



ReachOut e-Diversity News

An Electronic Publication of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

Welcome Back! New This Month:

1. Plain Language
2. How To Accept And Respect Other Cultures
3. Attributes Of A Health Literate Organization
4. The Three A's:
Accurate- Accessible-Actionable

April 2018 Edition | Volume 12 Issue 2

Read, Pass on to Friends,
Family Members, Colleagues
& Constituents



Don't
Miss an
Issue!

It is the policy of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to use person-first language in items written by staff. Items reprinted or quoted exactly as they originally appear may not reflect this policy.

Welcome! This is your April 2018 edition of Reach Out e-Diversity Newsletter!

This month we are adding to our focus on cultural and linguistic competence by highlighting literacy.

This issue focuses on health literacy.

Everyone benefits from communication that is clear and easy to understand. Literacy, language, and culture are intertwined. Health literacy efforts augment efforts to reduce disparities and improve an organization's linguistic and cultural competence (Andrulis and Brach, 2007; Sudore et al., 2009).



The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, Title V, defines health literacy as the degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions.

WHY is health literacy important?

If you are a **recipient** of health information and services, you need to be health literate so that you can:

- find information and services
- communicate your needs and preferences
- respond to information and services that you receive
- understand the meaning and usefulness of the information and services
- understand your choices, consequences, and context of the information and services
- decide which information and services matches your needs and preferences so that you can take the appropriate action

recipient

provider

If you are a **provider** of health information and services, you need to be health literate so that you can:

- help people find information and services
- understand what people are explicitly and implicitly asking for
- understand how to provide useful information and services
- decide which information and services work best for different people and situations so that people can take the appropriate action



WHO is at risk? Populations most likely to experience low health literacy are older adults, racial and ethnic minorities, people with less than a high school degree or GED certificate, people with low income levels, non-native speakers of English, and people with compromised health status. **Education, language, culture, access to resources, and age are all factors that affect a person's health literacy skills.**

Health literacy can help us prevent health problems and protect our health, as well as better manage those problems and unexpected situations that happen.



Take a look inside... Find out "HOW TO"

- use plain language
- develop a culturally responsive attitude
- be an organization that advances health literacy
- identify the most important factors that increase clarity of messages and materials

You're invited to read, reflect, and act!

SHARE with a family member, friend, peer, colleague

POST on facebook

TWEET on twitter

ACT on at least 1 thing that you read

YOU'RE INVITED!

PLAIN LANGUAGE

Plain language is a strategy for making written and oral information easier to understand. It is *one* important tool for improving health literacy.

[-READ MORE-](#)

PLAIN LANGUAGE
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

HOW TO ACCEPT AND RESPECT OTHER CULTURES

**ONLY ONE RULE:
RESPECT**

The ability to learn from and relate respectfully to people of your own culture as well as others' is known as "cultural responsiveness." Being culturally responsive requires openness to the viewpoints, thoughts, and experiences of others. This is not about changing others to be more like you. Instead, it is about exploring and honoring the differences of others.

[-READ MORE-](#)

ATTRIBUTES OF A HEALTH LITERATE ORGANIZATION

The white paper, "Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations" describes what healthcare organizations can do to lower barriers for people to get and use health information and services. Participants of the Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Health Literacy wrote the paper to inspire healthcare organizations to address health literacy issues.

[-READ MORE-](#)



THE THREE A's: ACCURATE- ACCESSIBLE- ACTIONABLE

Two decades of research indicate that much health information is presented in ways that are not understandable by most Americans. If health professionals want to reach people with information, they must make sure information, products, and services are accessible and understandable to their intended audiences.

[-READ MORE-](#)



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Plain Language

Plain language is a strategy for making written and oral information easier to understand. It is *one* important tool for improving health literacy.

Plain language is communication that users can understand the first time they read or hear it. With reasonable time and effort, a plain language document is one in which people can find what they need, understand what they find, and act appropriately on that understanding.



Key elements of plain language include:

- Organizing information so that the most important points come first
- Breaking complex information into understandable chunks
- Using simple language and defining technical terms
- Using the active voice

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 (H.R. 946/Public Law 111-274) requires the federal government to write documents, such as tax returns, federal college aid applications, and Veterans Administration forms in simple easy-to-understand language...”



Language that is plain to one set of readers may not be plain to others. It is critical to know your audience and have them test your materials before, during, and after they are developed.

Speaking plainly is just as important as writing plainly. Many plain language techniques apply to verbal messages, such as avoiding jargon and explaining technical or medical terms.

Plain Language: Getting Started or Brushing Up



Use this tool to learn about how to use plain language.

A Plain-Language Checklist for Reviewing Your Document

Do I know my audience?

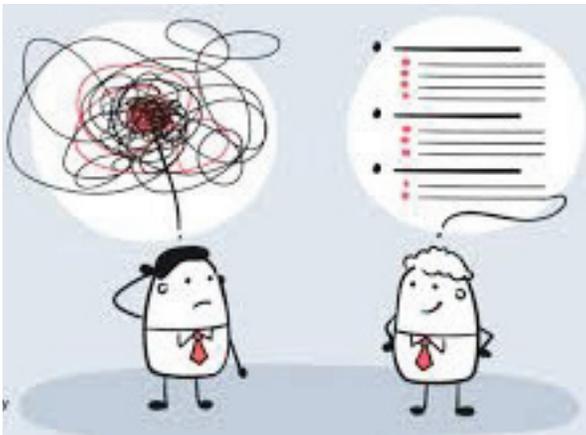


- **Consider your potential readers.**
Who is your audience, exactly? Are there multiple audiences? Remember, there is no “general public.”
- **Evaluate the needs of your readers.**
What do they want to know? How much detail do they need? What is the right tone for this audience? What action do you want readers to take?

- **Engage your audience.**

Use style, word choice, voice, organization, and visuals to draw your readers into your message.

Did I organize my document or product for my reader?



- **Provide a clear take-away message.**
Your document should convey a clear, specific message.
- **Put your main message first.**
In most cases, readers appreciate documents that begin with the main point.
- **Answer their questions.**
Before writing your document, write down the questions your readers have about your topic. Make sure each section or paragraph of your document answers a reader’s question.

Have I used an easy-to-read style?

- **Use first-person and second-person pronouns when appropriate.**
Using the pronouns I, you, and we make your document more conversational and help your reader focus on your message.
- **Use familiar, concrete, non-technical words.**
Unless you are writing for a group of experts, limit the use of jargon and technical terms.
- **Consider whether each adjective and adverb adds meaning.**
Avoid padding your writing with words like very, really, actually, or carefully.



Have I written this as concisely as possible and kept the message?

- **Keep sentences and paragraphs short.**
Try to write paragraphs of no more than 5 to 7 sentences and sentences of 10-20 words.
- **Write sentences focused on one idea.**
Write paragraphs that have a single theme. Sentences and paragraphs that focus on developing an idea are easier for readers.



Have I used the right visuals?

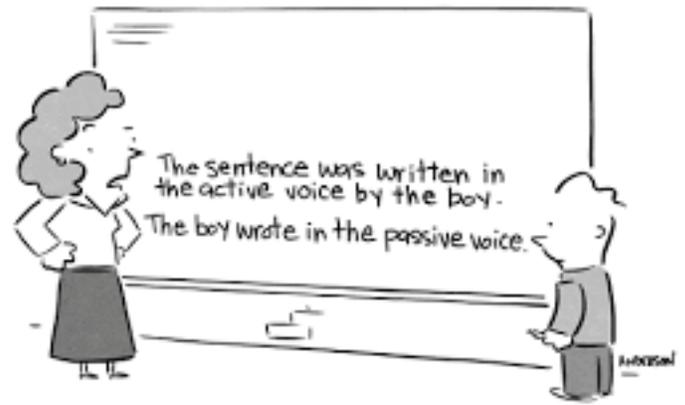


- **Use illustrations or visuals.**
Visuals, such as lists, tables, and infographics, can help the reader understand your message.
- **Use typography and white space appropriately.**
Fonts and other typographical elements should make your document more readable, not fancier. Having enough blank space in the margins and between sections also increases readability.

Have I written in the active voice?

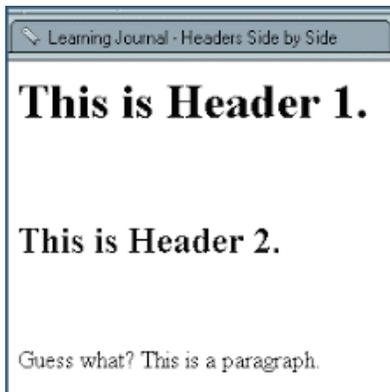
- **Use the active voice whenever possible.**

The active voice makes it clear who or what (the subject) is doing the action (the verb). Passive sentences often do not clearly identify who is performing the action.



"You're just messing with me, aren't you."

Did I make my document "skimmable"?



- **Use headings.**

Headings enable your reader to skim your document. Write headings in the form of questions, sentences, or phrases.

- **Use vertical lists (numbers or bullets)**

Lists, which group similar items, are easy for readers to skim. Choose numbers when presenting a list with items in a specific sequence or rank order. Use bullets when the items listed are equivalent in importance.



Use the check list and create a message that uses plain language. Post your message on an ODDC platform.



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How to Accept and Respect Other Cultures

LQ Williams

The ability to learn from and relate respectfully to people of your own culture as well as others' is known as "cultural responsiveness." Being culturally responsive requires openness to the viewpoints, thoughts, and experiences of others. This is not about changing others to be more like you. Instead, it is about exploring and honoring the differences of others. Developing a cultural- responsive attitude is a life-long journey, it includes:



- 1. Developing cultural self-awareness.** What influenced your own cultural identity? What values and beliefs do you hold and why? Understanding your own cultural makeup is the first step to understanding that others hold different values and beliefs and believe in them as much as you believe in yours.
- 2. Learn to appreciate and value diverse views.** Do not judge views that differ from yours as wrong. Instead, just accept that they are different and even try to understand other points of view.
- 3. Avoid imposing your own values.** Once you are aware of cultural differences, you may find that the cultural norms of some groups make you uncomfortable. Again, it is important to resist the urge to judge. Instead, make a conscious effort to understand the other perspective.
- 4. Resist stereotyping.** Avoid all stereotypes whether "negative" or "positive." Statements such as "blondes are dumb" or "Asians are good at math" will never be true of all individuals within that population. Furthermore, there will always be individuals outside of that population who will also fit that statement. Stereotypes are therefore unreliable and untrue.



LQ Williams

5. **Learn what you can.** Reading about or talking to members of another culture or visiting a friend's cultural celebration is a great way to increase your knowledge and overall acceptance.
6. **Accept your own naïveté.** Cultural responsiveness may require you to forgive your own mistakes and ignorance. Don't dwell on them. Instead, learn from them.

Reprint from owlcation.com

Cultural respect is critical to reducing health disparities and improving access to high-quality health care, health care that is respectful of and responsive to the needs of diverse populations.

Share on an ODDC platform 1 way in which you demonstrated respect for someone's culture who was different from yours



Did You Know?

Breaking culturally-accepted norms makes people uncomfortable.

20 million Americans speak poor English; 10 million speak none [Source: 2000 Census]. More than 300 languages are spoken in the United States.



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Attributes of a Health Literate Organization

The white paper, “**Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations**” describes what healthcare organizations can do to lower barriers for people to get and use health information and services. Participants of the Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Health Literacy wrote the paper to inspire healthcare organizations to address health literacy issues.

The Office of the Associate Director for Communication (OADC) has interpreted the attributes and offers a modified version to apply to organizations doing public health work. Each attribute includes a brief elaboration and strategies organizations can work on.



Attributes about Leadership, Priorities, Training, Access, and Special Situations

Has leadership that makes health literacy integral to its mission, structure, and operations

1. The organization makes advancing health literacy a high priority and part of the organizational values, culture, and day-to-day operations. Committed, continuous, knowledgeable leadership is key to effectively implement and sustain health literacy improvement activities.

Integrates health literacy into strategic and operational planning, quality improvement, goals, and measures

2. The organization makes sure that health literacy is explicitly integrated into all relevant activities, and that health literacy informs both strategic and operational planning, execution, and evaluation. The organization assesses success with vulnerable populations as part of its overall organizational performance measures.



Prepares the workforce to address health literacy issues and monitors progress

3. The organization recognizes and meets staff health literacy training needs. The training contributes to a culture in which everyone values and promotes effective communication. The organization measures the training’s impact on advancing health literacy and other goals.



Provides easy access to health information and services and help finding the way in facilities

4. The organization uses techniques to make it easy for people to find information in facilities, such as health departments, clinics, and social service agencies, and on Web sites and other communication channels. Help finding the way in facilities can mean providing clear signs, directions, forms, and helpful staff who provide information in plain language. Best practices in Web design and social media communication help the organization make its electronic materials, messages, and systems, such as patient portals or online databases, easy for people to find, understand, and use. If the organization provides telephone-based information or services, such as appointment scheduling or toll-free information lines, it can make sure staff use plain language when talking with the public.

Addresses health literacy in high-risk situations, such as emergency preparedness, crisis and emergency response, and clinical emergencies or transitions.

5. The organization puts processes in place to make sure that people receive clear and useful communication when they are at their most vulnerable or under emotional or physical stress. Planning for emergencies, crises and stressful transitions anticipates the audience's health literacy issues and prepares for the types of basic information and services people will need to respond to high-risk situations.



Communicates clearly available health services and costs

6. The organization uses clear communication techniques to explain a person's choices among health services and the costs, if relevant, for each service. If a person must complete forms to receive services, the forms are in plain language with information design techniques that make it easy to understand and complete the forms.

Attributes about Audience and Group Participation and Feedback in Health Communication and Information Activities



Includes members of groups served in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health information and services

1. The organization invites members of the groups it serves to be part of the processes that result in health information and services. It pays special attention to including people with limited literacy and numeracy skills when planning programs and preparing materials.

Meets the needs of audiences with a range of health literacy skills while avoiding stigmatization

2. The organization makes information and communication clear and culturally and linguistically appropriate for all audiences. It uses audience feedback to verify comprehension and information usefulness. The organization selects formats and channels with the greatest reach for the intended audience. Staff don't demean, criticize, or call negative attention to people with limited literacy and numeracy skills.



Uses health literacy strategies in oral communication

3. The organization uses clear communication techniques in spoken communication, such as conversations, interviews, oral presentations, and podcasts and videos. It reinforces spoken information and communication with other formats that help people remember the information and learn how to find more information when they need it. The organization uses various audience feedback methods to verify comprehension and information usefulness.

Designs and distributes print, audiovisual, and social media content that is easy to understand and act on

- 4. The organization asks the intended users of the information and communication to contribute to all steps of the content process. It uses multiple channels for information and communication so that people can use their preferred channels as well as be exposed to the information multiple times to help learning and recall. The materials have a clear message and actions the audience can take to protect and promote their health. The materials use words, numbers and concepts familiar to the intended audience.



Identify 1 attribute that makes your organization health literate.

Did You Know?

For many individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), the inability to communicate in English is the primary barrier to accessing health information and services. Health information for people with LEP needs to be communicated plainly in their primary language, using words and examples that make the information understandable.



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The Three A's: Accurate-Accessible-Actionable

Two decades of research indicate that much health information is presented in ways that are not understandable by most Americans. To ensure your information is understood, make sure you consider the three A's.

1

Accurate

Using health literacy best practices does not mean “dumbing-down” the information or distorting the science. Health literacy practices make sure information is presented accurately AND in ways that people can understand.

2

Accessible

Just because you create health information doesn't mean people see it or can use it. Where and how you present your information affects its accessibility. Key aspects to consider:

- Is the information where people can see it?
- How will people who aren't actively looking for your information be exposed to it?
- Do you have a main message statement?
- Have you made the information easy to skim and scan with large font, sub-heads and bullets, and white space?
- Do the images match the text and have useful captions?
Even in the digital age, where posting information on the Web is easy and low-cost, the Web is not always the best way to reach “the general public.” Multiple channels and formats are best, and it is your responsibility to ensure the information you created reaches the public in a useable format.

3

Actionable

It is human nature to want to tell people all we know about something, but that doesn't necessarily help. In the health field, we typically want people to start or stop doing something, or do more or less of something.

However, we often spend our resources giving people background information instead of our recommendations. Some background information may be important, but make sure you provide actionable information so the people you want to reach CAN do something with the information provided.

Check out this tool kit resource

[Written Materials Toolkit](#)



Using 1 tool from the tool kit, share a written material that you developed

Did You Know?

Health literacy — the ability to understand and communicate health information — is dependent on culture, context, knowledge, key skills, and many other factors. Developing health information at the appropriate literacy level and targeted to the language and cultural norms of specific populations helps promote health literacy.



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