



NEWS RELEASE

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida and the Florida Literacy Coalition Award Health Literacy Grants

ORLANDO, Florida (May 23, 2011) - Eighteen Florida adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and family literacy programs were recently awarded one-year grants of up to \$5,000 each to support the development of local health literacy programs.

The Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, funded by [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida](#) (BCBSF) and operated by the [Florida Literacy Coalition](#) (FLC), is a three-year project committing \$360,000 to improving the health literacy level of Florida residents by supporting literacy programs with financial, professional development and technical support. This initiative combines ESOL instruction and health education in a multi-disciplinary approach that teaches English to adults and families while helping these individuals acquire skills and knowledge to make informed choices regarding their health and nutrition.

There is growing consensus among health care providers and adult educators nationwide that limited English language and literacy skills often has a significant impact on one's health. According to the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy, nearly nine out of 10 adults struggle with everyday health information that is routinely available in health care facilities, retail outlets, media outlets and communities.

“At BCBSF, we are committed to helping people and communities achieve better health,” said Susan Towler, executive director, Community Affairs, BCBSF. “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.”

In 2010, BCBSF and FLC awarded health literacy mini-grants to sixteen organizations. This year's funding reflects a combination of new grants and renewal grants, allowing current programs to continue and build upon their success.

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“This initiative reflects Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida’s outstanding commitment to helping adult learners develop the skills they need to be informed health advocates for themselves and their children,” said Greg Smith, executive director of FLC. “The impact of this state initiative has been substantial with over 3,200 students served thus far. More importantly, what these individuals are learning is making a difference as they are exercising more, eating healthier, communicating more effectively with doctors and learning about affordable health care options.”

Recipients of the grant awards for the 2011-2012 cycle include the following programs.

- Collier County Housing Authority Land, Inc., serving Collier County
- Creative Clay, serving Pinellas County
- DeSoto County Education Foundation, serving DeSoto County
- District School Board of Pasco County, serving Pasco County
- East & West Area Adult Schools/Polk Education Foundation, serving Polk County
- First Coast Technical College, serving St. John’s County
- First Baptist Church of DeLeon Springs, serving Volusia County
- Flagler County Schools, serving Flagler County
- Florida State College at Jacksonville, serving Duval and Nassau Counties
- HELP of Fort Meade, Inc., serving Polk and Hardee Counties
- Literacy Council of Manatee County, serving Manatee County
- Literacy Council of Upper Pinellas, serving Pinellas County
- Miami-Dade College, serving Miami-Dade County
- The Motivational Edge, serving Miami-Dade County
- Pinellas County School District, serving Pinellas County
- Sarasota YMCA, serving Sarasota County
- S.B. Idea, Inc., serving Palm Beach County
- Williams H. Turner Tech Adult Center, serving Miami-Dade County

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida

Celebrating 65 years as Florida’s leader in the health industry, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is mission-driven to improve affordable access to health care. BCBSF is a not-for-profit, policyholder-owned, tax-paying mutual company. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please visit www.bcbsfl.com or to listen to Floridians speak out on health care issues visit www.thepowerofthehumanvoice.com.

About the Florida Literacy Coalition

Established in 1985, the [Florida Literacy Coalition](http://www.floridaliteracy.org) (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 300 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community-based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs. More information about the Florida Literacy Coalition can be found online by visiting www.floridaliteracy.org or by calling (407) 246-7110.

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Photography

Sharon Hackney, Senior Manager, Community Affairs of BCBSF and Greg Smith, executive director of FLC are joined by representatives from literacy programs receiving a health literacy grant.

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