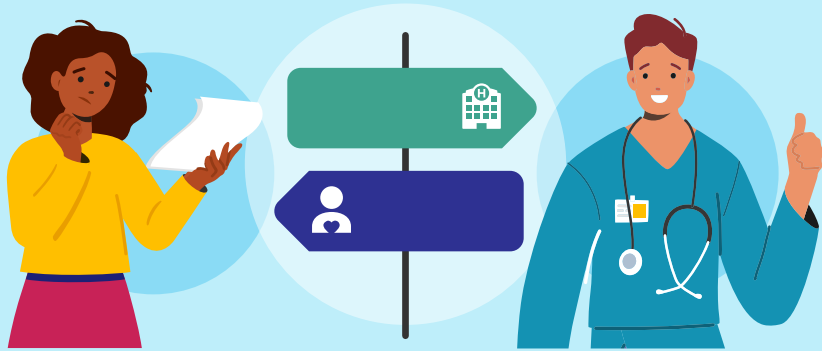


Improving Health Literacy for More Equitable Health Outcomes

What is health literacy?

Personal health literacy

The skills a person needs to understand and use health information to make informed choices about their health.



Organizational health literacy

The ways health care organizations (providers, hospitals, health systems, Medicaid agencies, and health plans) make health information accessible for patients.

Health literacy is a two-way street.

Health care *organizations* can adopt strategies to improve health literacy, making it easier for *people* to make decisions regarding their health and use health services effectively.

Why is health literacy important?



Greater health and wellness for all

Improving health literacy can **reduce medical errors**, **increase use of preventive care**, assist in patients' **chronic condition management**, and improve **morbidity and mortality** rates.



Improved health equity

Limited health literacy can worsen health disparities related to **race, age, income, and education**, among other factors. Addressing health literacy can improve outcomes for marginalized populations.



Reduced costs and better care

Limited health literacy can result in increased emergency department and overall hospital use, costing the U.S. economy **up to \$349 billion annually**. Enhancing health literacy can improve people's care and reduce costs.

What can health care organizations do?



Think broadly

Assume that *anyone* may struggle to understand health information. **Systemwide use of health literacy best practices** can improve outcomes for all.



Create better written communications

Whether print or digital, effective written material uses **plain language, simple design, and clear organization**. Use readability tools and user testing to refine written materials.



Improve verbal communications

Effective patient-provider communication is key to making joint decisions and expressing empathy. **Conversational speech, open-ended questions**, and strategies like the teach-back method can better engage patients.

A Word on Language Access



Better health is possible when everyone understands health information, regardless of English proficiency. Providers can adopt multilingual communication practices and offer access to qualified interpreters and translation services.

