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MRC

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

Increase Health Literacy

Health Literacy is an individual's ability to understand basic health information and health services. The individual's understanding of basic health information forms the basis for their own healthcare decisions. Health literacy requires an individual to have developed complex reading skills, critical thinking and analysis skills, decision-making skills, and applying these skills within the context of healthcare.

An Individual's Health Literacy May Be Affected if They Have:

- ★ Providers who use words that they don't understand
- ★ Limited education
- ★ Cultural barriers to the available healthcare
- ★ Limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare
- ★ Limited English proficiency (LEP)
- ★ Limited writing or reading skills or are illiterate

Limited Health Literacy is More Prevalent Among:

- ★ Adults who did not complete high school or are functionally illiterate
- ★ Elderly populations
- ★ Minority populations
- ★ Those in poverty
- ★ Those that are medically underserved

Patients with Limited Health Literacy May Have Difficulty:

- ★ Identifying health providers and services
- ★ Filling out healthcare forms
- ★ Understanding the need, identifying or incorporating adequate preventative healthcare strategies
- ★ Understanding the connection between high risk behaviors and disease
- ★ Managing chronic health conditions
- ★ Understanding written or verbal instructions on how to take their medication

MRC Units Can:

- ★ Identify different languages spoken in the community and the root causes of the limited literacy (limited education, non-English speaker with no access to culturally appropriate materials, or other)
- ★ Develop pictogram health education materials and share them with other MRC Units
- ★ Adopt existing CDC and HHS pictogram health education materials
- ★ Recruit multilingual speaking volunteers from local healthcare providers and other community organizations
- ★ Develop partnerships and participate with existing community organizations sponsoring adult literacy programs, (local GED program, English as a second language, local library programs)

Contact

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