



NEWS RELEASE

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida and the Florida Literacy Coalition Award Health Literacy Grants

ORLANDO, Florida (May 21, 2010) - Sixteen Florida adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and family literacy programs were recently awarded one-year grants of \$5,000 each. The funds will be used to establish a network of health literacy projects providing adult students with important information about health and nutrition while learning English.

The Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, funded by [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida](#) (BCBSF), and operated by the [Florida Literacy Coalition](#) (FLC), is a three-year project committing \$360,000 to improving the health literacy level of Florida residents by supporting literacy programs with financial and technical support. As part of the initiative, the FLC provides grantees with training opportunities, inter-agency collaboration facilitation and resource forums to build upon the strengths of each individual program.

There is growing consensus among health care providers and adult educators nationwide that limited English language and literacy skills can have a significant impact on one's health. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 14 percent of American adults have below basic health literacy skills. Adults with low health literacy skills cost the industry an estimated \$73 billion annually in the form of longer hospital stays and increased emergency room visits, doctor visits and medication.

“At BCBSF, we are committed to helping people and communities achieve better health,” said Susan Towler, executive director, Community Affairs, BCBSF. “By partnering with the Florida Literacy Coalition and supporting the Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, we are reaching more and more Floridians every day and positively impacting their health and well-being.”

(more)

In 2009, BCBSF and FLC awarded health literacy mini-grants to ten organizations. This year's funding reflects a combination of new grants and renewal grants, allowing current programs to continue and build upon their ongoing efforts.

“This initiative reflects Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida’s outstanding commitment to helping adult learners develop the skills they need to be informed health advocates for themselves and their children,” said Greg Smith, executive director of FLC. “We have already seen significant results in students becoming more health literate and we really appreciate BCBSF for making it all possible.”

Recipients of the grant awards for the 2010-2011 cycle include the following programs.

- Adult Learning Center Osceola, serving Osceola County
- Adult Literacy League, Inc., serving Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties
- DeSoto County Education Foundation, serving DeSoto County
- Florida State College at Jacksonville, serving Duval and Nassau Counties
- HELP of Fort Meade, Inc., serving Polk and Hardee Counties
- Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County, serving Palm Beach County
- Literacy Volunteers of America - Monroe County, serving Monroe County
- Literacy Volunteers of Lee County, serving Lee County
- Manatee Technical Institute, serving Manatee County
- Miami-Dade College Foundation, serving Miami-Dade County
- Pinellas County School District, serving Pinellas County
- S.B. Idea, Inc., serving Palm Beach County
- Sarasota YMCA, serving Sarasota County
- South Florida Community College, serving Highlands and Hardee Counties
- Three Rivers Regional Library System, serving Dixie, Gilchrist and Lafayette Counties

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida

Celebrating 65 years as Florida’s leader in the health industry, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is mission-driven to improve affordable access to health care. BCBSF is a not-for-profit, policyholder-owned, tax-paying mutual company. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please visit www.bcbsfl.com or to listen to Floridians speak out on health care issues visit www.thepowerofthehumanvoice.com.

About the Florida Literacy Coalition

Established in 1985, the [Florida Literacy Coalition](http://www.floraliteracy.org) (FLC) promotes, supports and advocates for the effective delivery of quality adult and family literacy services in the state of Florida. As a statewide umbrella literacy organization and the host of Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center, FLC provides a range of services to support more than 300 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community-based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs. More information about the Florida Literacy Coalition can be found online by visiting www.floraliteracy.org or by calling (407) 246-7110.