



AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY



Healthy People 2030 Health Literacy Definitions: Historic and Historical

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Disclosures



- I work for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
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What AHRQ Does



Health Systems Research

AHRQ invests in research to understand how to make health care safer and improve quality

Practice Improvement

AHRQ creates materials to teach and train health care professionals and systems to improve care for their patients

Data & Analytics

AHRQ generates measures and data used to track and improve performance and evaluate progress of the U.S. health system

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Overview

- Historic
- Historical
- Process
- Implications

Healthy People



- A national effort that sets 10-year goals and objectives to improve the health and well-being of people in the United States
- Included health literacy as an objective in 2000 with Healthy People 2010

Historic! Healthy People 2030 Elevates Health Literacy



Overarching Goal

Eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, and **attain health literacy** to improve the health and well-being of all.

Foundational Principle

Achieving health and well-being requires eliminating health disparities, achieving health equity, and **attaining health literacy**.

Historic! New Healthy People Health Literacy Definitions



Personal Health Literacy

The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and **use** information and services to inform health-related decisions **and actions** for themselves **and others**.

Organizational Health Literacy

The degree to which organizations **equitably** enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Healthy People 2030's two definitions when taken together constitute health literacy



Historical: the duality of health literacy is not a new concept.

Rima Rudd

**Demands +
Expectations**

**Individual
Skills**



Rima Rudd 2003

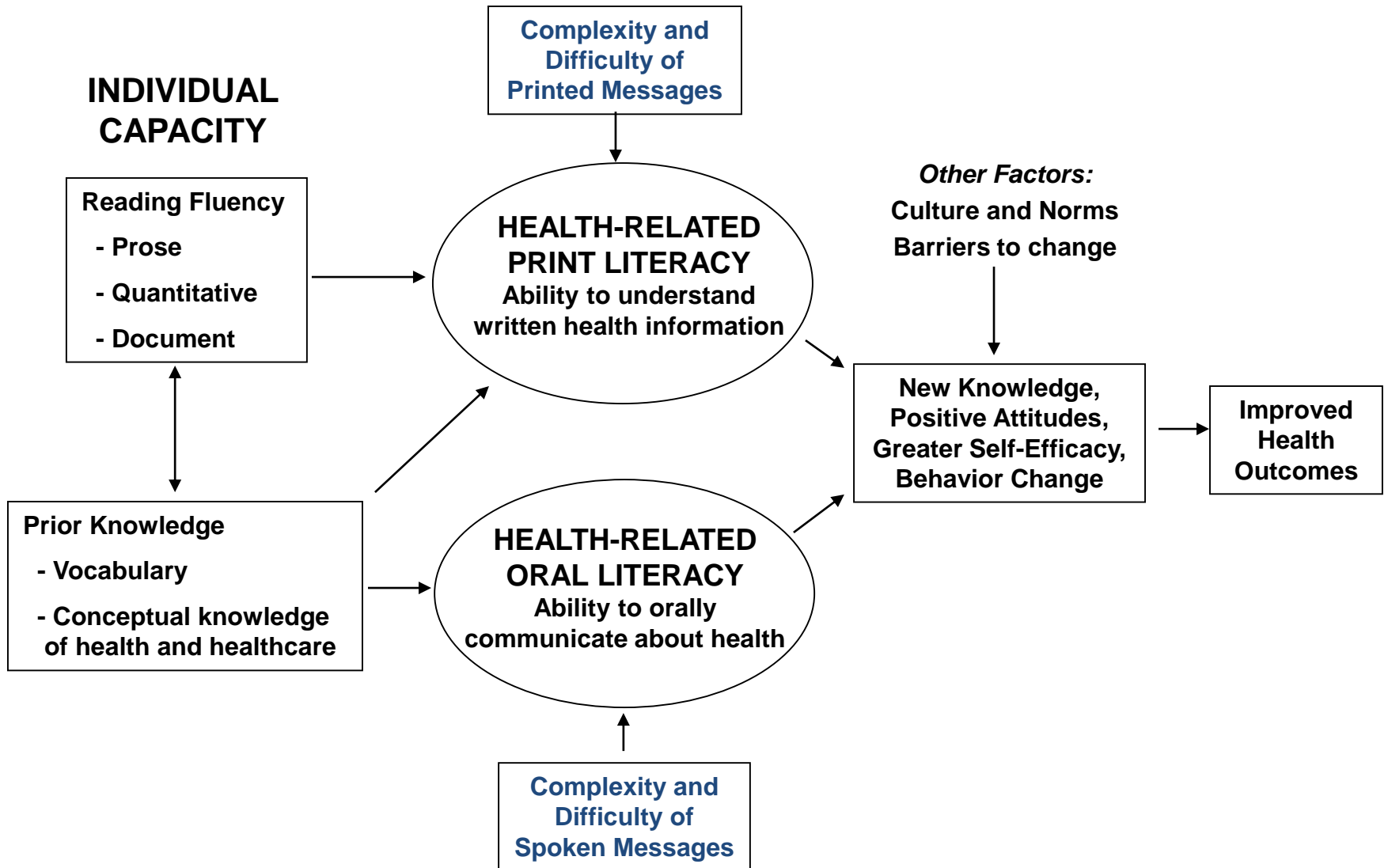


“Although the literacy and verbal skills of individuals are of critical importance, so too are the demands made by the health materials themselves, the communication skills of those in the health field, and the complicated nature of the healthcare and public health systems.”

U.S. DHHHS’s Action Plans to Achieve the Health Communication Objectives in Healthy People 2010

“Navigating the U.S. health-care and public health delivery systems is a complex task with numerous layers of bureaucracy, procedures, and processes. Consequently, an adult’s ability or inability to navigate these systems may reflect systemic complexity as well as individual skill levels.”

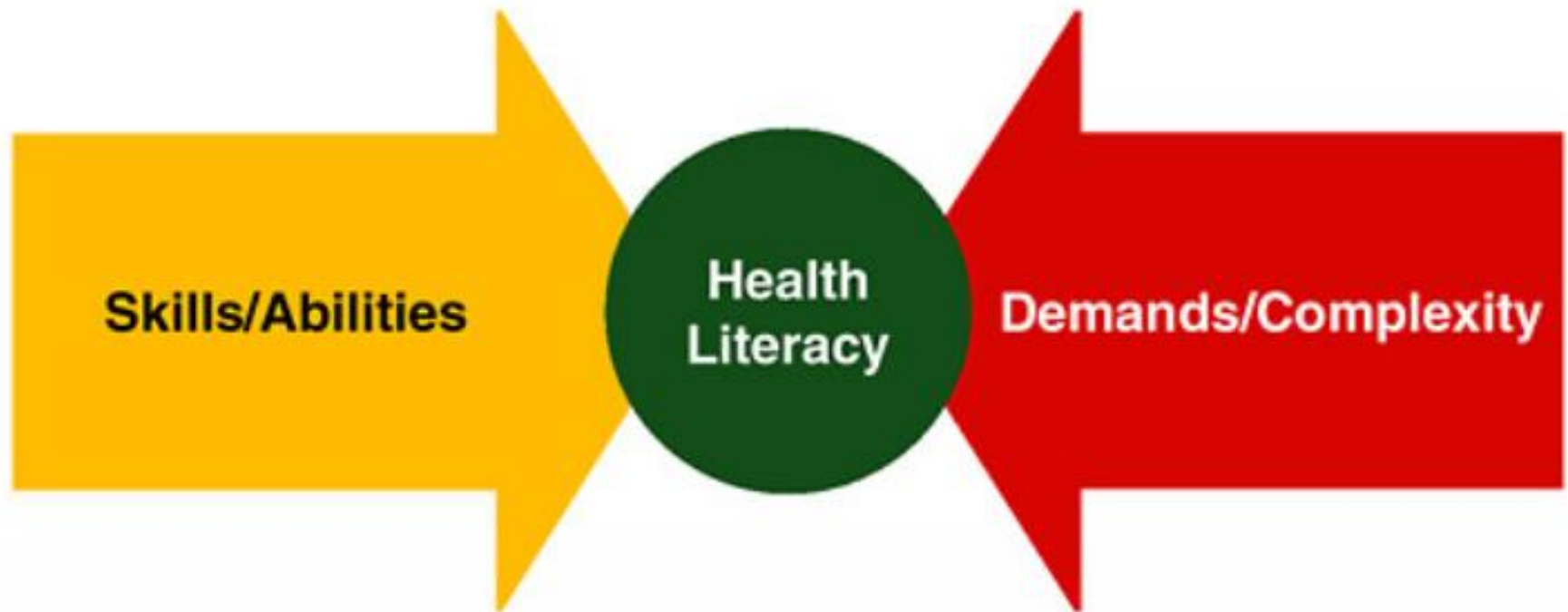
Baker 2006



Calgary Charter 2008

Health literacy allows the public and personnel working in all health-related contexts to find, understand, evaluate, communicate, and use information.

Ruth Parker 2009



“An individual’s ability to read, understand, and act on health information is ultimately determined by the clarity and complexity of the required test.”

Health Literacy Equation



x



=



Skills/Abilities x Ease or Complexity = Health Literacy

“Health literacy is the product of individuals’ capacities and the health literacy-related demands and complexities of the health care system.”
Brach et al. 2012



Where did the new definitions come from?

Dueling Definitions



HP 2010 & 2020

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

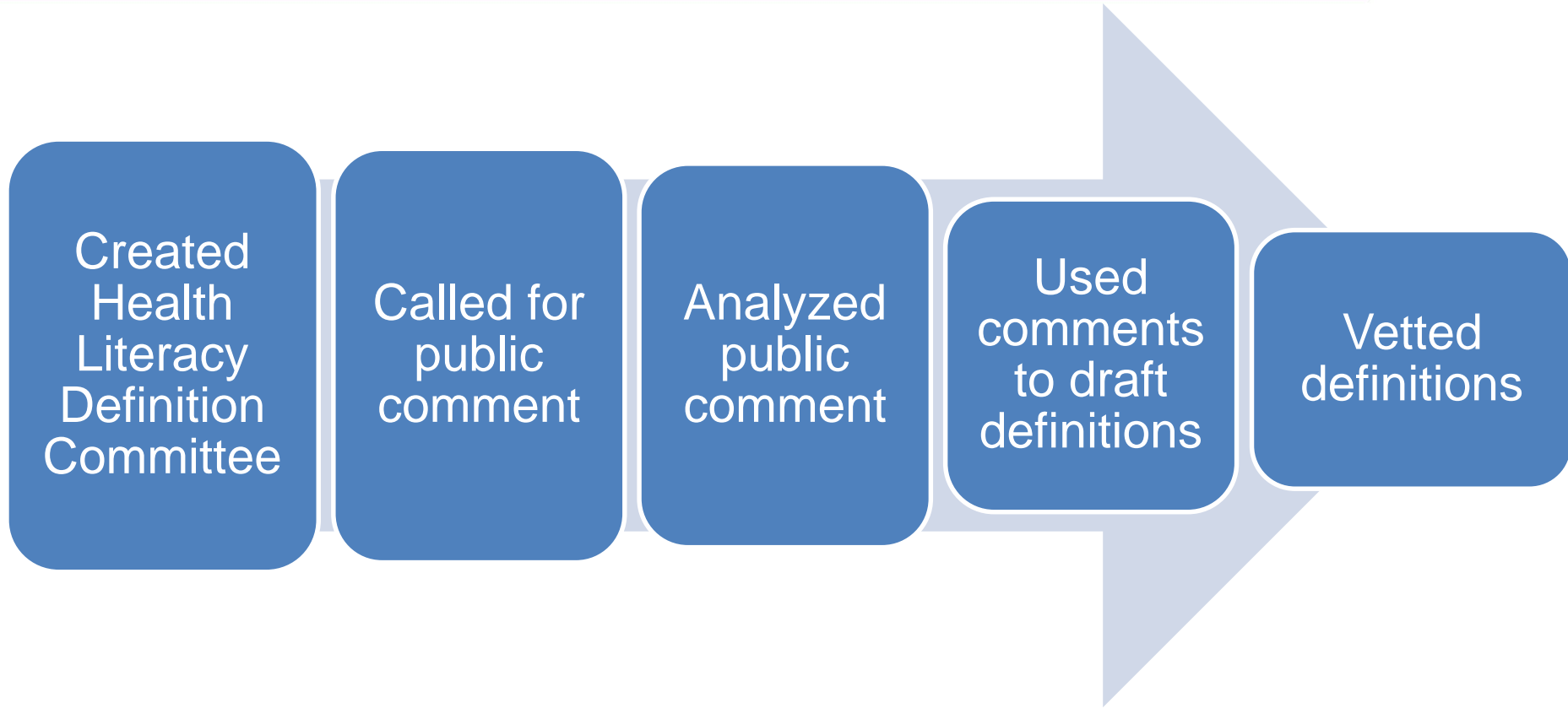
Ratzan and Parker

Secretary's Advisory Committee's Issue Brief

Health literacy occurs when a society provides accurate health information and services that people can easily find, understand, and use to inform their decisions and actions

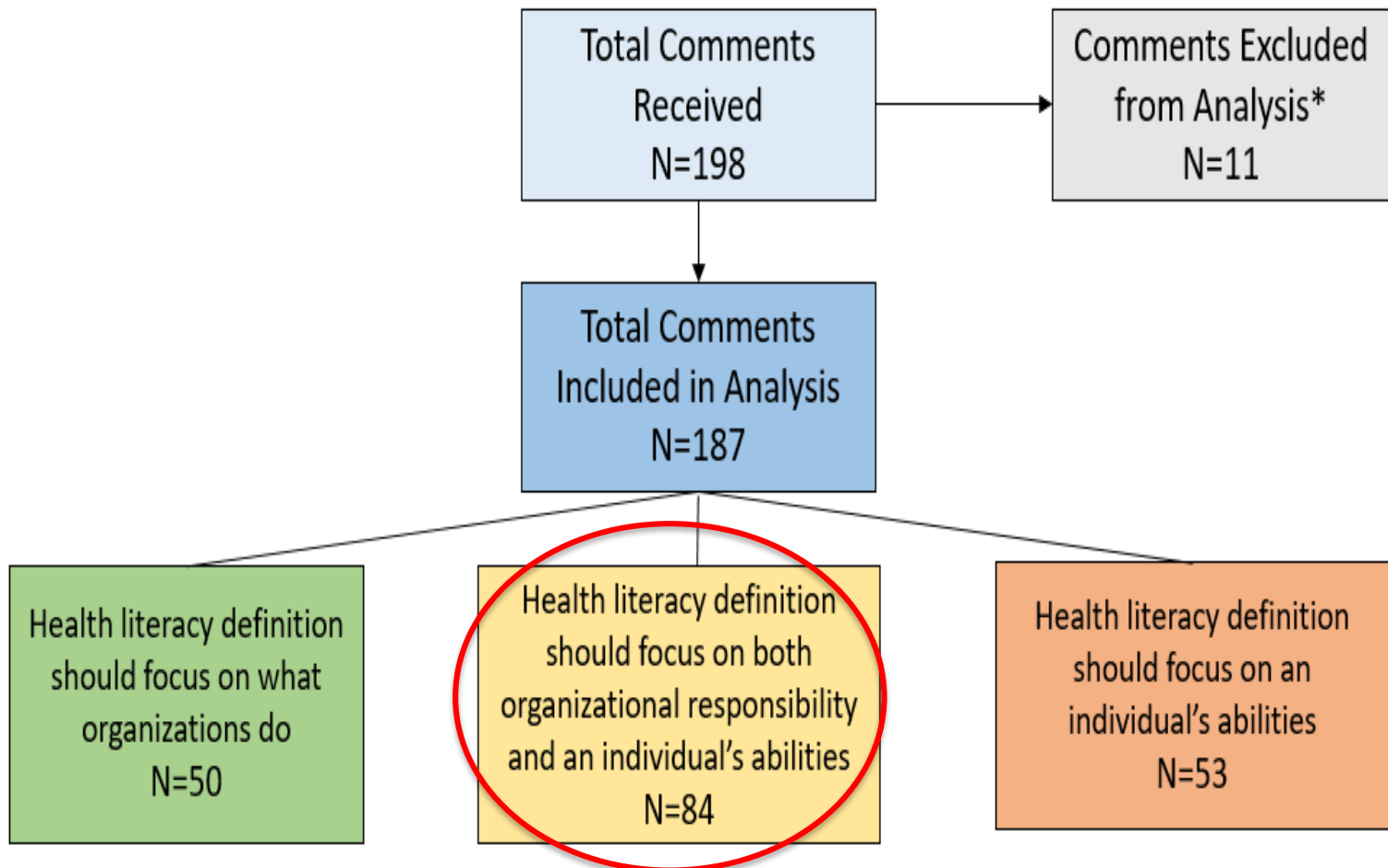
Kleinman, Baur, Rudd, Rubin

The Process



The Health Literacy Definition Committee includes the HC/HIT Topic area coordinators: The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ODPHP, and the 2019 leadership of the HHS Health Literacy Workgroup: the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and ODPHP.

Analysis of Public Comments



New Health Literacy Definitions



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The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

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The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Healthy People 2030's two complementary health literacy definitions when taken together constitute health literacy



**What does this
mean for you?**

Researchers: Personal Definition



- Health literacy measures still work.
- Examine not just at understanding but also action
- Study how to increase personal health literacy – abilities, not knowledge – used for themselves and other

Researchers: Organizational Definition



- Develop measures of organizational health literacy.
 - ▶ For quality improvement
 - ▶ For accountability
 - ▶ For tracking
- Study interventions to improve organizational health literacy
 - ▶ Don't forget health equity!
 - ▶ [Special Emphasis Notice \(SEN\): AHRQ Announces Interest in Research on Improving Organizational Health Literacy to Prevent and Manage Chronic Disease](#)

Practitioners

- Ammunition for advocates: Call to action
- Shift the paradigm: It's us, not them
- Spotlight disparities: Seize the day
- Let's use our personal health literacy to improve organizational health

What questions do you have?



www.AHRQ.gov/health-literacy