15 Ways to Influence Health Care Policy and Advance the Health Literacy Agenda

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Learning Objectives

• Examine recent and forthcoming legislation, both State and Federal, related to health literacy, plain language and health care reform.

• Identify 15 powerful actions that can raise health literacy awareness among policy makers and legislators.

• Practice various strategies in small group exercises and leave this presentation prepared to take action!
Disclaimer

• I, Doug Seubert, do not have any relevant financial interest or other relationship(s) with any commercial entities producing health care related products and/or services.
What is the Health Literacy Agenda?

• What is our message?
• Who will deliver our message?
• Who needs to hear it?
Health Literacy: Present and Future

The world as it is...
- Most health information is written at the 10th grade level and above

The world as it should be...
- Healthcare organizations, agencies and providers follow standardized guidelines for plain language and clear writing.

Other examples?
How do we get there?

- Clarify our agenda (be specific)
- Link health literacy to health care reform
  - Patient safety
  - Improve quality
  - Reduce cost
- Strike while the iron is hot
- Organize
- Build support
- Develop allies
Toolbox

- NALS and NAAL
- Growing field of research
- National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
- Making Health Literacy Real: The Beginnings of My Organization’s Plan for Action (CDC)
- Healthy People 2020 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
  - State health plans
- Organizations and agencies leading the way:
  - Health Literacy Missouri
Strike while the iron is hot...

- Healthcare reform
  - Quality, Affordable Health Care for All Americans
    - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
    - Signed into law Mar 23, 2010
  - Small Business Health Fairness Act
    - Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act of 2011
    - Empowering Patients First Act
  - Empowering States to Innovate Act
    - Gives states an option to develop their own healthcare policies outside federal requirements passed under the Affordable Care Act
Strike while the iron is hot...

• Plain language
  – Plain Writing Act
    • Signed into law Oct 13, 2010
  – Plain Language in Health Insurance Act of 2009
    • Died in committee (111th Congress); may be reintroduced

• Health literacy
  – S. 174: Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention America Act
    • Sec. 305. Health literacy: research, coordination and dissemination
    • Introduced in the Senate, read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance
15 Actions You Can Take

Gather information and strategize
1. Learn how grassroots advocacy works
2. Identify your representatives
3. Analyze a bill
4. Conduct opposition research

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15 Actions You Can Take

Contact your elected officials
5. Write an effective letter
6. Send a powerful e-mail
7. Make a compelling phone call

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15 Actions You Can Take

Work the news media
8.  Start a press clippings file
9.  Write a letter to the editor
10. Pitch a news story or interview

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15 Actions You Can Take

Super-powerful actions that take more time

11. Have a face-to-face meeting with your representative
12. Testify at a public hearing

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15 Actions You Can Take

A few more actions to consider

13. Organize a town hall
14. Apply for an appointment to a committee
15. Lobby your lobbyist
Interactive Discussion

• What works?
• What is most effective?
  – Actions by individuals
  – Actions by groups
  – Actions by organizations
Action Workshop

1. Identify contact
2. Know the facts
3. Be respectful
4. Be non-partisan
5. Be specific
6. Keep it short and to the point
7. Ask for a specific action
8. Ask for a response
9. Evaluate
10. Follow-up
Resources

- U.S. Senate
  http://www.senate.gov

- U.S. House of Representatives
  http://www.house.gov

- Links to State/Local Governments

- U.S. Senate - Lobbying Disclosure Filing Search
  http://www.senate.gov/legislative/Public_Disclosure/LDA_reports.htm

- U.S. House of Representatives - Lobbying Disclosure Filing Search

- Eye on Lobbying in Wisconsin
  http://ethics.state.wi.us/LobbyingRegistrationReports/LobbyingOverview.htm
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