We envision a Pennsylvania with active citizens able to manage their own and their family’s well-being, empowered to be effective partners with their healthcare providers, and living longer, more productive lives.

Rationale

- Nearly half of all adults have difficulty understanding and using health information.
- Far more people look for health information online than see a doctor on a typical day.
- On popular search engines, only one link in five leads to relevant health information.
- Nothing—not age, income, employment status, education level, or racial and ethnic background—affects health status more than literacy skills.
- Costs related to higher rates of hospitalization and higher use of expensive emergency services by lower literate patients represent between 7% and 17% of all personal healthcare expenditures.
- The savings that could be achieved by improving health literacy—a lower bound of $106 billion and an upper bound of $238 billion—translate into enough funds to insure every one of the 47 million persons who lacked coverage in the U.S. in 2006.
- Patients with inadequate health literacy are diagnosed with cancer at a later stage.
- Populations most likely to suffer from low health literacy include those aged 65 and over, minorities, immigrant populations, and Medicare/Medicaid recipients.
- Forty-six percent of American adults cannot understand the label on their prescription medicine.

High Tech

PRE-K
Kids’ online fitness training program with three components:
- Weight loss management
- Sport specific
- Autism
Streaming health videos on common childhood health problems and prevention
Online family health and parenting support materials

K-12
Online health information for school and personal use
Downloadable fact sheets and brochures on topics including allergies and asthma, diabetes, mental illness, disability, drugs and alcohol, and fitness and nutrition

ADULT
HealthNet database of easy-to-read and navigable websites
Prescreened, trustworthy online consumer health information and magazines
Evidence-based reports, encyclopedias and reference books, news, and streaming videos on diseases, conditions, and surgical procedures
Links to support groups
Online “Information Emergency Room” to provide citizens with accurate information on public health issues, concerns, and safety

High Touch

Strong health information print, audio, and video collections
Dedicated health information computer workstations
Special needs workstations and adaptive technology
Wee Fit programs for children ages 2-4
Signed storytimes
CHIP application centers
Partnerships with local healthcare organizations to provide health screenings
“Reach Out and Read” early literacy programs in family practice and pediatric offices
Workshops on finding reliable online health information
Wii exercise programs for seniors
Health information classes on topics in Healthy People 2010’s focus areas
Partnerships with Department of Aging to develop outreach programs for senior citizens
Partnerships with family literacy programs to incorporate health literacy into the curriculum
Workshops for healthcare providers on health literacy and strategies for communicating with adults with lower literacy
Programs using the TV411 “HealthSmarts” curriculum for adults with lower literacy
National Library of Medicine affiliate programs
Access to current medical research and data through academic libraries