

APPENDICES



Appendix I: *Partners for Action Examples*



Appendix II: *Needs Assessment Tools*



Appendix I: Partners for Action Examples

Although health literacy is among the top 20 items on the national agenda, it is still a new or unfamiliar topic for many people, even for those within the healthcare field. Awareness raising activities can take many forms, and each can help the staff of your healthcare facility become more knowledgeable about and more invested in health literacy discussions, research, and change.

A health literacy initiative can begin with any number of activities and could include one or more of the following activities:

- Presentations
- Tours
- Workshops
- Community Outreach
- Ongoing Collaboration

Many of these activities can be carried out within a healthcare facility with existing staff and through links to continuing education. At the same time, professional development activities such as presentations and workshops can help build skills but can also provide excellent opportunities for networking with other agencies and for forming partnerships. Staff responsible for health communications or marketing activities within your healthcare facility may want to be involved in planning partnership work.

A number of potential partners could provide presentations or overviews of literacy skills and their relationship to health outcomes. For example, state or city directors of adult education may be able to provide an overview of the literacy skills of U.S. adults based on the findings of the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) and the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL). Adult educators can provide an overview of the literacy skills of adults in the neighborhoods your hospital or health center serves. Adult education classes may provide a venue for pilot testing materials. Librarians can offer an important perspective on access to information, as well as on use of library-based computers, and patients' Internet needs. Social service providers such as case managers or program advocates may provide additional insight into patients' needs and the literacy barriers they encounter as they make decisions about health insurance coverage, complete forms, or make sense of letters, bills, and follow-up information.

Strategy for Action

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) is linking health literacy to patient safety. The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) report, *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*, recommends that healthcare systems:

- Engage patients in the development of health communications.
- Explore creative approaches to communicate health information.
- Establish methods for creating health information content in appropriate and clear language.
- Include cultural and linguistic competency as an essential measure of quality of care.

Some institutions are linking health literacy action to costs. For example, savings not often considered are related to costs incurred when the burdensome structure, format, and language used in forms as well as in mailed letters and test results necessitate staffing to help people understand, manage, and respond appropriately. Action within your healthcare facility could serve both patient and institutional needs and interests. On the following pages, we provide you with case examples of partnerships from the field and include details of the activities carried out through these partnerships including presentations, tours, workshops, community outreach, and ongoing collaborations.

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Presentations

Health literacy topics of interest can vary. However, you will find information within this guide that offers a focus on health literacy of U.S. adults, health literacy research findings, health literacy research opportunities, and best practice options for working with adults who have average or limited literacy skills. Initial health literacy activities can begin at any number of levels including:

- Health Literacy Grand Rounds
- Health Literacy Presentation or Forum
- Professional Continuing Education Programs

Consider engaging potential partners in health literacy work by inviting staff of educational and social service agencies and community volunteers to help plan a health literacy forum. Set aside time during the forum for interdisciplinary networking. You may also be in a position to encourage or support monthly workgroup meetings as an opportunity for cross-sector communication and action.

EXAMPLE

LOCATION: Morgantown, West Virginia

PARTNERS

- Department of Family Medicine, West Virginia University School of Medicine
- Harvard School of Public Health

ACTIVITY

- Health Literacy Grand Rounds came to West Virginia University School of Medicine

We provide more details about this case on the next page.

**HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACULTY DELIVERS GRAND ROUNDS
AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

BACKGROUND

As part of a residency-training grant initiative at West Virginia University School of Medicine, the principal investigator invited a health literacy expert from the Harvard School of Public Health to present a Family Medicine Grand Rounds on health literacy and on links between literacy and health outcomes. Attendance was “required” for some residents and “highly recommended” for others because the presentation met criteria for competencies that are required of all residency programs for accreditation.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Of the 330 residents/fellows who were in training at West Virginia University School of Medicine at the time, 33 (10%) attended the presentation. In addition to residents, approximately 70 faculty, staff, or students from a cross-section of health science disciplines and roles (nurses, allied health, dentistry, community medicine, librarians and others) attended. The Grand Rounds presentation stimulated interest and helped focus attention on the curriculum development process underway to improve communication with patients with low literacy.

Faculty members at West Virginia continue to apply what they learned during the health literacy Grand Rounds. In follow up discussions, a faculty member shared a story about drawing pictograms as he talked with a patient; another created a unique identification system for prescription bottles for a patient. Faculty members now ask their residents and students, “*Are you sure that the patient understands?*” The clinic operations chief plans to conduct an assessment of the clinic registration process to reduce barriers to access, and asked that the registration personnel are prepared to consistently offer assistance to all patients filling out forms.

LESSON LEARNED

- A one-time presentation can make a difference in the sensitivity and awareness of literacy issues in this clinical environment.

Tours

Health centers and hospitals are work places for people from various fields, including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, laboratory sciences, and the service industry. The structures of the buildings are shaped by a scientific and medical logic that is not necessarily intuitive to those not trained in these fields. In addition, the language used by the people working within the facility and the written words used in the various postings and materials are often not the words of everyday speech (Rudd, Renzulli, Pereira, & Daltroy, 2005). A walking tour of a hospital or health center that pairs a staff member with someone new to the facility can offer insights not easily gathered by staff or volunteers within the facility.

EXAMPLE

LOCATION: Harlem, New York

PARTNERS

- Harlem Hospital
- Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center
- New York City Mayor's office
- Literacy Assistance Center of New York City

ACTIVITY

- Harlem Hospital staff came to the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center
- Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center students took tours of Harlem Hospital

We provide more details about this case on the next page.

**MID-MANHATTAN ADULT LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS
TOUR HARLEM HOSPITAL**

BACKGROUND

Several adult education students from the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center reported negative experiences at hospitals and that they kept away from health facilities as a result. Many of the students were confused about the physical layout of hospitals and wanted to understand more. Additionally, some students expressed an interest in pursuing careers in healthcare. Teachers from the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center contacted Harlem Hospital. The medical director of Harlem Hospital was instrumental in engaging with the adult literacy program and formed this partnership.

ACTIONS TAKEN

The medical director of Harlem Hospital arranged for several of the department heads at the hospital to visit the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center. The heads of the pharmacy, emergency room, and managed care came to three different classes and spoke with the students about how to navigate services. Students asked many questions. As a follow up to these classroom discussions, Harlem Hospital hosted a program at the hospital for students from the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center, their friends and family, and members of the community. Staff from many departments, including maternity and emergency, presented an overview of their services. This forum was covered by the media and was noted in print and local television news. The director of the emergency department, who had worked all night, was present the next morning to give students a tour of the department. Students developed a short video. The students were incredibly appreciative and told their fellow students what they saw. This presentation was also videotaped and was widely viewed.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Leadership from the top is important in forming partnerships.
- The partnership enhanced the reputation of Harlem Hospital within the community.

Workshops

A health literacy workshop provides an opportunity to offer information on current issues in health literacy, potential areas for programmatic change, and for research studies. A presentation may be tailored to coincide with current institutional projects or areas of concern. Hands-on workshop ideas may focus on development of plain language materials, use of assessment tools, or the development of research protocols.

You may wish to begin health literacy work through a focus on print materials. Well over 500 studies published in public health and medical journals over the past three decades indicate that the level of difficulty of health materials (measured in terms of reading level) generally exceeds the reading ability of the people for whom they were designed (Rudd, Moeykens, & Colton, 1999; Rudd, Colton, & Schact, 2000; Rudd, Anderson, Nath, & Oppenheimer, in press). A fully developed workshop plan is included in this guide as an example of a type of workshop that could be offered to staff responsible for creating or assessing forms, follow up letters, or educational materials.

EXAMPLE

LOCATION: Boston, Massachusetts

PARTNERS

- Massachusetts General Hospital's (MGH) Library System
- University of New England's Health Literacy Center

ACTIVITY

- Plain language workshop came to MGH

We provide more details about this case on the next page.

**PLAIN LANGUAGE COMES TO
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

BACKGROUND

The director of one of Massachusetts General Hospital's (MGH) patient libraries was interested in how the library system at MGH could begin to address health literacy issues. She was concerned that the resources in MGH's patient libraries and the health education materials that the MGH produced were not meeting the needs of their patients. She brought her concerns to the multidisciplinary patient education committee at MGH. The committee decided they first needed to better understand what health literacy was before they could address the issue. A health literacy expert was asked to speak. As a follow up, a plain language expert at the University of New England's Health Literacy Center was invited to organize a workshop. The MGH patient education committee members enrolled in the workshop in order to increase their understanding of health literacy and the use of plain language in materials development.

ACTIONS TAKEN

After attending the health literacy workshop, some members of the patient education committee developed a subcommittee that meets monthly to discuss issues of plain language. Committee members frequently bring materials they are developing to the meetings so they can receive feedback and suggestions. The plain language subcommittee has also developed tip sheets for all hospital employees focused on how to use plain language and improve their communication. Additionally, the plain language subcommittee invites guest lecturers throughout the year to speak to the staff about the importance of health literacy and plain language communication.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Health literacy awareness building is important, and so is maintaining momentum.

Ongoing Collaborations

Ongoing collaborations between hospitals, health centers, and libraries can enhance community access to resources, bring libraries into medical settings, and bring valuable information from medical settings into the community. Resource librarians have moved from a focus on helping clients use resource books to helping clients access information on Web sites. In addition, it is important to incorporate the voice of the community. Consequently, written materials, including announcements and letters of invitation, as well as oral presentations, should be carefully crafted to reflect everyday words and phrases. You may want to consider the role your healthcare facility plays in the community and how health literacy considerations may support this role.

EXAMPLE #1 (OF 2)

LOCATION: Des Moines, Iowa

PARTNERS

- New Readers of Iowa
- Iowa Health System (IHS)

ACTIVITIES

- Collaborative
 - Development of 10 organizational teams at IHS each with a New Readers of Iowa member.
 - Several materials review, revision, and development projects.

We provide more details about this case and another case on the following pages.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW READERS OF IOWA /
IOWA HEALTH SYSTEM (IHS) COLLABORATIVE**

"I think the bottom line is that neither of us can be successful alone. We need each other's minds and experiences." - Archie Willard, New Readers of Iowa

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the New Readers of Iowa, an advocacy group that focuses on raising awareness around adult education and literacy, decided to center its 13th annual conference on health literacy. New Readers of Iowa wanted the medical sector's perspective on health and literacy, and contacted the Iowa Health System (IHS). Thus, the New Readers of Iowa/IHS Collaborative began. Since its inception, the New Readers of Iowa/IHS Collaborative has addressed many issues related to health and literacy including patient safety, disease prevention and screening, and access to healthcare coverage. The group meets twice a year – once for a planning meeting and again at the annual conference. The dialogue continues throughout the year with e-mail and phone discussions.

ACTIONS TAKEN

IHS has facilitated the formation of ten organizational teams based in hospitals, outpatient clinics, and one call center. They are dedicated to testing and improving health literacy strategies. At least one New Readers of Iowa member is a part of each organizational team, providing first-hand insights into adult learning and health literacy and ensuring a balance between the medical sector's input and that of an adult who has limited literacy skills. The New Readers of Iowa/IHS Collaborative has also initiated several materials review, revision, and development projects. These projects engage New Readers of Iowa to advise IHS hospitals and clinics on their patient materials. This collaborative work has led to changes in hospital informed consent forms and patient education sheets. In addition, the collaborative has provided awareness-raising among healthcare staff and led to formal trainings.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Communication between partners is critical.
- Relationships should be sustained.

On the following page we provide you with a second case example related to ongoing collaborations:

EXAMPLE #2 (OF 2)

LOCATION: Queens, New York

PARTNERS

- Queens Health Network (QHN)
- Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL)

ACTIVITIES

- QHN brought health information to QBPL.
- QBPL brought an understanding of the population of Queens to QHN.

**INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE QUEENS HEALTH
NETWORK AND QUEENS BOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY**

BACKGROUND

The Queens Health Network (QHN), comprised of 23 institutions, was having a difficult time delivering health information to their diverse patient population, speaking over 127 languages. In order to better serve their patients, the executive director of the QHN wanted to improve communication, increase available resources, and improve the network's information technology. As a first step, the executive directors of the QHN and the Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL) developed working groups to address the initial concerns of both the library and hospital staff. The three main areas of interest were identified as prevention, disease management, and overall community improvement.

ACTIONS TAKEN

The partnership between QHN and QBPL brought health information to the library system and brought a deep understanding of the population of Queens to the QHN. Some examples of this partnership include:

- The QHN hosts health screenings, health fairs, and specific health workshops at the library branches.
- The libraries advertise the health clinics and hospitals, distribute information on screening and early detection of disease, and help with immediate dissemination of important health information.
- The adult educators at the library work with the QHN doctors to help them identify and use plain language materials. Doctors are invited to visit, observe, and/or present in adult education classes.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Leadership from the top of both partners is critical.
- Common interests and goals form the foundation for work.

References for Partners for Action Examples

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