

Health Literate Organizations: Providing Optimal Equitable Care

December 13, 2018

A Department of Social Services
PCMH Presentation hosted by
Community Health Network of Connecticut, Inc.





Learning Objectives

- Define and discuss the impact of health literacy
- Explain the role of healthcare professionals in health literacy
- Define Health Literate Organizations (HLOs)
- Review literacy tools that assist in meeting Person-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) standards
- Understand how health literacy impacts health outcomes
- Learn how to become an HLO and obtain resources



Defining Health Literacy

Health Literacy Definitions

- The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, Title V, defines health literacy as:
 - “The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions.”
- Calgary Charter defines health literacy as:
 - “Health literacy is the use of a wide range of skills that improve the ability of people to act on information in order to live healthier lives. These skills include reading, writing, listening, speaking, numeracy, and critical analysis, as well as communication and interaction skills.”

Let's Talk Numbers

- **90 million** – According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the number of adults that lack the health literacy skills needed to understand and act on health information and health system demands
- **87 million** – According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), the number of adults with low health literacy (U.S. Department of Education NAAL)
- **36%** – The percentage of the adult U.S. population that have basic or low health literacy from the 2003 NAAL (U.S. Department of Education NAAL)
- **12%** – The percentage of U.S. adults that have the health literacy proficiency to perform complex health tasks such as using a table to calculate an employee's share of health insurance costs

Applying Health Literacy

- Use a complex group of reading, listening, analytical, and decision-making skills as well as the ability to apply them to health situations – for example:
 - Ability to understand instructions on prescription drug bottles, appointment slips, medical education brochures, doctors' directions, and consent forms as well as negotiate complex healthcare systems

Patient Healthcare Skills for Self-Care Management

■ Patients need the ability to:

- Access healthcare services
- Analyze relative risks and benefits
- Calculate dosages
- Communicate with healthcare providers
- Evaluate information for credibility and quality
- Interpret test results
- Locate health information

Health Literacy Components

In order to accomplish these tasks, patients need to be:



Visually literate (able to understand graphs or other visual information)



Computer literate (able to operate a computer)



Information literate (able to obtain and apply relevant information)



Numerically or computationally literate (able to calculate or reason numerically)



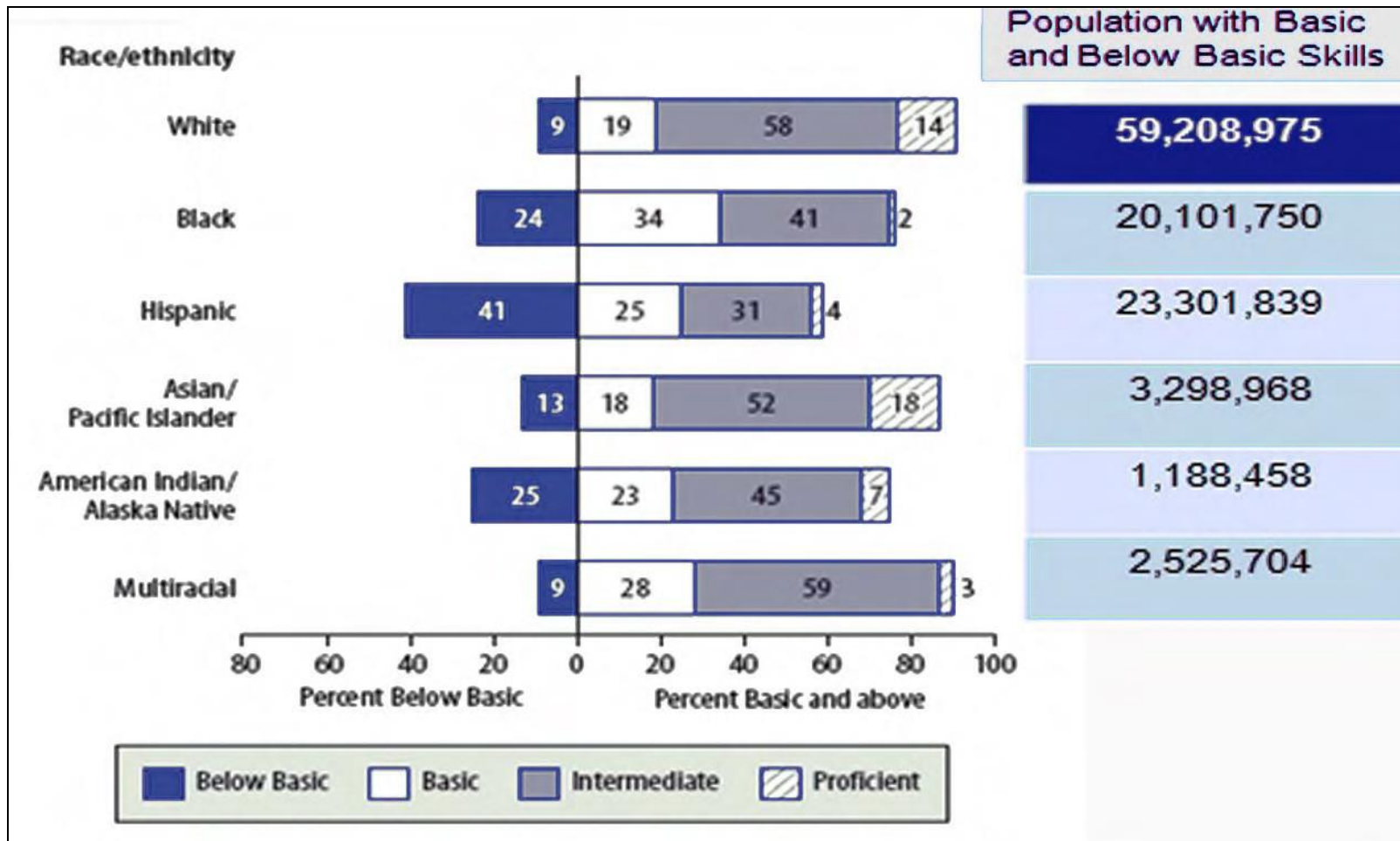
Able to orally articulate their health concerns and describe symptoms accurately

Who Does Health Literacy Impact?

Populations most likely to experience limited health literacy:

- Adults over 65
- Racial and ethnic groups other than White
- Recent refugees and immigrants
- People with less than a high school degree or GED
- People with incomes at or below the poverty level
- Non-native speakers of English

Health Literacy by Race and Ethnicity: U.S. Population



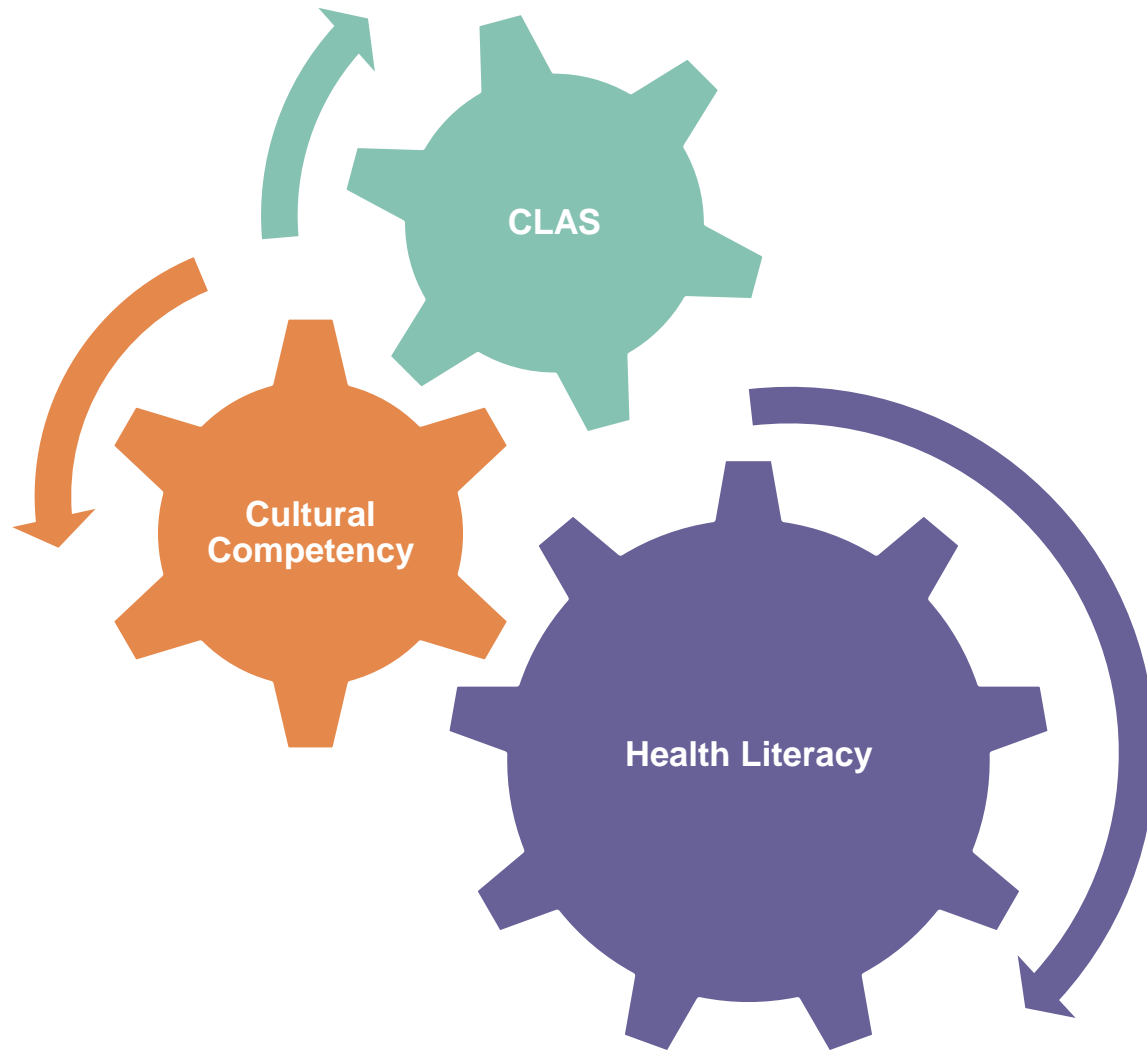
Source: 2003 NAAL Survey (U.S. Dept. of Education National Assessment of Adult Literacy)

http://publichealth.gwu.edu/departments/healthpolicy/CHPR/downloads/LowHealthLiteracyReport10_4_07.pdf

Cultural Context to Low Health Literacy

- Cultural belief systems
- Values
- Attitudes
- Traditions
- Language preferences
- Communication styles
- Cultural response to health information

Cultural Competency and Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)





Impact of Health Literacy



Economic Impact of Low Health Literacy

- According to a report on National Health Policy, the estimated cost of low health literacy to the U.S. economy is between **\$106 billion to \$238 billion** annually
- Inpatient spending increases by approximately \$993 for patients with limited health literacy

Economic Impact Causes

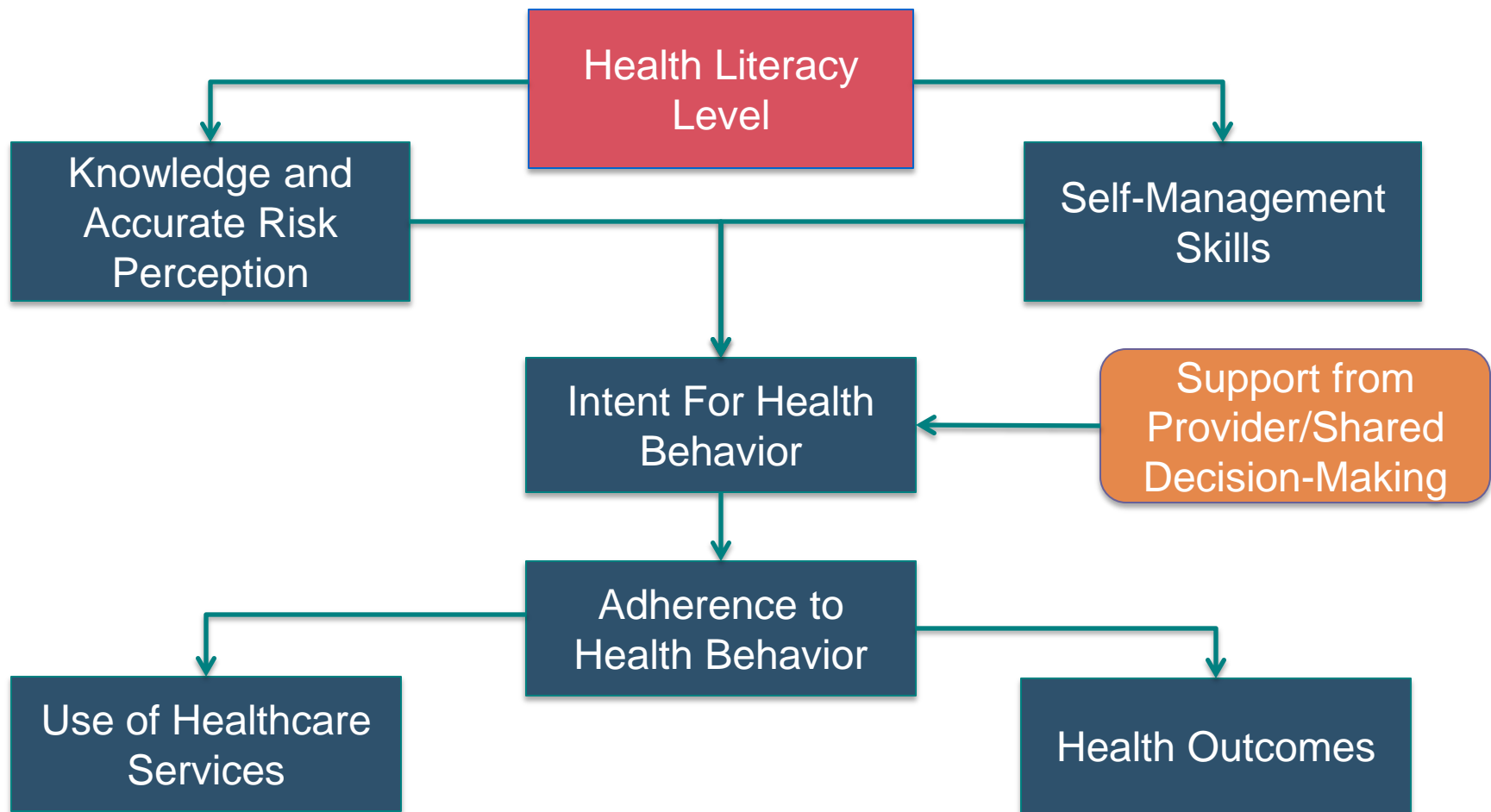
These high costs from low health literacy are associated with:

- Higher risk for death
 - After controlling for relevant covariates, lower health literacy scores were associated with high mortality rates within a Medicare managed care setting
- Increased use of healthcare services (4x higher healthcare costs)
- Increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations
 - 6% more hospital visits
 - 2 day-longer hospital stays

Poor Health Outcomes due to Low Health Literacy

- People with low health literacy have a lower likelihood of getting flu shots, understanding medical labels and instructions, and a greater likelihood of taking medicines incorrectly compared with adults with higher health literacy
- Individuals with limited health literacy reported poorer health status and were less likely to use preventive care
- Individuals with low levels of health literacy are more likely to be hospitalized and have bad disease outcomes
- Research findings show that low health literacy impacts incidence, mortality rate, and quality of life in patients with cancer

Health Literacy Drives Health Outcomes





Our Role in the Healthcare Community



Healthcare Provider Role

STEPS

- S - Speak Slowly
- T - Teach Back
- E - Encourage Questions
- P - Plain Language
- S - Show Examples

Healthcare Professional Role

- **Assess:**
 - Identify patients with limited literacy levels
 - Reflect the age, cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of patients
- **Communicate:**
 - Ask open-ended questions that begin with “how” and “what”
 - Offer assistance with completing forms
 - Improve the physical environment by using lots of universal symbols
 - Use simple language, short sentences, and define technical terms
 - Ask patients to explain your instructions or demonstrate the procedure
- **Provide information:**
 - For Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients, provide information in their primary language
 - Organize information so that the most important points stand out and repeat this information
 - Supplement instruction with appropriate materials (videos, models, pictures, etc.)

Consumer Health Librarian Role

- Promote awareness of health literacy among health professionals by creating clearinghouses of health literacy information, sponsoring health literacy seminars, and encouraging multi-organizational collaborations
- Help to train all healthcare staff on the principles of health literacy and plain language
- Create collections or repositories of materials (e.g. insurance forms and instructions, informed consent and other legal documents, aftercare and medication instruction, and patient education materials) in several languages and review the materials with members of the target population
- Help to disseminate existing communication tools and resources for patients



Defining Health Literate Organization



Health Literate Organization

A **Health Literate Organization** (HLO) is one that “makes it easier for people to navigate, understand, and use information and services to take care of their health.”

An HLO is an organization that has made changes to better match the demands of the organization with the capacity and skills of the people who need its information and services.

Organizations that can Promote Health Literacy

- Healthcare providers
- Public health officials
- Health communicators and educators
- Healthcare facilities/organizations
- Government agencies
- Payers of healthcare services, such as health plans, government health care purchasers, and employers
- Print, audiovisual, and electronic media
- Those responsible for food, drug, and medical device production and distribution
- Employers



HLO Advocates

- Visionaries
- Leadership
- Decision-makers
- Clinical
- Non-clinical
- Healthcare and public health systems professionals

HLO Foundations



10 Attributes of HLOs

1. Leadership makes health literacy a priority
2. Integrate health literacy into planning, evaluation measures, patient safety, and quality improvement
3. Prepare the workforce to be health literate and monitor progress
4. Involve consumers in design, implementation, and evaluation efforts
5. Create a shame-free care environment to meet the needs of patients with a range of health literacy skills
6. Use health literacy strategies in interpersonal communication to ensure and check patient understanding
7. Ensure easy access to health information and services and navigation support
8. Design and distribute print, audiovisual, and social media content that is easy to understand and act on
9. Address health literacy in high-risk situations (e.g. care transitions, communications about medicines)
10. Communicate health insurance benefits and health care cost information clearly

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>

Leadership and Planning

- Leadership makes health literacy a priority
 - Develops and implements policies and standards
 - Sets goals for health literacy improvement, establishes accountability, and provides incentives
 - Allocates fiscal and human resources
 - Redesigns systems and physical space
- Integrate health literacy into planning, evaluation measures, patient safety, and quality improvement
 - Conducts health literacy organizational assessments
 - Assesses the impact of policies and programs on individuals with limited health literacy
 - Factors health literacy into all patient safety plans

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>

Stakeholder Involvement

- Prepares the workforce to be health literate and monitors progress
 - Hires diverse staff with expertise in health literacy
 - Sets goals for training of staff at all levels
- Includes populations served in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health information and services
 - Includes individuals who are adult learners or have limited health literacy
 - Obtains feedback on health information and services from individuals who use them

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>

Effective and Appropriate Communication

- Meets needs of populations with a range of health literacy skills while avoiding stigmatization
 - Adopts health literacy universal precautions, such as offering everyone help with health literacy tasks
 - Allocates resources proportionate to the concentration of individuals with limited health literacy
- Uses health literacy strategies in interpersonal communications and confirms understanding at all points of contact
 - Confirms understanding (e.g., using the Teach-Back, Show-Me, or Chunk-and-Check methods)
 - Secures language assistance for speakers of languages other than English
 - Limits to two to three messages at a time
 - Uses easily understood symbols in way-finding signage

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>

Access to Health Literate Information

- Provides easy access to health information and services and navigation assistance
 - Makes electronic patient portals user-centered and provides training on how to use them
 - Facilitates scheduling appointments with other services
- Designs and distributes print, audiovisual, and social media content that is easy to understand and act on
 - Involves diverse audiences, including those with limited health literacy, in development and rigorous user testing
 - Uses a quality translation process to produce materials in languages other than English

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>

Health Literacy Assessment and Communication

- Addresses health literacy in high-risk situations, including care transitions and communications about medicines
 - Prioritizes high-risk situations (e.g., informed consent for surgery and other invasive procedures)
 - Emphasizes high-risk topics (e.g., conditions that require extensive self-management)
- Communicates clearly what health plans cover and what individuals will have to pay for services
 - Provides easy-to-understand descriptions of health insurance policies
 - Communicates the out-of-pocket costs for health care services before they are delivered

Source:

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/~//media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Discussion%20Papers/Attributes%20of%20a%20Health%20Literate%20Organization.pdf>



Health Literate Organization and PCMH

PCMH Standards & HLO

- Patient-access to care
- Team-based care
- Population health management
- Care management
- Care coordination and care transitions
- Performance measurement and quality improvement – patient experience

Access to Care

- Improve telephone access – bilingual staff
- Clear and simple automated instructions over the phone
- Create easy to understand materials
- Promote motivational interviewing skills

Team-Based Care

- Create signs
- Consider culture, customs, and beliefs
- Address language differences
- Communicate clearly
- Use the Teach-Back method
- Encourage questions
- Make action plans and follow up with patients
- Use health education materials effectively
- Link patients to resources

Population Health Management

- Communicate clearly
- Assess language barriers
- Consider cultural beliefs and customs
- Follow up frequently with patients
- Remind patients of appointments often
- Create letters and reminders with health literacy in mind

Care Management

- Communicate clearly
- Use the Teach-Back method
- Follow up with patients
- Encourage questions
- Conduct brown bag medicine review
- Help patients remember how and when to take their medicine
- Direct them to resources

Care Coordination

- Make referrals easy
- Follow up with patients
- Communicate clearly
- Assist with referrals
- Identify barriers with referrals – transportation, finances, insurance
- Use the Teach-Back method and motivational interviewing

Performance Measurement

- Get patient feedback
- Create a Health Literacy Improvement Plan – Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA)
- Form a quality improvement (QI) team that includes patients
- Assess effectiveness of improvement on patients
- Keep health literacy as a continuously evolving aspect to quality of care

Health Literacy Toolkit: AHRQ

AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions toolkit – 2nd edition

- Quick Start Guide
- 21 tools that address spoken and written communication, self management, and empowerment and supportive systems
- Over 25 resources with sample forms, PowerPoint presentations, and worksheets
 - <https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2.html>
 - PDF Version:
https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications/files/healthlittoolkit2_4.pdf



Health Literate Organization and Quality



Health Literacy is Critical to Quality

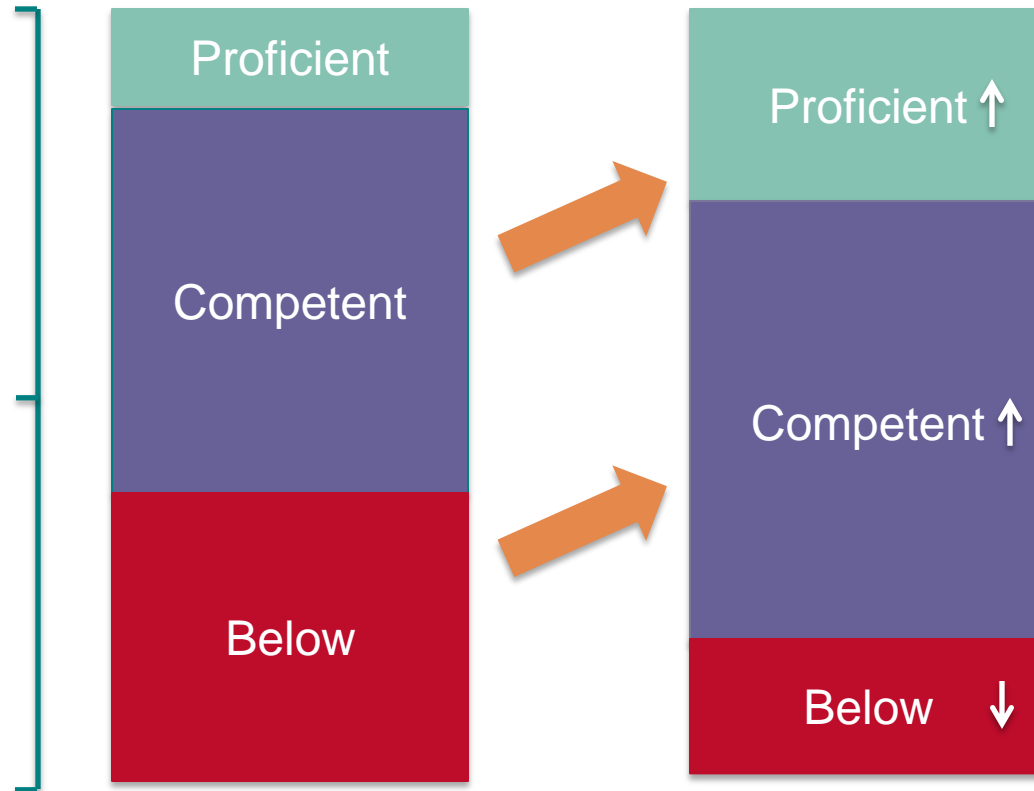
- Ensures health system reform efforts are effective
- Promotes preventive and behavioral health
- Facilitates better navigation of health systems
- Encourages use of culturally appropriate communication tools
- Plays its part in understanding health issues & effective ways of health promotion



Benefits of Quality for HLOs

- Improved health outcomes
- Better patient experience and satisfaction
- Decreased cost of care
- Increased provider and staff satisfaction
- Improved medication adherence and compliance
- Effective shared decision-making – goal setting
- Improved behavioral health integration

Raising the Health Literacy Bar



Measuring Health Literacy


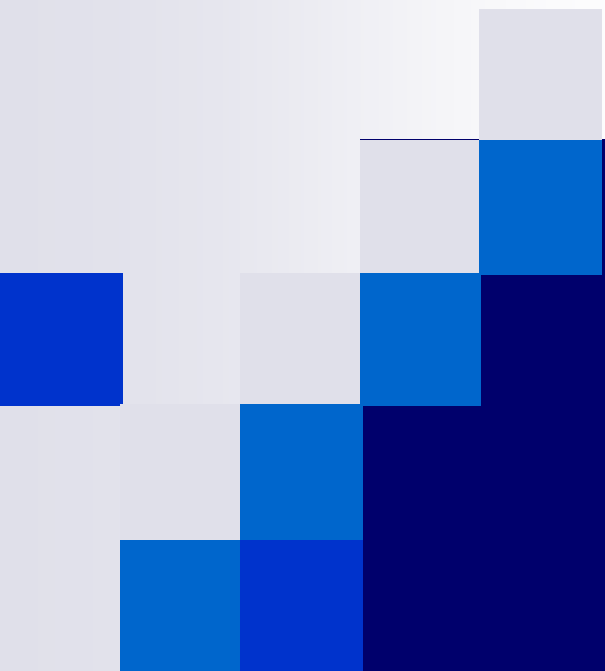
- Literacy is not the same as health literacy
- Formal Tests
 - Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine - REALM
 - Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults - TOFHLA
 - Diabetes Numeracy Test - DNT
 - Newest Vital Signs
- Informal Tests
 - Short Assessment of Health Literacy – Spanish and English - SAHL-S&E
 - A single-question – confidence test

Positive Impact on Health Outcomes

- Chronic medical conditions – improved diabetes & heart failure management
- Cancer screenings – increased cancer screening participation (e.g. colon cancer screening)
- Behavioral health management – improved symptoms in low literate depressed patients
- Preventive services utilization improved

Source:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2-intro.html>



Becoming a Health Literate Organization

Considerations Before Starting

- Identify your advocates – champions, allies, workgroup members
- Get buy-in – ask them to commit, make assessments
- Create a plan – objectives, actions, goals
- Vet the plan – stakeholders, allies, champions
- Build awareness – present plan at staff meeting
- Monitor progress – make it accountable
- Institutionalize the plan – formal launch and implementation

Form a Team

- Identify team members
- Bring team members together
- Offer educational activities and training
- Have subsequent meetings
- Establish routine reporting

Raise Awareness

- Educate staff
- Allow time for group discussion
- Pursue continuing education credits in health literacy
- Maintain awareness
- Make sure to have a plan to revisiting the topic periodically and training new staff

Create a Health Literacy Improvement Plan

- Set your health literacy goals
- Use the Primary Care Health Literacy Assessment to identify the tools
- Decide how you will implement the tools you have chosen
- Develop a clear and written plan
- Define who will be responsible
- Set time-specific, achievable objectives
- Establish measures

Practice Health Literacy Assessment

Primary Care Health Literacy Assessment

Please select **one** answer that most accurately describes your practice:

- Doing Well** Our practice is doing this well
- Needs Improvement** Our practice is doing this, but could do it better
- Not Doing** Our practice is not doing this
- Not Sure or N/A** I don't know the answer to this question **OR**
This is not applicable to our practice

1. Prepare for Practice Change

	Doing Well	Needs Improvement	Not Doing	Not Sure or N/A	Tools to Help
1. Our health literacy team meets regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1-Form Team
2. Our practice regularly re-assesses our health literacy environment and updates our health literacy improvement goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-Create a Health Literacy Improvement Plan 13-Welcome Patients
3. Our practice has a written Health Literacy Improvement Plan and collects data to see if objectives are being met.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-Create a Health Literacy Improvement Plan
4. All staff members have received health literacy education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3-Raise Awareness
5. All levels of practice staff have agreed to support changes to make it easier for patients to navigate, understand, and use health information and services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3-Raise Awareness

Source: AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, 2nd Edition (2015). AHRQ

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2-tool2.html>

Maintain Momentum

- Share the results of your progress assessments with practice staff to maintain awareness of health literacy-related issues and build continuing enthusiasm for your quality improvement efforts
- Establish a routine schedule for updating practice leadership on activities and accomplishments

Source:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2-tool2.html>



Spread the Word: Host an Event

- Health Literacy Month (October) – plan activities for that month
- Health Literacy Week – engage patients and staff
- Participate in community events – fairs/fundraisers
- Town halls – engage with patients to provide feedback
- Start a blog or have conversations via Twitter

Source:

<http://www.healthliteracymonth.org/health-literacy-month-handbook-the-event-planning-guide-for-health-literacy-advocates/>

The Future of HLOs & Additional Resources

- Nursing:

<https://www.omicsgroup.org/journals/health-literate-healthcare-organizations-and-their-role-in-future-healthcare-2167-1168-1000238.pdf>

- Pharmacy:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/pharmhealthlit/tools.html>

- Hospitals:

www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov/

- UnityPoint Health:

[Building Health Literate Organizations](#)

- Health Literacy Out Loud podcast:

<http://www.healthliteracyoutloud.com/2012/08/14/health-literacy-out-loud-82-attributes-of-health-literate-organizations/>

PCMH Contact Information

- By email: pathwaytopcmh@chnct.org
- By phone: 203.949.4194
- Online: www.huskyhealthct.org/providers/pcmh.html
- All PCMH webinars located on the HUSKY Health website page “[Webinars](#)” under the “Person-Centered Medical Home” menu item





Questions/Comments