

Form a Team

Tool 1

Overview

Implementing and sustaining health literacy universal precautions in your practice requires strong, effective leadership. You will need a dedicated team to plan and implement health literacy-related changes in your practice. This team should be led by a practice employee who is vested with the authority to coordinate the team's efforts and implement practice changes. Because health literacy is important for patients' interactions with all members of the practice, the most effective teams include representatives of both the clinical and administrative staff. Patients and caregivers can add critical insight, as well.

Actions

Identify team members.

- **Choose an energized and empowered Team Leader.** The Team Leader must have both enthusiasm for health literacy-related quality improvement and the clout to spearhead practice change. If the Health Literacy Team Leader is not part of the practice's senior leadership, senior leadership must make it clear that the Team Leader has the authority to act.
- **Include one motivated and respected representative from each area of your practice.** In small practices, it often works best to include most or all of your clinical and administrative staff members. In large practices, it is important to include at least one representative from each area of your practice. Team members may include:
 - Physicians
 - Nurses
 - Medical assistants
 - Practice managers
 - Front office staff
 - Billing staff
- **Keep the size of your team manageable.** A team with more than 8 members can make it hard to get things done.
- **Incorporate patients and/or caregivers into the team.** Having a patient and/or caregiver on the team can be extremely eye opening. These team members can provide invaluable first-hand insight on what patients experience and how systems and communication can be improved. We encourage you to recruit a patient or caregiver for your team.
 - Ask staff to identify and suggest patients or caregivers who are typical of your patient population.
 - Include this member, as needed, on special projects (ad-hoc member).
 - Consider providing a meal or a small gift of appreciation for this member's participation.

TIP

If you've done quality improvement work before, build on former or existing teams to populate your Health Literacy Team.

Bring team members together.

- Have an initial meeting.
- Introduce health literacy by showing the American Medical Association's health literacy video (23 min) or the American College of Physician's health literacy video (6 minutes).
- See Tool 3: Raise Awareness for additional methods of educating your team (and staff) about health literacy.
- Introduce the Toolkit and its key components.
- Review the goals of implementing the Toolkit.
- Ask at least one or two team members to review the full Toolkit carefully to become familiar with its contents.



Have subsequent meetings and establish routine reporting.

- Schedule regular team meetings. Frequent meetings may be needed at the outset (e.g., monthly). Meetings can take place less frequently once your implementation activities are underway.
- Early on and throughout the process, it is important to clarify each team member's role and responsibilities.
- Use Tool 2: Create a Health Literacy Improvement Plan, to help you develop and implement your Health Literacy Improvement Plan.
- Report progress on a monthly basis to the practice's senior leadership to maintain accountability and team engagement.

Resources

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement provides valuable information about the quality improvement process, including guidance on Forming the Team.

The AHRQ Practice Facilitation Handbook provides guidance on Creating Quality Improvement Teams and QI Plans.