

CONNECTING THE DOTS

HEALTH EQUITY AND HEALTH LITERACY

Improving health literacy is a national priority. Research has shown that health literacy is a more important predictor of health than race, socioeconomic status or educational attainment.¹



Check your organization's progress on implementing CLAS Standards

Understanding Health Literacy

Addressing health literacy through successful interventions and strategies can build a bridge to achieving health equity. Telligen's commitment to improving health literacy is an investment in improving health equity.

Personal Health Literacy

Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.²

Organizational Health Literacy

Organizational health literacy is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.²

Health Literacy Challenges

Limited health literacy is a silent epidemic. Even people with strong literacy skills can face health literacy challenges. Patients with low health literacy are more likely to have poorer health outcomes and higher healthcare costs as depicted below³:

Individuals with low health literacy...

- 

Are more likely to visit an emergency room
- 

Have more hospital stays
- 

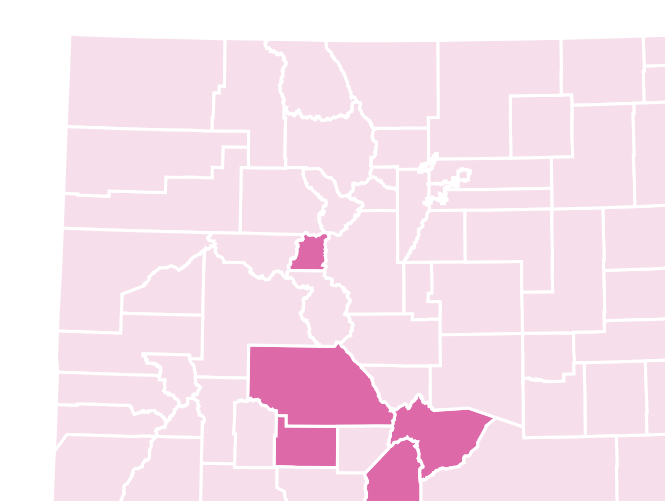
Are less likely to follow treatment plans
- 

Have higher mortality rates

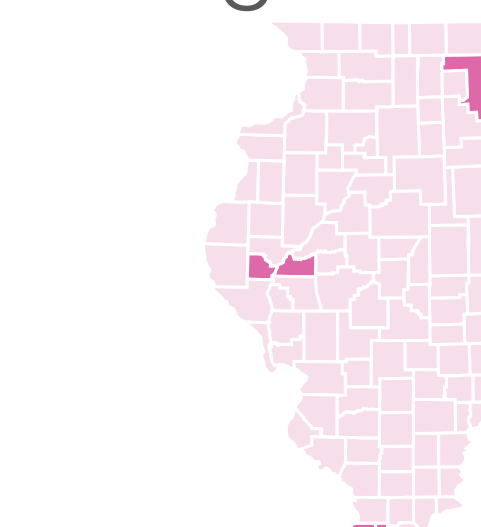
Examining the Data⁴

Identifying and acknowledging health disparities is the first step towards change. The health literacy estimates shown below are based on the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL). This national survey categorized literacy skills into the following 4 categories: Below Basic, Basic, Intermediate, and Proficient.

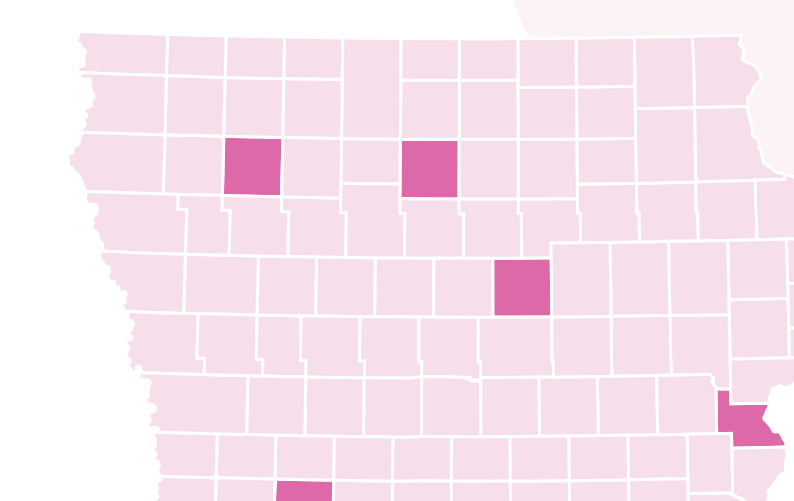
Category	Score
Below Basic	0-184
Basic	184-225
Intermediate	226-309
Proficient	310-500



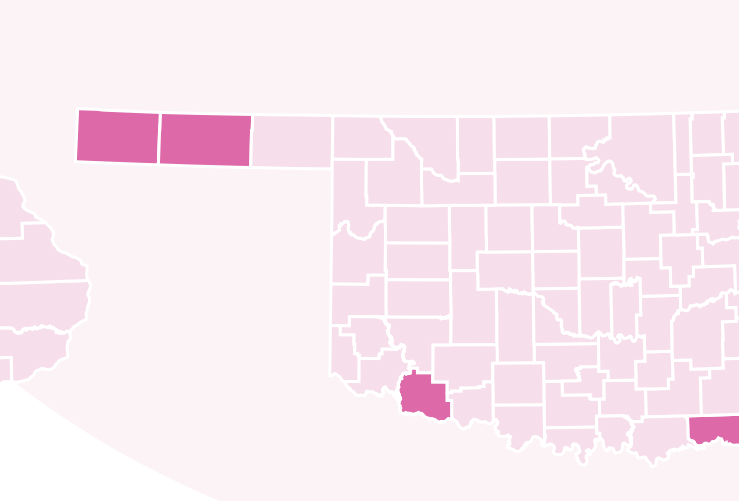
Colorado	
County	Score
Costilla	220.69
Huerfano	222.07
Lake	224.12
Rio Grande	229.16
Saguache	231.39



Illinois	
County	Score
Alexander	234.58
Cook	238.77
Pulaski	239.24
Cass	239.41
Brown	240.44



Iowa	
County	Score
Buena Vista	239.24
Louisa	241.17
Marshall	241.98
Taylor	243.07
Wright	245.07



Oklahoma	
County	Score
Tillman	234.41
Texas	234.78
Cimarron	234.99
Adair	233.93
Choctaw	235.14

Strategy for Change

Quality improvement is not linear, but rather iterative and continuous. Telligen supports communities and organizations through enhanced technical assistance and coaching to build a shared understanding and commitment to address health literacy and other social drivers, assess and prioritize action, implement evidence-based interventions, measure progress, and report and sustain change.

Effects of Change

Advancing health equity requires addressing low health literacy and health disparities. Actions to improve health outcomes must be woven into the fabric of organizations and communities and aligned with quality improvement to affect sustainable change.



¹ Berkman ND, Sheridan SL, Donahue KE, Halpern DJ, Crotty K. Low health literacy and health outcomes: an updated systematic review. *Ann Intern Med.* 2011;155(2):97-107
² <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>
³ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>
⁴ <http://healthliteracymap.unc.edu/>