

## Supporting Health Literacy- the role of case managers

### What is health literacy?

Health literacy is a person's **skills, knowledge, motivation, beliefs, confidence, resources and supports to access, understand, appraise, retrieve/remember, and use** information and services to make decisions about their health<sup>1</sup>.

Health Literacy Concept	In the context of Lifetime Care and Workers Care
<b>Access</b>	<p>the person's understanding of their injury/disability and what services/supports they may need</p> <p>the person's ability to find those services/supports and know how to engage with the services/supports</p>
<b>Understand</b>	<p>the person's understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the health information that relates to their condition/disability</li> <li>the information provided by health professionals</li> <li>the information provided by the case manager</li> <li>the information provided by icare and other funding agencies about the systems that they need to interact with</li> </ul> <p>the person's ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain to others their situation, disability, health-related experiences and needs</li> </ul>
<b>Appraise</b>	<p>the person's ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>decide if the source of information they have received is trustworthy, and if the information itself is trustworthy</li> <li>navigate conflicting information/advice</li> <li>assess whether the services/supports they are receiving are meeting their needs</li> </ul>
<b>Retrieve / remember</b>	<p>the person's ability to recall information/recommendations they have been given - both immediately, and over time</p>
<b>Use</b>	<p>the person's ability to apply the advice/information/recommendations in other contexts and situations</p>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Richard Osbourne. 2018. Using health literacy approaches to ensure no one is left behind: an update on World Health Organisation (WHO) initiatives and other programs. Deakin University.

## Why does health literacy matter?

Osbourne<sup>1</sup> identified that low functional health literacy has been associated with:

- increased health care costs
- higher prevalence of health risk factors
- increased mortality
- poorer health care adherence/participation in prevention activities
- poorer self-management of chronic conditions
- poorer outcomes
- less effective communication with health care professionals
- lower functional status
- poorer overall health status
- increased hospital readmissions

## Do case managers have a role in assessing and building health literacy?

Yes. Health literacy impacts all domains of the case management taxonomy<sup>2</sup>, but is of particular importance in the case management role in the domains of:

- holistic assessment
- planning
- education
- training & skills development
- emotional & motivational support
- advising

The case manager role in building health literacy is implied and specified throughout the Case Manager Expectations (Lifetime Care)<sup>3</sup>.

Principles of health literacy are consistent with the principles under-pinning the My Plan strength's-based person-centred planning approach:

- promoting independence to maximise self-efficacy
- building capability across participants and their informal supports to reduce dependence on case management services
- “do with, not for” – “doing with” the person and their family builds their ability to do it themselves next time. Always “doing for” may seem helpful but diminishes the person’s ability to achieve longer term independence.

The icare Health Literacy Framework<sup>4</sup> identifies the following roles and actions of both internal staff and external service providers in achieving improved health literacy outcomes for participants:

- the assessment of individual health literacy and the ability to form strategies to build the health literacy of consumers
- addressing the needs of family and carers regarding their injury and health literacy
- contact agreements – to maximise trust, provide support and answer questions
- injury and injury-management knowledge
- ability to educate others to promote health literacy capabilities
- person-centred practice
- promoting independence
- knowledge of local services
- integrated care – attention to both health and social care

<sup>2</sup> Lukersmith, S. 2017. *A Taxonomy of Case Management: Development, Dissemination, and Impact*. The Sydney eScholarship Repository, Post graduate theses/Sydney Digital Theses (Open Access)

<sup>3</sup> [Insurance and Care NSW | icare](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Insurance and Care NSW | icare](#)

- promotion of partnerships across providers and between icare and providers

## How do case managers assess a person's level of health literacy?

There is a range of tools and resources available in the literature to assess health literacy of individuals. Many are focused on acute medical conditions and health services rather than longer term disability and wellness.

The **Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool**<sup>5</sup> sits well in the My Plan Toolkit as it's based on having meaningful, person-centred conversations with the person. The toolkit therefore includes information about the CHAT and a prompt sheet to provide guidance on asking CHAT questions in the context of Lifetime Care and Workers Care participants, their health conditions and their needs.

## What else can case managers do to help with health literacy?

- ensure all written material you provide the participants (including their My Plan) can be readily understood by them
- use teach-back to check the participant has understood advice/instructions. Link to teach back training run by Deakin University and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District from the icare website<sup>6</sup>
- communicate clearly – tips on effective communication can be found in the SA Health website – Tools for promoting health literacy<sup>7</sup>

## References

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4. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care – Health Literacy policies and resources
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10. Lukersmith, S. 2017. A Taxonomy of Case Management: Development, Dissemination, and Impact. The Sydney eScholarship Repository, Post graduate theses/Sydney Digital Theses (Open Access)
11. CHAT – Safety Fundamentals for Person Centred Communication. 2020. Clinical Excellence Commission. NSW Health.
12. O'Hara et al. 2018. Conceptualisation and development of the Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool (CHAT).

<sup>5</sup> Home - Clinical Excellence Commission (nsw.gov.au)

<sup>6</sup> Training & workshops | icare (nsw.gov.au)

<sup>7</sup> Search Results | SA Health

Lifetime Care

GPO Box 4052, Sydney, NSW 2001

**General Phone Enquiries: 1300 738 586**

Email: [care-requests@icare.nsw.gov.au](mailto:care-requests@icare.nsw.gov.au)

[www.icare.nsw.gov.au](http://www.icare.nsw.gov.au)

Workers Care

GPO Box 4052, Sydney, NSW 2001

**General Phone Enquiries: 1300 738 586**

Email: [care-requests@icare.nsw.gov.au](mailto:care-requests@icare.nsw.gov.au)

[www.icare.nsw.gov.au](http://www.icare.nsw.gov.au)