



The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

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Why a National Action Plan?

- Identify and define key issues
- Establish priorities and key actions
- Connect diffuse sectors and organizations around common goals
- Create blueprint for regional and local efforts
- Provide a focal point for the field

Modeling a Process

- Plan development led by government staff with multi-sector engagement
 - Such as healthcare, public health, education, social services, communication and media
- Participatory and inclusive approach
 - Approximately 700 public and private sector people involved
- Outcome is a public document available for all to use

Federal Foundations for a National Action Plan

- Healthy People Objectives (first released in 2000)
 - 2010 and 2020 health literacy and related objectives
 - 2003 action plan pre-National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)
- NIH/AHRQ Program Announcement to fund research
- 2003 NAAL data
- 2004 Institute of Medicine report
- 2006 Surgeon General's Workshop on Improving Health Literacy
- 2007-08 Town Halls in 4 cities
- 2009 organizational consultations and draft reviews

Federal Definition for Health Literacy

- Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to *obtain, process, and understand* basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health *decisions*.
 - Healthy People 2010

National Action Plan

- Goals and high level strategies
- Multiple sectors and professions included
- Status: cleared for publication by HHS
March 2010
 - Forward by HHS Assistant Secretary for Health Dr. Howard Koh

Vision

- A society that
 - Provides everyone access to accurate, actionable health information
 - Delivers person-centered health information and services
 - Supports life-long learning and skills to promote good health
- Call for a response from all sectors involved in health information and services

Seven Goal Areas

- Health information
- Clinical practice
- Early childhood-university education
- Community-based services
- Partnership and collaboration
- Research and evaluation
- Dissemination of evidence-based practice

Goal 1

- Develop and disseminate health and safety information that is accurate, accessible and actionable
 - Applies to any organization or individual who is involved in developing or disseminating health information
 - Includes, for example, healthcare providers, public health officials, healthcare facilities, payers, the media

Examples of Goal 1 Strategies

- Involve members of the target population, including persons with limited health literacy, in planning, developing, implementing, disseminating and evaluating health and safety information
- Ensure that all consumer health communication—including applications, benefits materials, rights and responsibilities, letters, and health and wellness information—incorporate health literacy principles
- Participate in ongoing training in health literacy that focuses on improving clear communication and information design practices

Goal 2

- Promote changes in the healthcare delivery system that improve health information, communication, informed decision-making and access to health services
 - Applies to any organization or individual who manages, delivers or oversees healthcare services
 - Includes, for example, doctors, nurses, dentists, administrators, regulators, educators who provide professional training

Examples of Goal 2 Strategies

– Providers

- Use existing programs, such as AHRQ's *Questions Are the Answers*, to prepare patients and providers for visits and structure their communication

– Healthcare Administrators

- Increase awareness of and compliance with Title VI, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other laws designed to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency can access medical care

– Licensing and credentialing

- Include assessment of health literacy and CLAS (cultural and linguistic competence) skills in licensure requirements for all health professions

Goal 3

- Incorporate accurate, standards-based and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level
 - Applies to anyone administering or providing educational services to children, adolescents and young adults
 - Includes school administrators, managers, teachers and policymakers

Examples of Goal 3 Strategies

- Promote the availability of formal early childhood education for all eligible children
- Require coursework in health education for all students who are in postsecondary schools and preparing for a career in early childhood education
- Promote health literacy by including the National Health Education Standards in school curriculum reform initiatives
- Incorporate health education into existing science, math, literacy, social studies, and computer instruction in grades K–12 by embedding health-related tasks, skills, and examples into lesson plans

Goal 4

- Support and expand local efforts to provide adult education, English language instruction, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health information services in the community
 - Applies to any organization or individual delivering services in the community
 - Includes, for example, adult educators, community service providers, healthcare teams, health information and library professionals

Examples of Goal 4 Strategies

- Adult educators and community service providers
 - Support community-based programs that empower people to be more involved and active in health and that teach skills, such as computer use, to assist people in acquiring credible health information.
- Healthcare team
 - Invite adult education classes to visit your health center and adult education students to speak at meetings and symposia
- Health information and library professionals
 - Become familiar with information and literacy resources in your community and refer consumers to them

Goal 5

- Build partnerships, develop guidance and change policies
 - Applies to any organization funding, guiding or overseeing health literacy-related activities, programs and investments
 - Includes philanthropic, nonprofit, voluntary, advocacy, academic, professional organizations and government agencies

Examples of Goal 5 Strategies

- Government Agencies
 - Review, analyze and propose changes to existing laws, policies and regulations that make health information difficult to use
 - Facilitate public discussion about health information and services needed in communities to support better health outcomes
- Private sector and non-profit organizations
 - Include health literacy in strategic plans, request for proposals, grant awards, programs and educational initiatives
 - Educate policymakers and other decision-makers about the importance of health literacy and its contributions to improvements in health outcomes and decreased costs

Goal 6

- Increase basic research and the development, implementation and evaluation of practices and interventions to improve health literacy
 - Applies to any organization or individual involved in research, evaluation and intervention development
 - Includes, for example, researchers, funders, evaluators, and public health professionals

Examples of Goal 6 Strategies

– Researchers

- Develop methods to measure the full range of health professionals' and organizations' health literacy skills
- Develop more comprehensive individual and population measures of health literacy

– Public health professionals

- Include health literacy measures in public health data collection and surveillance
- Increase support for systems- and community-based research in health literacy improvement

Goal 7

- Increase the dissemination and use of evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions
 - Applies to any organization or individual involved in sharing information about more effective health information and services
 - Includes, for example, researchers, academic organizations and journals, health information and library professionals, professional associations advocacy groups, and funders

Examples of Goal 7 Strategies

- Strategies for Professional Associations, Advocacy Groups and Funders
 - Increase funding for dissemination and implementation research of evidence-based health literacy interventions
 - Develop guidance on how to change practice as a result of research findings
- Academic organizations and journals, and health information and library professionals
 - Use a variety of channels and formats to disseminate evidence-based research findings that are appropriate to the target audiences, including health professionals and adult educators
 - Explore new mechanisms to pull together and share data and research findings as they become available

Six Principles for National Action

- Cross disciplinary boundaries
- Be strategic and evidence-based
- Evaluate
- Continuously educate the public
- Include laws, policies and other institutional factors
- Involve communities most affected by limited health literacy

What Can You Do?

- Identify the most relevant goals and strategies for your organization
- Draft possible action steps
- Brief your colleagues and propose action steps
- Plan and implement approved actions
- Evaluate their effectiveness in improving health literacy
- Share your findings widely