



## NEWS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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FLC Contact: Heather Surrency  
(407) 246-7110  
Surrencyh@FloridaLiteracy.org

Florida Blue Contact: Toni Woods  
Toni.Woods@FloridaBlue.com

### **Florida Blue Foundation Sponsors Statewide Health Literacy Grants Program**

Fourteen programs across the state of Florida have been awarded a one-year grant, up to \$5,000, for the implementation of a health literacy program to benefit their Adult Education, ESOL, and family literacy students.

Congratulations to the following organizations:

- Adult Literacy League
- Atlantic Technical College, Arthur Ashe Jr. Campus
- Daytona State College
- DeSoto County Education Foundation, Inc.
- El Sol Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center
- New Beginnings Family Literacy Program, Flagler County Schools
- Lake Worth West Resident Planning Group, Inc.
- Learn to Read of St. Johns County
- Literacy Council of Sarasota
- Literacy Volunteers of Leon County
- Miami Dade College, Hialeah Campus
- Parent Academy of St. Lucie County
- Sarasota Family YMCA
- United Food Bank of Plant City

These mini-grants, awarded by Florida Blue Foundation and the Florida Literacy Coalition, will integrate health and nutrition information into the programs' curriculum. The focus is to help students acquire the knowledge, literacy skills and resources that will help them navigate the medical system and make informed health decisions. More than 15,000 students from programs throughout Florida have benefited from this Initiative since 2009.

There is a growing recognition among health care providers and adult educators around the country that limited English language and literacy skills can have a significant impact on one's health. According to the National Adult Assessment of Literacy, 14 percent of Americans cannot comprehend basic health information. The study indicates that health illiteracy is especially prevalent among: 1) adults who did not complete high school, with 49 percent having below basic health literacy, and 2) foreign-born adults who have English as their second language.

People who lack literacy and health literacy skills are much more likely to take medications incorrectly, be hospitalized and spend more time in the hospital than people with higher health literacy, and are four times more likely to have poor health. The potential for savings and better health are significant. Adult education, literacy and family literacy programs can play an important role in helping people to acquire these skills.

“At Florida Blue and the Florida Blue Foundation, we are committed to helping people and communities achieve better health,” said Susan Towler, vice president, Corporate Social Responsibility, Florida Blue. “By partnering with the Florida Literacy Coalition and supporting the Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, we are reaching more and more Floridians every day and positively impacting their health and well-being.”

The Florida Health Literacy Initiative provides training, resources and funding to assist Florida ESOL and family literacy programs to integrate health education into their instruction. The objective is to help students develop basic literacy and English language skills while gaining information to make informed choices regarding their health and nutrition.

The awards were recently presented during the 33rd Annual Florida Literacy Conference May 10-12 at Captiva, Fla.

“The support of this Initiative reflects Florida Blue Foundation’s outstanding commitment to helping adult learners, many who are new to this country, become strong health advocates for themselves and their families,” said Greg Smith, executive director of Florida Literacy Coalition. “We are excited to partner with Florida Blue and this year’s grant recipients to help adult learners throughout our state achieve better health through education.”

More information is available on the Florida Literacy Coalition’s website at [www.floridaliteracy.org](http://www.floridaliteracy.org). For questions, please contact Heather Surrency at (407) 246-7110 ext. 209, or via e-mail at [Surrencyh@Floridaliteracy.org](mailto:Surrencyh@Floridaliteracy.org).

### **About the Florida Literacy Coalition**

Established in 1985, the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) promotes, supports and advocates for the effective delivery of quality adult and family literacy services in the state of Florida. As a statewide umbrella literacy organization and the host of Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center, FLC provides a range of services to support more than 250 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community-based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs.

### **About Florida Blue Foundation**

Florida Blue Foundation is a trade name of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation, Inc. Florida Blue Foundation is a separate, philanthropic affiliate of Florida Blue, Florida’s Blue Cross and Blue Shield Company. The Foundation and its parent are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information about the Foundation, please visit [www.floridabluefoundation.com](http://www.floridabluefoundation.com).

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