

# 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 10<sup>th</sup> grade level and above

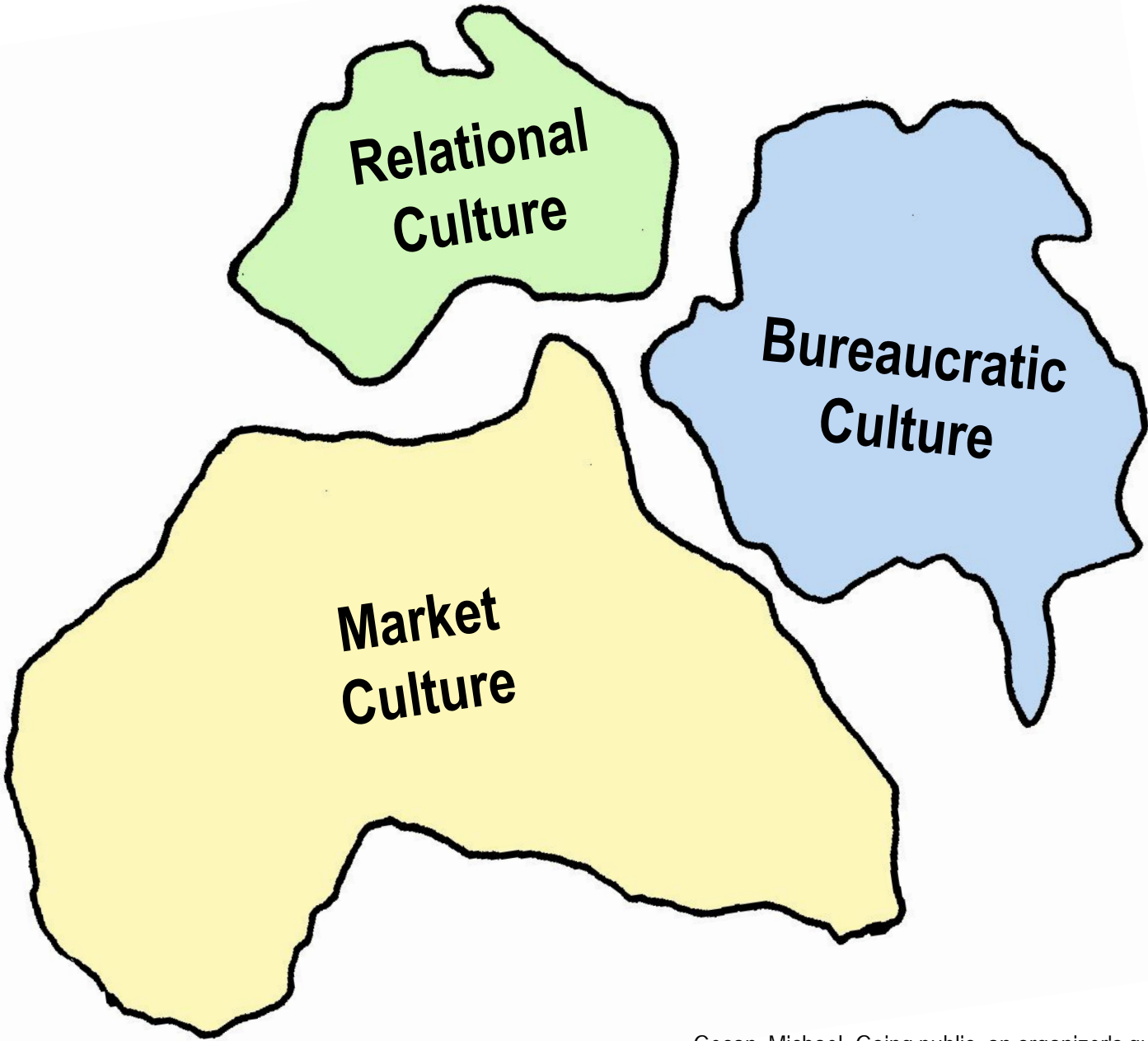
## The world as it should be...

- 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 (111<sup>th</sup> 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

Actions 1 through 12 are from **The One-Hour Activist** by Christopher Kush, ©2004, published by Jossey-Bass. Used with permission.

# 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  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html>
- U.S. Senate - Lobbying Disclosure Filing Search  
[http://www.senate.gov/legislative/Public\\_Disclosure/LDA\\_reports.htm](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/Public_Disclosure/LDA_reports.htm)
- U.S. House of Representatives - Lobbying Disclosure Filing Search  
<http://disclosures.house.gov/ld/ldsearch.aspx>
- Eye on Lobbying in Wisconsin  
<http://ethics.state.wi.us/LobbyingRegistrationReports/LobbyingOverview.htm>

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