
COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO

PROVINCIAL STANDARD FOR THE TRAINING OF VOLUNTEER TUTORS

September 2003

After extensive research within the community-based literacy field, the following “Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors” was developed by Community Literacy of Ontario. It is CLO’s hope that this standard will set the bar and recognize the professionalism of community literacy agencies. The use of the standard is strictly voluntary and is meant to provide agencies with a tool to evaluate and enhance the practices currently being utilized. It is also meant to inspire and encourage agencies to look at the components of their tutor training and work towards consistency across Ontario.

INTAKE

The Canadian Human Rights Act

The agency respects the conventions of the Canadian Human Rights Act by accepting applications from potential tutors without discrimination.

Benefits:

- Diversity is encouraged
- The volunteer base in agencies reflects the community in which they deliver service

Standard Information Package

It is recommended that the agency provide potential tutors with a standard information package that contains: information about the position, the length of the required training, any qualifications or skills needed, costs (if any) associated with training; information about the screening and selection process, and about the types of supports the volunteer will receive from the agency, confidentiality agreements, an application form and a written position description.

Benefits:

- Potential tutors have a clear understanding of the position, responsibilities, qualifications and required skills.
- Standard information allows all potential volunteers to make informed decisions about continuing with the process.

Application Form

It is suggested that the agency provides all potential tutors with an application form that collects at a minimum the following information: name and contact information, education, employment

history, relevant skills, availability, and two references; and requires the applicant to provide a writing sample. The application also includes written information about the agency's screening and intake process and any rules regarding confidentiality.

Benefits:

- Potential volunteer tutors are given the information they need to make an informed decision about continuing with the process.
- Completed applications provide agencies with the information to make an informed decision about inviting potential tutors to the initial training.
- Key information is given to the volunteer about the importance of the learning process taking place in a safe, comfortable environment.

TRAINING and SERVICE DELIVERY

Service Delivery

The agency is committed to the delivery of a learner-centred, goal-directed service to adult literacy learners.

Benefits:

- Everyone is aware of this commitment and works toward it.
- The learning needs of adult literacy learners are understood and respected.
- The aims of the LBS Learning Outcomes Approach are achieved.

Initial Tutor Training

The agency delivers, or participates in the delivery of, initial tutor training that provides potential tutors with the opportunity to gain and practice skills. It is recommended that the training is at least 15 hours in length and uses active learning and a variety of delivery methods to maximize the opportunity for learning. Common components should be included for provincial consistency.

Benefits:

- The quality, effectiveness and consistency of training and service delivery are maintained.
- Volunteers have had initial training and understand the needs and challenges of the adult literacy learner
- Learners are matched with trained and committed volunteers.
- Volunteers are given opportunities to gain skills and knowledge and provide input through active participation.
- The credibility of the community-based literacy delivery system is ensured.

CLO recommends that initial tutor training include the following components:

Understanding the Need

- Reasons why people come to community-based programs
- Factors affecting learning
- Effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual
- Awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally

Understanding Your Role

- Creating a positive learning environment
- Using a learning outcomes approach
- Monitoring and recording the learner's progress
- Commitment to active/ongoing learning
- Knowing your responsibilities as a tutor

Understanding the Adult Learner

- Characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
- Accommodating learning styles
- Understanding special needs
- Goal-setting
- Supporting learner input and participation

Understanding Service Delivery

- How to get started with teaching Reading, Writing and Numeracy
- Introduction to the five LBS Levels
- Using appropriate strategies for teaching Reading, Writing and Numeracy
- Lesson planning and tutoring with an outcomes-based focus.
- Finding, creating, and modifying learning materials
- Providing feedback to learners and the agency

ONGOING SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

Commitment

The agency is committed to the ongoing support and training of its volunteer tutors.

Benefit:

- Volunteer tutors get the resources, support and ongoing training they need within the individual agency's means.

Evaluation

It is recommended that the agency provide an opportunity for volunteer tutors to participate in an evaluation process.

Benefits:

- Volunteers receive feedback on their performance
- Learners receive better instruction
- The ongoing training needs of volunteers are identified
- Volunteers receive information on what supports, resources and ongoing training are available from the agency and how to access them
- The volunteer tutors' confidence in their ability to do the job is increased.

VOLUNTEER EXIT

Exit process

The agency has a clear process in place for volunteer exit. This process includes both voluntary and involuntary volunteer exits. Volunteer exits also may involve either leaving the agency completely, or exiting a specific match or volunteer position within an agency.

Benefits:

- The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of a voluntary exit.
- The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of an involuntary exit.
- Appropriate matches are supported and inappropriate matches are adjusted as necessary

CLO Publications
