



NEWS RELEASE

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Statewide Health Literacy Initiative Receives Sponsorship from Florida Blue Foundation

The Florida Literacy Coalition announced that it has been awarded a three-year, \$300,000 grant by the Florida Blue Foundation to continue the Florida Health Literacy Initiative. This program provides local literacy, family literacy and adult English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs with mini-grants to support the integration of health and nutrition information into adult literacy instruction. Through the acquisition of health literacy skills and knowledge, students are given the tools to help them make informed health decisions and to navigate the medical system.

More than 15,000 students from educational organizations throughout Florida have benefited from this initiative. The literacy coalition's data reflects the significant impact of this evidence-based program, both in terms of student health literacy assessment gains as well as behavioral changes and newly acquired skills. Participants are eating healthier, exercising more, learning how to communicate with doctors, access health insurance and better navigate the health care system.

There is 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 financial savings and increased health outcomes as a result of healthy literacy skill improvements are significant. Adult education, literacy and family literacy programs 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 at Florida Blue Foundation. “Through our partnership with the Florida Literacy Coalition, the Florida Health Literacy Initiative has made a significant impact in improving the health and well-being of Floridians.”

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 knowledge to make informed choices regarding their health and nutrition. In 2011, the Florida Health Literacy Initiative received the National Award for Program Innovation and Collaboration from the U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy.

“We are most appreciative of Florida Blue Foundation’s multi-year commitment to helping adult learners become strong health advocates for themselves and their families,” said Greg Smith, executive director of Florida Literacy Coalition. “Florida Blue is a leader in building healthy, strong communities throughout the state and it’s our privilege to partner with them on this initiative.”

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. For more information about the Florida Health Literacy Initiative and the Florida Literacy Coalition, please visit www.floridaliteracy.org.

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.

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