Gateway Health℠ Community Affairs Department

Improving Health Literacy in Communities throughout Pennsylvania and Ohio

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, or Title V, defines health literacy as the degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions.

Several ACA provisions address the need for greater attention to health literacy. There are provisions to clearly communicate health information, promote prevention, be patient-centered and create medical or health homes, assure equity and cultural competencies, and deliver high quality care.

BACKGROUND

According to a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, only 12 percent of adults have proficient health literacy. In other words, nearly 9 out of 10 adults may lack the skills needed to manage their health and prevent disease. In addition, 14 percent of adults (30 million people) have below basic health literacy. These adults were more likely to report their health as poor (42 percent) and are more likely to lack health insurance (28 percent) than adults with proficient health literacy.

Health literacy can affect one’s ability to:

• Navigate the healthcare system, including filling out complex forms or locating providers and services
• Share personal information, such as health history, with providers
• Engage in self-care and chronic disease management
• Understand mathematical concepts such as probability and risk

PURPOSE

Gateway Health believes that all people deserve to be healthy. Since 2010, we have been working to improve health literacy throughout Pennsylvania, and now Ohio, through sustainable workshops, seminars and programs that are open to the public and offered at no cost.

METHODOLOGY

Gateway HELPS (Health Literacy Program Series) addresses health literacy by specific and targeted workshops implemented and delivered through partnerships with faith-based and community-based organizations, senior centers and subsidized apartment buildings. To date, Gateway Health’s Community Affairs team has educated more than 1,500 Medicare eligible individuals in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

GATEWAY HEALTH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The H.A.S. (Health Awareness Series) is an initiative that began in April 2010, via a three-way partnership between Giant Eagle, Inc., the City of Pittsburgh and Gateway Health. H.A.S. is designed to provide health education and information. Each month, a new topic is highlighted and presented by an expert. Sample topics include:

• Diabetes management
• Sexual intimacy
• Eye health
• Chiropractic care
• Health literacy
• Preventive care for women

The series expanded into the greater Philadelphia region in 2013 and into Ohio in 2015.