

---

## APPENDIX I:



Powerpoint Slides/Overheads

*“On the National Agenda: Health and Literacy”*

and Handout

---





# On the National Agenda: Health and Literacy

---

Presented by:

XXXX

Based on a Slide Overview by:

Dr. Rima Rudd

Harvard School of Public Health



## Education and Health

---

All health surveys collect information on how many years of schooling people have.

We have strong evidence that education and health are linked.

2



## Education and Health

---

People with less schooling are more likely to die of a chronic disease, a communicable disease, or an injury than are people with more schooling. Pamuk et al., Health United States, 1998: Socioeconomic Status and Health Chartbook.

Literacy skills are at the foundation of education.

3



## What is the Role of Literacy in Public Health?

---

Literacy Skills -- such as reading, writing, numeracy, oral presentation, oral comprehension -- are essential for health action.

Public Health researchers rely on surveys and Public Health practitioners rely on messages and written materials.

4



## What Happens when Literacy Skills are Limited?

---

When Words Get in the Way... Adults May

- Get lost
- Miss out on needed information
- Remain unaware of options or opportunities
- Retreat into silence
- Assume a passive role
- Miss out on needed services
- Endanger health
- Lose entitlements
- Lose rights

5



## How is Functional Literacy Defined?

---

The ability to read, write, speak, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential. National Literacy Act 1991

This definition was accepted by over 20 industrialized nations. Consequently, adult literacy skills can be compared across nations.

6



## What does Functional Literacy Involve?

---

- Functional Literacy emphasizes the use of materials to accomplish tasks
- Components of Functional Literacy
  - Reading [prose and documents]
  - Writing [includes filling out forms]
  - Oral presentation / oral comprehension
  - Basic mathematics

7



## What are the Literacy Skills of US Adults?

---

- National Adult Literacy Survey [NALS]
- Measures
  - Prose Literacy: the written word in sentence and paragraph format
  - Document Literacy: the written word in forms, lists, charts, graphs
  - Quantitative Literacy: basic math functions

8



## Literacy Skills of US Adults: National Survey Findings

---

- The vast majority of US adults read.
- US adults with an average score have difficulty finding and integrating [e.g. compare and contrast] two pieces of information in a news story. They would also have difficulties using charts or labels such as that found on an over the counter medicine package to figure out the correct dosage.

9



## Literacy Skills of US Adults

---

### The Average Score [Score Range 0-500]

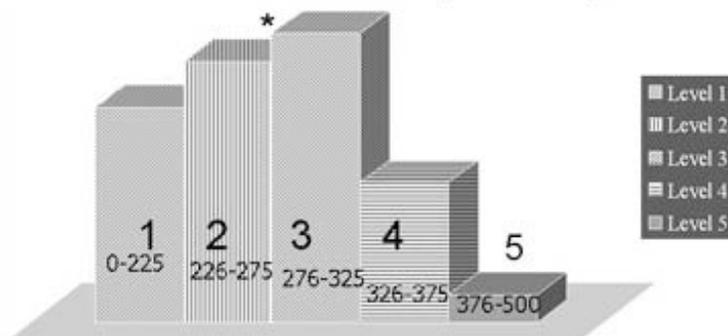
- Mean Prose Score: 273
- Mean Document Score: 267
- Mean Quantitative Score: 274

Educators and economists agree that NALS Level 3 skills [scores above 275] are needed for full participation in the current economy.

10

## Literacy Skills of US Adults NALS Profile

47% - 51% of U.S. Adults have  
Level 1 or Level 2 skill proficiency



11

## % of Adults with very limited Literacy in Our State

- XX % of the Adult Population in XX State Score in NALS Level 1 Counties with over 20% Adults at Level 1
- Counties with 20% or more adults scoring in NALS Level 1:

Based on data from:  
The State of Literacy in America: Estimates at the Local, State, and National Levels, National Institute for Literacy, 1998. [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

12



## What is Health Literacy?

*Healthy People 2010* and the *Institute of Medicine Committee on Health Literacy* used the following definition of Health Literacy:

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Both agree that Health Literacy is the interaction between people's skills and health system demands.

13



## Health Activities and Literacy – some examples

Health Activity	Focus	Examples of Materials	Literacy Tasks
<b>Health Promotion</b>	Enhance & maintain health	Articles in newspapers and magazines, booklets, brochures, charts, graphs, food and product labels, recipes	Use food labels Use calendar to plan exercise
<b>Health Protection</b>	Safeguard health of individuals & community	Articles in newspapers and magazines, postings for health and safety warnings, air and water quality reports, product labels, referendums	Compare product labels Vote on an environmental issue

14

## Health Activities and Literacy – some examples

Health Activity	Focus	Examples of Materials	Literacy Tasks
Disease Prevention	Preventive action & screening	Postings for inoculations & screening, charts Letters re: test results Articles in newspapers and magazines	Use a chart to determine risk Read screening letter for follow-up
Health Care & Disease Management	Partner with health providers	Health history forms, medicine labels, discharge instructions, education booklets & brochures,	Describe symptoms Time medicine

15

## Health Activities and Literacy – some examples

Health Activity	Focus	Examples of Materials	Literacy Tasks
Systems Navigation	Access needed services Understand rights	Maps, application forms, statements of rights and responsibilities, informed consent forms, benefit packages	Read signs and maps Apply for benefits Offer informed consent

16

## What do Health Literacy Studies Tell Us?



There is a mismatch between the reading level of health materials and average reading skills among adults. Most adults cannot use these materials:

- Informed consent
- Patient package inserts
- Patient education materials

People with limited reading skills:

- Are less likely to use screening and prevention services Use of services
- Have less knowledge of their illness and their medicine
- Are less likely to keep their chronic disease in check [diabetes].
- Are more likely to be hospitalized

17

## What Can We Do?



- Correct faulty assumptions about functional literacy in the US
- Make materials easier to use
- Improve health communication
- Advocate for changes in regulatory language
- Improve professional training
- Work in partnerships

18

## Adult Education



Jon Crispin, photographer

19

## Benefits of Partnering with Adult Education Professionals

Public Health and Adult Education sectors reach out to similar population groups:

- Those with less than high school/GED education
- Those who are poor
- Immigrants
- Adult educators are experts in educational techniques
- Adult education programs are in every state
- Adult education programs focus on building skills

20

## Public Libraries



Jon Crispin, photographer

21

## Benefits of Partnering with Library Professionals

Public Health and Library Services reach out to all.

- Librarians are experts in how information is organized, how searches can be designed, and where information is stored.
- Libraries are found in all communities.
- Resource librarians focus on helping people access information.

22



## *Healthy People 2010*

---

- Objective 11.2 of HP 2010:  
to improve the health literacy of  
persons with inadequate or marginal  
literacy skills.
- What actions can we take together?

23

**HANDOUT**

**TABLE 1: HEALTH ACTIVITIES ACROSS MULTIPLE CONTEXTS**  
**Promotion – Protection – Disease Prevention – Health Care - Navigation**

<b>Health Activities</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Examples of Materials</b>	<b>Examples of Tasks</b>
<b>Health Promotion</b>	Enhance & maintain health	Label on a can of food or recipes  Articles in newspapers and magazines  Charts and graphs such as the Body Mass Index  Health education booklets (such as well baby care)	Purchase food  Prepare a dish from a recipe  Plan exercise  Maintain healthy habits (re: nutrition, sleep, exercise)  Take care of everyday health – self and family members
<b>Health Protection</b>	Safeguard health of individuals & communities	A newspaper chart about air quality  A water report in the mail  A health and safety posting at work  A label on a cleaning product	Decide among product options  Use products safely  Vote on community issues  Avoid harmful exposures
<b>Disease Prevention</b>	Take preventive measures and engage in early detection	Postings for inoculations & screening  Letters re: test results  Articles in newspapers and magazines  Graphs, charts	Take preventive action  Determine risk  Engage in screening or diagnostic tests  Follow-up

Health Activities	Focus	Examples of Materials	Examples of Tasks
<b>Health Care &amp; Maintenance</b>	Seek care and form a partnership with a doctor or dentist or nurse	Health education Health history forms Labels on medicine Develop plan for taking medicine as described Health education booklets Directions for using a tool such as a peak flow meter Schedule and keep appointment	Seek professional care when needed Describe symptoms Follow directions Measure symptoms Maintain health with chronic disease (follow regimen, monitor symptoms, adjust regimen as needed, seek care as appropriate)
<b>System Navigation</b>	Access needed services, Get coverage and benefits	Maps, application forms, statements of rights and responsibilities, informed consent forms, benefit packages	Locate facilities, apply for benefits, offer informed consent

**TABLE 2: HEALTH ACTIVITIES AND NEEDED SKILLS**  
**Promotion – Protection – Disease Prevention – Health Care – Navigation**

Health Activities	Examples of Skills (the full range is <i>not</i> represented here)
<b>Health Promotion</b>	<p>Read and interpret charts and graphs</p> <p>Compare and contrast</p> <p>Use mathematics to solve problems and for tasks such as: measuring, calculating, estimating</p> <p>Use measuring tools</p>
<b>Health Protection</b>	<p>Read and interpret charts and graphs</p> <p>Analyze data and apply understanding of statistics and probability</p> <p>Compare and contrast</p> <p>Read and understand directions</p> <p>Locate and match information</p> <p>Write and express concerns</p>
<b>Disease Prevention</b>	<p>Understand concepts such as risk, normal, abnormal, positive findings</p> <p>Read and understand directions</p> <p>Read and interpret charts and graphs</p> <p>Analyze data and apply understanding of statistics and probability</p>
<b>Health Care &amp; Maintenance</b>	<p>Understand concepts (such as illness, disease, symptoms, chronicity)</p> <p>Evaluate and present ideas and information</p> <p>Engage in problem-solving processes</p> <p>Schedule and journal</p> <p>Use descriptive language (e.g., describe symptoms)</p> <p>Monitor (e.g., symptoms)</p> <p>Use mathematics to solve problems and for tasks such as: measure, calculate amounts, estimate</p>
<b>System Navigation</b>	<p>Understand concepts (such as rights, responsibilities, informed consent)</p> <p>Identify and use critical thinking and problem-solving skills</p> <p>Formulate and express judgments</p> <p>Fill out forms</p> <p>Use mathematics to solve problems and for tasks such as: measure, calculate amounts, estimate</p>

