

“Health Literacy in Action”

Presentation by:
The Literacy Assistance Center



The Problem:

- Individuals with low literacy skills are less likely to obtain preventive health care services
- Are more likely to be hospitalized and rely on emergency room for care
- Are more likely to experience poor health outcomes



Why Partner?

Low health literacy is most likely to be ameliorated through collaborations across disciplines, areas of expertise and experience



Why Partner?

Neither health care professionals nor educators acting alone can improve health literacy and adapt the health care system to meet the needs of the many patients who have difficulty understanding health information.



Step 1: Health Literacy Study Circles

- Developed at the Harvard School of Public Health by Dr. Rima Rudd
- Skills based approach to health literacy
 - Navigation
 - Chronic Disease Management
 - Prevention and Screening
- 200 participating programs are devoting at least 20% of class time to health literacy



Step 2: Local Health Providers

- Literacy program → health provider:
 - survey class and determine where they receive health services. The more local and familiar the facility is the better
- Health provider → literacy program:
 - grand rounds
 - administrators
 - front line health staff trained

AMA Foundation, 2003; Debra Roter, Johns Hopkins; Center for Medicare Education, Vol. 4, No. 8, 2003)



Partnership Activities

- Health fairs and screenings
- Facilities tours
- Health educators visit literacy programs
- Facilitated enrollers visit literacy program
- Plain language materials
- Internship and job training opportunities



Adult Educator Perspective

Partnerships have helped adult educators to:

- “Contextualize” the curriculum by using real life material (e.g., registration forms);
- Bring health related content and skills into the classroom (e.g., speakers on health topics)
- Demystify the health care system through visits to health care facilities; and
- Give teachers a sense of the challenges their students face.



Health Care Provider Perspective:

Partnerships have helped to:

- Demonstrate the gap between what doctors and other health care professionals and administrators think they have communicated and what patients have understood
- Demonstrate that clinical communication can be a barrier, along with educational deficits of patients.
- Enable health care providers to view their own system through the eyes of community residents.
- Give health care providers an opportunity to talk with the population they serve outside the patient/provider context.



Contact Information

Elyse Barbell Rudolph, Executive Director
Literacy Assistance Center

32 Broadway, 10th Floor

New York, NY 10004

212/803-3300

elyser@lacnyc.org

www.lacnyc.org

