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Building a Coalition to Promote Health Literacy in Central Massachusetts

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Building a Coalition to Promote Health Literacy in Central Massachusetts

Central Massachusetts Health Literacy Project

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Problem

Low health literacy is linked to

- higher rates of hospitalization
- higher use of expensive emergency service
- poor health outcomes.

Low health literacy is more common among those

- who are over 65
- belong to a racial/ethnic minority group, and
- have poor health status or no insurance.

Central Massachusetts has a large population of residents with low health literacy:

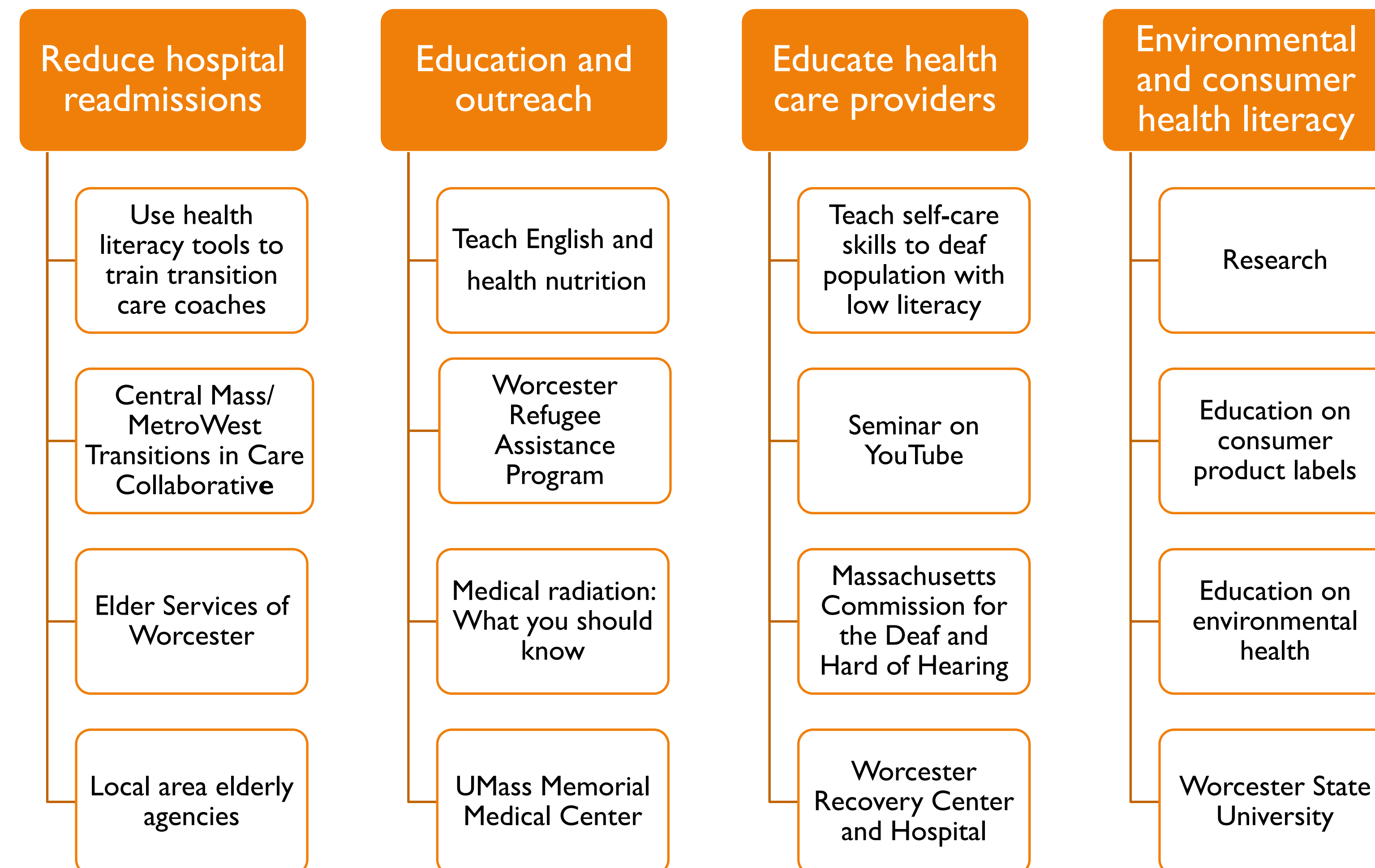
- increasing number of immigrants and refugees from South America, Africa, and Asia
- about 22% of Worcester residents in the age range of 12-17 live below poverty line (twice the state rate of 11.2%)
- per capita income for Worcester families is \$18,614 (significantly below poverty level)
- about 28 % of the population speaks a language other than English

(MassChip Health Status Indicators Report, 2009)

SOLUTION

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions (IOM, 2001).

The Central Massachusetts Health Literacy Project is a coalition of health care providers who share the vision of a healthier Central Massachusetts through health literacy efforts. Future plans include recruiting health care providers from diverse disciplines, securing funds, promoting community-based research activities, and forming a speakers bureau.



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