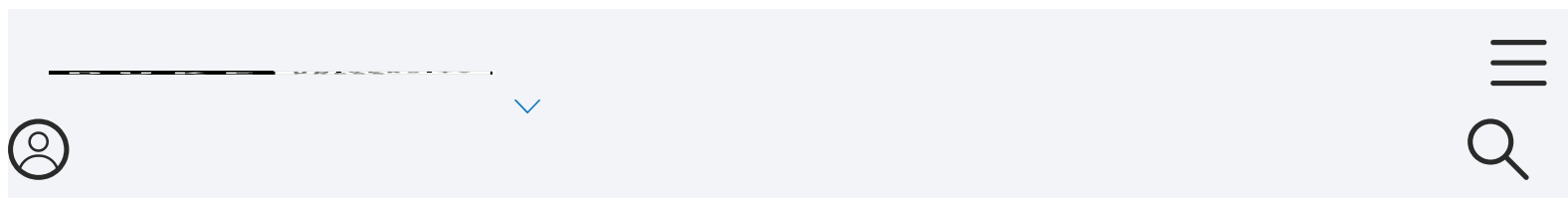


Easy-to-read consumer communications: a missing link in Medicaid managed care.

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Easy-to-Read Consumer Communications: A Missing Link in Medicaid Managed Care



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promised cost savings from the upheaval. Yet, little attention has been paid to educating these consumers with easy-to-read materials. The Maine Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Health Literacy Center,¹ with the support of the Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc., addressed the problem by offering three national skills training workshops called Writing for the Medicaid Market. The training was marketed to public and private organizations providing Medicaid managed care services, including state Medicaid officials, health benefit counselor staff (enrollment brokers), managed care plan (HMO) staff, and consumer advocates. The training addressed the core issue in health literacy: the mismatch between the low literacy skills of the target population and the high reading level of most health and managed care materials. Posttraining survey data revealed that training was successful in skill building, but also that it addressed only the tip of the iceberg. Faulty and/or nonexistent communication planning limits the success not only of Medicaid, but of other large health and social programs as well. The authors outline the broad scope of the national health literacy problem, share their posttraining survey data, discuss lessons extrapolated from both their data and their experience, and propose a national agenda to address a vast and generally ignored public problem.

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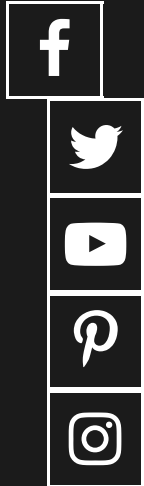
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