MELBOURNE HEALTH

Health Literacy Framework

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE
Executive Director Nursing Services

PRIMARY AUTHOR
Community Engagement Manager, Consumer Representative & Melbourne Health - Health Literacy Working Group

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
Published in iPolicy; communicated through Respect and Partnerships in Care Committee

EVALUATION STRATEGY
Review through existing patient experience data

Purpose:

Melbourne Health has developed a framework for health literacy which is called the MH Health Literacy Framework. The framework, by supporting and improving interactions with our health services, aims to increase the ability of our patients and consumers and their carers and families to fully engage with us in their care. The goal is for our community to achieve 'better health' through shared understanding and engagement for optimal health experiences and outcomes.

The framework aims to develop a shared understanding of what is important for addressing health literacy requirements in our health service. This framework is relevant to everyone at Melbourne Health: patients, consumers, carers and families, health care teams, managers and leaders. The Health Literacy Framework has been developed for use across all sectors of Melbourne Health as a tool to guide activities, projects and improvements to ensure greater health literacy is operationalised.

Background:

Health literacy is a dynamic concept. It is increasingly recognised not just as a personal characteristic but as a key issue for health care teams and their organisations\(^1\). Improving the health literacy of individuals, organisations and communities is identified globally to be associated both with better health outcomes and reduced costs\(^2\).

A health literate organisation is defined as “an organisation that makes it easier for people to navigate, understand, and use information and services to take care of their health”\(^3\). It is this expectation of health organisations, and Melbourne Health’s vision of being First in Care by providing Safe, Timely, Effective and Person-Centred care (STEP), which underpins the principles in the Health Literacy Framework, aligning it to the Melbourne Health Clinical Governance Framework.

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\(^1\) The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care


Principles:

- **Melbourne Health Culture**

  Organisational culture is defined as the shared values and beliefs that guide how organisations’ members approach their work and interact with others\(^4\). A key determinant in the development and maintenance of a high performance organisational culture is leadership\(^5\). Making health literacy integral to the mission, structure and operations of organisations like Melbourne Health is critical.

  For Melbourne Health to succeed in engaging all of our community in building health literacy, a shared understanding and focus on health literacy needs to become “the way we do things around here” (culture) and for this to be embedded in all of our practices.

- **Actions for Partnering**

  Health organisations are complex and are often unfamiliar to our community. MH strives to interact with people so that they can easily access its services, navigate ways within and through its services and feel safe and accommodated for. Clear communication enables them to understand all aspects of their care.

  Melbourne Health communicates with people in a variety of ways: verbally (e.g. conversations), in writing (e.g. letters, brochures and posters), visually (e.g. maps, signs, pictures) and through evolving technologies (e.g. internet websites, social media and videos). It is essential that all these forms of communication provide accurate, clear and easy-to-follow information. Optimal communication ensures that people are listened to, respected and supported to understand their health care needs and to make decisions about their health.

- **Skilled Health Care Teams**

  Health care providers, as individuals and within teams, have critical roles in aligning healthcare interventions with peoples’ wishes. They need to know ‘who’ their patients, consumers, carers and families are and to have the skills and judgement to engage patients and consumers in their own care, to the extent that they are able to or wish to, at that time. This includes being able to identify and support patients’, consumers’ and carers’ needs and their capacities for comprehension and decision-making and to provide adequate opportunities for clarification, questioning and for sharing concerns.

  Health care providers require organisational support in the form of information and training as well as enough time for reflection and discussion, and to improve their skills.

- **Understanding Individuals**

  To be a person-centred organisation, Melbourne Health needs to be respectful of and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of people in its community. It is important to understand and respect the ‘whole person’, necessarily shaped by their cultural, family and other influences and beliefs. Relationships based on trust and respect, provide the context within which optimal shared-decision making and engagement occurs.

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\(^4\) Cooke, R & Szumal, J, ‘Measuring normative beliefs and shared behavioural expectations in organisations: the reliability and validity of the organisational culture inventory’, Psychological Reports, vol. 72, iss. 3 part 2, June 1993, pp. 1299–1330.


**Engaged Consumers**

Consumer engagement is essential to build the health literacy capacity of individual patients, consumers, carers and families to engage in health care and for health services to better assist and support them. Successful consumer engagement has been defined as “actions individuals must take to obtain the greatest benefit from the health care services available to them”\(^6\). Engaging patients, consumers and carers to assist in the understanding of information being provided to them is critical for optimal health outcomes.

**MH Health Literacy Framework User Guide Checklist expectations:**

The Framework User Guide Checklist has been developed to assist staff in their implementation of the Framework in MH activities and projects. The checklist may be used for gap analysis work, preparation for improvement projects or assessment of improvement projects, in relation to the principles of the MH Health Literacy Framework.

The checklist is not a definitive guide for involving consumers in your activities. Please refer to the **MH03A Consumer and Carer Participation Guide for Staff**.

**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>A broad outline and conceptual structure to support a particular approach to an idea or objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH Health Literacy Framework</td>
<td>The name of the framework representing how Melbourne Health responds to the health literacy needs of its community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled health care teams</td>
<td>Teams with all of the skills required to improve outcomes for patients, consumers, carers and families at Melbourne Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care providers</td>
<td>Professionally-trained persons who work within healthcare teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Patients and consumers who receive healthcare and their carers and families, and others within our community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>As well as our staff, patients and consumers receiving healthcare, their carers, families and important others, people in our broader community who either interact with or are likely to interact with Melbourne Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering</td>
<td>Interactions with each other with the best possible communication, engagement, learning and collaboration, to achieve optimal healthcare experiences and outcomes for patients and consumers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>Knowing where to go at Melbourne Health, how to get there, who to speak to and as much as is wished to be known about how Melbourne Health functions</td>
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Appendices:

1. MH Health Literacy Framework
2. MH Health Literacy Framework User Guide Checklist

MH Health Literacy Framework reporting

- MH Respect and Partnership in Care Committee
- MH Community Advisory Committee
- NWMH Community & Consumer Advisory Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Author and approval</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2019</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jenny Barr and Linda Mack (Community Engagement Manager), Janney Wale (Consumer Representative), Michelle Swan (Carer Advisor, NWMH), Anne Hastie (Service Improvement Coordinator, NWMH), Belinda McCullough &amp; Suzanne Turner (Manager Quality and Innovation NWMH), Denise Heinjus (Executive Director Nursing and Allied Health), Liz Bremner (Learning and Organisational Development Manager), Adele Montgomery (Quality Improvement Consultant - Communicating for Safety), Jo-Anne Slee (Quality Improvement Consultant – Personalising End of Life Care), Peter Greenberg (Honorary Physician, Dept. of General Medicine &amp; Melbourne EpiCentre, RMH), Megan Hoffman (Acting Director, Nursing Workforce &amp; Professional Practice), Sally Cunningham (Allied Health). Reviewed by CAC and Respect and Partnership in Care Committees</td>
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This checklist can be used for assessing existing or new activities or projects with a health literacy lens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity / Project</th>
<th>Level of Achievement:</th>
<th>Person / team responsible</th>
<th>Yes / No / Action to be taken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Just Starting (S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Progress (P)</td>
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### Activities / Project / Program

- Are your activities and goals aligned to the Framework?
- Are your team members aware of the Framework principles and what their responsibilities are?
- Are team members aware of learning modules including: Person-centred Care / Speaking up for Safety / Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander / Disability and Cultural diversity?
- Are your goals well defined and communicated?
- How are you engaging with patients, consumers and carers?
- Are your team members engaging with patients, consumers and carers and with each other in this activity or project?
- Are you identifying individual and diverse needs according to the Framework statements and principles?
- How do you consider that patients, consumers and carers would respond to the Framework statements and principles in your area of MH?
- Is communication between staff and patients, consumers and carers being optimally addressed and is it consistent with the Framework statements and principles?
- What steps are you taking to ensure your patients, consumers and carers are being assisted to be involved in their care during their stay or visit and when they leave MH?

### Evaluation

- Have you reviewed your responses to the Framework statements and principles to assess need, change and improvement?
- How are you communicating your Framework evaluations, and to whom, at local and at organisational levels?
- What are next steps for extending your Framework activities with your colleagues at MH?

### Sustaining change

- How will you sustain your efforts in health literacy?
- What additional resources and training do you and/or others need?