

Improving Healthcare by Tapping Adult Education Expertise

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Literacy Assistance Center

The case of New York City Health Literacy Initiative

Elements

- Teacher Professional development through study circles
- Partnerships between Health and Literacy agencies



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Objectives

What we wanted to achieve: Students will

- Improve their literacy skills
- Understand and use health information to improve their own as well as their family's health
- Communicate more effectively with their health-care providers
- Access free or low-cost health insurance



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Guiding assumptions

Adult education programs are assets

Teachers are experts

Students are experts



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Partnership Activities – Health Sector

- Providing opportunities for students to tour the hospital /health center
- Providing educational sessions for students
- Providing screening opportunities



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Partnership Activities - Literacy Agency

- Review printed materials and offer feedback
- Offer instructional advice to medical presenters
- Offer opportunities for providers to understand a similar population



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Review printed materials and offer feedback

- New Haven Adult Learning Center and Hill Health Center
- Department of Adult Education site and Gouverneur Hospital
- Family Education Center engaged in plain language rewrites for Lutheran Medical Center (parent organization)



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Offer instructional advice to medical presenters

- Teachers are experts in literacy instruction
- Teachers understand students literacy challenges
- Teachers brief presenters on teaching techniques



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Offer opportunities for providers to understand a similar population

- Hospital patient population is generally similar to student population
- Ethnic and language experiences are utilized to enhance learning
- Queens Health Network and Queens Public Library – produced a video for use in continuing education of residents



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Providing literacy orientation to new doctors/staff

- Lutheran Medical Center --Teacher held sessions for new immigrant doctors
- Coney Island Hospital -- Health Literacy Advisor at Library and another teacher (Shorefront Y) offer health literacy orientation to new staff and to doctors.



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Mayor's Office of Adult Education Health Literacy Fellowship Program

- 1st and 2nd year medical students co-teach with literacy teachers
- Six (6) weeks
- Opportunity to build communication skills
- Opportunity to understand LEP students
- Building health literacy awareness up front
- Opportunity to learn from seasoned teachers



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Challenges

- Need for active program management support
- Funding is critical in determining the level of engagement
- Literacy managers overriding concern about educational gains for students
- Keeping health agencies engaged



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Improving practice in healthcare

- Improving staff awareness of health literacy issues
- Helping staff to develop instructional skills
- Building community capacity – agencies working together to address common needs
- Reaching hard-to-reach populations with health messages



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Impact on health care

- Reaching potential patients before health conditions worsen
- Having informed and empowered patients
- Providing potential patients with access to health care



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THANK YOU

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