



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 24, 2011

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Health Literacy Grants Available for Literacy Organizations in Florida

Grant proposals are being accepted for the third year of the Florida Health Literacy Initiative. The Florida Health Literacy Initiative is a partnership between Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) and the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC). This Initiative works to provide health-education resources for local adults in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and family literacy programs so that students make informed choices about their health and nutrition. The cornerstone of this three-year statewide initiative is a mini-grants program that will award twenty grants of \$5,000 each in May 2011.

Health literacy skills and health communication are a struggle for most people in the United States. Nearly 90 percent of English-speaking adults struggle to utilize health information available in health care facilities, retail outlets, the media and communities, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Non-native speakers of English, adults over the age of 65, recent refugees and immigrants and people with less than a high school degree or GED, in particular, are more likely to experience limited health literacy.

People who lack 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. 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.

“We are so pleased with the positive outcomes in the first two years of our health literacy initiative,” said Susan Towler, executive director, Community Affairs, BCBSF. “By partnering with the Florida Literacy Coalition and supporting this grant program, BCBSF is fulfilling its commitment of helping people and communities achieve better health.”

(more)

Last year BCBSF and FLC were proud to award 16 organizations with health literacy mini-grants. The third year of funding will reflect a combination of new grants and renewal grants, allowing current programs to continue and build upon their ongoing efforts.

“More than 2,600 students and families were served by this program in its inaugural year, with student health literacy assessment scores improving by an average of 42 percent.” said Greg Smith, executive director of FLC. “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.”

The application and guidelines are available on the Florida Literacy Coalition’s website at www.floridaliteracy.org. Proposals must be received by February 23, 2011. For questions, please contact Naomi Soto at (407) 246-7110 ext. 209, or via e-mail at soton@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 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.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is a leader in Florida’s health industry. Since 1944, the company has been dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of all those it serves by offering an array of choices. 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 see its Web site at www.bcbsfl.com.

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