



# Institute for Healthcare Advancement

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) offers seven ACAP accredited micro-credentials as part of their Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program (HLSCP). IHA first achieved an ACAP accredited program in June 2022.



Advancing Health Literacy toward Health Equity

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) offers a self-paced online program that consists of 50 lessons across seven critical health literacy domains. Each domain represents an online, self-paced course called a micro-credential. The participants are offered the opportunity to complete all seven micro-credentials to earn the Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program (HLSCP). This certificate program has been designed to enhance a person’s health literacy knowledge and ability to complete tasks regardless of work environment.

The health literacy community is comprised of professionals from diverse disciplines such as health care, academia, public health, and health communication. Each profession brings its own health literacy perspective, experience, and expectations for professional development and growth opportunities.

As of May, 2024, a total of **2,549 people** have participated in the program. The organization has issued **18,203 certificates** with 604 participants completing all seven micro-credentials to earn the HLS certificate.



"Budgeting sufficient time and securing administrative support are critical to navigating the accreditation process smoothly. Staying organized, using a checklist, and establishing efficient file-sharing methods—like a shared folder on the right platform—are essential for keeping everything on track and ensuring success."



**Rachel Roberts, MPH, MPCHEs®**  
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## WHY IHA SOUGHT ACCREDITATION

IHA pursued accreditation for the Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program (HLSCP) to enhance the rigor and credibility of the planning and development process. As an organization with a broad network of colleagues in the U.S. and around the world, IHA is regarded as a leader in health literacy and aims to set a higher standard for work and deliverables.

## VALUE OF ACAP ACCREDITATION

An accredited assessment-based certificate program (ABCCAP) accredited by I.C.E. distinguishes IHA from other certificate programs that are based solely on attendance and completion rather than performance. Learning about the planning and development process required under the ICE 1100 Standards adds a layer of relevance and credibility to professionals that they may not find with other programs. Potential candidates have shared they are impressed by the care taken in the development and by the fact that the modules are accredited by a third-party.



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## HOW IHA PREPARED FOR ACCREDITATION

The level of effort expended on the development of the seven modules was extensive. The organization engaged over 60 Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop the program. They recruited these participants through conference attendee information and from the Health Literacy Solutions Center, which IHA sponsors. They sent invitations that included descriptions of the tasks and an offer of a \$250 honoraria for each task required. They received over 100 applications. Their selection process included attention to a wide variety of characteristics to build diverse panels including: geographic location, professional background, race and ethnicity, gender, age, number of years as practitioners, whether they were in a rural or urban setting, and whether they practiced in a for-profit or non-profit organization. These SMEs were separated between content development and assessment development, with a limited amount of crossover.

Their original plan was to have one module with one certificate. Once the SMEs developed the learning objectives they recommended the separation of the content into the seven modules. The development of content for one module was an estimated six months. As they finished a module, they launched it on their learning platform. The overall development time from the job analysis to release covered approximately five years.

Once the development process was complete, IHA initiated the accreditation process. They began with accrediting one module with the expectation that they would bundle the other six once they learned the full process. The process to complete the application for the first module took about three months. The greatest challenge they identified was the amount of work and time involved in gathering the information and reviewing the application drafts. However, as they worked through the process, they found that the I.C.E. staff was responsive to questions via telephone and email. Also, the application platform was simple to navigate.

IHA used several consultants to complete the various tasks, including a psychometrician, an organization familiar with accreditation, an instructional designer, and a proof reader. They also employed an organization to assist in the item-writing activities.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR IHA

IHA is now exploring a health literacy certification as a next step in professional development. They completed the job task analysis, validation survey, and feasibility study. Additionally, they identified a partner to assist with certification responsibilities. They also plan to apply for reaccreditation of the micro-credentials, as the interest generated among academics and nurses, supports continuous offering of the modules.

## IMPACTS OF ACCREDITATION

- 1 The Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program was well-received and highly valued by professionals across the United States and Canada.
- 2 Many public health departments now require their staff to complete these micro-credentials to stay relevant in their field.
- 3 Departments are receiving grant funding to offer the program, highlighting its importance and impact.
- 4 Some states sponsor health literacy coalitions, allowing IHA to develop specific marketing efforts such as offering a group rate.
- 5 The Center for Disease Control and Prevention awarded the Orange County (California) Health Care Agency, \$26 million to improve equity in the county. A portion of these funds was earmarked for projects addressing the social determinants of health.
- 6 IHA was awarded funds to improve organizational health literacy in four large public agencies using the certificate program as the foundation.

