



Get to Know the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy seeks to engage organizations, professionals, policymakers, communities, individuals, and families in a linked, multisector effort to improve health literacy. The plan is based on the principles that (1) everyone has the right to health information that helps them make informed decisions and (2) health services should be delivered in ways that are understandable and beneficial to health, longevity, and quality of life. The vision informing this plan is of a society that:

- Provides everyone with access to accurate and actionable health information,
- Delivers person-centered health information and services, and
- Supports lifelong learning and skills to promote good health.

The National Action Plan includes seven goals that will improve health literacy and suggests strategies for achieving them:

1. Develop and disseminate health and safety information that is accurate, accessible, and actionable.
2. Promote changes in the health care system that improve health information, communication, informed decisionmaking, and access to health services.
3. Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level.
4. Support and expand local efforts to provide adult education, English language instruction, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health information services in the community.
5. Build partnerships, develop guidance, and change policies.
6. Increase basic research and the development, implementation, and evaluation of practices and interventions to improve health literacy.
7. Increase the dissemination and use of evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions.

Many of the strategies highlight actions that particular organizations or professions can take to further these goals. It will take everyone working together to improve access to accurate and actionable health information and usable health services. ¹

Key Words

Health Literacy, Action Plan, Informed decisions, Access to care

Start today:

Talk to a colleague in your organization about how attention to health literacy could improve your services and outcomes.



Tips for Health Educators

What we can do!

The field of health education provides a practical context for health literacy improvement. As health educators, we work within and alongside health care and public health services and organizations, often serving as gatekeepers, counselors, advocates, and liaisons between community members and health care providers and policymakers.

Specifically, health educators can address and improve health literacy by:

1. Helping to identify what consumers need and want to know about their health or health condition,
2. Creating health education materials and programs that are clear, understandable, and accessible to a broad audience,
3. Increasing knowledge of health topics through community and one-on-one education,
4. Educating health professionals, providers, and others about health literacy and ways to address the problem, and
5. Advocating for organizational and institutional change to improve health literacy.

SOPHE recently adopted two resolutions related to health literacy. Get involved - join us in our efforts to improve Health Literacy!

Strategy in Action

Many states are developing their own health literacy plans and initiatives in line with the National Action Plan. Learn more about state and local collaborations and academic, government and non-profit organizations with a health literacy focus on the *CDC Health Literacy* Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/StateData/index.html>



Other National Policy Initiatives Supporting Health Literacy

- The **National Prevention Strategy (HHS)** is a comprehensive plan to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life. Improving health literacy contributes to the 4 strategic directions of the Strategy: healthy and safe community environments; clinical and community preventive services; empowered people; and the elimination of disparities.
- Several provisions of **the Affordable Care Act (ACA)** directly acknowledge the need for greater attention to health literacy, and many others imply it. (Health literacy is directly mentioned as it relates to quality improvement, shared decision-making, presentation of drug risks and benefits, and medical training.) As the ACA extends health insurance coverage to some 32 million adults and promotes greater attention to the barriers faced by individual patients, those implementing the law will need to consider how to incorporate health literacy into strategies for enrolling beneficiaries and delivering care.
- **The Plain Writing Act of 2010** requires the federal government to write all new publications, forms, and publicly distributed documents in a “clear, concise, well-organized” manner that follows the best practices of plain language writing.

Resources

- Steps to Developing an Organizational Plan
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/PlanAct/Steps/Introduction.html>
- Making Health Literacy Real: The Beginnings of my Organization’s Plan for Action
http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/PlanAct/PDF/Planning_Template.pdf
- Sample Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
<http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/sampleplan.htm>
- The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
<http://www.health.gov/communication/hlactionplan/>

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