

# Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

Partnering for the health of all Minnesotans



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# Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

## Partnering for the health of all Minnesotans

The **Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership** is a collaboration of Minnesota health care consumers, health care organizations, and literacy groups. An independently funded program of the Minnesota Literacy Council, the Partnership was formed in January 2006 to help coordinate health literacy efforts across the state.

### **Our mission:**

The mission of the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership is to improve the health of all Minnesotans through clear health communication.

### **We believe that:**

- low health literacy affects everyone in Minnesota
- helping providers communicate health information in a clear and easy-to-understand manner is key to improving health literacy in Minnesota
- clear communication increases patient safety
- patients need to be empowered to ask questions of health care professionals in order to make informed choices about health care
- health literacy is a predictor of health status

### **Our goals are to:**

- train health care providers about health literacy
- empower patients to ask for clear communication
- share health literacy resources

### **We are responding to a problem**

By uniting in a statewide collaborative effort with monthly networking and educational meetings, members of the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership call attention to the challenge of low health literacy in a coordinated and cost-effective fashion. Together, we can increase understanding and lead people toward better health.

*We know that health literacy can predict health status and that educational strategies and techniques to help patients increase understanding will make a difference. When patients do not understand the information health care providers give them, patient safety is compromised.*

*When patients do not understand, they are often unable to speak up about their care, advocate for themselves, or make informed choices about their health care.*

## Training health care providers



### Our challenge:

Health literacy is often defined as a patient's ability to read, understand and act on health information. It is clear that much more is at play than just a patient's ability to read the information presented by his or her provider. The way the information is delivered is also a critical component to one's ability

to understand and act on health information. At the Partnership, we believe health literacy is also a **provider's capacity to communicate clearly, educate about health, and empower patients.**

### Provider education efforts:

- We facilitated a pre-conference workshop on health literacy for the Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety conference. This presentation focused on how to use the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's Universal Precautions Toolkit to assess the health literacy of a clinic or care system and implement concrete strategies for improving communications and empowering patients to manage their own care.
- We participated in the 2010 Community Health Worker Conference by providing resources and information about the Partnership via a table display.
- At the first-ever Minnesota patient education summit we led a work group discussion on "Making the Case for Patient-Centered Communication." The group talked about how literacy, language, and culture affect provider communication with patients and their families.
- We spoke about the basics of health literacy to 60 participants at the Chi-at-Large chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society Patient Education: Basics and Barriers conference.

### Published articles

#### *Health literacy: Achieving "meaningful use" for patients*

Lane Stiles, Fairview Health Services  
*Minnesota Physician*  
May 2010

#### *Health Literacy in Minnesota*

Lisa Hoelscher, MPH, RD, LD, CHES  
*MDA Update*, newsletter of the Minnesota Dietetic Association  
Summer 2010

## Empowering patients



### Our challenge:

Health information is often communicated at a very high level. In fact, **only 12% of adult English speaking Americans are proficient at understanding health information** according to the most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy conducted by the U.S.

Department of Education. This leads to a gap in information being shared and amount of this information that is actually understood by patients. All patients need to be encouraged to ask questions and seek out clear health communication in order to make informed choices about health care.

### Patient empowerment efforts:

- The **Health Literacy Program for Minnesota Seniors** (HeLP MN Seniors) is an evidence-based program aimed at building capacity and enhancing efforts to improve the health literacy status of older adults. The program teaches older adults how to improve communication with their health care providers and find good health information. This program was supported through collaboration with the University of Minnesota Health Sciences Libraries and a subcontract from the National Library of Medicine National Network of Libraries of Medicine (N01-LM-6-3503). Program materials are available on the Partnership website at **[healthliteracymn.org/resources/help-mn-seniors](http://healthliteracymn.org/resources/help-mn-seniors)**.
- A **needs assessment** was done to determine how Minnesotans use the Internet to find health information. A voluntary and anonymous survey was completed by more than 130 library visitors. About 20% report they are not using the Internet to find health information. Participants surveyed are using the Internet to find information about living a healthy lifestyle (52%), to look up health information for family members (44%), to educate themselves about current health topics (41%), to diagnose their symptoms (37%) and to determine if they should visit a doctor (29%). This program was made possible through the support of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and AmeriCorps VISTA.



- The class, **Take Charge of Your Health Care: Asking Questions, Getting Answers** was created to empower people to ask their health care providers questions and use the Internet to find accurate and useful information. Although participation in the program was minimal, results were impressive: 75 percent of those who attended said they would feel comfortable finding health information on the Internet. All participants felt confident in their ability to obtain, understand, and act on health information, and in their ability to know what questions to ask at their medical appointments. The results from this class provided valuable information to the Partnership and will help guide future efforts focused on consumer empowerment. This program was made possible through the support of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, and AmeriCorps VISTA.
- Partnership member organizations, the African and American Friendship Association for Cooperation and Development, Inc. and the Women’s Initiative for Self Empowerment, Inc. in collaboration with the International Institute of Minnesota, Inc., received an **Eliminating Healthcare Disparities** grant from the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health to implement a program using health care professionals from minority communities of color in Minnesota to provide health literacy education, advocacy, health services navigation, and medical interpretation in immigrant communities. As part of this grant health literacy training was provided to 22 health care professionals trained outside of the U.S. representing more than a dozen countries.
- The Partnership was asked to join the **Minnesota Asian/American Health Coalition’s Blueprint Advisory Committee**. The committee published “The Minnesota Community Blueprint to Asian/American and Pacific Islander Health Equity (The Blueprint)” in December 2010. The Blueprint is a structured map for strengthening health systems in Minnesota with the goal of optimizing the health and well-being of the Asian/American and Pacific Islander community.

#### Published articles

*Take Charge of Your Health, A report from the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership*

Nathan Maas,  
AmeriCorps VISTA  
volunteer  
MHLP website  
July 2010

*Health Literacy Training Program for Seniors – Sharing our Success*

Alisha Ellwood, Blue  
Cross and Blue Shield  
of Minnesota  
Anne Beschnett,  
Health Sciences  
Libraries, University  
of Minnesota  
*NPHIC Update*,  
newsletter of the  
National Public Health  
Information Coalition  
October 2010

*Take charge of your health*

Alisha Ellwood, Blue  
Cross and Blue Shield  
of Minnesota  
*Minnesota Health  
Care News*  
December 2010

## Sharing resources

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership website. The header includes the organization's logo and a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Health Literacy, Partner With Us, Events, Resources, Blog, and Contact Us. A prominent banner features a photo of a healthcare professional and the text 'Working together... to improve health through clear communication'. Below the banner, there are several content blocks: 'MHLIP Updates' with links to recent events, a 'Leading the Way to Health Literacy' section with a featured article about Aleve and Flexeril, and a search bar. A sidebar on the right promotes an AHRQ Universal Precautions Toolkit.

### Our challenge:

Health literacy is an evolving field. There are updates on national best practices, new research being published in scientific literature, and changing legislation. There is a tremendous amount of work going on and it can be a challenge to follow all that is happening. The Partnership is not only committed to following the national scene but also sharing information of activities that they are implementing in their own organizations.

### Sharing resources:

- In July 2010, we debuted our new Web site at **healthliteracymn.org**. The Web site features Partnership updates, our Health Literacy 101 training, the HeLP MN Seniors workshop materials, papers and articles, links to national resources, and a member-only area. Our Web site redesign was made possible through the subcontract for HeLP MN Seniors.
- Each year, the Partnership invites guest speakers to share best practices or initiatives related to health literacy. Presentations tie into the Partnership's goals of empowering patients, training providers, and providing resources. In 2010, we welcomed three speakers who shared best practices for writing effective, engaging health education materials.
- Monthly Partnership meetings provide an avenue for members to support and learn from each other. Time is set aside to share best practices, new programs and opportunities with members.

## Operations and Finances

### Operations

The Partnership is guided by a chair, vice-chair and steering committee. Leadership during our fiscal year July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 is listed below.

**Chair, Alisha Ellwood, MA, LMFT, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota**

**Vice-chair, Lane Stiles, Fairview Health System**

#### Steering Committee:

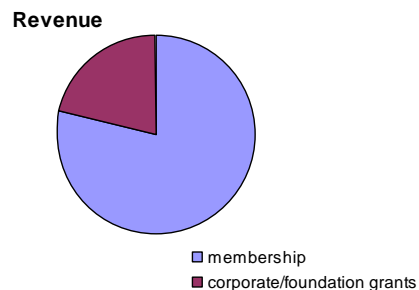
- Alisha Ellwood, chair
- Lane Stiles, vice-chair
- Mary Beth Dahl, Stratis Health
- Laurie Porter, Gillette Children's Hospital
- Cathy Grady, Minnesota Literacy Council

### Financial summary

#### Year ended June 30, 2010

The Partnership is an independently funded program of the Minnesota Literacy Council, relying on volunteers, minimal membership dues, grant funding, in-kind contributions and other donations to support our efforts.

<b>Revenue</b>	
Membership	\$7,350.00
corporate/foundation grants*	\$2,000.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$9,350.00</b>



<b>Expenses</b>	
professional services**	\$2,007.33
supplies and equipment	\$63.33
administration expense	\$160.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,230.66</b>



*\*corporate funding provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota in support of the AmeriCorps VISTA program*

*\*\*professional services includes costs for VISTA volunteer*

## Partner with us!

The Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership welcomes anyone who has an interest in improving health through clear communication, including:

- health care companies, clinics and providers
- insurance agencies
- community organizations
- social service agencies
- individuals interested in health literacy

You or your organization may align with the Partnership in one of three ways: by becoming a member, by becoming a friend, or by volunteering.

## Become a member

### Benefits:

- participate in monthly meetings
- share resources, such as Web sites, health education materials, and training curricula
- receive invitations to special events and health literacy trainings
- have opportunities for networking to gain support for their own health literacy efforts.
- receive access to a special “members only” portion of the Partnership’s Web site

**Commitment:** Members attend monthly networking and informational meetings. Members also participate in and make decisions about programs, operations, and structure.

### Annual dues:

The Partnership follows a fiscal year from June 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Membership is not pro-rated. Annual dues are based on the following criteria:

- \$50 for individuals
- \$100 for organizations with an annual budget less than \$500,000
- \$250 for organizations with an annual budget between \$500,000 and \$5 million
- \$500 for organizations with an annual budget more than \$5 million

## Become a friend of health literacy

If your corporation’s or organization’s goals align with those of the Partnership and you have opportunities to support activities, contact us about becoming a friend of health literacy.

## Become a volunteer

If you are interested in health literacy and would like to contribute to special events, participate in grant writing, or using health literacy as a platform for an academic project please contact us.

**For all of the above you can reach us through our website at [healthliteracymn.org](http://healthliteracymn.org) and click on ‘contact us’.**

## Thank you

members and supporters!

African and American  
Friendship Association for  
Cooperation and  
Development, Inc.

Allina Hospitals & Clinics

Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
of Minnesota\*

Center for Cross Cultural  
Health

CentraCare Health System

Fairview Health Services\*

Gillette Children’s Hospital\*

Health Partners\*

Hennepin County Medical  
Center

Hennepin Faculty  
Associates\*

Hoeschler, Elizabeth

Medica

Midwest Medical Insurance  
Group

Minnesota Department of  
Health

Minnesota Literacy Council\*

Minnesota Literacy Council  
VISTA program

Olmsted Medical Center

Park Nicollet Health Services

Pediatric Home Service\*

Prime Therapeutics

Public Health Consultants

Stratis Health\*

UCare Minnesota\*

Women’s Initiative for Self  
Empowerment

*\*denotes founding member*