



Literacy Network

Improving lives through literacy



# English for Health: Developing and Promoting Health Literacy Partnerships

Beth Gaytan

Health Literacy Director

Beth@litnetwork.org

[www.litnetwork.org](http://www.litnetwork.org)



## **In this presentation, you will learn:**

- About the English for Health program
- Goals of the program
- Outcomes of the program
- How we developed partnerships to bridge the gap between patients and providers
- What we learned about health literacy partnerships



What is the strongest predictor of individual health status?

- A) age
- B) income
- C) education level
- D) employment status
- E) racial or ethnic group
- F) literacy skills



What is the strongest predictor of individual health status?

- A) age
- B) income
- C) education level
- D) employment status
- E) racial or ethnic group
- F) **literacy skills**



# Literacy Levels and Health Outcomes

- Low literacy is associated with poverty and lack of access to health care
- "Non-compliant" patients who do not follow discharge instructions often lack the literacy skills to do so



# English for Health

- English language course focused on improving health outcomes for adult English language learners in our community
- 12 weeks, 48 hours
- Learning opportunities for those that access the healthcare system and for those that work within it





# Key Components

- Pre and Post assessments (English language and health)
- Partnering healthcare organization hosts class
- Free text (*Staying Health*) and journal
- Free childcare
- Frequent provider involvement
- Authentic curriculum



# Our Learners



- Most have had little interaction with health care system
- Income and level of education vary greatly
- Most do not use health care



# Program Goals

- Teach basic English skills to connect with the health care system
- Give a basic understanding of the healthcare system and a patient's role within it
- Teach learners how to find and access affordable health care
- Encourage learners to ask questions about their health and health care
- Increase learner confidence for more effective communication with healthcare providers



# Curriculum

- *Staying Healthy*, Chapters 1-3
- Authentic materials
- Real use of new language and health literacy skills
- Students learn how to teach others
- Students interact with healthcare staff and providers
  - Presentations
  - Medical students—community involvement rotations
  - Mock clinic



Literacy Network

Improving lives through literacy

# Mock Clinic

Learners communicate with clinic staff, make appointments, fill out basic forms, describe health symptoms and discuss medications with a pharmacist





# Mock Clinic



Learners practice in an authentic setting with local healthcare professionals. They must use language in problem solving, communication, and self-advocacy



# Reported Program Objectives

- Learners will demonstrate improved verbal and written skills to facilitate better advocacy and proficiency in navigating the complex health care systems
- Learners will participate in classroom discussions and mock health clinic and successfully complete at least 70% of the program's 15 predetermined competencies



# Anecdotal Outcomes

- **Myriam** cut her cholesterol in half by eating better
- **Manuela** made her own doctor's appointment and asked a pharmacist questions about a cold medicine
- **Juan Carlos** found out how to access low-cost health insurance at Community health center after being laid-off and losing his job





# Advancing Health Literacy while Creating Healthy Partnerships

- *English for Health*
  - First semester - 2008
    - Offered in a community center
    - RNs from St Mary's Hospital volunteered in a mock clinic





# Partnership Steps: 2009

- **Latino Health Council** endorses program
- **St Mary's Hospital** hosts class, provides financial and in-kind support
- **UW School of Pharmacy** students assist with development of curriculum
- **Willy Street Co-Op** offers a tour, lesson on nutrition and \$20 gift cards to all students



Literacy Network

Improving lives through literacy

# 2010 Recognition

**Wisconsin Literacy:**  
*Outstanding  
Health Literacy  
Achievement.*





## 2010 Recognition

- **Wisconsin Department of Health Services:**  
*Promising Practice* for improving minority health outcomes (one of five statewide).

Program description at:

<http://bit.ly/LitNetHealth>



# Partnership Steps: 2011

- **Humana** grant funds program expansion in 2011
- **Group Health Cooperative, Wingra Community Health Center** and **Dean Health** support program, host classes
- **UW School of Medicine** students as classroom tutors
- **United Way Safe and Healthy Aging**: improve toolkit with usability testing
- **UW School of Medicine**: ESL Students are paid consultants



# Partnership Steps: 2012

- **Group Health Cooperative** supports the development of *English for Health 2*
  - *Staying Healthy*, Chapters 4-6
- **UW West Clinic** begins to host *English for Health*
- **Contract work** with local HMO to improve the readability of documents
- Development of **English for Healthy Kids**
- Further funding from **Humana** to offer trainings to other community based organizations



# Creating Partnerships

- Offer a service or a program
- Community endorsement
- Existing connections
- Meet with everyone
- Advertise your work
- Use media to give publicity to partners



# Why *English for Health*

- Providers and staff become personally engaged
- Hospitals and clinics show community involvement
- The program can be offered initially with in-kind support
- The program is sustainable
- The program benefits community members



# What makes a Healthy Partnership?

- It starts at the top: leadership support
- Acknowledgment that all partners benefit
- Good advanced planning
- Emphasis on common goals
- Joint leadership on issues
- Visibility in the community



Literacy Network

Improving lives through literacy



## Contact info:

Beth Gaytan

Health Literacy Director

Beth@litnetwork.org

608-244-3911

[www.litnetwork.org](http://www.litnetwork.org)