



## **Are Your Adult Literacy Students Ready to Work with the Healthcare Community?**

Audrey Riffenburgh & Toni Cordell

4th Biennial Wisconsin

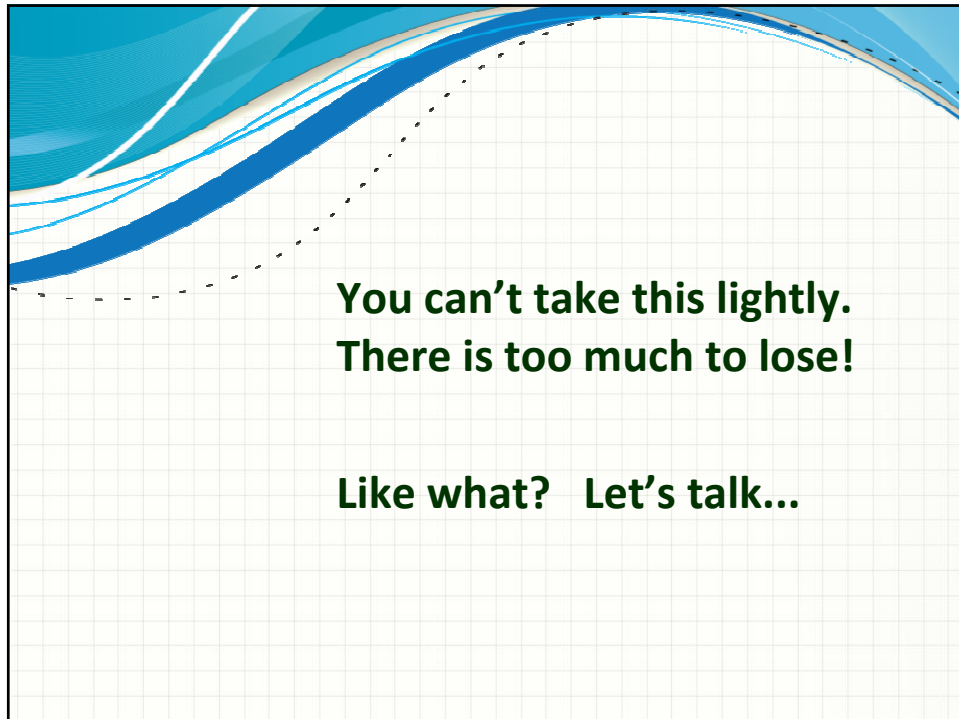
Health Literacy Summit

April 12, 2011



### **Who We Are**

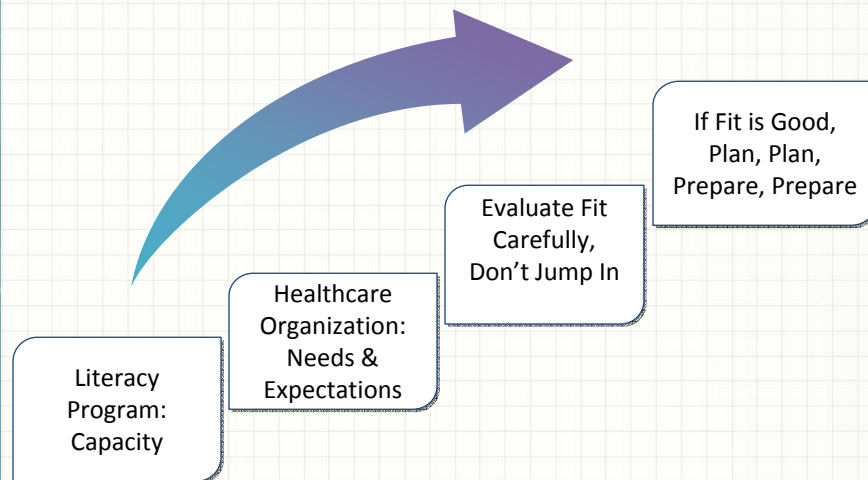
- **Audrey Riffenburgh, MA**
  - Health literacy consultant/trainer/speaker for 17 years
  - 12 years in adult literacy (local, state, national levels)
  - From New Mexico—the only state to have had a state-wide student leadership training program
- **Toni Cordell, LLL (Life-Long Learner)**
  - Professional speaker on literacy and health literacy
  - Former adult literacy student; current college student
  - Five years on staff at Laubach Literacy Action
  - Adult literacy advocate—skated across the US to draw media attention to the solvable problem of illiteracy



## Why Be Cautious?

- If the collaboration is not successful, your program's image and reputation suffer.
- If the healthcare org is not ready, you may sink time into a project that has no real effect.
- If learners do not meet expectations, negative stereotypes can be perpetuated.
- **Putting learners in situations where they are not prepared to succeed can damage self-esteem and confidence. Remember their past history with authority/power. Don't throw them to the wolves.**

## Working Toward Success



Literacy Programs and Students:  
What Are Your Capacities?

Questions to Ask Before You Start

## Are You Ready? Do You...

- know about health literacy? The stats? What it is? What challenges the healthcare org faces?
- have staff resources to dedicate to the project?
- know what your program does best and can offer?
- have learners with leadership training and experience in your program? In their lives?
- have the staff time and expertise to orient, train, support, prepare and equip learners to succeed?

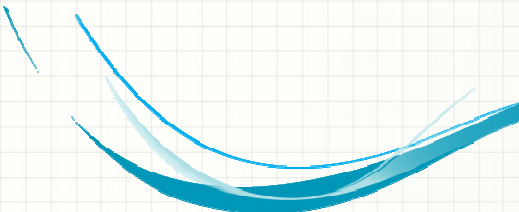
## Whom Should You Select?

- What qualities should you look for?
- What experience, skills, and training are needed to succeed?
- What opportunities for leadership training are available?
- Are expectations appropriate?
- What do learners get out of it?
- What might be at risk if they go public with personal information?



## What Are Appropriate Roles?

- Helping evaluate printed health materials? Websites?
- Doing a “walk through” of a facility?
- Speaking about their struggles with the healthcare system?
- Advising on policy?
- Serving on committees?
- When are these roles inappropriate and for whom?



Healthcare Organizations:  
Needs and Expectations

Questions to Ask Before You Start

## What Do Organizations Need/Expect?

- Have they thought through what they need?
- Is it within your program's mission?
- Do they have realistic expectations about the skills and availability of adult learners?
- Are they ready for your learners' input?
- Are you and your students skilled enough to charge for your help? Or can you exchange expertise?

## Case Study: Is This a Good Match?

### **DBP (Dedicated but Poor) Literacy Program**

- 4 Staff
- Budget always thin
- 2 learners speak in public about program but only accompanied by staff
- No learners on staff, committees, or board
- 3 help set up for tutor trainings

### **ABC Hospital**

- Know they need to address HL for accreditation
- Want to start with easy-to-read materials/forms
- Zero budget
- 2-person committee for patient education
- Recently began working on language/translation issues

## Summary

- Consider carefully what your program and your students have to offer, gain, and lose.
- Identify what you can realistically and skillfully do with your program's resources.
- Remember to protect your learners' dignity. Set them up for success. Mastery is not achieved overnight.



**QUESTIONS?**



## Contact Us

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