

Effective Health Communication is Everyone's Job

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2012 TB Outreach Worker Training

Objectives

- *Define health communication*
- *Articulate the importance of health communication*
- *Identify how health literacy, cultural competency, and patients' limited English proficiency impact health communication and how to improve them.*
- *Some tools to help you cross communication boundaries.*
- *Critical components of a language services plan*

U.S. Department of
Health and Human
Services -Health
Resources and
Services
Administration

<http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/healthliteracy>



Effective Health Communication—Not Just for Clinicians

Understanding and delivering effective health communication is the charge of all health care professionals from all parts of your organization

- Physicians
- Nurses
- Direct Service
- Social Workers
- Front-office
- Patient Relations
- Billing
- Pharmacists

Each individual involved in a health care encounter is a key player in ensuring that information is not only delivered to the patient, but is understood by the patient.

The Importance of Health Communication

Effective health communication can lead to positive health outcomes

- better use of the health care system
- better medical outcomes
- improved patient-provider relationships.

Poor health communication can lead to negative outcomes

- patient difficulty in following instructions
- malpractice suits
- low patient participation and buy-in



FACT

- Up to 80% of patients forget what their doctor said as soon as they leave the doctor's office
- Nearly 50% of what patients remember is recalled incorrectly

Unified Health Communication: Like a Three-Legged Stool

- Unified health communication is the seat of the stool, and health literacy, cultural competency, and LEP are the legs.
- Just as a stool cannot stand without all three legs, a health care provider cannot communicate effectively without cultural competency and an awareness of health literacy and LEP.



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Page 7

Health Literacy—A Leg of the Stool

Health literacy involves a range of social and individual factors which are influenced by educational systems, health systems, culture, and language.

Symptoms of the PROBLEM

Limited health literacy:

- Impacts nearly one in every three people living in the United States
- Can affect any population segment, regardless of age, race, education, or income
- Can't be diagnosed by any new medical technology and is not visible to the eye

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Page 8

Why Learn About Health Literacy?

- 33%** of the patients were unable to *read basic health care materials*
- 42%** of the patients could not *understand directions* for taking medication on an empty stomach
- 25%** of the patients were unable to *understand information* on an appointment slip
- 43%** of the patients did not *understand the rights and responsibilities* section of a Medicaid application
- 60%** of the patients did not *understand a standard informed consent form*.

Findings from "Inadequate Functional Health Literacy Among Patients at Two Public Hospitals" 2009

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Page 9

Think....

Take a moment to put yourself in the shoes of an individual with limited literacy. The following passage simulates what a reader with low general literacy sees on the printed page.

Try reading the next slide out loud. Here's a hint: The words are written backwards and the first word is "cleaning"

Think...

**GNINAE LC—Ot erussa hgih
ecnamrofrep, yllacidoirep
naelc eht epat sdaeh dna
natspac revenehw uoy eciton
na noitalumucca fo tsud dna
nworb-der edixo selcitrp.**

Identifying Limited Health Literacy

Literacy is difficult to identify.

- 90 million adults in the United States have limited health literacy
- We see patients every day who have trouble reading and understanding health information
- Even people with adequate health literacy skills may have trouble understanding and applying health care information, especially when it is explained in unfamiliar technical terms



Tools and Techniques for Improving Communication

Slow Down!

Such patient-centered visits take no longer than “traditional” visits, in which the agenda is set by the health care provider.

Behaviors such as sitting rather than standing, listening rather than speaking, and speaking slowly, can help to reinforce the impression that you are focused on the patient.



Tools and Techniques for Improving Communication

Use Plain, Noncomplex Language

Most people have trouble understanding words used in health care. In others, a word may be familiar, but the person may not understand it in a health care context.

Words that providers use in their day-to-day conversations with colleagues may be unfamiliar to the majority of persons who are not medically trained.

USE	DON'T USE
TELL, RELEASE	DISCLOSE
CHANGE	AMEND
CONDITION	SYNDROME
PROBLEM	DYSFUNCTION
CANCEL	REVOKE
FIRED, LET GO	SEPERATED

Tools and Techniques for Improving Communication

PLAIN LANGUAGE!!!

Evidence indicates that all patients prefer easy-to-read materials to more complex or comprehensive materials.

- Focus on instructions for key behaviors that the patient must put into action
- Create materials for readability at the 6th- to 8th-grade level
- Larger text (10- to 12-point) and fill it with blank space
- Bullets and clear illustrations

PLAIN LANGUAGE EXAMPLES

Before

This is a multipurpose passenger vehicle which will handle and maneuver differently from an ordinary passenger car, in driving conditions which may occur on streets and highways and off road. As with other vehicles of this type, if you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers, the vehicle may roll over or may go out of control and crash. You should read driving guidelines and instructions in the Owner's Manual, and WEAR YOUR SEAT BELTS AT ALL TIMES.

After

WARNING: HIGHER ROLLOVER RISK

Avoid Abrupt Maneuvers and Excessive Speed.

Always Buckle Up.

See Owner's Manual For Further Information.

PLAIN LANGUAGE EXAMPLES

WELCOME

Available to citizens statewide, Virginia's public mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services system is comprised of 16 state facilities and 40 locally-run community services boards (CSBs). The CSBs and facilities serve children and adults who have or who are at risk of mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, intellectual disabilities, or substance use disorders.

Please click [here](#) if you need immediate help.

DMHS has been working with a broad network of stakeholders to transform our system to enhance community-based care for individuals, make overdue infrastructure improvements to our state facilities and to change the way services are delivered. Our [strategic plan](#) reflects efforts to fully embrace self-determination, empowerment, and recovery for individuals in our service system. We have also been further examining our system and working with state and local stakeholders to determine the services that will be needed in the future.

DMHS recently premiered "Voices of Hope and Recovery," a film about the struggles and victories of five Virginians who have overcome the grip of mental illness to live life on their own terms. Created by award-winning Virginia filmmaker Robert Griffin, along with an original score by acclaimed Virginia singer/songwriter Steve Dassetz, this 60-minute documentary illustrates the power of hope and the possibility of recovery from serious mental illness. **Please click [here](#) to watch the film.**

RESOURCES

- Behavioral Healthcare for Veterans
- Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders
- Cultural & Language Competence
- Early Access for Seniors and Adults with Dementia
- Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia
- Mental Health Criminal Justice Continuum
- Mental Health Emergency Division

PLAIN LANGUAGE EXAMPLES

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www.hhs.gov

healthfinder.gov

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Home > Quick Guide to Healthy Living

Quick Guide to Healthy Living

Welcome to the Quick Guide to Healthy Living. Find information and tools to help you and those you care about stay healthy.

Choose a topic area below to get started.

Nutrition and Fitness
Get nutrition and fitness tips for the whole family.

Important Screening Tests
Find out which screening tests you need.

HIV and STDs
Protect yourself from HIV and other STDs.

Cancer Screening and Prevention
Worried about cancer? Get answers.

Everyday Health

VIEW ALL QUICK GUIDE TOPICS

Find health advice for you or someone you care about.

Who are you trying to help today?

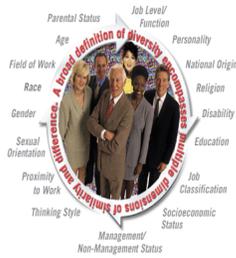
Me
 Someone Else
 My Child

Age: yrs Sex: Female Male

Pregnant?

What Is Culture?

Culture should be defined in a broad sense, as there are other things in addition to race, language, and ethnicity that contribute to a person's sense of self in relation to others. Multiple memberships in these subgroups contribute to an individual's personal identity and sense of own "culture".



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Page 22

Culture as an Iceberg



- Visible Part:**
- Age
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Language
 - Physical abilities
 - Cultural artifacts
- Hidden Part:**
- notions of modesty
 - conception of beauty
 - ideals
 - body language
 - Attitudes toward elders
 - governing child-raising
 - definition of sin
 - relationships to animals
 - tempo of work
 - patterns of superior / subordinate relationships
 - concepts of humor
 - eye contact behavior
 - social interaction

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Page 23

Culture Gives Context, Meaning, and Direction



- It is a filter through which people process their experiences and events of their lives.
- It influences people's values, actions, and expectations of themselves.
- It impacts people's perceptions and expectations of others.
- It informs our understanding of when support is needed.
- It influences how and from whom we seek support.
- It influences how we attempt to provide support.

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Page 24

Cultural Competency—A Leg of the Stool

Cultural Bias is Everywhere

The Institute of Medicine found evidence that, whether they know it or not, many providers treat their patients differently depending on the patient's race and ethnicity.

Research shows that individuals who are culturally different from their providers are less likely to:

- Have providers identify with and understand their situation and feelings
- Establish a connection and trust with providers
- Receive sufficient information
- Be encouraged to participate in medical decision-making

Cultural Factors Influencing Patient-Provider Communication

• THINK.....

- We all carry misinformation and stereotypes about people
- We are not bad people because we acquired this; none of us asked to be misinformed.
- But in order to build relationships with people of different cultures, we have to become aware of the misinformation we carry.

Techies- all/always	Young people- all/always
Wear glasses	Are naïve
Are nerds	Reckless
Are shy	Think they know best

Culture and Health

Culture is also a central issue in people's health care. A person's culture can affect:

- *How health care information is received*
- *How rights and protections are exercised*
- *What is considered to be a health problem*
- *How symptoms and concerns about the problem are expressed*
- *Who provides treatment for the problem*
- *What types of treatment should be given*

Cultural Factors Influencing Patient-Provider Communication

Nonverbal Communication Varies greatly among people, often leading to cross-cultural misunderstanding.

- Facial Expressions
- Head Movements
- Hand and Arm Gestures
- Personal Space
- Touching
- Eye Contact
- Physical Postures

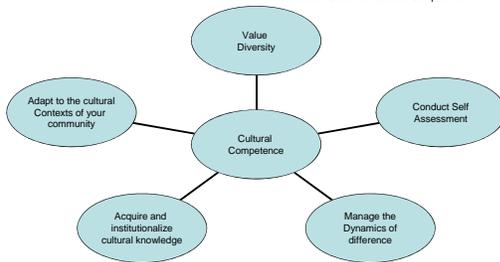


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Page 28

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

National Center for Cultural Competence



And incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

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Page 29

Developing Cultural Competency

HRSA Suggests a Dual Approach

Fact-Centered Approach

What to do: Gain cultural information about specific ethnic groups

How to do it: Learn culture-specific information, such as an ethnic group's historical context, cultural concepts of illness and disease, health-seeking behaviors, health-oriented data and disease patterns, and so on.



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Page 30

Developing Cultural Competency

Attitude/Skill-Centered Approach

What to do: Enhance communication skills and focus on the cultural values and beliefs of individuals (including yourself)

How to do it: Recognize and acknowledge your own biases; understand yourself and others in terms of culture; understand how race, ethnicity, gender, spirituality, and other issues play a role in delivery and in perceptions of health care; and acquire and apply culturally competent communication skills



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Page 31

LEP—A Leg of the Stool

Limited English Proficiency

Patients with LEP can have difficulty understanding health care procedures, navigating the health care delivery system, accessing quality care, and cooperating with health care recommendations.

These difficulties may create barriers preventing patients from being able to make decisions that lead to better health outcomes.



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Page 32

How Common is Limited English Proficiency?

Over 350 languages are spoken in the U.S.

There are more than 47 million people in the nation who speak a language other than English, and over 30 million who were born outside the United States

During the past decade, the number of Spanish and Asian-language speakers grew by 50%

Over 17% of the nation's population speak a language other than English at home.



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Page 33

LEP's Effect on Health Care

Without effective language services, patients with limited English proficiency:

- *May have less access to primary care*
- *May be less likely to receive follow-up appointments after Emergency Department visits*
- *May be less likely to understand their diagnoses, medications, and follow-up instructions*
- *May be less satisfied with care received*
- *May not receive equivalent levels of preventive care*

Page 34



Overcoming the Effects of LEP

Individuals with LEP who use language assistance services can:

- *Communicate effectively with their health care providers*
- *Reap the benefits of preventive care*
- *Understand their diagnosis and condition*
- *Make informed decisions about treatment options*
- *Provide patients with informed consent forms*
- *Follow through with recommended treatments*

Page 35



What are Language Services?

- Individuals Right to Know
- Interpreting
- Translation
- Assistive Technology/Communication Tools
- Signage
- Way-finding
- Community Involvement
- Training

Page 36



Identifying Your Patient's Language

You can't provide language assistance to your patients with LEP until you know what language they speak.



Page 37

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Providing Language Assistance Services

Interpretation

- Interpretation is the process of understanding and analyzing a spoken or signed message and re-expressing that message faithfully, accurately, and objectively in another language, taking the cultural and social context into account.
- The purpose of interpreting is to enable communication between two or more individuals who do not speak each other's language.
- Not every bilingual person has this skill.



Page 38

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The Risks of Using Untrained Interpreters

Just because someone speaks two languages, it does not mean that they are competent to act as an interpreter.

- *Unknown language competency*
- *No orientation to medical interpretation*
- *No or little knowledge of medical terminology*
- *Previous relationship with patient*
- *Relationship with patient could compromise the quality of the session*

Symptoms of the PROBLEM

In the study entitled, *The Bilingual Consultation*, it was found that 23% to 53% of words were incorrectly interpreted by untrained interpreters.

Page 39

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Children as Interpreters

- Imbalance of power
- Lack of Maturity
- Lack of Language Proficiency
- Uncomfortable role
- Negates confidentiality



Maintaining Control of the Encounter

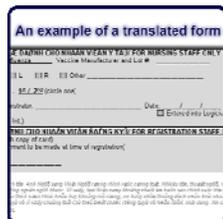
- Ask questions directly to your patient
- Ask open ended questions
- Speak about one problem or symptom at a time
- Avoid using slang or idioms

“Up and at ‘em”
 “I’m feeling under the weather”
 “Barking up the wrong tree”
 “Up the creek without a paddle”
 “A tough nut to crack”

Providing Language Assistance Services

Translated Written Materials

- Providing language assistance services includes ensuring appropriate translated written materials for patients with LEP; however, translated written materials should not substitute for oral interpretation.
- Translated written materials may include:
 - Signage in the office (including notices advising LEP persons of free language assistance)
 - Applications
 - Consent forms
 - Medical/treatment instructions
- Most of the time, translation is NOT done effectively by interpreters. There are two different skill sets involved.





Signage and Way Finding

Other than serving as the big logo for an organization, the primary purpose of a signage is to direct the outsiders and visitors as to what the organization stands for, but once again, there are a lot of other elements attached to the determination of this direction





Page 44

Language Access Training

- How to work effectively with an interpreter
- Cross cultural communication
- Communicating complex information to individuals who possess low literacy skills or who are not literate
- Identifying individuals with literacy and health literacy barriers to communication



Page 45

Sustaining Language Access Services

- Ensure that interpreting and translating services are considered mission critical
- Budget for those costs as you would any overhead and consider them the cost of doing business, not just a luxury
- Request/require all bi-lingual staff to become certified interpreters and pay them for that additional skill when they perform it
- Train ALL staff to work effectively with interpreters



Page 46

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- Billing staff
- Pharmacists

Each individual involved in a health care encounter is a key player in ensuring that information is not only delivered to the patient, but is understood by the patient.



Page 47

Resources

- <http://centerforplainlanguage.org>
- <http://www.lep.gov>
- <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc>



Page 48
