

Health Literacy Webinar

January 7, 2022

Slide Notes and References

Slide 5

Plain Writing Act of 2010 - The law requires that federal agencies use clear communication that the public can understand and use. Required for information:

- Necessary for obtaining any federal government benefit or service
- Describing a federal government benefit or service, or
- Explaining how to comply with a federal requirement

Federal agencies must:

- Designate an official for “plain writing”
- Develop internal procedures
- Train agency staff
- Publish a compliance report

See resource: Federal Plain Writing Guidelines

Slide 6

Over 3 in 10 adults have below basic or basic health literacy skills

Over 5 in 10 adults have intermediate health literacy skills

About 1 in 10 adults have proficient health literacy skills

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

Slide 7

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Slide 8

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Slide 9

Health literacy is a state that occurs when a patient has the skills and abilities to match the level of complexity in the health system related task they're trying to tackle. The onus is on the health system and health care providers to exert downward pressure on that right arrow to reduce complexity so it aligns with where the patient is. While patient skills and abilities can be developed over time, the most efficient route to achieving health literacy is lowering that right arrow.

Source: Parker R. *Measuring health literacy: What? So What? Now what?*. PowerPoint presentation at the Institute of Medicine workshop on measures of health literacy; Washington, DC. February 26.2009.

Slide 12

Sources:

CLAS Standards - <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas/standards>

SDOH - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7710382/>

Slide 13

Source: J Gen Intern Med. 2004 Dec; 19(12): 1228–1239.

Slide 14

Sources:

- Paasche-Orlow MK, Wolf MS. The causal pathways linking health literacy to health outcomes. *American Journal of Health Behavior*. 2007;31(Suppl 1):S19–S26.
- Presented by DeWalt. IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2014. *Facilitating patient understanding of discharge instructions: Workshop summary*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Slide 18

Bottom line: Readability calculators help you quickly see where you need to simplify language and shorten sentences. Readability calculators do not address understandability and actionability.

Slide 24

Questions to ask your audience:

1. Is it easy to understand?
 - What is the main point?
 - What parts don't make sense? How would you explain it?
2. Can you do what it is asking?

3. What else would you want to know?
4. Is it offensive to you in any way?

Revise your content to mitigate or address concerns.
Ask a member of your audience to validate revisions.

Usability testing source: <https://www.invisionapp.com/inside-design/ux-usability-research-testing/>

Slide 32

Here's another example of a document given out by a health system. Take a moment to read it, noting how long it takes you to locate the most important information:

1. What is this letter about?
2. How much will it cost?
3. How will results be communicated?

Note any content that could be communicated more clearly.

Slide 33

This revised, health literate "after" version:

- Chunks information into sections using bold headers.
- The main point is expressed in the very first line.
- With the addition of cost information, consumers can make an informed decision.
- Most importantly, they'll know how results will be communicated.