

Health Literacy: Policy



Clear health communication
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Agency: _____

Effective Date: _____

Objective:

The Health Department will take actions to provide an environment, information, programs and services that are accessible, understandable, and actionable to people of all health literacy levels.

Background:

The Health Department recognizes that to successfully manage their health, people must be able to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. This “health literacy” includes the ability to use reading, writing, verbal, numerical, and digital skills effectively.

Research shows that limited health literacy is seen in all sociodemographic groups, and is difficult for service providers to identify. In fact, 88% of U.S. adults do not have the health literacy skills needed to manage all the demands of the current health care system. Adults’ health literacy skills may be further reduced when they are under stress.

In order to empower people to make the best decisions for their health and well-being, the Health Department recognizes that it must use “health literacy universal precautions.” Employees should assume that all clients may have difficulty understanding health information and should communicate in ways that anyone can understand.

Actions:

1. All employees will complete approved health literacy training at least every two years.
2. All new employees will complete approved health literacy training within 60 days of hire.
3. Employees will provide clients with information that is clear and understandable.
4. Employees will confirm client comprehension using the “teach back method” in order to minimize miscommunication.
5. Employees will support clients’ efforts to improve their health.
6. The Health Department will work to ensure that all written and digital resources it provides to clients are accessible, understandable, and actionable.
7. The Health Department will conduct an annual health literacy friendly assessment of its facility.

- 8. The Health Department will conduct ongoing monitoring of its employees to ensure a continued health literacy friendly environment for its clients.
- 9. The Health Department will work with community partners to encourage a sustainable health literacy friendly community by establishing, advancing, and maintaining effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all residents.

Outcomes:

Effective health literacy interventions will:

- help clients with low health literacy feel more involved in their health care,
- increase compliance,
- improve health outcomes,
- reduce health care costs,
- benefit clients with stronger health literacy skills, and
- positively influence education and academic performance, which can have long-term benefits throughout a person’s life.

Adopted by:

(Name, Title) _____ (Date)

(Name, Title) _____ (Date)

Sources:

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