

INNOVATIVE TEACHING ACTIVITY

Organizational Health Literacy in Maternal and Child Health

Assignment Description & Grading Rubric

I. Overview of Assignment

Overview of Organizational Health Literacy

Organizational health literacy is the extent to which an organization's demands enable their patients to obtain, access, understand, and make decisions based on health information. The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) 10 Attributes of a Health Literate Health Care Organization can be used as a guide to assess an organization's health literacy. An assessment can provide an overview of how effectively and efficiently an organization's services are meeting the needs of their community.

Maternal and Child Health Leadership Competencies

- Self: Ethics and Professionalism, Critical Thinking
- Others: Communication, Cultural Competency
- Wider Community: Working with Communities and Systems

II. Steps in Assessing Organizational Health Literacy

Step One: Select the Organization

Choose an organization from the list provided of local health care or public health service providers. If you choose to select an organization not on the list, you must obtain permission from the instructor. The organization should be in your community and relevant to maternal and child health.

Step Two: Plan the Observation and Key Informant Interview

Begin by researching the organization. Become familiar with who they are, the services they provide, the population they serve, and any affiliations they have with larger networks.

Next, contact the organization to request an interview. Introduce yourself, give your school's credentials, and explain that you are working on a project that explores how local health providers incorporate health literacy into their organization. Explain that you would like to visit their site and do an observation, as well as conduct a short interview with a staff member about some of the ways their organization operates. The interview can be done in person or on the phone.

In preparation for the observation, identify the health literacy attributes on which you will be focusing, as well as the suggested guidelines for which you will be examining. Fill in five of the worksheets, one for each health literacy attribute. Revisit your research and be familiar with the services provided at the site you will be observing.

In preparation for the key-informant interview, identify the health literacy attributes on which you will be focusing, and select two interview questions for each attribute. You can use the questions provided or write your own. Prepare a brief introduction of the topic of health literacy, as well as an explanation of the purpose of your interview, to be provided to your interviewee before you begin asking questions.

Step Three: Conduct the Observation

Depending on the contact you have made with your site, you may visit during an arranged time or at your convenience. It is important that you are respectful and professional throughout your visit. Bring a notepad for taking notes on things that you observe, and consider taking photographs of the waiting area, if it is permissible. The more information you can remember about the site, the better prepared you will be to assess it later on. If there are printed materials available for the public, consider taking some with you. Be on the look out for evidence of the health literacy attributes you have selected, and be sure to note the successes as well as the areas where improvement is needed.

Step Four: Conduct the Key Informant Interview

The interview should consist of an introduction, a series of open-ended questions, and a closing.

The introduction should include: your name and school, the class that included this assignment, a brief definition of health literacy and how it applies to organizations, and an explanation of the objective of the assignment, which is to explore the practical application of the concepts of health literacy in a local health organization. Be sure to communicate that this is not a critique, but rather an exploratory analysis that is meant to help students understand the way organizations incorporate aspects of health literacy.

The following are suggested interview questions to target each of the ten health literacy attributes. You may modify these questions to fit the specific organization you are assessing. Supplement these with your own questions. Each question is followed by examples that can help probe the interviewee for responses.

- **Attribute 1- Leadership Promotes:** How does the leadership in [*name of organization*] create a culture that values patient and consumer perspectives? How does leadership in [*name of organization*] make effective communication a priority across all levels of the organization? (*Examples: mission statements including health literacy goals, company events addressing health literacy*)
- **Attribute 2- Plans, Evaluates, & Improves:** How does [*name of organization*] track and report communication failures? How does [*name of organization*] collect feedback from consumers? (*Examples: easy-to-answer surveys, assistance with surveys, error logs*)
- **Attribute 3- Prepares Workforce:** What types of employee-training does [*name of organization*] require on patient/client communication? Are there any trainings on topics like cultural competency? (*Examples: staff training on the community's cultures, trainings on communication skills like using simple language instead of complicated jargon, trainings on active listening skills*)
- **Attribute 4- Includes Consumers:** How does [*name of organization*] include consumers in planning? In what ways does [*name of organization*] learn about

the needs of the community it serves? (*Examples: focus groups in the community, inclusion of community members in governing boards*)

- **Attribute 5- Meets Needs of All:** How does [*name of organization*] use written information in communication? Spoken communication? What is the atmosphere like at [*name of organization*]? (*Examples: combination written and spoken information, an environment that is welcoming and does not demand high health literacy skills, universal precautions*)
- **Attribute 6- Communicates Effectively:** How much time is allowed for the services at [*name of organization*]? How do staff members confirm understanding with clients? How does [*name of organization*] plan for different language needs? (*Examples: interpreters, electronic interpreter, scheduling that permits time for each client*)
- **Attribute 7- Ensures Easy Access:** How easy is it for new clients to find the location of [*name of organization*] and navigate departments once inside the building? Are there any staff members who are available to help new clients navigate the facility? (*Examples: easy-to-follow signs, printed maps, costumer-assistance stations with staff*)
- **Attribute 8- Designs Easy to Use Materials:** What kinds of printed materials does [*name of organization*] use? How easily understood are these materials by clients? Are these materials available in multiple languages? (*Examples: brochures with simple language and streamlined information, written materials in multiple languages, materials available in print and electronically*)
- **Attribute 9- Targets High Risks:** Does [*name of organization*] use an informed consent? What is this process like? How does [*name of organization*] ensure information on medications is accurate and understood by the patient? (*Examples: informed consent process that includes more than a signed form and emphasizes communicating risks and benefits and checking for understanding, asking patients to explain in their own words procedures and treatments, medication counseling that includes visual aids*)
- **Attribute 10- Explains Coverage & Costs:** Does [*name of organization*] communicate the cost of care in advance of delivering services? How does [*name of organization*] troubleshoot difficulties in obtaining reimbursement? (*Examples: staff that can assist patients with communicating with insurance companies, services that refer patients to insurance navigator programs, materials that communicate the cost of care clearly*)

The closing should include asking your interviewee for any further thoughts or comments, thanking your interviewee for their time, providing your contact information for any follow-up concerns, and arranging to deliver the assessment report you will generate. After the interview, be sure to follow-up with a thank you e-mail or letter to the person you interviewed.

III. Assignment Deliverables

Submit report

Your report should include the following:

- A 1 page summary of background information on the organization from your research (who, what, where, why, what makes them MCH)
- 5 completed worksheets (one for each attribute)
- A 1-2 page reflection and conclusion, answering the following questions:
 - How health literate is the organization, overall?
 - What were the major strengths of the organization in terms of health literacy?
 - What are your recommendations for improvement?
 - How does the organization’s health literacy impact the services they deliver?
 - How does organizational health literacy impact maternal and child health, in general?

Present findings

Provide the class with a 10-minute oral presentation on your experience assessing health literacy at your chosen health care or public health organization. Present the information included in your report, as well as any personal anecdotes or thoughts on how health literacy plays a role in maternal and child health.

IV. Grading Rubric

Your assignment will be graded based on the following criteria. A possible 60 points can be obtained.

Category	10 Points	7-8 Points	4-5 Points	1-2 Points
Background	Background research shows a variety of resources cited in a reference page.	Background research is accurate and is cited in a reference page.	Background research is minimal and is cited in a reference page.	Background research is insufficient in preparing for the assessment.
Observations	Observations identify the ways the organization is meeting the standards of each attribute, provide details, and additional insights.	Observations identify the ways the organization is meeting the standards of each attribute with no additional insights.	Observations are minimal and only somewhat address the ways the organization is meeting the standards of each attribute.	Observations do not address the ways the organization is meeting the standards of each attribute.
Interview Questions	Questions were inviting, open-ended, and focused on the attributes.	Questions were adequate in addressing the attributes.	Questions were difficult to understand or irrelevant to the attributes.	Questions were not effective in addressing the attributes.

Worksheets	Worksheets were completed with detailed examples.	Worksheets were completed with minimal information.	Worksheets were missing some information.	Worksheets were missing the majority of the information.
Reflection	Reflection was 1-2 pages in length and included thoughtful answers to each question, showed critical thinking, and applied learning to the broader field of MCH.	Reflection was 1-2 pages in length and answers each of the questions, but does not show critical thinking or further reflection.	Reflection was 1-2 pages in length and answered some of the questions, but was missing information.	Reflection was substantially lacking in length and content.
Writing	Writing was well-organized, succinct, and easy to follow, with no significant grammatical errors.	Writing was organized and somewhat easy to follow, with minimal grammatical or syntax errors.	Writing was somewhat challenging to follow and included some grammatical and syntax errors.	Writing was challenging to follow and included many grammar and syntax errors.