

# Closing the Health Literacy Gap: Advancing Health Equity

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**HEALTH  
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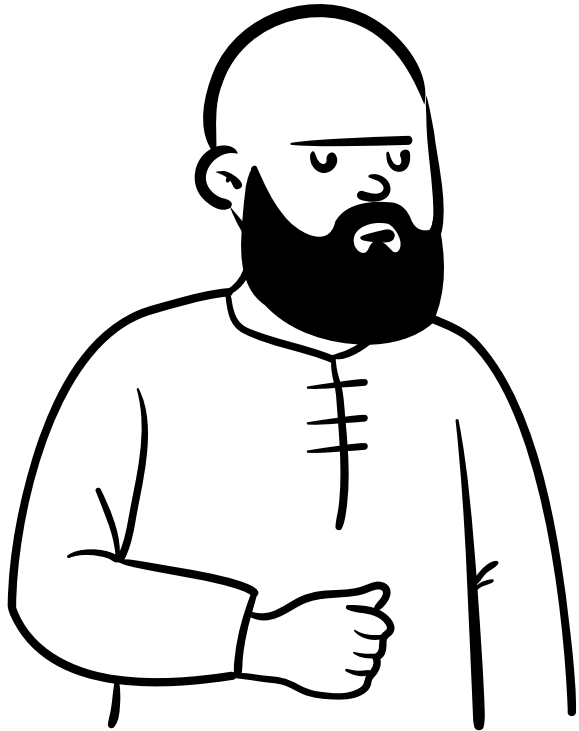


# What is Health Literacy?

**Personal health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the **ability** to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

**Organizational health literacy** is the degree to which organizations **equitably enable** individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

# Let's Meet John...



He's feeling dizzy, suddenly can't see very well, and has been very tired recently.

He works long days as a mechanic, and his first language is Spanish, but he can both read and speak English. He lives an hour away from the nearest pharmacy.

His typical lunch is rice and beans with a beef stew. He doesn't drink coffee but has a Coke since it's refreshing and has caffeine.

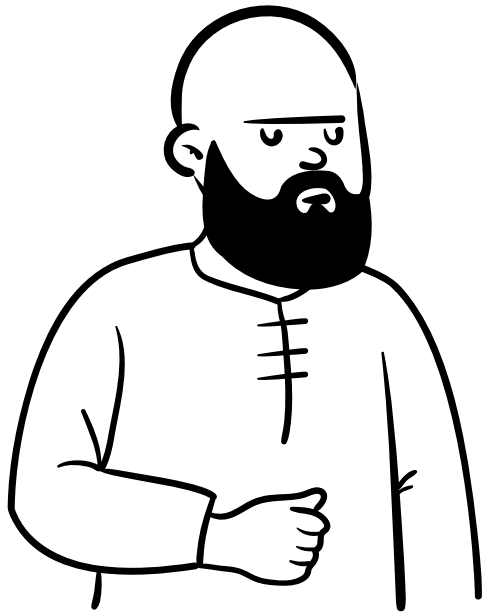
# Health Literacy ?!?



Your test results came back and your **Hemoglobin A1c** was very **elevated**, it looks like you have **type 2 diabetes**. It means your body doesn't use **insulin** properly. Let's focus on eating more of a **balanced diet**, reduce your **carbohydrate** and **sugar intake**. Also, we need to change your medication for **hypertension**. Please go to your pharmacy and they will give you the updated medications – you now have to take 2 medications instead of 1.

This is your **Enalapril**, take it **orally** every 12 hours with food. The doctor also **prescribed Chlortalidone**, take that **one twice a day** with an **empty stomach**.

# Let's Think about John:



He works long days as a mechanic, and his preferred language is Spanish, but he can both read and speak English. He lives an hour away from the nearest pharmacy.

His typical lunch is rice and beans with a beef stew. He doesn't drink coffee but has a Coke since it's refreshing and has caffeine.

I see Spanish is your preferred language, Here are some materials about diabetes in Spanish, let's find time to connect you with a diabetes educator who also speaks Spanish.

Race, ethnicity, and preferred language

Health literacy

What's your nearest pharmacy? Oh, it's an hour away. We can ask the pharmacy to send you a 30-day refill to your home.

Social drivers of health

It sounds like rice and beans is a staple in your culture, let's talk about your food options and how to fit it in given your work schedule. We have some recipe cards in Spanish that provide some alternative options.

Culturally and linguistically appropriate services

# Connecting the Pieces



# What are CLAS Standards?

Culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) ensure that the services you and your organization provide are **respectful** and **responsive** to each patient's culture and communication needs.

The CLAS Standards provide health care organizations with 15 **actionable steps** for providing appropriate services.



## NATIONAL CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES STANDARDS

The National CLAS Standards are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by establishing a blueprint for health and health care organizations to:

### Principal Standard

1. Provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs.

### Governance, Leadership and Workforce

2. Advance and sustain organizational governance and leadership that promotes CLAS and health equity through policy, practices, and allocated resources.
3. Recruit, promote, and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.
4. Educate and train governance, leadership, and workforce in culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

### Communication and Language Assistance

5. Offer language assistance to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them, to facilitate timely access to all health care and services.
6. Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally and in writing.
7. Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.

populations in the service area.

### Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability

9. Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies, and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organization's planning and operations.
10. Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's CLAS-related activities and integrate CLAS-related measures into measurement and continuous quality improvement activities.
11. Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLAS on health equity and outcomes and to inform service delivery.
12. Conduct regular assessments of community health assets and needs and use the results to plan and implement services that respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations in the service area.
13. Partner with the community to design, implement, and evaluate policies, practices, and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
14. Create conflict and grievance resolution processes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to identify, prevent, and resolve conflicts or complaints.
15. Communicate the organization's progress in implementing and sustaining CLAS to all stakeholders, constituents, and the general public.

# #2 Communication and Language Assistance



**Complete an organizational assessment specific to language assistance services**



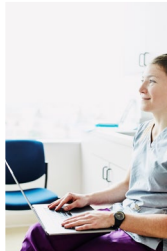
**Standardize procedures for staff members and train staff in those procedures**



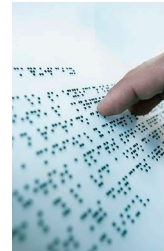
**Provide individuals with notification that describes what communication and language assistance is available, in what languages the assistance is available, and to whom they are available**



**Require that all individuals serving as interpreters complete certification**



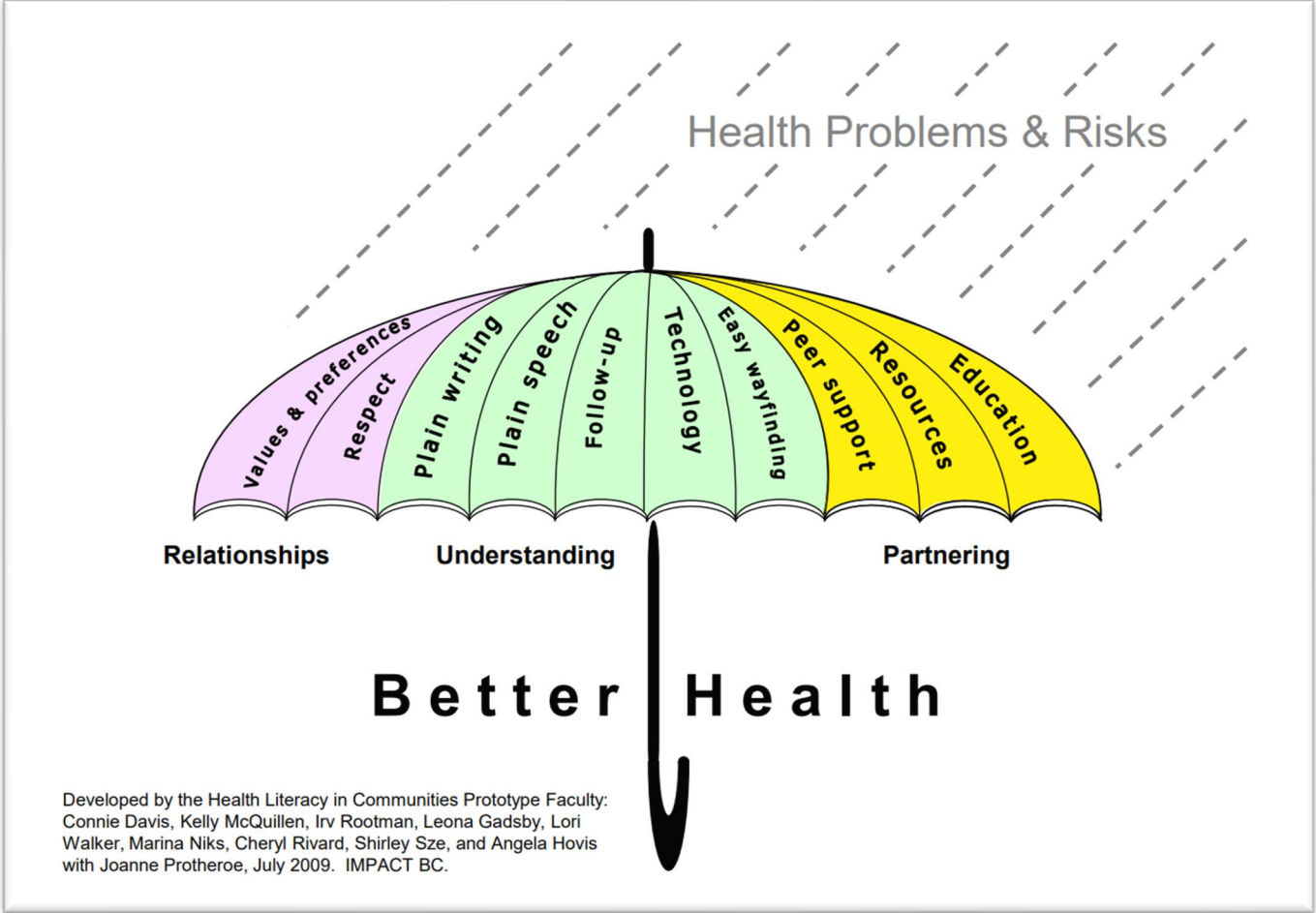
**Provide financial and/or human resource (e.g., time off) incentives to staff who complete interpreter training and meet assessment criteria**



**Formalize processes for translating materials into languages other than English and for evaluating the quality of these translations**

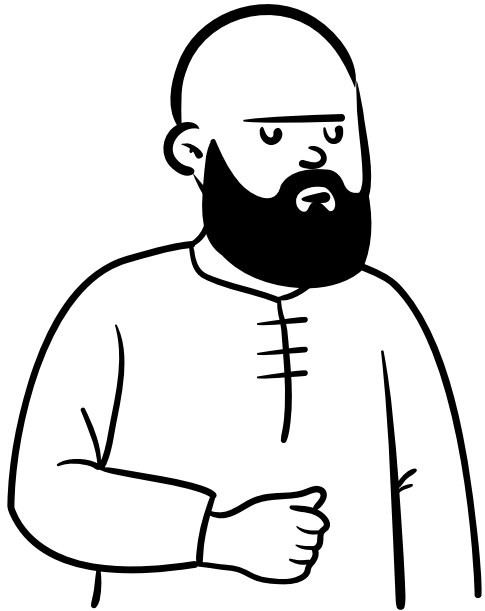


# The Health Literacy Umbrella



Developed by the Health Literacy in Communities Prototype Faculty:  
Connie Davis, Kelly McQuillen, Irv Rootman, Leona Gadsby, Lori Walker, Marina Niks, Cheryl Rivard, Shirley Sze, and Angela Hovis with Joanne Protheroe, July 2009. IMPACT BC.

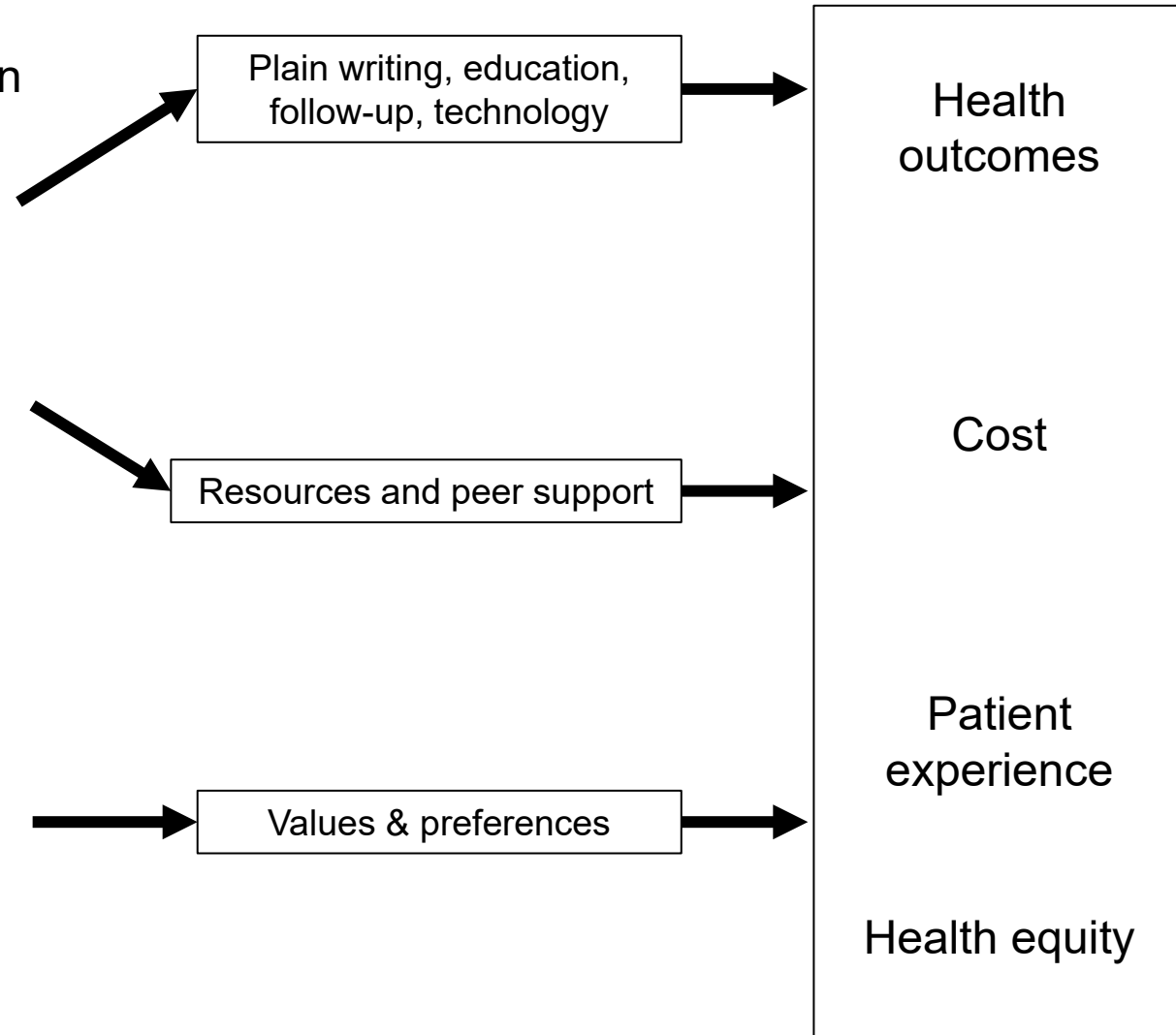
# How's John Doing?



He **read the diabetes pamphlets** in Spanish and **had a few questions** for the diabetes educator. He messaged him on the **portal**.

He can't attend the hospital's diabetes support group because of work, but he was **connected to the local fitness and nutrition program** at the Y.

He still has rice and beans with beef stew but **eats less rice and added vegetables**. He **stopped drinking his daily Coke** but has it occasionally.



# Resources

- **HHS/OMH:** [CLAS, Cultural Competency, and Cultural Humility](#) – overview of cultural competency and cultural humility strategies
- **HHS/OMH:** [Communication Styles](#) – guide on cultural differences for communication styles
- **HHS/OMH:** [Effective Cross-Cultural Communications Skills](#) – tips on how to improve your organization’s cross-cultural communication skills
- **HHS/OMH:** [ADDRESSING Framework](#) – a useful mnemonic for key social identities to consider for getting to know a patient’s cultural identity
- **HHS/OMH:** [RESPECT Model](#) – a model for how to engage patients in a culturally and linguistically competent manor
- **HHS/AHRQ:** [The SHARE Approach Quick Reference](#) – a five-step process for shared decision making that explores what matters most to the patient
- **HHS/AHRQ:** [Be More Engaged in Your Healthcare: Tips for Patients](#) – a tool to empower patients to engage in shared decision making with their healthcare providers
- **CMS:** [Guidelines to Developing a Language Access Plan](#) – comprehensive guide on how to create a language access plan to ensure individuals with Limited English Proficiency receive appropriate assistance
- **HHS/OMH:** [Working Effectively with an Interpreter](#) – tips on how to work with an interpreter
- **LEP:** [Translation](#) – several resources on translation including language identification cards, toolkits for written translations, guides for making written material clear and effective

# CLAS Assessment

To begin an individualized action plan for working toward CLAS standards, take the [CLAS Assessment](#). A member of the ESRD Network Quality Improvement Department will follow up with targeted technical assistance.

# Thank You



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