

Health Literacy Toolkit

a companion to the
Minnesota Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

2016



Foreword

The Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership's Health Literacy Toolkit is a companion piece to the Minnesota Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. In this toolkit you will find resources such as trainings, guides and assessment tools to complement the action plan. These key resources included in the toolkit have been categorized based on the Priorities for Improving Health Literacy outlined in the action plan:

- 1. Adopt and use health literacy best practices across all verbal and written communication.** To make it easier for consumers to access and understand health information, the health care community should develop and implement best practices for providing written and verbal health information in jargon-free, understandable language.
- 2. Make information about health relevant and accessible.** Patients should have easy access to usable information presented in a variety of mediums so they can understand diagnoses, make treatment and prevention decisions, and evaluate health risks.
- 3. Increase and improve patient-centered resources.** Health care professionals should provide patients with the necessary resources to understand the health care system and receive the most appropriate care. Whether individual assistance is provided in-person, by phone, or online, health care professionals should help patients coordinate and navigate health care.
- 4. Implement and enhance education opportunities at all levels.** Health literacy concepts should be integrated into primary, secondary and professional education.
- 5. Streamline processes within the health care system.** Productive partnerships within the health care system could identify and implement effective strategies and actions to lessen the burden on patients to navigate the fragmented health care system.
- 6. Invest in language and cultural resources.** Because limited English proficiency has a profound impact on health literacy, health care organizations need to take language and cultural differences into account when providing health information.

These resources are intended for a variety of audiences, including health care providers, educators and anyone interested in improving his or her own health literacy. While we tried to be broad in our resources, some may be more targeted to a certain audience. We have highlighted these tools but additional resources for each audience and priority area are available upon request.

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	i
Getting Started	1
Featured Health Literacy Resources by Priority Area	2
• Priority Area 1: Adopt and use health literacy best practices across all verbal and written communication.....	2
• Priority Area 2: Make information about health relevant and accessible	3
• Priority Area 3: Increase and improve patient-centered resources	4
• Priority Area 4: Implement and enhance education opportunities at all levels	5
• Priority Area 5: Streamline processes within the health care system	6
• Priority Area 6: Invest in language and cultural resources	7
Conclusion	8

Contact the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership at 651-662-0986 or visit healthliteracymn.org for more information about this toolkit, the Minnesota Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy, and efforts to improve health literacy in Minnesota.

Getting Started

Use these resources as an introduction to health literacy.

[Health literacy and patient safety: Help patient understand](#)

American Medical Association

There is both a [video](#) and a corresponding [clinician manual](#) to help build awareness of the issue and introduce key best practices to improve health literacy skills for health professionals.

[Health Literacy 101](#)

Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

This presentation and training guide was created to help introduce the basics of health literacy and train on key best practices that can be used by anyone who is in a position to provide health information.

[Minnesota Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy](#)

Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

The Minnesota Action Plan is intended to serve as a tool for organizations and professionals throughout the broader health community. The plan was a collaborative effort including 43 co-sponsors representing various sectors.

Priority Area 1

Adopt and Use Health Literacy Best Practices Across All Verbal and Written Communication

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide evidence-based guidance to support primary care practices in addressing health literacy. The Toolkit can help practices reduce the complexity of health care, increase patient understanding of health information, and enhance support for patients of all literacy levels.

Teach-Back Program

Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

This program is designed to help you facilitate trainings and discussions around using the teach-back method. The guide is divided into 5 main sections and provides many resources that will be helpful to you as you create your own program to promote using the teach-back method.

Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills

Ceci and Len Doak

This book is considered a classic text in health literacy. The authors' contribution to the field and to our understanding of clear communication principles has been crucial. The text provides insight for all concerned with improving health communication.

Priority Area 2

Make Information about Health Relevant and Accessible

Guidelines for Creating Materials

Harvard School of Public Health

This guide offers key points about plain language, layout and design and formative evaluation to guide you in creating health education materials. It also includes referrals to additional resources on the Health Literacy Studies website for more detailed guidelines and illustrative examples.

Plain Language Medical Dictionary

University of Michigan

The Plain Language Medical Dictionary widget is a project of the University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library as part of the Michigan Health Literacy Awareness project. Providers and educators can enter a medical term into the widget to search for plain language equivalents to use in speech or written materials.

Public Health Image Library (PHIL)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Much of the information critical to the communication of public health messages is pictorial rather than text-based. Housed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the PHIL offers free access to the CDC's pictures, which can be useful for public health professionals, the media, educators, students, and the general public.

Priority Area 3

Increase and Improve Patient-Centered Resources

Advocate for Health Literacy in Your Organization

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

This strategy guide will help you advocate for health literacy in your organization. Health professionals must commit to advocating for improved health literacy in their respective organizations. Health literacy must be embedded in programs, policies, strategic plans, and research activities.

The SHARE Approach

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The SHARE Approach is a five-step process for shared decision making that includes exploring and comparing the benefits, harms, and risks of each option through meaningful dialogue about what matters most to the patient.

Choosing Wisely

Drexel University College of Medicine

Choosing Wisely is a set of interactive instructional modules to enhance physician and patient communication around recommendations from the Choosing Wisely campaign. These modules are designed to help physicians, patients and other health care stakeholders think and talk about overuse of health care resources by providing strategies for physicians to build trust and address patient attitudes and beliefs that more care is not always better care.

Priority Area 4

Implement and Enhance Education Opportunities at All Levels

Good Questions for Good Health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A toolkit and [presentation](#) for consumers about how to improve communication with doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists and increase understanding. Ideal for health professionals and advocates whose work includes empowering consumers and educating patients.

Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The purpose of this web-based training program is to educate health professionals about public health literacy and their role in providing health information and services and promoting public health literacy. The course uses knowledge checks, scenario-based interactions, video clips, and a post-test to engage learners. The course includes an evaluation, glossary, and resource list.

National Health Education Standards

Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards

The National Health Education Standards provide a framework for teachers, administrators and policy makers in designing or selecting curricula, allocating instructional resources, and assessing student achievement and progress. The Joint Committee was formed with support from the American Cancer Society and members included the American Public Health Association, the American School Health Association, and the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

Priority Area 5

Streamline Processes within the Health Care System

The Health Literacy Environment of Hospitals and Health Centers

Harvard School of Public Health

This guide and the review tools found within it offer an approach for analyzing literacy-related barriers to healthcare access and navigation. This guide will assist program directors, administrators, and health care workers at hospitals or health centers to consider the health literacy environment of their health care facilities and to analyze ways to better serve patients.

The Health Literacy Environment Activity Packet

Harvard School of Public Health

The exercises in this packet are designed to help hospitals and health center staff members begin to consider some of the characteristics of their workplace that help or hinder a visitor's ability to make his or her way about. This analysis of the health literacy environment of hospitals and health centers includes information about signs and directions and how to better serve patients and clients.

Literacy Demands in Health Care Settings: The Patient Perspective

American Medical Association

This guide focuses on the mismatch between the average functional literacy skills of US adults and the literacy-related demands of the health care setting, including a description of health contexts and the literacy demands encountered within various settings. Health literacy is examined from the perspective of patient rights and patient-provider interaction.

Priority Area 6

Invest in Language and Cultural Resources

Culture Care Connection

Stratis Health

Culture Care Connection is an online learning and resource center for health care providers, staff, and administrators to learn about culturally-competent care in Minnesota. This site provides information on cultural competence concepts, health topics, ethnicities, stakeholder organizations, and resources that are most reflective of the needs of Minnesota's diverse populations, as well as the health care organizations that serve them.

The Exchange

Multilingual Health Resource Exchange

The Exchange is a Minnesota collaborative created to help improve health through better communication. The Exchange focuses on issues that can impact health such as class, culture, language, literacy, race and spirituality. The Exchange's resources are open to everyone, and there is an online library of translated health education materials for Exchange members only.

Culture, Health, and Literacy

World Education *in collaboration with* the National Institute for Literacy

This guide contains descriptions of health education materials addressing issues of culture and low-literacy, and includes references to curricula written in languages other than English. The guide includes background information, resource guides, workbooks, videos, audio and links to other helpful websites.

Conclusion

The Minnesota Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy provides a vision of a world of clarity and understanding between patients and health care providers, as well as a framework to work toward. This companion Health Literacy Toolkit highlights resources that individuals and organizations can use within the contexts of their own work and day-to-day lives to work within this framework.

This action plan begins the important discussion on how to improve health literacy, and this toolkit provides concrete information and resources to translate each priority area into action by health care providers, educators, and individuals. No organization or individual can carry out the action plan alone. These resources provide some tools to get started within your organization and community. As more people and groups have access to the action plan and toolkit, our hope is for health literacy to improve steadily over time in Minnesota.

If you are interested in learning more about health literacy, what different organizations are doing to improve health literacy and what ways you can get involved in this effort contact the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership at 651-662-0986 or healthliteracymn.org/contact-us.

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was made possible through the University of Minnesota Office for Business & Community Economic Development Community Health Initiative (CHI) Community Health Internship Program and the work of Aldona Martinka, Community Health Intern for the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership.