

## Staff Talking Points

*Use these talking points during your next staff meeting to promote effective communication between your team and the people you serve. We are providing 2 different topics, so feel free to tackle both at once, or use this content across 2 meetings.*

### Using Plain Language

Health literacy refers to a person's capacity to find good health information, to understand it, and to use it to navigate the health care system and improve their health.

Only about 12 out of every 100 adults have all the skills they need to do these things.<sup>i</sup>

To address this, one of the most recommended strategies is to use plain language with our patients (or community members). Plain language is language people understand the first time they read or hear it. I want us to focus on the spoken word. We all spent time in school learning a new vocabulary related to our work in health. But, those we serve don't know those words and consider them "jargon."

What are some jargon words we use often here at our organization? *(Allow for discussion, and after each word ask, "How might we say that using plain language?")*

I challenge us all to use plain language with the people we serve. This can help understand the information we give them. If you hear me use a word that someone might not understand, please remind me to use plain language. Remind each other. I will do the same for you.

### Finding Quality Health Information Online

Many people use the internet to find health information. In fact, more than 1 billion Google searches each day are health-related.<sup>ii</sup> This is only growing given the current public health crisis. At the beginning of the pandemic, about 7 out of 10 adults said they searched the internet for information about COVID-19.<sup>iii</sup> Unfortunately, the amount of misinformation on the internet leads individuals not having what they need to make appropriate health decisions for themselves. Our patients (or community members) need to know where to go to find accurate health information. We should make visible efforts to guide them in finding the best health information they can online. Some authoritative sources of health information are MedlinePlus and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Let's be sure to promote

these with our patients.

To find good health information online at other sites, we should tell our patients to look for a website that:

1. Tells who wrote the information. It should be a health care worker (such as a doctor or nurse) or from a health care organization.
2. Exists to help people (not sell things). Helpful sites normally end with an .edu, .gov, or .org.
3. Does not ask for personal information (such as birthday, social security number, or credit card number).

If you want more information about health literacy, you can contact the UAMS Center for Health Literacy - [healthliteracy@uams.edu](mailto:healthliteracy@uams.edu).

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<sup>i</sup> National Assessment of Adult Literacy, <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/google-receives-more-than-1-billion-health-questions-every-day.html#:~:text=An%20estimated%207%20percent%20of,minute%2C%20according%20to%20the%20report.>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/31/americans-turn-to-technology-during-covid-19-outbreak-say-an-outage-would-be-a-problem/>