

An illustration of a living room. In the foreground, there is a yellow sofa with orange cushions. In front of the sofa is a white coffee table with a pink bowl on it. To the right, there is a blue and pink patterned rug. In the background, there is a white lamp with a white shade and a white floor lamp with a white shade. The walls are a light beige color.

# Opening Doors

## Literacy and Homelessness Information & Referral Protocol

Developed by  
Street Haven Learning Centre for the  
Toronto Street Education Coalition  
2002

# Acknowledgements

*Opening Doors: Literacy and Homelessness Information & Referral Protocol, 2002.*

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# Introduction



# Introduction

This document is a result of a project by Street Haven Learning Centre. The project, entitled "StreetReach", was a joint effort by the members of the **Toronto Street Education Coalition** (TSEC). TSEC has worked together for the last three years sharing information and advocating for literacy work with homeless and socially isolated learners. The partner agencies of TSEC include: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, Alpha-Toronto, Street Haven Learning Centre, and Beat the Street.

One of the deliverables of the project was to produce an information and referral protocol for use by agencies serving people who are homeless to assist them in referring potential learners to literacy services.

The object of this protocol is to provide staff in drop-ins and shelters information which will enable them to:

- understand and be aware of the issue of literacy;
- identify a person with literacy issues;
- talk to the client regarding literacy needs in a safe and supportive way;
- and find out the best place to refer participants with literacy needs.

## ***Who will benefit from this protocol?***

- **Social service agencies** that work with people who are homeless will benefit by learning more about literacy issues.
- **Potential literacy learners** who are homeless will benefit because staff at the places they go will be able to address their literacy needs as well as the other basic needs they have (e.g. food, clothing, shelter).

## What is literacy?

**Literacy** can be broadly defined as the ability to read, write and use numbers to perform common everyday tasks. Literacy is different from English as a Second Language (ESL) because it defines a person's skills in their first language.

Clients who require **English as a Second Language** speak a first language other than English and can read and write in that language. Clients who speak a language other than English as their first language but who do not read or write in that language would require **ESL Literacy**. It is generally believed that it is easier to learn to read and write in English if you are literate in your first language. Therefore some programs suggest that you learn literacy in your first language prior to learning English literacy.

In Ontario there are four streams in the literacy field: Anglophone, Francophone, Native and Deaf/Blind.

Clients in **Anglophone** literacy programs have English as a first language and are learning how to read and write and do basic math in English.

Clients in **Francophone** literacy programs have French as a first language and are learning how to read and write and do basic math in French. Often these learners include people who are newcomers to Canada, such as refugees. By attending a francophone literacy program, these clients can tap into resources in the community for their language group.

Clients in **Native** literacy programs are aboriginal Canadians. Native literacy programs use a culturally specific approach to literacy learning. This allows native learners to learn literacy skills within their own culture.

Clients in **Deaf and/or Blind** literacy programs have either hearing disabilities, sight disabilities or both. In these programs clients can learn literacy in Braille or with American Sign Language.

The focus of this Information and Referral Protocol is on literacy programs that provide services to homeless clients. However, where appropriate, we will provide basic information on ESL, ESL Literacy and high school upgrading. ([See Referral Chart, page 18.](#))

Literacy skills are usually divided into five levels. These levels roughly correspond to grades 1-9. The following skills are typical of each level. **Please Note: these descriptions are provided for information only. Any assessment of a client's literacy skills should be done by a literacy practitioner.**

*Level 1*

Can read very simple text that is familiar and uses short simple words. Can write name, address and a short simple sentence. Can read numbers under 100 and add and subtract single digits.

*Level 2*

Can read short, uncomplicated familiar texts. Can write several sentences or a short paragraph. Can add, subtract, multiply and divide and use money.

*Level 3*

Can read a variety of texts that are more complex in content and form. Can write several good paragraphs for a variety of purposes. Can add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals and has some understanding of fractions.

*Level 4*

Can use a variety of reading strategies to understand and interpret texts that are complex in content and form. Can write for a variety of purposes using well developed paragraphs, appropriate style and more complex grammar. Can add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions and integers and perform simple calculations with ratio, exponents and square roots.

*Level 5*

Can use a wide range of appropriate and efficient strategies to analyze, synthesize and draw conclusions about information and ideas in texts that are complex in form and content. Can write for a variety of purposes using a variety of complex forms and organizational approaches, appropriate style, creativity and logic. Can perform a variety of computations using fractions, decimals, integers, percents, exponents and square roots; creates and solves algebraic equations.

Based on The *Level Descriptions Manual*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, 1999/2000.

# Who provides literacy programming?

In the province of Ontario, a wide range of organizations provide literacy services. Literacy services are provided by independent community-based agencies, local school boards and community colleges. Typically, school boards and colleges provide classroom-based learning and community-based agencies provide small-group and one-to-one learning. There are four community-based programs and a few school board classes that specifically serve homeless clients.

## Programs that serve homeless clients

There are four community-based literacy programs in Toronto that specifically serve homeless clients. These four programs are Street Haven Learning Centre, Beat The Street, St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program and Alpha-Toronto. Each of these programs is structured to accommodate the needs of clients who are either living in shelters or who are at risk of homelessness. All four of these programs are community-based literacy programs that operate in a learner-centred environment. One of these programs, Alpha-Toronto, offers literacy learning in French.

## Programs that serve the general population

In Toronto there are over fifteen **community-based literacy programs**. Community-based literacy programs tend to offer small-group and one-to-one programming rather than classes. Most programs offer only part-time learning and there is a mixture of daytime and evening programming. Community-based programs are geared towards learners' needs and provide an informal, unstructured learning environment.

In Toronto there are two **school boards** who operate literacy classes: the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Both these organizations have many classes spread across the Toronto area. Classes may be part-time, full-time, daytime or evening. Clients must have an assessment at a central office. In some cases, classes are offered in locations which may be frequented by clients who are homeless or marginalized.

There are three **colleges** in Toronto that offer literacy classes: Centennial, Seneca and George Brown. College literacy programs tend to focus on clients who are at higher levels. These programs are classroom-based and often include computer-based learning. Typically, these programs are full-time during the day. Clients must be assessed prior to entering these programs. In general these programs are not suitable for homeless clients.

## Contrasting two learning systems

<b>"Standard" Education System</b>	<b>Literacy Program</b>
Grades 1 to 12 followed by diploma	LBS Levels 1 to 5 followed by job, further training or other activity – no diploma yet.
Designed for the education of children	Designed for upgrading of adults' skills
All learners have roughly equal knowledge level on given topic	Different amounts of knowledge between learners in same learning group on any topic
External authority (government) tells what learner needs to learn	Adult is own authority to determine what s/he needs/wants to learn – has help from others
Learner level recognized in terms of grades	Learning recognized in terms of what learner can do with learning they have achieved
Broad-based development of knowledge	Learner wants to learn very specific things
In a given class, all do same work at same time of day and in same semester	Should be able to proceed at own pace, do work that is useful to own goals, and do at time of day convenient
Specialized institution (i.e. schools) - elementary school followed by high school	Various possible learning environments - can move from one to another depending on what is being learned and when
Full-time days September to June	Needs flexibility in total hours and schedule
Class format	Classes, groups, one-to-one and self instruction modes all possible
Usually student does all their learning first, then goes to work	May do some learning, then work, or integrate two, over and over through life
More formal and standardized systems of evaluation, reporting, etc. where teacher evaluates learner	Less formal systems of evaluation, often done collaboratively or completely by learner, no formal reporting mechanisms
Teachers have similar training, highly skilled, unionized, good salary with benefits	Instructors have varied backgrounds, experience, may be volunteer, short-term contract, part-time, only for contact time.

Based on Sudbury Literacy *Creating a Referral Protocol*, Quill Literacy Network *Youth Literacy Referral Kit*.

# How prevalent are literacy needs?

In 1994/95 Canada participated in an international study of literacy skills. The report from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) includes basic facts on the distribution of literacy skills in Canada. The report also redefines "literacy" for the information age.

*" Literacy now means more than the basic ability to read and write. Literacy skill levels now also reflect a person's ability to understand and use information, a key function in a world where daily living requires higher communication and information processing skills."*

The report shows that a significant number of Canadians have difficulty with everyday literacy tasks.

- about 22% of adult Canadians 16 and over fall in the lowest level of literacy. They have serious difficulty dealing with printed materials and most likely identify themselves as people who have difficulties reading.
- about 24-26% fall in the second lowest level. Such people can deal only with material that is simple and clearly laid out, where the tasks involved are not too complex. They read, but not well.

The report also found that those who receive some kind of income support had lower skills than those who did not. As well, those who received social assistance had lower skills than those Canadians on unemployment insurance. The report also makes a link between lower skills and educational attainment. It states that 60% of social assistance recipients have not completed secondary school. This partially explains their lower levels of literacy.

The IALS study also looked at Francophone literacy. The report notes that there is a "marked disparity in educational attainment between francophones and anglophones." More Francophones are at Level 1 and 2 mainly because in general Francophones have lower levels of education than Anglophones.

This study did not collect data on the homeless population. It is generally believed that the literacy skills among the homeless population may be lower than those of the general public.

Source: *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada. Highlights from the Canadian Report.*  
<http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/ialsreps/high1.htm>.

# Client Issues



# Homeless Clients: How to identify a possible literacy need.

The following items are suggestions of difficulties clients may have in a hostel or drop-in if they cannot read, write or do math very well. However, there may be non-literacy related reasons why clients have difficulty with these tasks. It is important that staff not use this information to "diagnose" literacy needs, but rather use it to help identify a potential need for referral. Proper literacy assessments should only be done by a trained literacy practitioner.

- Not able to follow hostel/drop-in guidelines (guidelines are only available in written form)
- Not able to follow chores schedule (schedule only available in written form)
- In intake client does not fill or has difficulty filling out forms, reading agreements, signing name or writing the date
- Client asks for help reading/interpreting/understanding documents from lawyer, doctor, housing, social assistance, etc.
- Client asks for help in writing letters, statements for lawyers, filling forms, reading classified ads or signs
- Client has difficulty managing money, does not have a bank account or know how to use an ABM, complains of often getting "ripped off" at stores etc.
- Client asks for appointment times to be written down and still has difficulty keeping appointments.
- Client has indicated being labeled/diagnosed with a Learning Disability or with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

## Other possible signs that a client may have problems with literacy

- Difficulty following instructions
- Not asking questions for clarification
- Choosing to take a form and bring it back later rather than filling it out on the spot.
- Makes many spelling and grammar mistakes on a form.
- Nervousness during an interview
- Left formal schooling with less than secondary school diploma
- Lived in many places of residence when a child
- Employed at only short-term, lower skilled jobs
- Indicates dislike of school
- Gives only one-word answers
- Mixes up word sounds - e.g. Seems to get tongue-tied on words
- Makes inappropriate word choices
- Uses very poor grammar when speaking
- Has been labeled learning disabled

Sources: United Way *Put It on The List*, Sudbury Literacy *Creating a Referral Protocol*, Quill Literacy Network *Youth Literacy Referral Kit*.

# How to approach clients regarding their literacy issues.

Here are a few points to remember before approaching a student regarding his or her literacy needs.

- Approach clients with the greatest sensitivity to the shame they may feel about their literacy skills.
- Remind the client of the alternative nature of community-based literacy programs; that it is not like going "back to school". (See section on Community-based literacy programs, page 6.)
- Sometimes it helps to draw the client's attention to another client who may have returned to learning successfully.
- Never push or force a client into a literacy program. It is very important that the decision to return to learning comes from the client.

The following section is taken from a publication called *Literacy Support Work* by the United Way of Canada.

## ***Initial Contact***

The initial contact is a crucial and sensitive step in the literacy support process. First of all it's important to take the time to build a rapport with this person based on trust and mutual respect. Broach the subject when the time is right.

## ***Broaching the Subject***

Deciding to make changes to one's personal situation is a long, arduous process, and fear of taking the first step is understandable. The person must take on this commitment and have faith in his or her chances of success. Further failure can sometimes be devastating. The important thing is to 'plant' the idea without applying pressure. Remember: this decision belongs not to you, but to the person you're talking to.

The real motivating factor at this stage is independence: the ability to make choices, set goals and move to attain them, spurred on by commitment and perseverance.

*Some simple guidelines*

### **Be straightforward**

Deal with the subject openly and respectfully. Don't beat around the bush - it may only create confusion.

### **Be open and accessible**

Take time to listen, in a non-judgemental way, to what the person says and offer an empathetic and understanding ear.

## **Listen attentively and be positive**

Try to gauge the person's receptivity and motivation. Work with him or her to set realistic personal goals that will lead to taking the first step.

## **Offer reassurance**

Help the person to see that he or she is not alone, is valued and trusted, and that you have faith in his or her intellectual ability. Suggest that there are learning options available to them.

## ***Understanding resistance***

Someone who has trouble with reading and writing may show resistance when the subject is first raised. He or she may:

*Refuse to acknowledge reading and writing problems.*

Possible responses for the intervenor:

- Many people have the same problem
- Some adults in this situation have decided to go back to school
- Learning is a life-long thing - it's never too late
- Think of how good it will feel to know things...

*He or she may say "I've been getting along fine up to now".*

Possible responses:

- Point out how important it's been to find ways of getting around this problem. What works for you?
- Discuss and praise the useful resources that have been accumulated
- Talk about the times that reading and writing are missed the most.
- Suggest learning just enough for those occasions.

*He or she may say "I've had it with school".*

Possible responses:

- Talk about what school was like: memories, fears, failures...
- Talk about how things have changed, what school for adults is like: how it works, who goes there, how a typical evening [day] goes, what you will learn...

*He or she may say "It's too late, I'm too old".*

Possible responses:

- Examples of people of the same age who are learning
- Talk about the person's dreams: the great things he or she could do with knowing more
- Talk about what learning could change in life, both now and [later]
- What new things has he or she learned recently? How and where? Did it feel good?
- Encourage him or her to try, to take a chance

## ***What happens next***

Now that the subject has been broached openly, give the person ample time to think things over, and more importantly, to take action. It's a good idea to agree to talk again. Often, two or three formal or informal contacts will be needed before the person decides anything, especially if registration in a literacy group is being considered.

Despite the fact that an adult would benefit from a literacy program the decision is ultimately their own. Sometimes adults are unable to commit themselves to a literacy program because the time is not right for them. They will, however, remember the information and support you have provided.

## **Why should I improve my reading and writing?**

### **The better I can read and write, the more likely I am to:**

1. Feel better about myself.
2. Find and keep housing.
3. Get training I need to get a job.
4. Find and keep a job.
5. Take better care of my health.
6. Know and learn about my rights.
7. Live independently and be active in my community.

Based on Sudbury Literacy *Creating a Referral Protocol*, Quill Literacy Network *Youth Literacy Referral Kit*.

## **Benefits of literacy help**

Improving one's literacy skills is not just about learning to read and write better. There are many other benefits that are not immediately obvious. When talking to clients about whether they would like to take up literacy upgrading it helps to point out the wide range of benefits that come with being in a literacy program.

### ***Why is literacy important to my client?***

- Literacy increases independence: improves clients' ability to live independently by managing money, understanding recipes and food labels, understanding their health issues, important letters and being able to respond to requests to fill out forms etc.
- Literacy improves self-esteem: clients don't feel "stupid" if they can handle tasks on their own. It helps them understand that their difficulties are not their fault.
- Literacy improves skills used to get and keep a job
- Literacy improves chances of a client being able to participate in other programming or further training. Literacy helps clients learn how to learn.

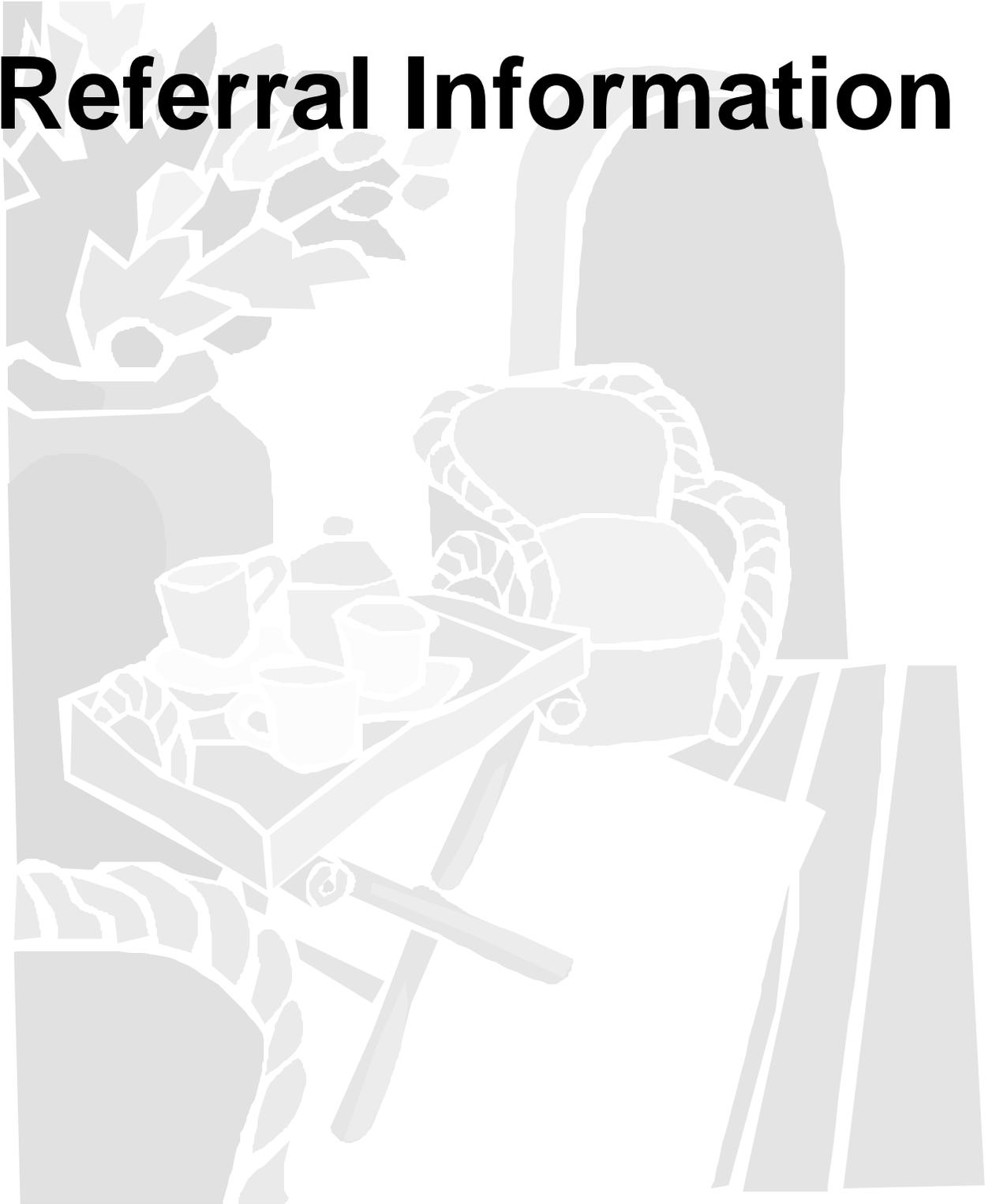
### ***How will my client benefit from attending a literacy program?***

- Programs provide a safe place to go during the day/evening.
- Program provides a sense of community for the client.
- Program highlights and values clients' strengths.
- Program provides support for individual including access to information and referral.
- Program provides access to computer technology.

***How will I benefit from this referral?***

- One step further to helping clients reach individual goals.
- Clients' level of stability is increased; affects health, housing retention, etc.

# Referral Information



## Issues to consider before making a referral.

1. Make sure the client has enough **stability in his/her life** to be able to commit to learning. Clients who are still living on the street or who are actively using drugs or alcohol will have other priorities that will have to come first (e.g. housing, food, clothing, treatment etc.) before literacy help is attempted.
2. Talk to the client about commitment to learning. In order to succeed in a literacy program clients have to be able to attend on a regular basis. Even the programs that serve homeless clients will require some minimum level of participation. Also clients who participate sporadically will see little improvement and may get frustrated with their lack of progress.
3. As a staff person, consider how much time you have to devote to this referral. If possible offer to accompany the client to their first interview or intake at the literacy program. This often makes the referral much more successful. Also you may talk to the literacy program worker directly to see if a staff person can visit your agency.

## Program Information

The following information is meant to be used in conjunction with the Referral Chart (see next page).

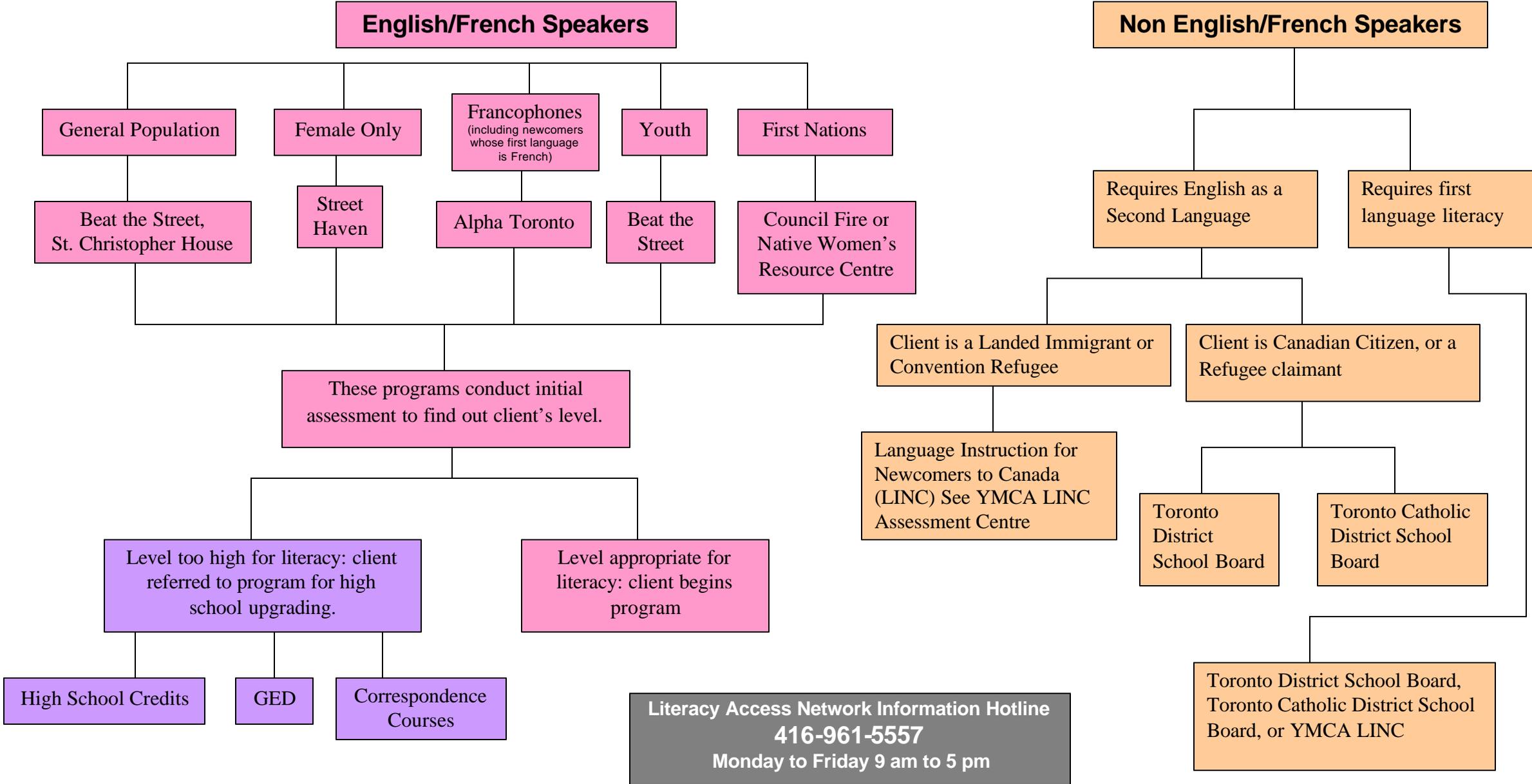
To make a referral:

1. Talk to the client about **his or her needs** and goals regarding literacy and/or upgrading. Remember to approach the topic carefully as outlined in the previous section.
2. Determine the client's **target group** (e.g. women, first nations, youth, etc.).
3. Consult the **Referral Chart** for the likely programs to refer the client to.
4. Look up the **program name** in the Program Information sections for specific referral details.
5. Select an **appropriate program** and work with the client to access that program.

## Remember!

1. In Toronto there is a referral hotline for literacy programs called the **Literacy Access Network (LAN)**. It is similar to the Street Helpline but specializes in adult literacy. At LAN they have all the program information for literacy, upgrading and ESL programs. If you need more information than is available here contact them directly at 416-961-5557 (Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm). Program information is also available on their web site, [www.mtml.ca/lan.htm](http://www.mtml.ca/lan.htm).
2. The program information presented here is up-to-date at the time of printing. If any information is incorrect please contact the Literacy Access Network for current details.
3. Many programs listed here have excellent **web sites** with complete program information. Check their web sites for more information.

# Literacy and Homelessness Referral Chart



# Literacy Programs That Serve Homeless Clients.

Name	<b>Alpha-Toronto</b>
Address and Location	2 Carlton Street, Suite 1009, Toronto ON M5B 1J3 On the tenth floor of a tall building at the north east corner of Yonge and Carlton above subway entrance, between Pizza Hut and Baroli Café
Phone	416-542-1574
fax	416-596-8398
Email	<a href="mailto:673350@ican.net">673350@ican.net</a> <a href="http://www.nald.ca/alpha/index.htm">www.nald.ca/alpha/index.htm</a>
Staff Contacts	Executive Director – Renaud Saint Cyr
Hours	10 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday
Target population	Francophones in Toronto
Eligibility requirements	Francophone, no grade 12 diploma.
Programs offered	French literacy, math and computers.
Levels	LBS 1 - 5
Intake procedure	Clients must come in for an initial assessment.
TTC provided?	Yes, based on income or Ontario Works.
Food provided?	Sometimes.
Childcare provided?	No.
Level of commitment required	Expected to attend regularly.
Other services offered	Library of French books. Computer access. Information and referral.
Referral procedure	Can be referred by self, agency or other worker.

Name	<b>Beat the Street</b>
Address and Location	290 Jarvis Street, Toronto, ON M5B 2C5 on the west side of Jarvis just north of Gerrard, next to the Harvey's; look for the artwork on the lawn.
Phone	416-979-3361
fax	416-979-3292
Email	<a href="mailto:bts@frontiercollege.ca">bts@frontiercollege.ca</a> <a href="http://www.beat-the-street.org">www.beat-the-street.org</a>
Staff Contacts	Manager - Robert Davis Literacy Coordinators - Lucy Scanlon and Lurana Kruchten
Hours	9 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Thursday closed for lunch from 12 noon to 1 pm.
Target population	Street involved people with an emphasis on youth, 16 and up and out of school
Eligibility requirements	Must be functioning below a grade nine level, motivated to learn and willing to commit to at least one session per week.
Programs offered	Writing Group – Tuesday mornings Math Group – Wednesday and Thursday afternoons Reading Circle – Tuesday mornings Welcome Group – Thursday mornings Computer Access – Monday – Thursday mornings GED – 8 week sessions (call for start dates) Monday – Thursday mornings with independent study in the afternoons One-to-one tutoring also available.
Levels	LBS 1 – 5
Intake procedure	Client must contact on the phone or in person. At that time a quick screen is done to determine eligibility. Client meets with one of the literacy coordinators for an intake and assessment appointment (possibly same day) for about one hour. New clients join the Welcome Group on Thursdays while waiting for a match with a tutor or group.
TTC provided?	Yes, clients must fill out a form to receive tokens.
Food provided?	No, only coffee.
Childcare provided?	No.
Level of commitment required	Minimum of one session per week.
Other services offered	Access to computers. Information and referrals. Creative arts projects.
Referral procedure	Client must contact the center himself/herself.

Name	<b>St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program</b>
Address and Location	248 Ossington Ave, Toronto, ON M6J 3A2 North west corner of Ossington and Dundas West.
Phone	416-539-9000
fax	416-532-8739
Email	<a href="mailto:schalp@nald.ca">schalp@nald.ca</a> <a href="http://www.nald.ca/schalp/index.html">www.nald.ca/schalp/index.html</a>
Staff Contacts	Coordinator – Elaine Belore Literacy Worker – Judi Snively
Hours	Monday to Wednesday 9 am – 9 pm Thursday and Friday 9 am – 5:00pm
Target population	English speaking adults over 16 years of age living in the catchment area. (Ossington Ave to Sherbourne and St. Clair to Lake Ontario)
Eligibility requirements	Must live within catchment area and be working at below grade nine level.
Programs offered	Monday Basic Group – morning Book Club – Monday evening Jumping in Group – Monday evening Moving On Group – Monday to Thursday and Wednesday evenings Computer and Newsletter Group – Tuesday evenings One-to-one tutoring also available.
Levels	LBS 1 – 3
Intake procedure	Clients must attend two appointments. The first appointment lasts about one hour and covers background information and goal setting. The second appointment is for about one and a half hours and is a reading and writing assessment.
TTC provided?	Yes.
Food provided?	Yes some snacks are available.
Childcare provided?	No.
Level of commitment required	Students must notify staff if they are going to be absent.
Other services offered	Access to computers. Information and referrals.
Referral procedure	Self-referral or agency/worker referral.

Name	<b>Street Haven Learning Centre</b>
Address and Location	67 Adelaide Street East, Toronto, ON M5C 1K6 3rd floor three story building on the south west corner of Adelaide St. East and Church. Look for sign reading "Adelaide Resource Centre for Women"
Phone	416-392-9230
fax	416-392-9241
Email	<a href="mailto:shlearn@bellnet.ca">shlearn@bellnet.ca</a> <a href="http://www.streethaven.com">www.streethaven.com</a>
Staff Contacts	Intake and Assessment – Sharon Saunders
Hours	Monday to Thursday 10 am – 4:30 pm Friday 10 am – 1 pm
Target population	Homeless or socially isolated adult women.
Eligibility requirements	Must be functioning below a grade nine level and part of target population.
Programs offered	English – Tuesday and Thursday afternoons Math – Monday and Wednesday afternoons Science Reading Group – Wednesday afternoons Map Reading Group – Tuesday afternoons One-to-one tutoring also available. GED drop-in Tuesdays afternoons Computer access – Monday to Friday mornings and Monday to Thursday afternoons
Levels	LBS 1 – 4
Intake procedure	Phone or drop-in to book an intake appointment. Intake and assessment usually takes 1 – 2 hours and can be done in more than one appointment if necessary.
TTC provided?	Yes
Food provided?	Yes, snacks when available
Childcare provided?	No.
Level of commitment required	Learners are expected to attend classes regularly although we are very flexible. Tutoring requires a commitment of attending once per week.
Other services offered	Access to computers. Information and referrals. Other services are provided at the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women include health, drop-in, arts and crafts, etc.
Referral procedure	Clients may self-refer or be referred by another agency, worker or friend/family.

Name	<b>Council Fire Native Cultural Centre</b>
Address and Location	439 Dundas Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 2B1 the south west corner of Dundas and Parliament.
Phone	416-3604350
fax	416-360-5978
web site	<a href="http://www.torontocouncilfire.org">www.torontocouncilfire.org</a>
Staff Contacts	Literacy Coordinator – Dawn Antone
Programs offered	Adult literacy and upgrading, including one-to-one.

Name	<b>Fred Victor Employment Resource Centre</b>
Address and Location	100 Lombard Street, Toronto, ON M5C 1M3 Lombard runs between Richmond and Adelaide streets, FVERC is between Jarvis and Church streets.
Phone	416-364-8986
fax	416-364-9407
web site	<a href="http://www.fredvictor.org">www.fredvictor.org</a>
Staff Contacts	Literacy Instructor
Programs offered	Literacy class co-sponsored by the Toronto Board of Education. Hours: Tuesday and Thursday afternoons Referrals: Client must be assessed at the Bickford Centre first. Call 416-393-1995

Name	<b>John Howard Society</b>
Address and Location	42 Charles Street East, 5th floor, Toronto, ON M4Y 1T4 near Yonge and Bloor.
Phone	416-925-4386 (ask for Literacy Intake Worker)
fax	416-925-9112
Staff Contacts	Intake Worker
Programs offered	Literacy program for youth in conflict with the law, Monday to Friday 9 am – 12 pm.

Name	<b>Native Women's Resource Centre</b>
Address and Location	191 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 2E5 located just west of Sherbourne Street on Gerrard.
Phone	416-416-963-9963
fax	416-963-9573
web site	<a href="http://www.nativewomenscentre.org">www.nativewomenscentre.org</a>
Staff Contacts	Literacy Coordinator - Janine Willie
Programs offered	Adult literacy and upgrading for native women only.

# Literacy or High School Credits by Correspondence

Name	<b>Independent Learning Centre</b>
Address and Location	20 Bay Street, 3rd floor, Toronto ON M5J 2W1 at the corner of Queen's Quay.
Phone	416-314-325-4388 (automated)
fax	416-314-8575
web site	<a href="http://www.ilc.edu.gov.on.ca">www.ilc.edu.gov.on.ca</a>
Programs offered	High School credit courses by correspondence. There is a \$25 fee for each course. Clients must be able to provide their own motivation and structure.

## GED Programs

Name	<b>Beat the Street</b>
Programs offered	Eight week GED Test preparation course. See page 28 for referral details.

Name	<b>Street Haven Learning Centre</b>
Programs offered	GED Study drop-in. See page 32 for referral details.

Name	<b>Turning Point Café GED Program</b>
Address and Location	95 Wellesley Street East, Toronto, ON M4Y 2X9 On the north side of Wellesley just east of Church Street.
Phone	416-925-9250 Learning/Training Coordinator
fax	416-926-9926
web site	<a href="http://www.turningpoint.on.ca">www.turningpoint.on.ca</a>
Programs offered	Self-directed GED preparation for youth ages 16 – 24 years.

# High School Credit Programs

Name **Toronto Catholic District School Board - Monsignor Fraser College**

Address and Location 146 Isabella Street, Toronto, ON M4Y 1P6  
near Bloor and Sherbourne

Phone 416-393-5533  
fax 416-393-5912  
web site [www.tcdsb.on.ca](http://www.tcdsb.on.ca)

Name **Toronto District School Board - City Adult Learning Centre**

Address and Location 1 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON M4K 1M8  
Corner of Danforth and Broadview

Phone 416-393-9740  
fax 416-393-9751  
web site [www.tdsb.org](http://www.tdsb.org)

Programs offered Adult High School offering high school credits part-time or full-time. September to June. Day school or night school.

Programs offered High School Credit program, Full-time September to June. Open to adults 18 years and older.

Name **Toronto District School Board - Alternative Schools**

Address and Location Oasis - 20 Brant Street, 3rd floor, Toronto, ON M5V 2M1  
Contact - 132 St. Patrick Street, Toronto, ON M5T 1V1

Phone Oasis: Phone: 416-393-9830 Fax: 416-393-8280  
Contact: Phone: 416-393-1454 Fax: 416-393-8280  
fax  
web site [www.tdsb.org](http://www.tdsb.org)

Programs offered Secondary Schools for youth who have dropped out of high school and want to return. High school Credits. Both Oasis and Contact are open to homeless youth. Oasis also has the Triangle Program for gay/lesbian youth.

# Adult English as a Second Language/Literacy Programs

Name	<b>Toronto District School Board – ESL and ESL Literacy Classes</b>
Address and Location	East: 39 Highbrook Drive West: 1 Civic Centre Court North: 5050 Yonge Street South: The Bickford Centre, 777 Bloor Street West Jones Avenue Adult Centre, 540 Jones Ave
Phone and web site	East: 416-396-6909 West: 416-394-7100 North: 416-395-8080 South: 416-393-0528 <a href="http://www.tdsb.org">www.tdsb.org</a>
Programs offered	Adult English as a Second Language classes. Many locations across Toronto, call for details.

Name	<b>Toronto Catholic District School Board - ESL and ESL Literacy Classes</b>
Address and Location	Many locations across Toronto
Phone fax and web site	416-222-8282 ext. 5348 416-512-4992 <a href="http://www.tcdsb.on.ca">www.tcdsb.on.ca</a>
Programs offered	Adult English as a Second Language classes. Call for details.

Name	<b>YMCA LINC Assessment Centre</b>
Address and Location	42 Charles Street East, Toronto, ON M4Y 1T4 near Yonge and Bloor
Phone fax web site	416-925-5462 416-928-3561 <a href="http://www.ymcatoronto.org">www.ymcatoronto.org</a>
Programs offered	Adult English as a Second Language classes for Landed Immigrants and Convention Refugees. Various classes around Toronto, call for details.

# Appendices



# Appendices

## *List of Appendices*

1. [List of Resources](#)
2. [Literacy Facts Brochure produced by Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy.](#)
3. [Identifying Literacy Needs, Literacy Access Network Bulletin, Fall 1997. Produced by Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy.](#)

# Resources on literacy and homelessness

*"Am I Welcome Here" A Book About Literacy and Psychiatric Experiences.* Julia Rogers and the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1991.

*Creating a Referral Protocol: A Guide to Literacy Planners Creating a Process to Refer New Learners to Literacy Programs in Your Community.* Kristen Gunn, Sudbury Community Literacy, 1998.

*Gimme Shelter: A Resource for Literacy and Homelessness Work.* Betsy Trumpener. St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program Literacy and Homelessness Project Phase 2 Report, 1997.

*IALS Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Government of Canada. 1995.

*The Level Descriptions Manual.* Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2000.

*Literacy and Homelessness: Delivering Literacy in an Adult Drop-in.* Karen Farmer, St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1995.

*Literacy Audit for Social Service Agencies.* Jim Bell, Calgary Adult Literacy Awareness Project, 1992.

*Literacy and Homelessness Project Phase 3 Report: More Ideas.* St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1999.

*Literacy Support Work - An Integrated Approach.* United Way of Canada, 1997.

*Youth Literacy Referral Kit: A Guide for Agencies that Work with Youth Who Have Literacy Barriers.* Aimee Field, Quill Literacy Network, 1999.

**All of these resources are available at AlphaPlus, a literacy library in Toronto. 2040 Yonge Street, 3rd floor, Toronto, M4S 1Z9 (between Davisville and Eglinton) Phone: 416-322-1012 Web site: [www.alphaplus.ca](http://www.alphaplus.ca)**

## Literacy Facts

### Did you know that ...

#### **In Toronto**

The 1996 Census tells us:

- There were approximately 248,108 people aged 15 years and over that had less than a grade nine education. This is 12.8% of the population of people aged 15 years and over in Toronto.
- About 42% of all unattached single people lived on incomes of less than \$17,000.
- About 24% of all families of four lived on incomes of less than \$32,000.
- About 42% of all new arrivals into Canada settled in Toronto.

## **In York Region**

The 1996 Census tells us:

- There were approximately 39,979 people aged 15 years and over that had less than a grade nine education. This is 8.8% of the population of people aged 15 years and over in York Region.
- About 35% of all unattached single people lived on incomes of less than \$14,500.
- About 12% of all families of four lived on incomes of less than \$27,000.

## **Sources**

*Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Statistics Canada. 1996.

*Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society.* Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Human Resources Development Canada. 1997.

*Literacy Economy and Society.* Statistics Canada. 1996.

*Literacy Needs Assessment.* Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. August 1992.

Census Reports. Statistics Canada. 1996.



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**"You just don't know what it is like. I feel so alone and embarrassed because I can't read and write".**

**"I never go far from home because I can't read the signs. I'm afraid of getting lost."**

**"When I can't read labels at the grocery store, I just ask someone to help me. I tell them I forgot my glasses."**

*callers to the  
Literacy Access Network.*

# What is Literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read, write and use numbers well enough to handle most everyday situations.

Being able to read, write, and use numbers affects a person's ability to participate and make decisions in society.

## Reading

According to the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS):

- Among the 2,141,800 people aged 16 years and over surveyed in Toronto, 24% were not able to read most everyday printed material such as instructions on a bottle of medication or information on a bank machine.

## Using Numbers (Numeracy)

According to the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS):

- Among the adults surveyed in Toronto, 21% were not able to use numbers in most everyday situations.

These individuals may recognize numbers but have difficulty filling in a bank deposit slip or adding up a bill.

# Issues related to Literacy

The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey points out that literacy is related to several issues:

## Education

- Approximately 12% of high school graduates in Canada are not able to read or use numbers in everyday situations.
- Students who complete high school have better literacy skills, and have better chances of maintaining these skills, than students who do not graduate.

Adult education increases literacy levels, promotes life-long learning, and improves a person's chances of getting a good job.

## Age

- 10% of Canadians between 16 and 25 years old are unable to read most everyday material.
- Over 50% of Canadian adults over the age of 65 years old are not able to read or use numbers in everyday situations.

## **Employment and Training**

- About 12% of Canadian workers have low level literacy skills.
- The majority of workers in Canada with low level literacy skills have jobs in the manufacturing or construction industries.
- Workers with low level literacy skills are at the greatest risk of becoming unemployed.
- Most skills training offered in Canada is geared to workers with higher literacy skills.
- Approximately 50% of retired workers in Canada are not able to read most everyday material.

Literacy skills improve with use; for example, in a job that requires reading and writing. Having a regular job helps an adult maintain and improve literacy skills.

## **Social and Economic Support**

- Having inadequate income often prevents adults from returning to school or gaining access to literacy programs.

Providing support in the form of bus and subway tickets and child care services helps adults to gain better access to literacy programs.

# Identifying literacy needs



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Reprinted from the Literacy Access Network Bulletin, Fall 1997 Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy

At the Literacy Access Network, we often get calls from people who are calling for or about someone who they believe has a literacy problem. Often, we ask why do you think this person has a literacy problem? And why has it become important *now* to do something about it?

A lot of the folklore around literacy reinforces the idea that people who have reading problems are ashamed, and go to great lengths to hide their "illiteracy". This may be true in some cases, although people more often try to hide reading problems for much more practical reasons than shame. They may be afraid of losing something important - a job, a chance at retraining, or access to services.

Of course, in today's society, literacy skills are increasingly necessary, and low literacy skills are increasingly becoming barriers to training or employment.

People who lack confidence in their literacy skills may be unwilling to pursue opportunities for professional development. In the workplace, they may refuse to take on additional responsibilities, or even turn down promotions. In their personal life, they may have difficulties with official forms and documents, or with understanding their children's report cards or notices from school.

## Identify literacy needs *before* pursuing skills training

Intermediaries often become aware of their clients' literacy needs when clients have to fill out forms on their own. There may be numerous

misspellings. Information may be in the wrong places, or the wrong information may be supplied (for example, if the form asks, "How many hours a week did you work?" and the client fills in the company's name). Important places on the form may be left blank.

Because clients are often encouraged to enter skills training programs, or clients express interest in a program, intermediaries should be aware if someone has literacy issues *before* that person attempts a program that requires good reading skills.

Previous unsuccessful attempts at training programs may actually be a signal that an individual has trouble reading. For example, if a training program accepts people without any entrance requirements, people could easily get into the program and then be frustrated and disappointed because they can't read well enough to keep up. Or, someone may have applied to a program that does require some kind of entry assessment, and failed to get in.

## Ask about previous school experience

Level of education may or may not be an indication of literacy, or of someone's readiness to go into a training program. If you ask people about their experience in school, you may get some idea if they have literacy issues that will interfere with further education.

People who left school early out of frustration because they weren't doing well, may have problems with literacy and other basic skills. They will probably express some reluctance about

going back to school, either for high school credits or skills training, because they know they don't have the basic skills necessary to do well. An Adult Basic Education (ABE) program will help prepare them to go on. If they are currently employed, they may want to go to a community based literacy program for one-to-one tutoring, so they can improve their literacy while working around their schedule.

Other people may have left school early, even though they were doing well, for other reasons - employment, pregnancy, lack of money (especially if they are from a country where high school isn't free). If they left school very early - before starting high school, perhaps - they may need a literacy or ABE program. However, many people in this situation actually have good literacy skills, and may have educated themselves over the years. They may be ready for high school credit programs, or even to take the GED examinations for a high school equivalency certificate. They may be ready to enter skills training programs, or join post-secondary programs as mature students.

### **Do they say they were "pushed through" high school?**

There are other people who have finished high school who will show reluctance to go on to further education. These people have recognized that, while they have a high school diploma, they did not acquire strong literacy skills along the way. They may have, in the past, attempted college or training courses and not done well. They may tell you, often with some bitterness, that they were "pushed through" school and "didn't really learn anything".

People may say, "I never did well in school. I think I must have a learning disability, but the teachers didn't know about that back then." People who say they have - or think they have - a learning disability, may be saying they have problems with literacy. Whether or not a learning disability is the issue, the previous difficult school experience can be a warning that a literacy or ABE program may be necessary before skills training.

### **Following up**

Literacy problems may also be indicated by how someone handles everyday written and printed material. If someone always needs help with filling out forms, writing down addresses and phone numbers, or following written instructions, there may be a literacy problem. (See below for things to notice around paperwork.)

It's important for concerned intermediaries or friends to know where people can go for help, so that literacy issues no longer get in the way of the pursuit of other goals. Literacy and ABE programs are available for adults who want to improve their reading and writing.

Adult learners enter programs with different levels of literacy, and a range of educational experience. It is difficult to determine how long adults will have to stay in a literacy program, before they achieve their literacy goals. Entering a program is the first step in the right direction.

## Dealing with paperwork

### Recognizing a literacy problem

There's no single easy way to tell if someone has a reading problem. What's important to remember is that, in most cases, literacy doesn't become an issue in people's lives until reading difficulties prevent them from doing something they want to do. So, you are most likely to notice someone's reading problem at the same time they are forced to notice it - when not being able to read actually *is* a problem for him. This may be when someone is dealing with society's deluge of printed and written materials.

For example, often someone who has difficulty reading will have relied on a close friend or family member, (or, in the workplace, a colleague) to handle any day to day paperwork. If this person drops out of the picture, literacy support will have to be found elsewhere. A friend or intermediary may be asked to help fill out a form, for example, and begin to wonder if the person asking for help has trouble reading and writing.

If someone comes to you for help with paperwork, you should look at the request in context. Needing help filling out a form doesn't necessarily indicate a literacy problem. For example, most people need help deciphering complicated forms such as income tax returns.

So, think about the following questions. Why is help needed? Is it because the form is complicated or requires specialized knowledge that you might have? Is it because the individual is uncertain of the information required, and wants to discuss it with someone else (think about how often you consult with family member or co-worker when filling out forms)?

Or is it because the person needs help reading the form and can't easily write down the answers? Does he know what he wants to say, and is dictating the answers, or is he consulting with you? Are you doing all the writing? Most people want to check over a completed form before sending it off to its final destination - does he want to read the form over after you've finished, or is he relying on what you say you've written down?

Similarly, someone might bring printed material, such as a rent change notice or instructions for operating equipment, to you and ask for help. Is it because the material requires specialized knowledge that you might have? Is it so complicated (or important) that it's reassuring to go over it with someone else? Or is it that she can't read it? Is she reading it with you, or are you reading it to her?

People who have literacy problems may say they "don't like reading". This may be true. Try to notice if they read when they have to read, or do they always get help?

When a lack of literacy skills interferes with people's ability to comfortably function in everyday life, they may be ready for a literacy or ABE program.