



Say it Right the First Time: Effectiveness of Plain Language Training on LA County Department of Public Health Workforce

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Background

Nearly 9 out of 10 adults have difficulty using basic health information that is presented in our health care facilities, media, pharmacies and communities. In Los Angeles County, 53% of working age adults have low literacy levels which, in turn, impacts health literacy levels. Low health literacy affects their ability to search for, use or relay health information, adopt healthy behaviors and act on public health alerts. As a direct result of low health literacy, people are more likely to use emergency services more, skip preventative screenings, have chronic conditions they don't understand and can't manage and report having overall poor health.

In 2010, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH), Health Education Administration (HEA) program developed its first edition of "Say It Right the First Time" curriculum and training. Now in its fifth edition this training is implemented throughout the Department of Public Health workforce.

Objective

To examine the efficacy of HEA's Plain Language training in teaching and empowering DPH staff to incorporate plain language principles in their everyday communications.

SAY IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME:
Using Plain Language To Address Health Literacy

Methods

During fiscal year 2013-2014, a total of 160 DPH staff attended 9 Plain Language trainings. Since 2010, over 900 DPH staff and external partners have taken "Say it Right the First Time."

The following evaluations were administered before (pre test only) and after (post test & overall eval) each 3-hour training:

Evaluation Method	Goal
Pre & Post Test	Measures specific skills and knowledge regarding health literacy and plain language.
Overall Training Evaluation	Measures fidelity to objectives, customer satisfaction, self-reported knowledge and confidence.

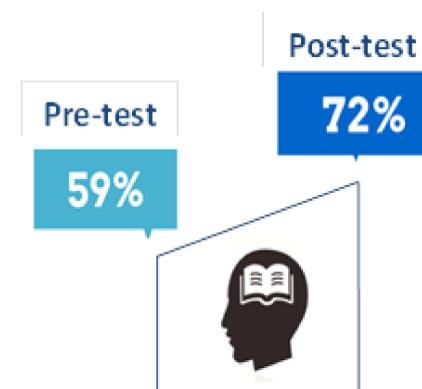
Results were then entered into MS Excel worksheets where descriptive statistics were performed to analyze data.

Results

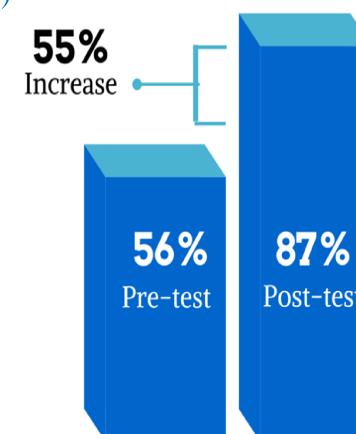
Table 1: 2013-2014 Evaluation Summary

Strongly Agreed or Agreed that...	
Training objectives were fully met.	98%
They were satisfied with the training.	97%
They would recommend the training to colleagues.	94%
They will apply information in the next year.	97%

Graphic 1: Average pre/post comparison



Graphic 2: Average pre/post comparison (based on self-report)



Conclusions

This plain language training, in conjunction with organizational support, has led to a cultural shift within DPH. The change has occurred slowly, but is evident in the quality of health education materials that are being developed throughout DPH. Furthermore, HEA is now utilized as a plain language expert when responding to health emergencies such as: H1N1, TB, Ebola, and, most recently, Measles.

Implications

The question of prevention is ever-present in the minds of decision makers and tertiary care providers due to the changes brought about by the Affordable Care Act. Plain language remains a viable strategy to preventing diseases, complications, and creating communities of empowered and informed health consumers.



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