

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

Find more information and resources on our health equity webpage



### 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.<sup>2</sup>

#### 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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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 below<sup>3</sup>:

Individuals with low health literacy...



**Are more likely to visit an emergency room**



**Have more hospital stays**



**Are less likely to follow treatment plans**



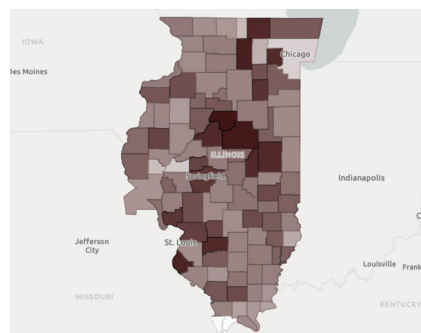
**Have higher mortality rates**

### Examining the Data in Illinois<sup>4</sup>

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 and scores: Below Basic, Basic, Intermediate, and Proficient.

Health Literacy Scores in Illinois

256.09 233.04



**BELOW BASIC: 0-183**  
Can perform no more than the most simple and concrete literacy activities

**BASIC: 184-225**  
Can perform simple everyday literacy activities

**INTERMEDIATE: 226-309**  
Can perform moderately challenging literacy activities

**PROFICIENT: 310-500**  
Can perform complex and challenging literacy activities

### 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. Use [Telligen's health equity assessment](#) to take action in identifying gaps and opportunities to improve health literacy and culturally appropriate health information and services.

### Where Can I Learn More?

Scan the QR code or visit [www.telligenqiconnect.com/health-equity](http://www.telligenqiconnect.com/health-equity) to access resources and trainings available for your organization.

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>

<sup>4</sup> <http://healthliteracymap.unc.edu/>