

## Health Literacy and Limited English Proficiency: 2023 Reading List

This brief bibliography contains a variety of resources focused on health literacy and limited English proficiency (LEP). The list contains three sections: factsheets and toolkits for consumers, reports and recommendations for professionals, and peer-reviewed journal articles. All the resources in this list are available to read and download for free. For more resources on health literacy and cultural competency, contact the OMH Knowledge Center at [KnowledgeCenter@minorityhealth.hhs.gov](mailto:KnowledgeCenter@minorityhealth.hhs.gov) or [browse the online catalog](#).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and reinforced in the [National Healthy People 2030 initiatives](#), health literacy includes both personal and organizational elements. Personal health literacy entails an individual's ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and take deliberate actions for themselves and others. Organizational health literacy focuses on an organization enabling individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and take deliberate actions for themselves and others. CDC further explains that health disparities are inequitable and are related to unequal distribution of social, political, economic, and environmental resources; and disparities can be reduced by addressing the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes, known as social determinants of health.

In the United States, proficient health literacy among Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Multiracial adult populations is lower compared to their White and Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#). Although many Americans have suboptimal health literacy levels, racial and ethnic minority groups have the lowest health literacy levels, and these groups also experience a disproportionate burden of disease, which suggests that differences in health literacy levels contribute to health disparities – preventable differences to achieve optimal health in vulnerable populations. Building capacity for LEP is pivotal for promoting health literacy.

LEP is [defined](#) as anyone “5 years or older who self-identify as speaking English less than ‘very well’ according to the U.S. Census 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate data.” Recent [Census data](#) shows that over 64 million individuals residing in the U.S. speak a language other than English in their homes; and of these people, nearly 26 million are considered LEP. Overall, LEP individuals have poorer health outcomes than individuals who speak English proficiently in healthcare settings. LEP individuals tend to utilize health resources less often, including preventative services and prescription medications. They are more likely to receive incomplete aftercare or discharge instructions from providers and are less likely to provide full, documented consent so that they understand the risks and benefits of a medical procedure. When providers fail to provide language access services, LEP individuals often depend on translations from family members or other medical staff who are not trained in medical interpretation. While the current literature shows that LEP is a significant barrier to adequate healthcare for millions of individuals in the U.S., it also shows that there are countless opportunities, as well as enthusiasm, to improve language access services.

## Consumer Materials

**Be More Engaged in Your Healthcare.** Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. AHRQ.gov, 2020. [Click here to read](#)

**Health Insurance Basics: Key Words and Phrases You Need to Know.** FamiliesUSA.org, 2016.

- English version: [Click here to read](#)
- Spanish version: [Click here to read](#)

**How do I? Answers to Individuals' Common Questions.** HealthIT.gov, 2018. [Click here to read](#)

## Reports

**Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals.** The Joint Commission, 2010. [Click here to read](#)

**National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy.** Health.gov, 2010. [Click here to read](#)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC.gov, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.** National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov, 2006. [Click here to read](#)

**Roundtable on Health Literacy.** National Academies Sciences Engineering Medicine, nationalacademies.org, 2023. [Click here to read](#)

## Journal Articles

**Clinicians' Obligations to Use Qualified Medical Interpreters When Caring for Patients with Limited English Proficiency.** *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*, v. 19, # 3, p. 245–252, 2017. [Click here to read](#)

**Examining Perceptions of Spanish Language Health Information Among Hispanics Living in the United States: A Qualitative Study Assessing Videos, Brochures, and Websites.** *Health Promotion Practice*, v. 22, # 3, p. 385–394. 2021. [Click here to read](#)

**Development and Implementation of the How to Talk to Your Doctor HANDBOOK Health Literacy Program in Rural Counties.** *Health Literacy Research and Practice*, v. 3, #3, p. e205-e215, 2019. [Click here to read](#)

**Health Literacy.** *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, v. 306, #10, p. 1158, 2011. [Click here to read](#)

**Implementing a Medical Student Interpreter Training Program as a Strategy to Developing Humanism.** *BMC Medical Education*, v. 18, # 1, p. 141, 2018. [Click here to read](#)

**Language Assistance for Limited English Proficiency Patients in a Public ED: Determining the Unmet Need.** *BMC Health Services Research*, v. 19, #1, p. 56, 2019. [Click here to read](#)

**Language Services in Hospitals Vary by Ownership and Location.** *Health Affairs (Project Hope)*, v. 35, # 8, p. 1399–1403, 2016. [Click here to read](#)

**National Estimates of Professional Interpreter Use in the Ambulatory Setting.** *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, v. 37, # 2, p. 472–474, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**Overcoming the Language Barrier: A Novel Curriculum for Training Medical Students as Volunteer Medical Interpreters.** *BMC Medical Education*, v. 22, # 1, p. 27, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**Social Determinants, Health Literacy, and Disparities: Intersections and Controversies.** *Health Literacy Research and Practice*, v. 5, #3, p. e234-e243, 2021. [Click here to read](#)

**The Role of Limited English Proficiency and Access to Health Insurance and Health Care in the Affordable Care Act Era.** *Health Equity*, v. 4, #1, p. 509–517, 2020. [Click here to read](#)

**Understanding Medication Adherence in Patients with Limited English Proficiency.** *Kansas Journal of Medicine*, v. 15, p. 31–36, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**Updating Health Literacy for Healthy People 2030: Defining its Importance for a New Decade in Public Health.** *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, v. 27, #6, p. S258, 2021. [Click here to read](#)

**Use and Usefulness of After-Visit Summaries by Language and Health Literacy among Latinx and Chinese Primary Care Patients.** *Journal of Health Communication*, v. 25, #8, p. 32–639, 2020. [Click here to read](#)

## **Additional Resources**

**Common Language Access Questions, Technical Assistance, and Guidance for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs.** LEP.gov, 2023. [Click here to read](#)

**Cultural Competency Training.** Think Cultural Health. [Click here to read](#)

**Guidance and Standards on Language Access Services: Medicare providers.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Inspector General. HHS.gov, 2010. [Click here to read](#)

**Health Literacy for Healthy People 2030.** Health.gov, 2023. [Click here to read](#)

**Health Literacy Online: A Guide for Simplifying the User Experience.** Health.gov, 2016. [Click here to read](#)

**Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, 2nd Edition.** Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. AHRQ.gov, 2020. [Click here to read](#)

**Plain Language - Communication Your Audience Understands the First Time.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC.gov, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**Rural Health Literacy Toolkit.** Rural Health Information Hub, 2023. [Click here to read](#)

**The Federal Plain Language Guidelines: Guidelines, Laws, & Standards.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC.gov, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

**What is Health Literacy?.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC.gov, 2022. [Click here to read](#)

The OMH Knowledge Center contains a collection of over 70,000 documents, reports, books, consumer materials, and journal articles related to the health status of racial and ethnic minority populations. Knowledge Center staff can respond to requests from the public by providing selective bibliographies of articles and books in its collection.

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