



HEALTH LITERACY RESOURCE GUIDE

HEALTH LITERACY DEFINITIONS

- **Personal Health Literacy:** the degree to which individuals are able to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
- **Organizational Health Literacy:** The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

THE ROLE OF HEALTH LITERACY

- Ensures clients receive reliable, accurate information that allows them to make informed decisions about their health.
- Enables individuals and communities to understand their health risks, interpret health information, and participate in environmental, social, and health decision-making.
- Ensures mutual understanding of clients' health needs.
- Promotes equity.
- Reduces the complexity of the healthcare system by making information more understandable to individuals at all levels.

COMMON BARRIERS TO HEALTH LITERACY

- Client's limited reading, reading comprehension, and math skills
- Provider's use of technical or medical terminology
- Provider's reliance on print communication as single source of information
- Provider's limited awareness of cultural differences

WARNING SIGNS FOR LOW HEALTH LITERACY

- Frequently missed appointments
- Incomplete registration forms
- Non-compliance with medication
- Unable to name medications, explain purpose or dosing
- Identifies pills by looking at them, not by reading the label
- Unable to give coherent and sequential history
- Asks few questions
- Lack of follow-through on tests or referrals

TOOLS TO SUPPORT HOUSING COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROVIDERS

- [Healthy People 2030](#) – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 10-year plan to help individuals, organizations, and communities across the country improve health and wellbeing.
- [Universal Precautions Toolkit](#) – Evidence-based guidance to support agencies in addressing health literacy. The Toolkit offers strategies to help reduce the complexity of healthcare, increase patient understanding of health information, and enhance support for patients of all literacy levels.