



NEWS RELEASE

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Florida Blue Foundation Sponsors Statewide Health Literacy Grants Program

Fourteen programs across the state of Florida have been awarded a one-year, \$5,000 grants 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, Orlando
- Atlantic Technical College, Arthur Ashe Jr. Campus
- Broward Community Schools
- Collier County Adult Education
- DeSoto County Education Foundation, Inc.
- El Sol Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center
- Lake Worth West Resident Planning Group, Inc.
- Language Learning Center at Maitland Presbyterian Church
- Learn to Read of St. Johns County
- Literacy Council of Sarasota
- Miami Dade College, Hialeah Campus
- Sarasota Family YMCA
- School District of Hillsborough County
- United Food Bank of Plant City

These mini-grants, awarded by the 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 required to navigate the health care system and make informed health decisions. More than 16,000 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 speak English as their second language.

People who lack literacy and health literacy skills are much more likely to use medications incorrectly, have at least one chronic disease, spend more time in the hospital, and are four times more likely to have poor health than people with higher health literacy skills. The potential for cost savings and improved health outcomes 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 making a difference for Florida’s communities and to finding ways to help the people of Florida in their pursuit of better health,” said Susan Towler, vice president, Florida Blue Foundation. “By partnering with the Florida Literacy Coalition and supporting the Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, we are making an impact and creating sustainable change throughout our communities.”

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 support of this Initiative reflects Florida Blue Foundation’s outstanding commitment to helping adult learners, many who are new to this country, become informed 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.”

Organizations received their awards on May 9, 2018, at the 35th Annual Florida Literacy Conference in Orlando, Fla.

More information is available on the Florida Literacy Coalition’s website at www.floridaliteracy.org. For questions, please contact Heather Surrency at (407) 246-7110 ext. 209, or via e-mail at 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](http://FloridaBlueFoundation.com) enables healthy communities by making grants, building coalitions and rewarding best practices. More than three million people in Florida have received direct health services as a result of grants made to nonprofit organizations since our founding in 2001. Florida Blue Foundation is a trade name of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation, Inc., an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.