine whether users can access and use the information provided.
- Word of mouth from neighbors, friends and family is an effective way to spread information, particularly in rural areas.

Who We Are

FloridaLawHelp.org is Florida's legal information website designed to provide Floridians with free information about their legal rights along with the tools and resources they can use to protect those rights. These resources include self-help information and do-it-yourself forms as well as links to social service agencies and legal aid offices. The Florida Justice Technology Center (FJTC) took over management and administration of the site in 2015 and partners with legal services organizations around the state to create and update content. FJTC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established to increase access to justice through the innovative use of technology.

What We Did

In May 2018, FloridaLawHelp.org conducted 4 focus group discussions and 26 user tests to gather feedback from community members and social service staff to determine how best to present legal information online and identify gaps in legal content. In this round of outreach activities, we used the 2016 U.S. Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) to identify the counties with the following characteristics: Highest overall number of people in poverty; highest percentage of people in poverty; high percentage of children in poverty; and lowest median household income. The first four counties listed below met those criteria:

County	All Ages in Poverty Count	All Ages in Poverty Percent	Under Age 18 in Poverty Percent	Ages 5 to 17 in Families in Poverty Percent	Median Household Income in Dollars	Estimated Pop.
Miami-Dade	487,700	18.2	24.8	24	\$45,886	2.7 Million
Madison	5,205	31.9	40	37.6	\$33,721	19,000
DeSoto	9,323	28.6	42	40.1	\$34,146	35,000
Levy	8,467	21.4	32.3	31.4	\$33,092	40,000
Orange	209,800	16.3	22.2	21.2	\$51,312	1.2 Million

Source: https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saipe/saipe.html?s_appName=saipe&map_yearSelector=2016&map_geoSelector=aa_c&s_state=12&menu=grid_proxy

While the four counties identified using census data were geographically diverse, varied in overall population and covered both rural/urban areas, there were no medium to large counties on the list. Therefore, we added Orange County because it is a larger, urban county, located in East-Central Florida and is home to the third highest overall population in poverty in Florida.

We reached out to legal and social service providers in each county to identify potential user testing sites and locations to conduct focus groups. The sites were chosen based on the first agency that responded and was willing and able to host us. We conducted the user tests and focus groups at the following locations:

Reaching Floridians With Legal Information: Feedback from Focus Groups and User Testing

- Miami County: Legal Services of Greater Miami in Miami
- Madison County: Madison County Public Library in Madison (user testing only)
- DeSoto County: Family Service Center in Arcadia
- Levy County: CareerSource Career Center in Chiefland (user testing only)
- Levy County: Child Protective Investigation offices in Chiefland (focus group only)
- Orange County: Goodwill East Job Readiness Center in Orlando

User Testing

Prior to the scheduled day of user testing, we sent each location a flyer and sign-up sheet which they could post. In each location, except for the Family Service Center in Arcadia, we made an announcement to the patrons in the waiting room. We offered each participant a \$10 gift card for providing their feedback on various ways of getting information online. A total of 26 people completed the test. See Appendix III for a summary of the participant demographics.

Prior to each user test, we explained what FloridaLawHelp.org was, that the Florida Justice Technology Center, a non-profit, managed the site, and that we were seeking feedback on how we could improve the way we presented legal content on the site.

With each participant, we conducted a 15-to-25-minute conversation. We started by asking a few questions about their internet use, how they research issues online and where else they might go for help. We then asked them to walk through a hypothetical example about a young man who needed help accessing Florida's Extended Foster Care program and asked them to look for the relevant legal information using different formats: Video, Narrative, FAQ and Flowchart. After the participants had reviewed the first format, we used specific measures to gauge their understanding of the information and their level of confidence. We then showed each participant the same information in a second format and repeated the process.

This report focuses on the results of the initial questions about internet use and legal research. See the companion report **Comparing Online Legal Content Formats** for more detailed methodology on the second piece of the user tests. See Appendix I for the Interview Guide.

Focus Groups

We reached out to local legal services providers and social service providers in each county to identify possible participants. In three counties, Miami, DeSoto, and Orange, the local legal service provider reached out to its community partners or provided contacts. In Levy, we reached out to others, we researched agencies that served low-income communities. We called, sent letters and e-mails inviting organizations to participate. See Appendix I for a list of representative organizations that participated.

At the beginning of each focus group, we again explained what FloridaLawHelp.org was, the role of FJTC, and that we were seeking feedback on what legal information was important to their community and how to reach them. We then asked the participants three sets of questions. The first set related to the key legal issues in their community. We asked the participants to identify the most common issues and whether any of those issues could be addressed by providing information. We also asked which issues had the most profound impact on people's lives. The second set of questions related to how the participants' communities received information, in terms of formats, outreach, and online information. Finally, we asked the participants how they learned about resources and how FloridaLawHelp.org should share information with them. See Appendix II for the Focus Group Guide.

The Results: User Tests

Internet Use

All of the 26 participants reported using the internet for at least some reasons with 20 reporting that the internet was an integrated part of their life and they used it for a wide variety of purposes. The six participants, almost 25% of the group, who did not use the internet as frequently all reported making under \$15,000 per year.

Over three-quarters of the participants reported using their phone to access the internet - almost half of those, 12 participants, used both phones and computers to access the internet with another eight primarily using their phone. Seven of the eight who reported accessing the internet primarily through their phone reported making under \$15,000 per year. These findings highlight the need to ensure that

web information is mobile friendly and that it can be downloaded and printed for others who do not have access to the internet.

Facebook

When asked about Facebook use, the participants' answers varied widely. Nine of the participants, approximately 30%, said that they never used Facebook. Six, approximately 23%, said they used Facebook occasionally with some mentioning that they used it to stay in touch with friends and family. Eleven, approximately 42%, reported using Facebook frequently, often every day, with half of them reporting that they used it for both social reasons as well as to read or find information.

Using the Internet to Get Help

For those participants who reported that they had researched an issue online, the majority reported using Google. Others searched for a specific service provider or website. The participants had a mix of feelings about what made online information accessible. Many commented on the need for sites to provide basic information (contact, fees, hours etc.) upfront and streamline navigation so that the user doesn't have to keep clicking on links to find what they need. In addition, five participants specifically complained about having to know the "perfect" word when using search functions to find the information they needed.

When it came to layout, the participants' responses were more varied. Some reported liking outlines and bullet points and wanting more graphics. However, others wanted less graphics and more information. Others liked information to be practical or step-by-step with some mentioning that often sites aren't written for lay people. While some reported that some sites required users to read too much information before getting to the point, others wanted in-depth information. Several reported being annoyed by registration requirements and pop-ups.

Other Places to Get Help

The participants identified multiple avenues for getting assistance including local libraries, government agencies, and community organizations with almost a quarter reporting that they sought legal advice from a lawyer. However, over a third relied on family or friends for advice and two participants mentioned that they would want to speak with someone rather than rely on information they found on the internet.

Content Formats

The testing of the four legal content formats (Video, Narrative, FAQ and Flowchart) had surprising, statistically significant results, but are limited to the very specific scenario and legal content used during this set of user tests. Those who saw a Flowchart as the first format built a significantly better understanding and had the highest level of confidence. However, the majority did not like the format. In contrast, the Video was the most popular format, but those who saw the Video had the least understanding. In addition, those who saw the Video felt confident that they could provide good advice although they did not demonstrate understanding of the key factors. The Narrative and FAQ were both more middle-of-the-road in terms of comprehension, confidence level and user preference. For a more in-depth report on the content testing results, please see **Comparing Online Legal Content Formats: The Results of User Research**, Jessica Rae and Laura Quinn, Florida Justice Technology Center, July 2018.

The Results: Focus Groups

Legal Issues

The focus group participants agreed on some key legal issues. Across the four counties, low-income Floridians struggle to find affordable and safe housing, have trouble accessing basic services and disability benefits due to language barriers, lack of providers, or transportation issues, and need assistance navigating the immigration system. Similarly, regardless of their community, for many families, one bad event (often an arrest or criminal conviction, but also evictions, predatory loans, episodes of unemployment, domestic violence, illness, aggressive towing, daycare or school issues, or natural disaster) could destabilize a family for months if not years.

Reaching Floridians With Legal Information: Feedback from Focus Groups and User Testing

In general, all groups thought that there were issues that could be addressed by providing clear and concise information about the law and legal process along with assistance with filling out forms. While each group highlighted issues specific to their community, the most common issues included understanding child support, gaining temporary custody of a related child, obtaining simplified divorce, understanding and accessing public benefits, and managing the consequences of criminal records or driver's license suspension. The groups identified several other legal topics which could be addressed through legal information including tax preparation and related consumer protection, protecting against identity theft, guardian advocacy proceedings, public housing, disability benefits and rules, and obtaining protective orders. All groups discussed the need for general information about the legal system which includes a "glossary" of terms along with step-by-step information on how low-income individuals could seek a waiver of court fees.

In the rural counties of Levy and DeSoto, the lack of local providers or affordable transportation options complicates the ability to access needed services. Although this suggests that online resources would be helpful, the groups in those counties pointed out that language barriers, low literacy rates and inadequate WiFi coverage create additional obstacles.

When we asked the groups if they could identify which legal issues, if addressed, would have the biggest impact on the well-being of their communities, the groups reported a variety of issues including access to affordable and safe housing, adequate employment opportunities that pay a living wage, affordable and reliable transportation, expungement of arrests and criminal records, assistance with consumer issues, and eliminating language barriers.

Reaching Clients

We asked the participants how what their organizations found to be the most effective ways to get self-help resources to their clients. Their answers were consistent and focused on traditional grassroots, community-based methods. All four groups mentioned that talking to people directly was an important

and effective outreach method; three mentioned enlisting other local service providers to ask them to spread the word as well.

All four reported some success with social media and applications including Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. However, other than social media, electronic media wasn't mentioned frequently as either a way to reach clients or to provide information. One group mentioned using emails to reach out to the families it already serves, but two more mentioned specifically that resources should be available both in print and electronic versions.

Two groups mentioned that providing printed resources at places where potential clients are likely to visit can be effective. For instance, a staffer in DeSoto mentioned an unmanned table with a display at the local library during the Week of the Family had worked very well for them. However, one group also mentioned that there can be problems with replacing/collecting out-of-date materials.

In Orlando, the group suggested that it might be worthwhile to place information in the newsletters of big local employers like theme parks and school systems as they often want or need content. In DeSoto, the group mentioned advertising in the local paper while the Miami group mentioned Spanish radio. Two groups said that they have not found events to be helpful or worth the amount of effort those events can take. In Levy, the group mentioned that their community had held an event to assist grandparents raising their grandchildren, but even though this is a large issue in the community, attendance was limited. The reason for this was unclear.

When asked what formats for providing information have worked well, hard copy was a common theme. All four groups mentioned handing out information—brochures, pamphlets, resource guides, and newsletters. In addition, sharing information via word of mouth was effective with one group mentioning that it was particularly powerful in rural areas.

When asked specifically about how online information should fit into a mix to help clients, the groups were lukewarm on whether websites were helpful - they mentioned that it can be a struggle to get

clients to use or rely on online information and that face-to-face or word of mouth is usually best. However, one of the four groups felt that website information was a must; another two felt that it was important to have but had limitations; the fourth felt that relying on face-to-face made more sense. In all locations, both access to the internet and language barriers can be a problem. Three of the four groups mentioned that it can be useful to make printed resources available as a PDF (although one mentioned PDFs can be problematic, especially on mobile phones). One mentioned that many clients want information in print and will print out electronic materials.

Reaching Social Service Staff

All the groups reported that one of the key ways agencies find out about new resources was through discussions with other service providers. This was evident during the focus group discussions where participants were able to meet one another, explain their services and in one location address some community issues. In DeSoto County, the group mentioned that there used to be a quarterly meeting where providers would come together to talk about issues and share resources, but that those meetings were no longer being held as many organizations are resource strapped and would have to travel too far to attend. In some locations, organizations cover multiple counties from one or two offices and would have to travel for hours to get to meetings.

Three of the four groups mentioned email newsletters as a good way to reach agency staff with new information, but at the same time, three groups mentioned the importance of developing personal connections to other providers in the area.

What Do These Results Mean?

Although this was only the initial round of outreach, the feedback we received from the user testing and focus groups is invaluable and we thank those who took the time out of their busy schedules to help. See Appendix III. for user test participant demographics and Appendix IV. for Focus Group participants.

The Florida Justice Technology Center intends to use the information gathered during these events to inform our approach going forward, for instance:

- Conducting research similar to this set of outreach activities approximately on a quarterly basis. FJTC is committed to ensuring that FloridaLawHelp.org and our other related websites are informed by talking to the Floridians who will most benefit from their use.
- Updating and adding information to FloridaLawHelp.org based on the needs identified by the focus group participants.
- Adding an overview of the court system with a glossary of common terms.
- Looking for opportunities to include information in a variety of formats, especially flowcharts, or step-by-step narratives which function somewhat like flowcharts.
- Ensuring that information is mobile-friendly and printable.
- Working to translate key legal information into additional languages
- Continuing to build relationship with Florida social service agencies, including sending updates to legal and social service providers when new content is available.

Both the user tests and focus groups made it clear that the overall quality of the content is of paramount importance. The Florida Justice Technology Center and FloridaLawHelp.org will continue to emphasize well written information in plain language in areas identified through research with the Florida community.

APPENDICES

Appendix I.	Interview Guide
Appendix II.	Focus Group Guide
Appendix III.	Participant Demographics
Appendix IV.	Focus Group Participants

Appendix I: User Testing Flyer & Sign Up Sheet

FloridaLawHelp.org Content User Tests – May 2018

Hi, I'm _____! [get their name].

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Intros● Thank you!● Gift card● Working on Florida Law Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Thinking about different formats for info● Few questions, then a scenario, ask you to use my phone to look at things● Not a test of their skills
---	--

Context Questions

1. Just to get started, can you tell me a little about how you use the internet, if you do? What do you use it for?
 - Do you typically use it on a phone or desktop? Both?
 - Do you use Facebook?
2. Can you think back to the last time you used the internet to look up possible solutions to a problem you were facing—was there a time? If so, what was the problem?
 - a. What was the first thing you did to look for help?
 - b. What sources of information were helpful? What made them helpful?
 - c. Did anything make it more difficult than you would have liked to find information?
 - d. Where else did you go (other than the internet) for that problem?

Scenario - Now we get into the “role playing” portion!

3. Based on that, do you think Chris is eligible? Can you tell me a little more why/why not?
 - a. How confident do you feel that’s the right thing to do?
4. If you’ll hand me back the phone for a second, I’m going to show you a second page, and I’d love for you to do exactly the same thing. [take back the phone, flip to the other resource, give it back

to them]. Can you take a look at this, and use it to try to find the same information—would you give Chris the same advice?

5. [When they seem like they're ready] Based on that, do your thoughts about what you would say to Chris change?
 - Do you feel any more or less confident?
6. Does this second format seem easier or harder to use than the first?

Demographics

I really appreciate your help! Do you mind answering a few demographic questions, just to wind up?

1. Do you live here in XXX [town]? [understand whether they live in urban/ suburban/ rural area]
2. Would you say your own personal income per year is under \$20,00, \$20K- \$40K, or above \$40? If you're willing to answer?

That's it! Those are all the questions I have! Any questions for me before we wrap up?

Appendix II: Focus Group Guide

FLH Social Service Staff Focus Groups- May 2018

Ask people to quickly introduce themselves

[0:05] Thank you all so much for coming—I really appreciate your time. Let me tell you a little about what I'm up to—I've just started in the past few months working on the Florida Law Help website. We're giving a lot of thought to our strategy and what legal information is most needed by low-income folks in Florida, and we're eager to hear your thoughts, as people who work with exactly those clients every day. I have some questions that I'm going to throw out for your input, but I don't have any specific goals that I'm trying to achieve today, other than just listening to you guys. I'm going to take your thoughts, together with those from about five other groups around the state, and we'll put out a write up about what folks had to say.

Does that make sense? Any questions before we dive in?

I'd love to start by brainstorming a list of the types of civil legal issues you often see as problems for your clients—civil legal issues meaning things where they haven't committed a crime, but they might ideally want to consult a lawyer for another reason [I don't want to actually give examples here, as it will slant the start of the conversation]

1. What are some of the key civil legal issues that you see coming up again and again? [write up the list as it's generated. Don't filter for anything other than criminal vs. civil]
2. [0:20] From this list, are there ones that are just way more common than the others, or it is more a long list of equally common things? [star common things, if there are those]
3. What legal issues could be most easily addressed through providing people with information (as opposed to a lawyer)? [maybe different color stars]
4. What are key leverage points, key legal issues that would really make a difference to people's lives? [yet another color star]

[0:30] That's an incredibly helpful list. Let's say, for a minute, that we have all that fantastic information waiting and ready for people... I'd love to get your thoughts on how to actually get that into people's hands.

5. What have you found to be the best ways to get resources to people for self-help?
6. What kind of information have you had people react well to? In what formats?
7. What kind of outreach has worked well for them, to help people learn about the services you offer?
8. How does a website fit into this? Do your clients typically look up information online, do you think? What would need to be true for them to use one?

[0:45] In addition to clients finding us directly, it's also important to us that we're on the radar of community organizations like you, who might be looking up answers or connecting people to us.

9. How do you as a social services organization get to know about resources that might be useful to your clients?
10. How can we best outreach to social services staff, to help them help people?

Thank you!

Appendix III: User Test Participant Demographics

Income Level	Number of Participants
Under \$15K/ year	16
\$15k-\$30K/ year	5
More than \$30K/ year	5
Total	26

Gender	Number of Participants
Female	19
Male	7
Total	26

Test Location	Number of Participants
Arcadia	4
Chiefland	3
Madison	8
Miami	6
Orlando	5
Total	26

Age	Number of Participants
20s	4
30s	6
40s	6
50s	4
60s	6
Total	26

Urban/ Suburban/ Rural	Number of Participants
Rural	15
Suburban	4
Urban	7
Total	26

Race	Number of Participants
Black	10
Hispanic	1
Not Captured	1
White	14
Total	26

How Often They Use th	Number of Participants
Frequently	22
Sometimes	4
Total	26

Appendix IV: Focus Group Participants

Representatives from the following organizations:

Department of Children and Families

DeSoto Cares

Early Learning Coalition (Levy County)

Florida Rural Legal Services

Goodwill Industries of Central

Florida, Job Connection Center -West Orlando

Goodwill Industries of Central

Florida, Job Connection Center-East Orlando

Healthy Families (DeSoto County)

Legal Services of Greater Miami

Orlando Union Rescue Mission

Partnership for Strong Families

Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC)

Three Rivers Legal Services