



Literacy Assistance Center

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
EDUCATION EDITORS
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COALITION LAUNCHES HEALTH LITERACY INITIATIVE

Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott will join prominent New York City adult literacy groups and health care providers on December 9th from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to endorse the city's first concerted effort to shatter the lethal combination of low literacy and poor health. The Mayor's Office and the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) will inaugurate the Health Literacy Resource Center at the New School University, 66 W. 12th St., Room 407.

"Close to two million New Yorkers lack sufficient English reading skills to know all they should about self-care, qualifying for health insurance, and communicating with healthcare providers," says Elyse Barbell Rudolph, Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center. "The Health Literacy Resource Center will assist literacy programs throughout the city in integrating basic health skills into their curriculums and establishing links with a nearby hospital or clinic."

"Reading saves lives," points out Rudolph, noting that New Yorkers with low literacy skills and their children suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases such as asthma, have higher than average mortality rates, and frequently go without medical care due to a misimpression that they are ineligible for Medicaid. Reading can also save money: prescription drug errors, unnecessary hospitalizations for conditions that could have been treated with regular access to a doctor, excess emergency room visits, and other consequences of low literacy increase the nation's health care bill by as much as \$70 billion annually.

The Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) developed the initiative with assistance from an advisory board that includes the Mayor's Office, as well as officials from GHI, Harlem Hospital, the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation, New York-Presbyterian HealthCare System, the United Hospital Fund, and other agencies and organizations. The Altman Foundation provided initial funding. The Adult Literacy Media Alliance (ALMA) has prepared a series of health literacy videos for the Resource Center, extending its TV411 literacy project.

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