

Starting Up and Advancing Your Company's Health Literacy Program

Part II The Basic Elements of a Health Literacy Program

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Inadequate Health Literacy

What Health Plans Can Do About It

- 1. Clarify the terminology**
- 2. Clarify your basic goals and objectives**
- 3. Identify system-wide opportunities for change**
- 4. Make a comprehensive plan of action**
- 5. Include the basic elements of clear and effective health communication strategies**

1.
Clarify Terminology

Clarify Terminology

Literacy vs. Health Literacy

Save time by avoiding persistent confusion over terms

For example:

**Be clear about the difference between
“Literacy” and “Health Literacy”**

Clarify Terminology

“Literacy” - 1ST Usage

1. Ability

“The quality or state of being literate,
esp. the *ability* to read and write”

Clarify Terminology

“Literacy” - 2nd Usage

1. Ability

“The quality or state of being literate,
esp. the ability to read and write”

2. Knowledge

“A person’s *knowledge* of a particular subject
or field” (e.g., health, health care, finance, computers

Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary

Clarify Terminology

Literacy vs. Health Literacy

1. Literacy Issues (1st Usage)

Issues having to do with people's basic *ability* to simply read and write

2. Health Literacy Issues (2nd Usage)

Issues having to do with person's *knowledge of* health and healthcare issues.

Clarify Terminology

Health Literacy

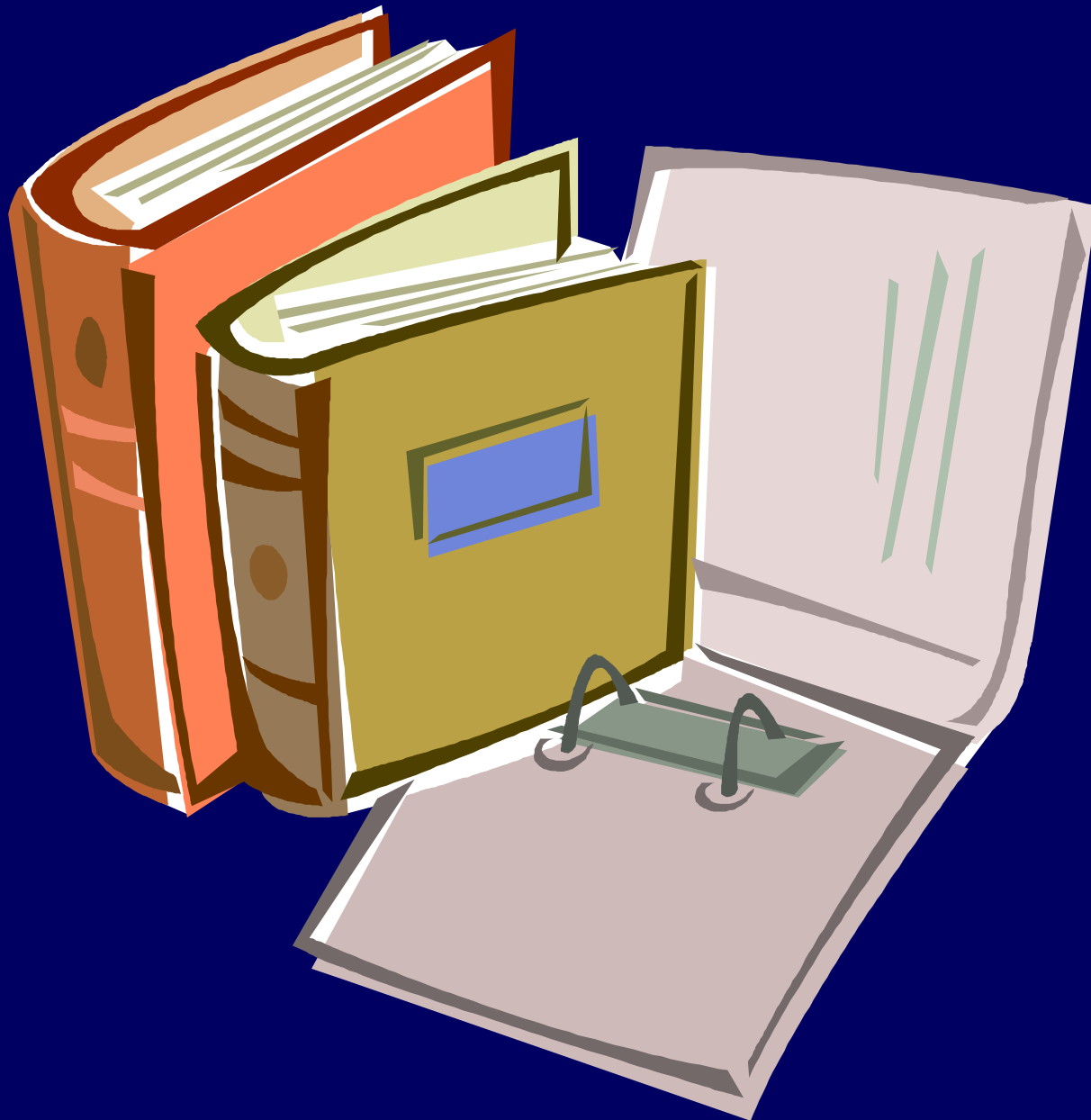
Health literacy is the degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions...

(broader than just the issue of literacy)

Clarify Terminology

“Health Literate”

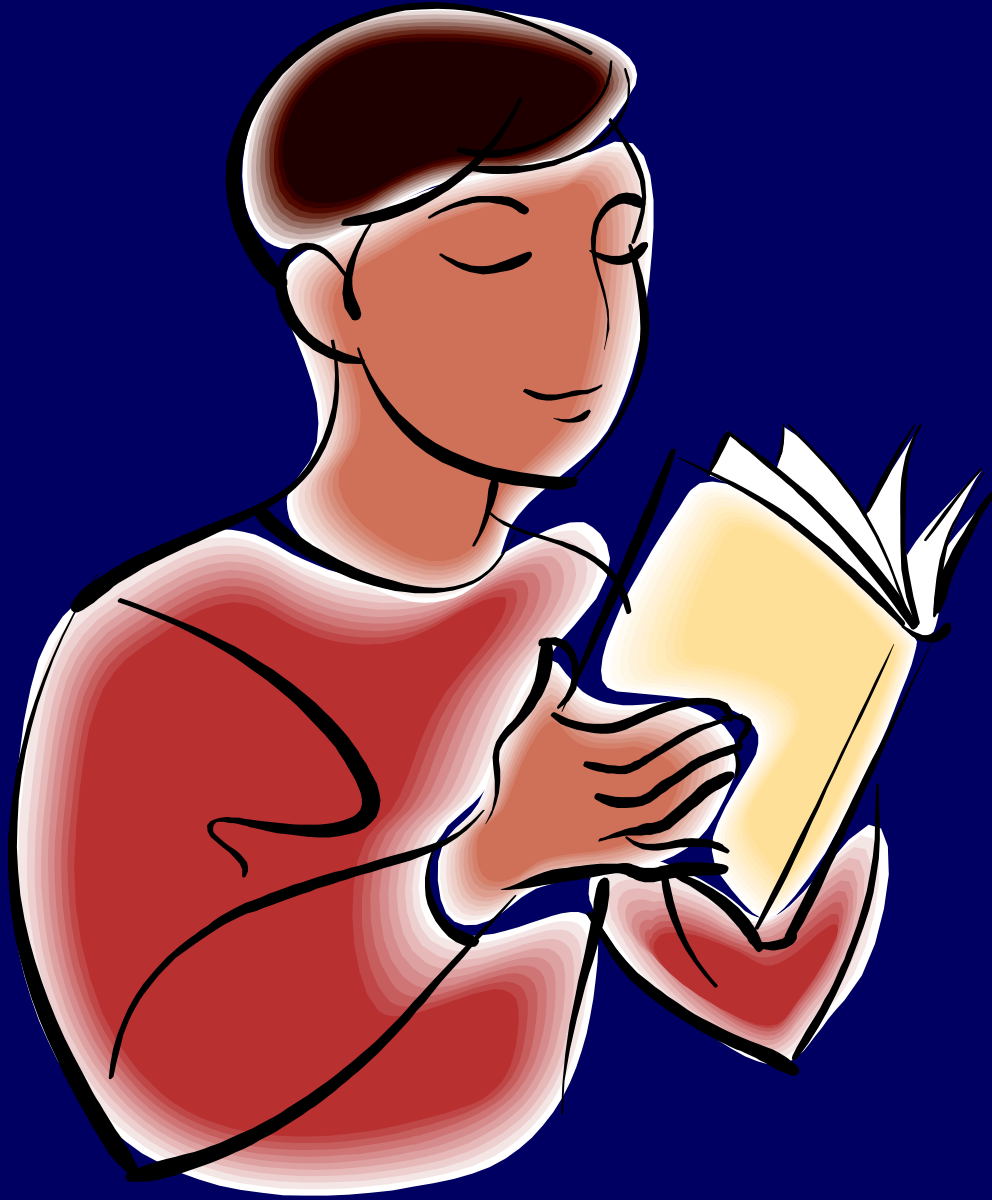
- Be clear about
 - what can be “Health Literate” -
 - what cannot be “Health Literate”



Material is not “*literate*”
Nor is it “*health literate*”

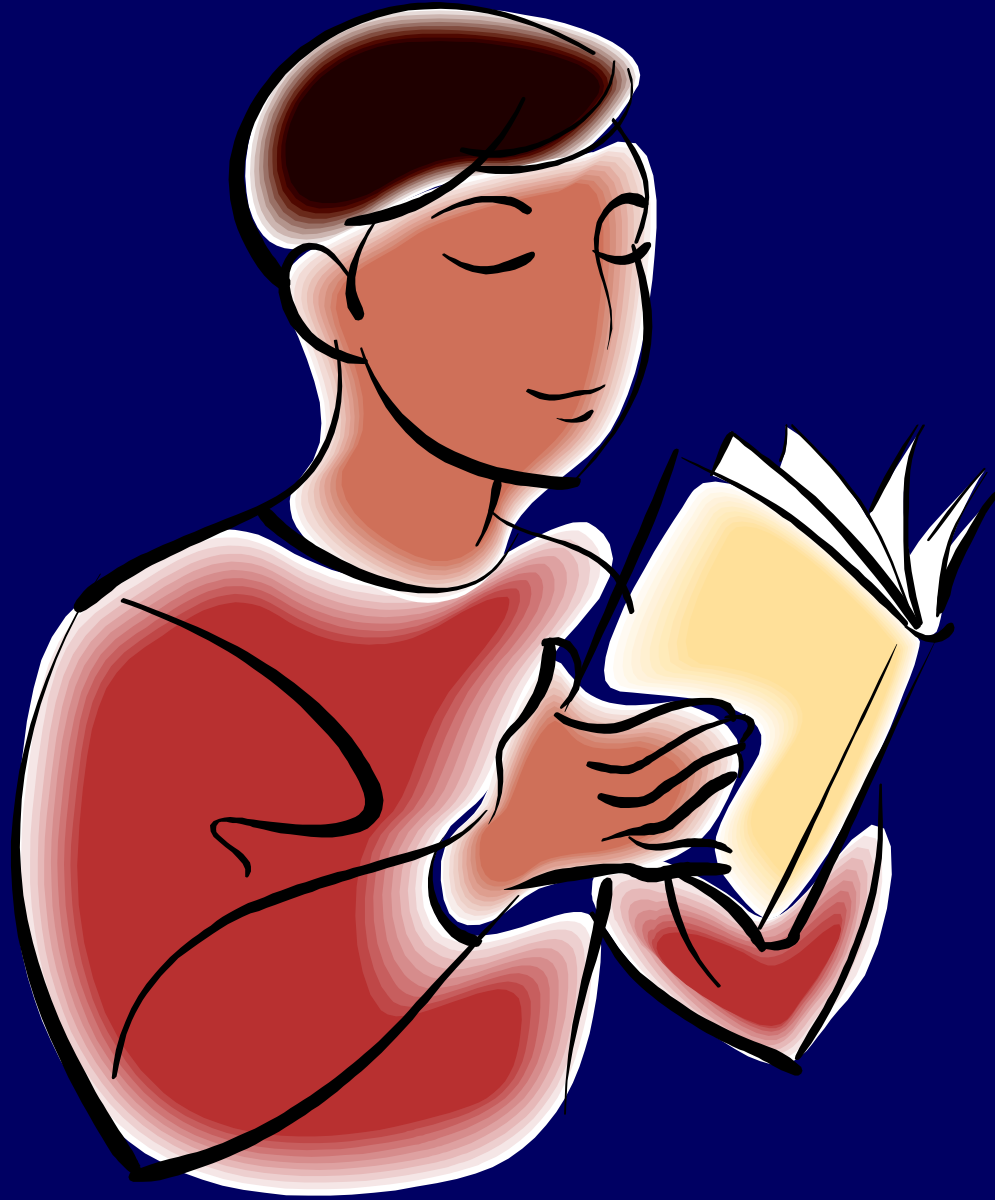
Material can be...

- Easy-to-read
- Reader-friendly
- Patient/Consumer-friendly
- Written in plain language



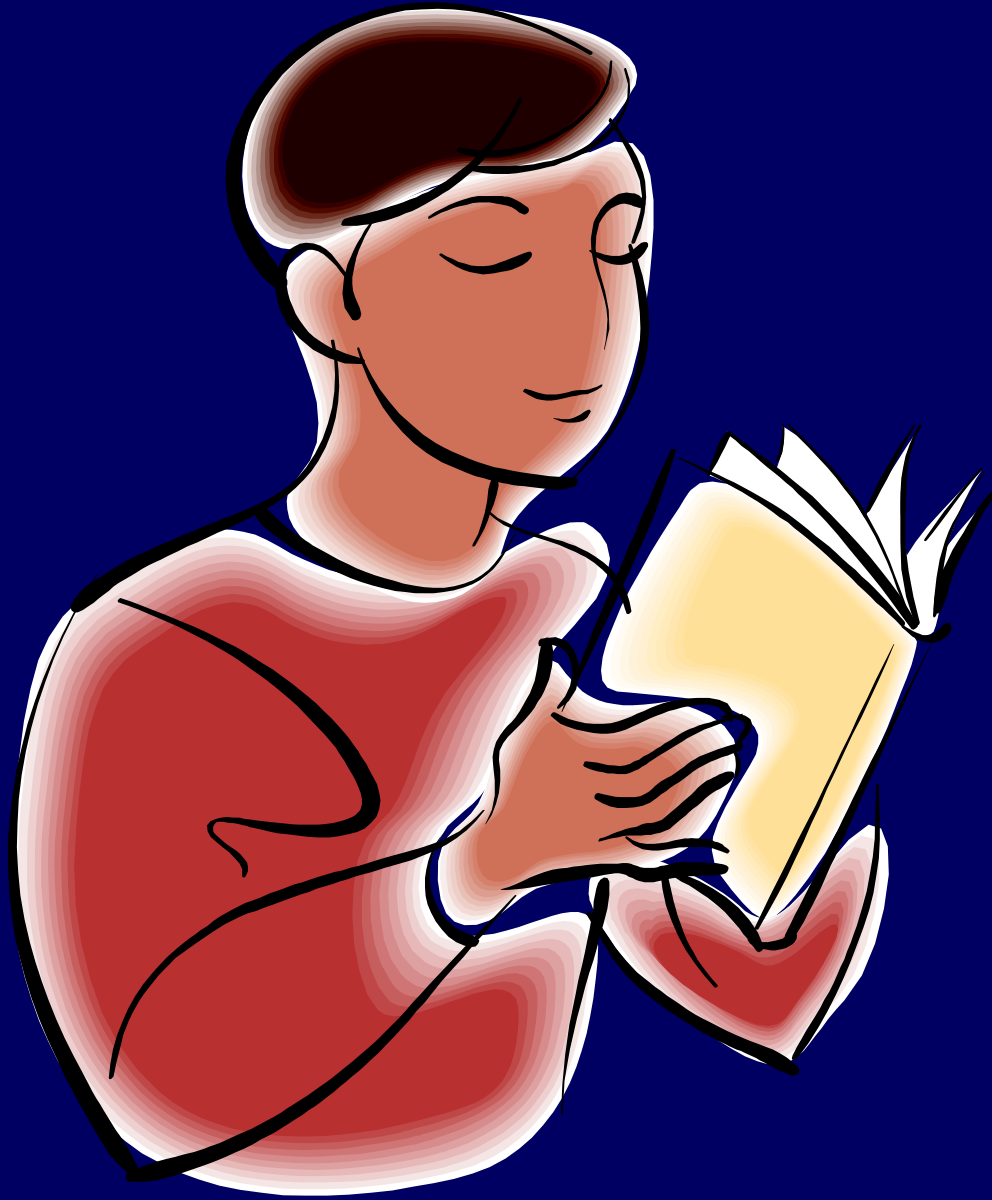
People can be...

- Literate
- Illiterate (offensive)



People can be...

- Strong readers
- Marginal readers



Or, people can have...

- Adequate literacy skills
- Marginal literacy skills
- Inadequate literacy skills

2.
Clarify
Basic Goals and Objectives

Clarify Basic Goals and Objectives

The Problem

Inadequate health literacy among members

The Goal

Improve the health literacy of members, i.e...

Improve the ability of members to obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions

Clarify Basic Goals and Objectives

Clear and Effective Health Communication

The Objective

To effectively translate information across

- **Literacy and health literacy levels**
- **Languages**
- **Cultures/Diverse Perspectives**

In different ways

- **Verbally**
- **In print**
- **On the web**

3.

**Identify System-Wide Opportunities
for Change**

Identify System-Wide Opportunities for Change

Benefits

- Marketing
- Customer Support (Call Center)
- Newsletter
- Website

Health Services

- Marketing
 - Customer Support (Call Center)
 - Newsletter
 - Website
-
- Applications
 - Enrollment
 - Claims Processing
 - Fraud , waste and abuse
 - Medical Services (includes research)
 - Nursing Services
 - Dental Services
 - Pharmacy Services
 - Paraprofessional Services
 - Administrative Services

4.

Make a Plan of Action

Make A Plan of Action **(Not Necessarily in this Order)**

1. Determine organizational readiness

Determine your organization's current reason(s) to respond, readiness to respond, and/or progress with a response. Includes obtaining support from the most influential individuals.

2. Assess needs of membership

Determine the literacy skills and the cultural backgrounds of the populations your organization currently wants to reach. Includes using indirect or direct data.

3. Assess current materials

Assess the reading level, literacy demand and cultural sensitivity of samples of your current materials. Includes using a reading formula and the health literacy materials development checklist.

4. Raise awareness and provide staff training

Increase and ensure awareness and skills of current staff. Includes arranging for initial and more in-depth training.

5. Build resources

Build and maintain a variety of up-to-date health communication resources. Includes planning for translation and interpreter services, where needed. Plan with sustainability in mind.

6. Establish policies and procedures

Establish and maintain up-to-date policies, procedures and guidelines for reader-friendly communications. Includes developing guidelines for contractors and researchers.

7. Implement policies, procedures and guidelines.

Pilot in selected departments before implementing system-wide changes.

8. Evaluate and monitor ongoing effectiveness.

Make necessary adjustments. Note progress and accomplishments.

5.

Include the Basic Elements of a Health Literacy Program

**Strategies for
Clear and Effective Health Communication**

Elements of a Health Literacy Program for Health Plans

- **Awareness, interest, commitment**
- **Skills building**
 - **Assessment of patients and materials**
 - **Consumer friendly verbal communication**
 - **Consumer friendly written communication**
 - **Consumer friendly web-based communication**
 - **Effective cross-cultural communication**

What Else Can We Do?

Promote System Simplification

- **Conduct an audit of your system from entry to exit**
- **Look for points of unnecessary complexity**
- **Take steps to decrease unnecessary complexity**

Opportunities

A chance to offer

- **respect**
- **acceptance**
- **compassion**
- **interest**
- **efficient service**
- **effective care**
- **clarity**

A chance to make something

- **clear**
- **simple**
- **brief**
- **appealing**
- **interesting**
- **believable**
- **persuasive**