

SAMPLE Health Literacy Assessment Report for [*Organization Name*]

Background

I conducted my health literacy assessment at [*Organization Name*], a clinic that provides services to children with special health care needs. This clinic is a part of a larger network of federally-funded clinics, and most of the clients are Medicaid recipients. The clinic serves eligible children with a wide variety of special health needs, such as diseases like Sickle Cell Anemia. Specialty care providers work in the clinic on a rotating basis, and many of the children see additional providers within the clinic, such as mental health care professionals.

The clinic is located in Tampa, Florida, on a university campus. The clinic serves patients from both the local community and sometimes from further away, on account of the scarcity of some of the specialty services they provide.

The clinic serves an important function, as it addresses the needs of children with special health care needs, which cannot be addressed by many pediatricians. It also serves populations with lower socio-economic status, who may face additional challenges in accessing high-quality care.

The clinic is considered a part of maternal and child health, as it specifically serves children's health needs. The clinic provides family-centered care, as children with special health care needs need support and cooperation from their caregivers in order to maintain health. The key-informant interview was conducted via telephone with the Clinic Supervisor.

Evaluation and Reflection

Overall, in terms of the five attributes I chose to evaluate, this clinic showed a moderate to strong degree of health literacy. I assessed the clinic in terms of the following attributes: #3- Prepares Workforce, #4- Includes Consumers, #6- Communicates Effectively, #8- Design Easy to Use Material, and #10- Explain Coverage and Costs.

The major strengths in the clinic's health literacy include Communicating Effectively, Designing Easy to Use Material, and Explaining Coverage and Costs. In terms of communication, the clinic addressed the different language needs of their clients with bilingual staff, in-person translators, and a telephone translation service that specializes in translating medical terminology. In terms of materials, the clinic used a lot of well-designed brochures and info-sheets to supplement their verbal communication. They also seemed to excel in explaining coverage and costs of services. In this particular clinic, coverage and costs are somewhat simpler than they may be in other settings, as most patients will not owe any money out-of-pocket. When Medicaid denies coverage, the clinic has a specific system that informs the patient before the services are administrated, and gives patients the opportunity to appeal for coverage, with the assistance of clinic staff.

Areas in which the clinic could improve their health literacy include Preparing the Workforce and Including Consumers. In terms of workforce training, this clinic has a lot of strong resources that provide customer-service training, which include some elements of health literacy, such as using simple words, checking for understanding, and listening actively. However, there were no staff trainings designed to address issues such as cultural competency, which is a key part of ensuring quality patient/provider interactions.

In addition, the clinic does not assess or evaluate their staff in terms of health literacy. Implementing both of these measures in the clinic's workforce could improve the clinic's overall degree of health literacy.

Health literacy impacts the services delivered at this clinic in many significant ways. Many of the patients seen at this clinic are children with complicated diseases that require complex care. Health literacy can help ensure that the information is understood and can be utilized optimally by the patient. One patient may be referred to multiple specialists and their family may be given complicated instructions on how to provide for their care, heightening the importance of health literacy. It is especially important that communication is clear and effective with this population.

Organizational health literacy plays a critical role in maternal and child health. The ways in which an organization communicates health information to their clients has a significant impact on how well the clients are able to make decisions about their health-related behaviors. Clear communication is a critical part of the patient/provider interaction, and many of the attributes of a health literate organization are geared towards improving this communication. Many of the key issues in maternal and child health, such as prenatal care, early childhood development, children with special needs, breastfeeding, and more, involve women making health-related decisions about their behaviors and treatments. It is important to remember that these decisions are being made in the context of the information and guidance they have received, including that which comes from healthcare providers. Thus, health literacy is a critical factor in decision making and therefore health outcomes.