

# A Breakthrough Health Literacy Program

*Empowering Parents | Benefiting Children | Improving the Health Care System*



*“This program works at so many levels  
— for families, for medical facilities,  
for taxpayers. It is truly innovative.”*

— Rhode Island Department of Health

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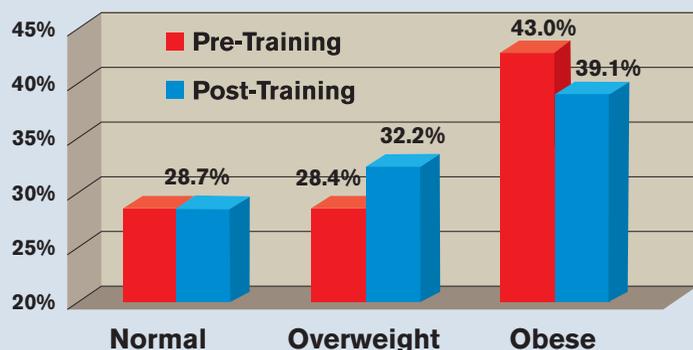
HEALTH CARE INSTITUTE

## Changing the Health Trajectory of our Most Vulnerable Children and Families

### Eat Healthy, Stay Active

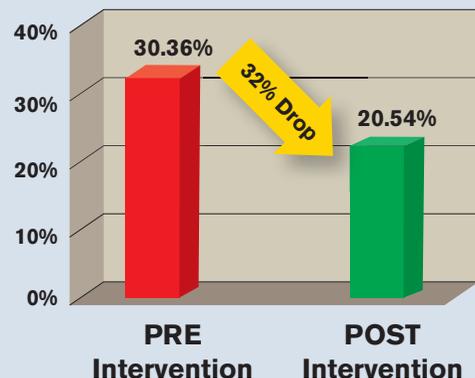
In 2009, the Health Care Institute created a low literacy training program on diabetes risk awareness, budget-conscious nutrition, and importance of physical activity. Eat Healthy-Stay Active's goal is to increase knowledge and awareness of important factors in chronic disease prevention among Head Start staff, parents, and children, and to help each participant translate those skills into action. Low literacy materials were developed to explain basic concepts such as MyPyramid, the food groups, portion control, shopping on a budget, and integrating physical activity into daily life. Below are a few of our results.

#### BODY MASS INDEX RESULTS - ADULTS



The number of participants who were classified as obese decreased by almost 4 percentage points, and the number of participants classified as overweight increased by roughly 4 percentage points. Aggregate BMI for parents and staff decreased significantly from 30.11 to 29.2 ( $p < 0.001$ ), shifting the BMI classification for adults from obese to overweight.

#### CHILDREN'S OBESITY LEVELS DROP



The prevalence of obesity among children decreased by 32% following the intervention ( $p < 0.0001$ ).



### Oral Health

Dental decay is the number one chronic disease in this country. An estimated 40% of all children entering kindergarten have at least one cavity and 51 million school hours are lost each year because of dental illness. Access to oral health services is the number one health concern of parents and Head Start programs nationwide. The Health Care Institute's Oral Health Training Program seeks to improve the oral health education of Head Start parents and families. Through the training, parents and families gain knowledge in the following areas:

- Preventing cavities
- Understand how and when to brush and floss
- Understand that good dental care begins during pregnancy
- Caring for your baby's teeth
- Understand when to visit the dentist

### Other Initiatives

Committed to insuring that all needs are being addressed, HCI's methodology has been applied to target other key health issues.

#### Second Hand Smoke Education

- Learn about the effects of secondhand smoke
- Know how to protect your children from secondhand smoke
- Know the facts about smoking during pregnancy
- Learn about the health risks of smoking
- Develop a health habit

#### Read and Understand Medicine Labels

- Learn how to choose over-the-counter medications
- Learn proper dosage amounts
- Learn the side effects of medications
- Learn how to avoid medicating a problem you don't have
- Know when the medication expires

#### What To Do When You're Having a Baby

- Learn how to have a healthy baby
- Learn how to care for yourself before, during and after pregnancy
- Learn how to care for your newborn baby

## The UCLA/Johnson & Johnson HEALTH CARE INSTITUTE

### Solving Dilemmas Caused by Low Health Literacy

Each day, emergency rooms, clinics and doctors' offices across the United States fill up with anxious parents who bring their children for minor ailments that could be treated at home. Often they wait for hours to see a medical professional. The children miss school, parents lose time at work and, usually, much-needed pay. Our overburdened health care system becomes more crowded and taxpayer costs for medical services at the local level and for the federal Medicaid programs escalate sharply.

The UCLA/Johnson & Johnson Health Care Institute, applying health training techniques based on academic research, is helping families and communities nationwide to overcome these dilemmas by addressing a root cause: low health literacy.

**Moreover, the program has had startling benefits: parents have discovered a sense of empowerment, characterized by a marked improvement in their self confidence and self esteem, and willingness to share newfound knowledge with others in the community.**

Approximately 90 million adults have trouble understanding and acting on health information — and this population is prone to use health services at a higher rate. Perhaps they are not proficient in English or have limited education and cannot check a medical guide or online service. Perhaps they do not have the confidence to tackle common childhood illnesses at home. Perhaps, in wanting the best care for their children, they simply assume they must seek professional help.

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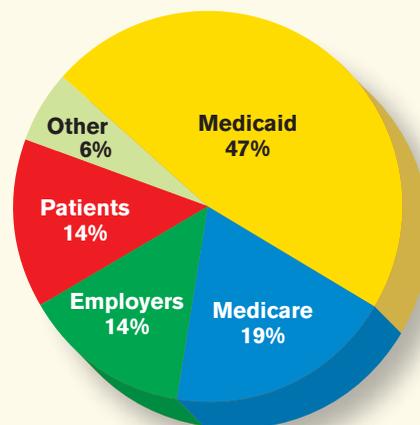
*“What I find most compelling is that a very modest investment can have a huge return for our society.”*

— Head Start Executive Director

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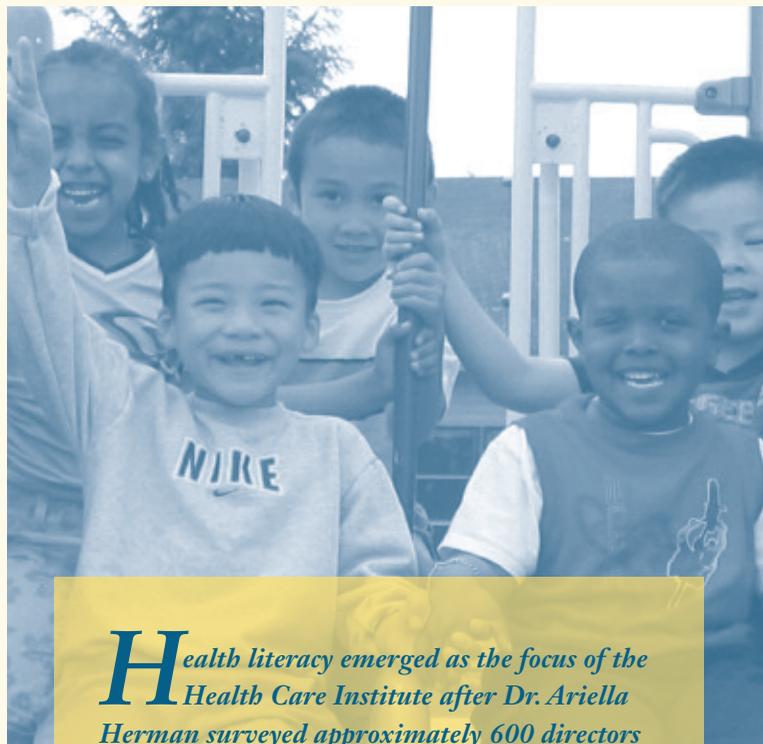
The Health Care Institute proves that the challenges of low health literacy can be surmounted: that parents can gain the knowledge and skills to care for a sick child, thereby relieving the pressure on the health care system and reducing medical costs to the public. In short, empowering parents in this way has enabled them to become the first line of defense for their children's health — and has untold benefits for society.

### WHO PAYS FOR THE COST OF LOW HEALTH LITERACY?



The direct medical costs of low literacy are financed through additional hospital and office visits, longer hospital stays, and extra tests, procedures, and prescriptions. While all payers fund these additional resources, taxpayers finance a disproportionate share.

Source: Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc.



**H**health literacy emerged as the focus of the Health Care Institute after Dr. Ariella Herman surveyed approximately 600 directors of Head Start programs nationwide. This research, the most comprehensive of its type ever, revealed that parents' lack of knowledge was the barrier to their children receiving appropriate health care at home.

## Empowering Parents, Benefiting Children, Improving the Health Care System

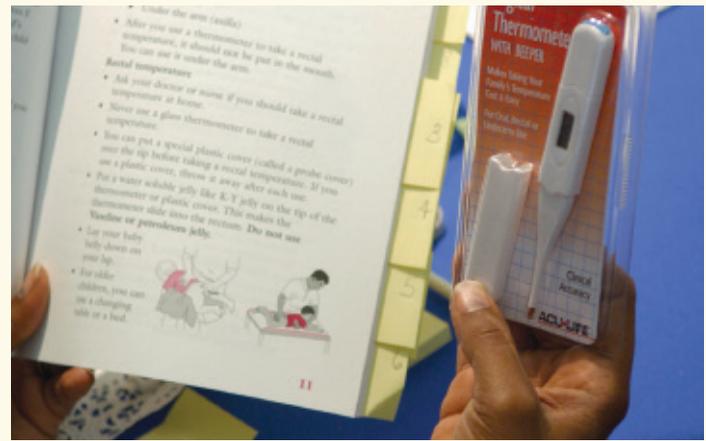
Recognizing the low level of health literacy among parents in an initial core group of Head Start parents, the Health Care Institute was founded with a clear goal: to better serve low-income children and families by providing the appropriate tools to help them make more-informed decisions regarding their health. Four objectives guide the program:

- Empower parents in decision making for the health care needs of their children
- Enhance parents' self esteem and confidence in meeting their parental objectives
- Enable parents to become better caregivers for their children by improving their health care knowledge and skills
- Provide training and information to participating child/family-focused organizations to successfully implement health care literacy training programs for families.

*“My son had a fever and I panicked a little bit, but then I remembered the training and I said, ‘Wait a minute. I don’t have to run to the ER. I know what to do.’”*

— Head Start parent

The results are tangible and profound. Since it began operations in 2001, the Health Care Institute has taught thousands of parents how to treat everyday childhood illnesses at home, easing the burden on local emergency rooms and clinics. At a one-time average cost of just \$100 per family, the training achieves remarkable results. (See charts this page.)



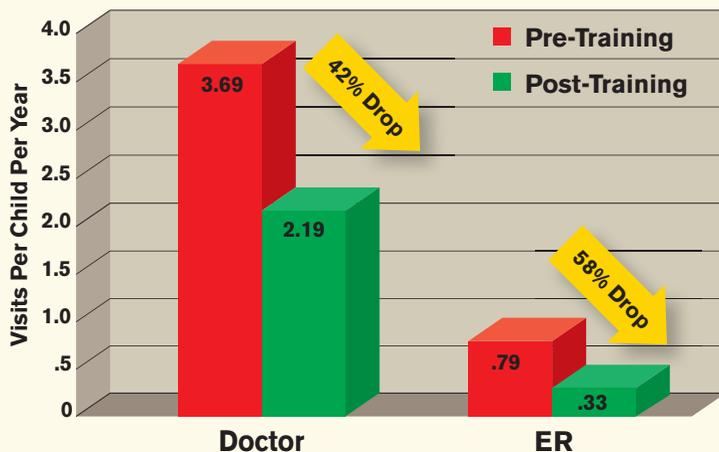
Medicaid, which pays for care for many families with low health literacy, can potentially save at least \$554 per family annually in direct costs related to clinic/ER visits.

- For the first 10,000 families trained in the program, this could mean a potential savings of \$5.5 million.
- By training one million families, over half a billion dollars could be saved annually.

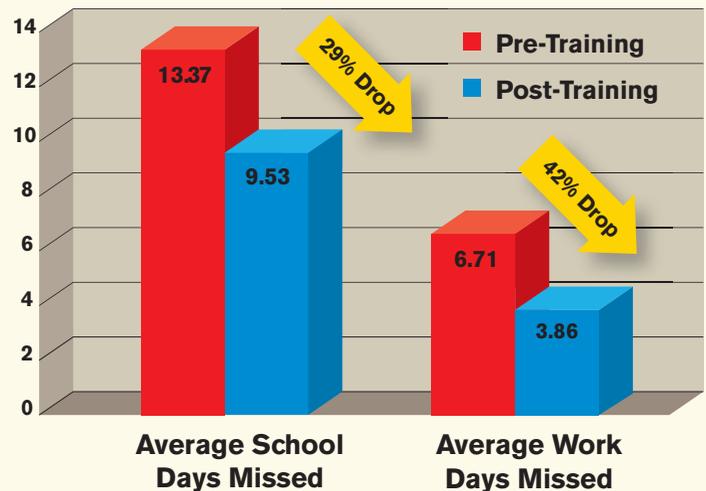
The impact goes far beyond the trained families. Parents share their knowledge and skills with family members and friends.

Overall, empowering parents to care for their children at home reduces overcrowding in community health facilities, taking pressure off medical staffs and freeing them up to care for people with serious health problems.

HOW PARENTS' BEHAVIOR CHANGED...



...AND THE IMPACT AT SCHOOL AND WORK



*“Any time you educate the general public about ways to help themselves, you benefit those who work in health care and in public safety.”*

– Chief of Police

The Health Care Institute is committed to ensuring 100 percent parental participation.



Arrangements are made to eliminate barriers such as lack of transportation and child care.



## How the Program Works to Expand the Circle of Knowledge

The Health Care Institute training model is specifically designed to ensure that families, children and organizations achieve long-term, lasting benefits from participation. Faculty from UCLA and other renowned universities and experts in early childhood education participate to expand this circle of knowledge.

### Train-the-Trainers

Programs selected to participate are required to attend a two-day Train-the-Trainer session that introduces them to the Health Care Institute and gives them the tools they need to successfully execute the program at the local level. This includes instruction in strategy implementation, project management, parent and staff motivation, marketing and community relations. Further, each organization develops a Health Improvement Project that outlines the particular program’s goals and serves as the tool to help the local teams plan the parent-training event. Finally, they participate in a mock parent-training session, a critical component of the Train-the-Trainers program that allows participants to see firsthand, from start to finish, the ideal way to conduct such a session.

All of this preparation ensures that the work of the Health Care Institute is customized to directly affect the children and families of the local communities.

### Parent Training

Parent-training sessions are tailored to the demographic, language and cultural needs of the families at each participating organization. During the session, parents receive basic health care and medical information, and learn to use *What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick*, by Gloria Mayer, RN, and Ann Kuklierus, RN, a low-literacy guide covering more than 50 common childhood illnesses. Parents also

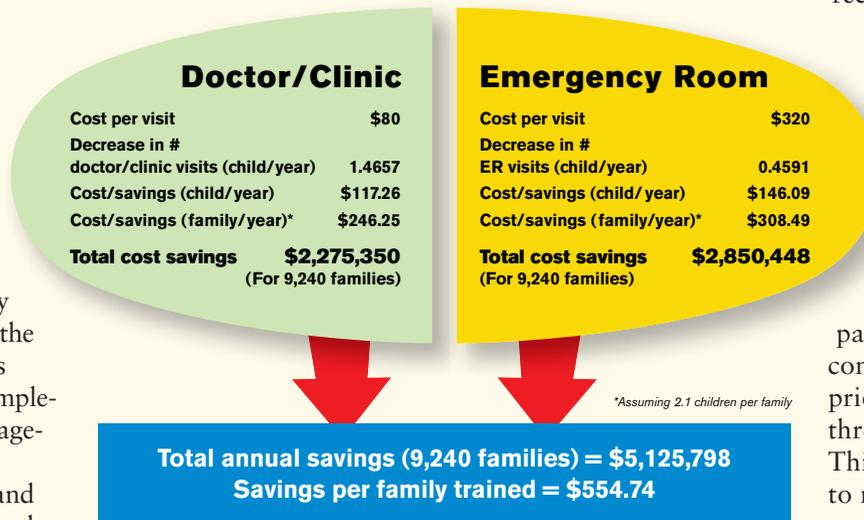
receive hands-on instruction in key actions, such as taking temperatures and measuring medicine.

### Measurement and Assessment

To measure the success of the program, parents are asked to complete an assessment prior to training and three months afterward. This exercise is designed to measure parents’ perceptions and knowledge of health care and their confidence or anxiety in

taking care of their children when they are sick. Post-training intervention with the families is central to the success of the program. These sessions, occurring monthly for three months, provide another one-on-one opportunity to reinforce the concepts learned at the parent training and to inquire about illnesses, treatment sites, and school or work absences. Perhaps most important, these meetings provide parents with ongoing encouragement and support.

### COST SAVINGS TO MEDICAID



**Total annual savings (9,240 families) = \$5,125,798**  
**Savings per family trained = \$554.74**

**20,000 families = \$11.1 million**

## Validated by a Decade of Outcomes Data



The Health Care Institute's Methodology is a comprehensive approach to health empowerment for Head Start parents, children and staff with an array of programs targeting key health issues. We are building a better future for the most vulnerable children by providing a strategic model for successful implementation of any health literacy education programs.



HCI is committed to improving the health of underserved populations. Since its inception, HCI has trained nearly 43,000 families in the treatment of common childhood illnesses. It is our goal to improve the health literacy of families nationwide so that they may better meet the health care needs of their children.

*"I have seen and done a lot of parent trainings, but I have never done anything that is as exciting as the Health Care Institute. Everybody needs it."*

— Head Start Executive Director

*"Our mission is to enable child/family focused organizations to effectively increase the health literacy of parents through a training and support program that gives them the knowledge, confidence and resources to care for common childhood ailments at home."*



### Ariella Herman, Ph.D.

Research Director of the Health Care Institute

Dr. Herman's research and consulting have been in the areas of, child care and health care management systems. In the last 10 years her main focus has been on low income population and developing low literacy health education programs. She is a key contributor to several programs conducted by the Harold and Pauline Price Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at UCLA Anderson and serves as an instructor in the UCLA/Johnson & Johnson Head Start Management Fellows Program.

Dr. Herman has received several awards for outstanding teaching, including the Citibank teaching award in 1995. She was recognized with the Head Start-Johnson & Johnson Exceptional Teaching Award and the Health Literacy Award for the "most innovative Health education & Promotion Program" in 2009. Most recently, her research with the Health Care Institute has been published in the Journal of Community Health, Journal of Emergency Medicine, and has been featured in several high profile news publications. Dr. Herman holds a Ph.D. in management, a M.S. in engineering, a B.A. in mathematics and she is fluent in seven languages.

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