



In the Know:

Health literacy news and best practices

May 2021

White House invests in new health literacy program

Racial and ethnic minority populations experience health disparities. This includes higher rates of COVID-19 cases and death.

We know that health literacy is a powerful tool to bring greater health equity. That is why we are excited to see the White House invest in a new health literacy grant program.

This spring, Vice President Harris announced a \$250 million grant program focused on boosting health literacy. It will help ensure underserved communities have accurate information about COVID-19 and vaccines.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will fund 30 projects in cities and 43 projects in rural communities. Local governments were able to apply for grants earlier this spring. The winning projects should be announced in the coming weeks.

Recipients will identify communities at the highest risk for health disparities and low health literacy. Then they will create a health literacy plan and partner with community groups to increase knowledge of COVID-19 safety guidelines and the vaccines available.

[Learn more about the program here.](#)



Meet our new intern

The Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership is excited to welcome a new intern on board this summer, Hannah Geressu. This is the Partnership's fifth year having an intern through the University of Minnesota Community Health Initiative.



Hannah will work with Partnership Chair Alisha Odhiambo on creating resources to support the Health Literacy Month campaign in October.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born in Minneapolis and grew up just outside the Twin Cities in St. Louis Park. As an undergraduate at Yale, I majored in Political Science and German, and spent a semester abroad in Germany. I now study Public Health Administration and Policy as a master's student at the University of Minnesota. For the duration of my master's program, I am a graduate research assistant to a wonderful professor, Dr. Sayeh Nikpay, and conduct literature reviews and review academic manuscripts.

Why are you passionate about public health?

I am passionate about public health because of its population-level approach to health care and outcomes. I enjoy taking a step back ("zooming out") to analyze health trends within a large system of interrelated parts, such as health care facilities, insurance companies, government bodies and academic institutions.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time, I like to run, practice yoga, vlog, read novels, watch Netflix and spend time with loved ones. I'm currently reading "A Gentleman in Moscow" by Amor Towles and rewatching the TV series "Reign."

Using health literacy to promote oral health

The pandemic has touched every aspect of peoples' lives – including the health of their teeth.

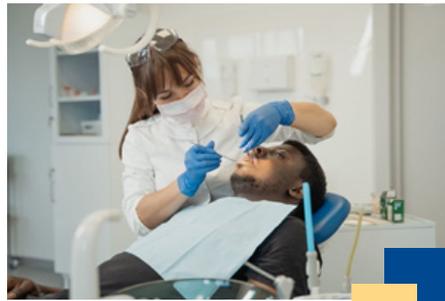
In early 2020, dental offices across the country shut down. But when most reopened a few months later, the number of dentist office visits was still 20% lower than before the pandemic.

According to a survey from the American Association of Endodontists, more than half of Americans say the COVID-19 pandemic is the reason why they have been putting off trips to the dentist offices.

This has a big impact. Tooth decay gets worse if it's not treated. There is also a health equity connection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, groups who are more likely to be impacted by COVID-19 are also at higher risk for oral diseases.



The Minnesota Department of Health's oral health campaign provides helpful resources like posters and post cards.



Resources

How can providers promote oral health right now? Education and health literacy is important.

Patients should know that visiting dentist offices is safe and it is needed to stay healthy. Here is more information you could use to help spread this message:

- [COVID-19 and Dental Care](#) – This Minnesota Department of Health page explains why seeing a dentist is so important. It also lists quick tips to practice good hygiene at home.
- [Healthy Teeth. Healthy Baby.](#) – The Minnesota Department of Health's campaign includes posters in different languages, key messages and talking points, post cards and more.
- [Oral Health Tips for Families](#) – This PDF from Head Start has helpful facts and tips you can reference.

Upcoming events

[Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership virtual meetings](#)

(10:30 a.m.-noon, first Wednesday of the month)

- June 2
- August 4
- September 1

The [Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership website](#) will be updated in case a meeting is canceled or rescheduled.

[Virtual Global Health Literacy Summit](#)

- October 3-5

[Virtual Health Literacy in Action Conference](#)

- October 14-15

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