

# Health Literacy Missouri

*Mission: Providing access to plain language health care information; offering educational resources that help providers communicate effectively with patients; improving health literacy through education and community collaborations; and strengthening the evidence base for health literacy.*



## Health Literacy

- ◆ Health is defined as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.” (*Healthy People 2010*)
- ◆ People with limited health literacy have less knowledge of disease management, report poorer health status, and are less likely to seek preventative services.
- ◆ The cost of low health literacy to the Missouri economy is in the range of \$3.3 billion to \$7.5 billion annually. (*The High Economic Cost of Low Health Literacy in Missouri—Vernon et al, 2008*).

## Health Literacy Missouri initiative

- ◆ As approved by the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) Board of Directors in 2006, Health Literacy Missouri (HLM) envisions a future in which the policies and practices of Missouri institutions and the public promote understanding of health and medical information, informed decision-making, health-enhancing actions, and improved health outcomes. MFH committed five years of funding to this effort with a vision to become a national leader in health literacy.
- ◆ MFH funded and convened partners throughout Missouri to form the HLM Coordinating Council. It is composed of representatives from universities, professional organizations, health collaboratives, and MFH. These partners are working to develop an interactive and comprehensive health literacy resource center for the entire MFH service area and have adopted three guiding principles: 1) engage community partners, 2) innovate strategically, and 3) put consumers first.
- ◆ Among the core activities of HLM are:

### *Needs Assessment*

- Conducted interviews with key informants (community-based, provider, and service organizations) in the field to assess needs in Missouri
- Administered independent survey of health care provider organizations

### *Resource Inventory*

- Administered and analyzed survey of health care journalists
- Administered and analyzed survey of nationwide health literacy leaders
- Collecting and cataloging health literacy resources

### *Health Professions Curriculum Development*

- Training providers to enhance communication and health literacy skills with their patients
- Developing lectures and workshops targeted for a variety of professional conferences
- Developing health professions curriculum planning with universities and colleges in Missouri

### *Partnership Development*

- Forging relationships with state and nationwide health stakeholders
- Community outreach within and beyond MFH borders

### *Demonstration Projects*

- Community-based interventions serving vulnerable populations are a high priority for HLM
- Working with community groups to design innovative approaches to improve health literacy
- Evaluating interventions for inclusion in the resource inventory for dissemination