



The Path to Health Literacy

Health Literacy: A Definition

"The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions." Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, Article V.

Phase One: Health Insurance Literacy

Individuals have the ability to understand the complex terms, concepts, and financial implications when purchasing health insurance in order to pick the "right" plan.

Phase Two: Health Care Literacy

Once individuals have health insurance coverage they need to know how to effectively use it. For example, they should know:

- ✓ What a primary care provider is and how to select one.
- ✓ What to expect when they visit their doctor and what types of questions they should ask.
- ✓ Why prevention, such as annual check-ups and screening tests, are important.
- ✓ What a provider network is and what in- and out-of-network means.

Phase Three: Full Consumer/Patient Engagement

In this last phase, consumers "own" their own health and are empowered to actively engage in their own communities to improve population health. This means:

- ✓ Individuals, as proactive managers of their health, make wise and informed decisions.
- ✓ A shared decision-making process with providers and patients working together.
- ✓ Individuals understand the value of engagement in their communities and are empowered to educate their family and friends and advocate to improve other factors that advance population health in their communities.



Health Literacy: A Resource Guide

The following provides a sampling of the resources available on health literacy.

The Value of Health Literacy: FAQ summarizes research on the relationship between health literacy and health outcomes - www.health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsliteracy.htm
Key findings include:

- ✓ Individuals with limited health literacy skip preventive care services (pap smears, cancer screenings, flu shots, etc.) and enter the health system sicker, requiring more resources.
- ✓ Those with chronic conditions like high blood pressure, asthma, diabetes, and HIV, know less about their condition, and its management.
- ✓ Limited health literacy skills are associated with higher rates of emergency room use, hospitalization, and use of hospital resources.
- ✓ All of these lead to increased health care costs.

“Learn about Health Literacy:” A guide from the Centers for Disease Control - <http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/learn/>

“National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy:” Designed to engage organizations, professionals, policymakers, communities, individuals, and families in linked, multi-sector strategies - <http://www.health.gov/communication/HLActionPlan/>

“Clear Communication:” A National Institute of Health initiative on health communication - the "study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health" - <http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/index.htm>

Smart Choice: A Workbook created by the University of Maryland Extension to help consumers make smart choices when selecting their insurance plan.
https://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_images/programs/insure/Workbook%208.14.14.pdf

From Coverage to Care: Tools to assist individuals understand the benefits of their new health care coverage, including a "Roadmap to Better Care and a Healthier You."
<http://marketplace.cms.gov/technical-assistance-resources/c2c.html>

Patient Engagement: A Framework for Improving Health & Lowering Costs: Produced by the Regional Primary Care Coalition, this is designed to help individuals and health systems, including providers, increase consumer engagement.

- ✓ **Report** - <http://www.regionalprimarycare.org/regional-issues/patient-engagement/>
- ✓ **Resource Guide** - http://www.regionalprimarycare.org/assets/Patient-Engagement-Resources-Guide-3-22-2013.Final_-1.pdf

For additional resources visit the Coalition's Website or Contact Leni Preston, Coalition Chair - leni@mdchcr.org

www.mdhealthcarereform.org