



Clear & Simple

ACA Readiness: *Integration of Plain Language across the Health Net Enterprise*

Health Net is committed to working with our members to ensure the best possible health outcomes. To make informed decisions about their health, members need and deserve information they can understand. In 2010, Health Net's Cultural and Linguistic Services Department launched the Clear & Simple Initiative to promote the use of plain language principles.



Christine Varner,
Health Net
We provide information to make benefits easier to understand.

Phase 1 – Education and engagement

The initial Clear & Simple campaign was both fun and practical, including:

- Activities and contests for National Health Literacy Month.
- Plain language tip sheets, glossary and online training.
- Readability Studio software for all associates.

Phase 2 – From knowledge to practice

The Affordable Care Act makes it more critical than ever for associates to understand and use plain language principles. Our goals were to:

- Meet ACA readiness checkpoints for appropriate reading levels.
- Train associates who produce and/or review member-informing materials.
- Integrate plain language into our organizational culture.

Strategy

We developed an in-person training program to explain plain language principles and guide participants through readability software practice exercises. Objectives were:

- Understand key plain language principles.
- Apply these principles in the development of materials.
- Identify factors that impact readability.
- Use the Readability Studio with confidence.

We reached out to all Health Net associates who have a role in producing member materials – across multiple departments and lines of business.

In-person plain language training

Hour one

Party games – complete with prizes – introduce health literacy issues and plain language principles.



An **origami challenge** – with expert-level instructions (“Valley-fold and unfold diagonally in half both ways”) – gives participants a vivid sense of how it feels to confront unfamiliar language.

Hour two

Readability Studio practice – testing readability and editing Health Net documents.

Participants

- Nearly 150 associates have completed the in-person training program, with another 100 associates registered.
- Two hundred associates have deployed the Readability Studio software.
- Our goal is participation by all associates who produce member materials and documents.

Outcomes

Survey results suggest that our training sessions are helping associates bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, leaving them confident in their abilities to use plain language principles and readability tools.

Plain language confidence



Readability tools confidence



Implications for policy, delivery or practice

Before plain language training, the documents submitted to our Cultural and Linguistics Department were, on average, written at the 10th grade reading level – well above the 6th grade level required by many of our lines of business. Since training began, graduates have been submitting materials at the 7th grade reading level or below. That's progress!

With these encouraging signs, we're on our way to achieving our next set of goals:

- Decrease document rewrites required by 90% after two years.
- 95% of all member-informing materials and vital documents are produced at the appropriate grade level.
- Achieve a 50th percentile CAHPS score on the item “Does your health plan explain things in a way you can understand?”

By ensuring our associates produce Clear & Simple documents, we become more efficient, integrate plain language into Health Net's culture and promote health literacy. Our work supports our ultimate goal – improving our members' access to care and health outcomes.

Josefina Bravo,
Health Net
We speak your language.

