

Factsheet

Assessing Organizational Health Literacy in Primary Health Care Services

The M-POHL OHL Consortium
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Studies suggest that a **considerable proportion of the population has a level of health literacy that makes it difficult to find, access, appraise and utilize health information** when it comes to their own and other's health, well-being, health care and navigation of the healthcare system.

Primary health care services play a key role in improving and accommodating health literacy among the population. They can **adjust organizational structures and processes to meet the health literacy needs** of people they serve, staff, and the local population in the region, who are the primary beneficiaries of enhanced health literacy. To reduce inequalities in health and health care, it is important that primary health care services are health literate, i.e. take health literacy into account in their clinical and administrative services and organizational structure.

Characteristics of a health literate organization

A health literate primary health care service...

- ... incorporates health literacy into the management and organizational structure,
- ... provides easy access to primary care service and facilitates navigation,
- ... communicates in clear and easy to understand language,
- ... promotes health literacy of users,
- ... promotes health literacy of staff members,
- ... promotes further activities of the organization regarding health literacy,
- ... promotes digital health literacy.

Assess organizational health literacy in your primary health care service

With the **International Self-Assessment Tool for Organizational Health Literacy in Primary Health Care Services (OHL-PHC)** you can assess how health literate your service is. By self-assessing the degree of fulfilment of indicators associated with the characteristics of a health literate primary health care service outlined above, you can **gain insight into strengths, weaknesses, and potentials for improvement regarding organizational health literacy**. The tool has 70 indicators of concrete observable or measurable elements. Results can be used to identify, select, initiate and evaluate efforts tailored to enhance your organizational health literacy. Self-assessment is a method commonly used in organizational development processes.

Experiences from using self-assessments to enhance organizational health literacy in primary health care services show that the services identified opportunities for improvement, raised the awareness of the concept of organizational health literacy among healthcare staff, encouraged teams to work together to initiate change, and improved team-efficacy.

“ It is clear, transparent, you see at a glance where we are strong, where our weaknesses lie. It is easy to use. I think the main value of exploring organizational health literacy is really the enrichment in the job, the broadening and the increase in knowledge. ”
(Stuermer et al. 2022)

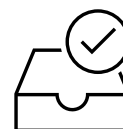
How to perform the assessment and start the process of improving organizational health literacy

The self-assessment can be conducted for the entire organization or for specific units.

- It is important to **appoint a coordinator** for the self-assessment process in your organization. Coordinating the process includes establishing a self-assessment team and providing them with introductory information, collating the results from the individual assessments and organizing and summarizing the joint meeting.
- The **two main steps** of self-assessment are **(1) individual assessments** by several staff members of your organization (duration approximately 30 minutes), and **(2) a joint meeting** for discussing results and selecting priority areas for improvement (duration up to 3 hours).
- **Following the assessment, resources and time must be allocated to initiate interventions and develop policies.** This can be done either by the assessment team or a new team (e.g. a multi-disciplinary health literacy team).
- The self-assessments **should be repeated periodically** to evaluate progress and select additional interventions for improving organizational health literacy.

Contact

To assess and enhance organizational health literacy within your primary health care service, please contact:



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