

Helpful Resources for Serving Adult Learners Facing Multiple Barriers

September 2021



Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills programs have long served adult learners facing multiple barriers to learning. These barriers and vulnerabilities include poverty, education levels, disabilities, lack of social supports, limited access to information, employment status, poor health conditions and more.

Supporting adult learners facing multiple barriers has long been a top priority and keen focus of literacy educators. In response, Community Literacy of Ontario has researched and created five factsheets to create awareness and share strategies and resources to help support vulnerable learners in LBS programs.

CLO's Supporting LBS Learners Facing Multiple Barriers Factsheets cover the following topics:

1. **Effective Strategies**
2. **Barriers to Learning**
3. **Strengths of the LBS Program**
4. **Partnerships & Connections**
5. **Helpful Resources**



Introduction

Literacy and Basic Skills organizations have consistently developed strong linkages and a variety of partnerships in their communities to best support adult learners facing multiple barriers.

Community Literacy of Ontario has compiled a variety of impactful resources related to poverty and vulnerability.

Partnership Success Stories - Literacy and Basic Skills Agencies and Ontario Works

Community Literacy of Ontario, November 2019

This collection of eight [Partnership Success Stories](#) focuses on effective partnerships between Literacy and Basic Skills agencies and Ontario Works. The success stories serve to illustrate how LBS agencies can serve learners with multiple barriers by developing unique partnerships with Ontario Works in their region.

“We are a place of second chances. Our learners know this and so do we. We don’t ignore or minimize the barriers they face. Instead, we teach them skills and ways to access the services they deserve and need.”

Quote from an LBS Educator

Coordinating to Bring Low-Literacy and Marginalized Clients Employment

Literacy Link South Central and partners, February 2014

This [document](#) looks at the state of the labour market in Ontario now and in the future and considers how low literacy individuals could be affected in the future. This project includes ten strategies for assisting low skilled or low-literacy individuals attain their employment goals.

Improving Our Knowledge of and Responses to Singles on Ontario Works in Toronto – Executive Summary Report

Toronto Employment and Social Services, April 2018

This [Executive Summary Report](#) covers the state of single people receiving Ontario Works support in Toronto, Ontario. The summary covers details from four working reports and includes key findings and next steps.

Walk a Mile in Their Shoes - Documenting the Experiences and Needs of Singles in Receipt of Ontario Works in Toronto

Toronto Employment and Social Services, March 2018

The [Walk a Mile in Their Shoes Report](#) is one of the four working reports included in the previous executive summary. The report is a detailed look at the lived experience of single persons receiving Ontario Works support in Toronto, Ontario. It covers topics such as housing, food security, health, and more.

No Simple Story - Singles, Deep Poverty and Ontario Works in Toronto

Toronto Employment and Social Services, March 2018

The [No Simple Story Report](#) is one of the four working reports included in the previous executive summary. The report is a detailed look at the lived experience of single persons receiving Ontario Works support in Toronto, Ontario. The report includes interviews and covers what it means to be single, deep poverty, and more.

“We started a lunch voucher program, funded by a service club in our town. Our learners were so happy. One said “I’ve been saving my money for food for the kids and going without myself. This helps me so much.” We are so happy to meet this learner’s need, but it’s VERY wrong that she must face this circumstance.”

Quote from an LBS Educator

Prosper Canada Website

The [Prosper Canada website](#) contains a wide variety of information and resources related to poverty. Prosper Canada is a national charity dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for Canadians living in poverty through program and policy innovation. Prosper Canada develops and promotes financial policies, programs and resources, which can be found on their website.

Literacy + OW: Best Practices for Serving Ontario Works Clients

Community Literacy of Ontario, 2013

CLO’s [Literacy + OW Newsletter](#) shares best practices on how literacy practitioners can and do work with Ontario Works clients. The best practices were prepared through a review of existing resources, a survey of CLO’s member literacy agencies, and a focus group with the CLO Board of Directors.

“Everyone is a product of their individual experiences. If we don’t make the time and space to understand those experiences, it is difficult to build trust and develop relationships – both of which are foundations for success.”

Quote from an LBS Educator

Working with Learners Living in Poverty – Webinar #1

Literacy and Essential Skills as a Poverty Reduction Strategy
QUILL Learning Network, Pop Up PD for Literacy Educators, September 2019

In [Webinar 1](#) of this series, Angela Briscoe from Frontier College discussed research around literacy and poverty reduction. The webinar included an overview of the report’s 11 key research findings and 11 strategic recommendations which point to the need for improved coordination and collaboration in efforts to address poverty in our communities. Best practices were highlighted, such as customizing learning resources and using learner-centred approaches that harness the experience and needs of adult learners.

Working with Learners Living in Poverty – Webinar #2

Better Research for Better Practice: Understanding the characteristics, experiences and trajectories of OW clients in Toronto

QUILL Learning Network, Pop Up PD for Literacy Educators, October 2019

In [Webinar 2](#) of this series, staff from Toronto Employment and Social Services shared the results of a research study of singles on Ontario Works in Toronto. The focus of the study was to better understand their characteristics, service experiences and needs, how the singles caseload is changing over time, and what factors might predict exits to employment for this population group. Key study findings were presented with points on how to connect research results to frontline service planning and program design.

Working with Learners Living in Poverty – Webinar #3

Skills Upgrading Programs Supporting People Living in Poverty

QUILL Learning Network, Pop Up PD for Literacy Educators, November 2019

In [Webinar 3](#) of this series, four presenters discussed how Literacy and Basic Skills programs assist people who are living in poverty develop their skills, achieve their goals, and receive support to move on to further education or employment.

Project Ontario Works (POW)

Literacy Link Niagara, 2012

[Project Ontario Works](#) is an innovative resource that includes the following documents:

- Building Partnerships Between Adult Literacy & Ontario Works – A Best Practices Guide
- Final Report
- Sensitive Language Tip Sheet
- POW Quick-Screen

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Quote from an LBS Educator

Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy – A backgrounder on poverty in Canada

Government of Canada

This [website](#) provides an in-depth overview of the nature of poverty in Canada. It includes the definition of poverty in Canada as well as details about groups likely to experience poverty.

Discussion Paper - Literacy and Poverty

Frontier College, 2019

This 7-page [Discussion Paper](#) highlights statistics related to literacy and poverty, the barriers encountered, poverty reduction strategies, potential interventions and key questions.

Literacy and Essential Skills as a Poverty Reduction Strategy - National Research Report

Frontier College, 2019

This [National Research Report](#) looks at the relationship between literacy levels and life outcomes, specifically the relationship with poverty. The report includes 11 key findings and 11 recommendations.

Conclusion

The Supporting LBS Learners Facing Multiple Barriers Factsheets were research and written by Community Literacy of Ontario. CLO is a provincial network of community-based Literacy and Basic Skills agencies. We are located in Barrie, Ontario. You can learn more about our organization by visiting our website and by following us on Facebook and Twitter.

CLO hopes that our factsheets capture the effective strategies, unique strengths, innovative partnerships and helpful resources developed by Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills programs to support the courageous adult learners who engage in learning despite the many barriers they face.

To learn more, read our full report: [Supporting LBS Learners Facing Multiple Barriers](#).

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Our factsheets can be freely downloaded from CLO’s website at: <https://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca>.