

Use these talking points during a staff meeting to start a conversation about clear health communication. Choose one topic for a quick discussion or use the topics across several meetings during October for **Health Literacy Month**.



Use plain language

Health literacy is about more than a person's skills. Health organizations also have a responsibility to make health information and services easier for people to find, understand, and use.

One way we can do that is by using plain language.

Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. In health care and public health, we use many words and phrases that are familiar to us but may be unfamiliar to the people we serve. These words are jargon.

Talk about it:

What jargon words or phrases do we use often in our work?

After each example, ask: *What could we say instead?*

Try it:

Choose one jargon word or phrase you will replace with plain language. Add it to the UAMS Center for Health Literacy #PlainPledge Jargon Jar by scanning the QR code or visiting: <https://healthliteracy.uams.edu/health-literacy-month/plainpledge/>.



Challenge each other to use plain language. If you hear a word that someone may not understand, help each other find a clearer way to say it.



Check understanding with teach-back

Even when we communicate clearly, we should not assume that people understood the information we shared.

Teach-back is a way to check how well we explained something. Instead of asking, "Do you understand?" ask the person to explain the information in their own words.

For example:

"I want to make sure I explained that clearly. Can you tell me how you will take this medicine when you get home?"

If the person has trouble explaining the information, try explaining it another way and check again.

Teach-back is not a test of the person. It is a way to check how clearly we communicated.

Talk about it:

When could we use teach-back in our work?

Try it:

Think of something you explain often. How could you ask someone to explain it back to you in their own words?

**Help people find trustworthy health information**

People get health information from many places, including websites, social media, videos, friends and family, and artificial intelligence tools. Not all health information is accurate or trustworthy.

We can help the people we serve know what to look for and where to find reliable information.

Encourage the people you serve to look for health information that:

1. **Says who created the information.** Look for information from a qualified health professional, health organization, government agency, university, or other source with relevant expertise.
2. **Explains why the information was created.** Look for sites that clearly explain their purpose. Be cautious if the main purpose is to sell a product or service, promote a particular viewpoint, or collect information.
3. **Shows when the information was published or reviewed.** Health information can change, so check that it is current. For most health topics, look for information reviewed within the last 2 to 3 years.
4. **Explains how your personal information will be used.** Before sharing personal information, look for a privacy policy that explains what the website collects and how it will use your information.
5. **Avoids claims that sound too good to be true.** Be cautious of dramatic claims, promises of cures, or guaranteed results.

Trusted sources of consumer health information include [MedlinePlus](#) and federal, state, and local public health agencies.

Talk about it:

What trustworthy health information sources do we currently recommend to the people we serve? Are there others we should be promoting?

Try it:

Identify one trustworthy resource you can share with the people you serve.

Want to learn more about health literacy and clear health communication?

Contact the **UAMS Center for Health Literacy** at HealthLiteracy@UAMS.edu.