



# Supporting Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs

## FACTSHEET #3: Strategies

In 2022, Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) surveyed twenty-five Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies across Ontario and conducted province-wide research for the [Report on Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs](#).

Life stabilization is not about merely one need; there are often many different needs that intersect, and learners often require services from several agencies. LBS staff help learners access services in the community as many cannot navigate them without support. Learners across the province also rely on staff at LBS agencies to assist with acquiring skills such as reading information provided by food banks or completing government documents required for accessing social services.

LBS practitioners have always had a role in the life stabilization needs of learners, and the Service Provider Guidelines for Literacy and Basic Skills state:

*Without foundation literacy abilities, individuals are significantly disadvantaged in their efforts to pursue their career goals, maintain employment, further education, participate in training opportunities, and increase personal independence. The Literacy and Basic Skills program provides adults with a foundation from which to launch and pursue their goals.*

CLO has created three factsheets based on the Report on the *Report on Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs*. The factsheets summarize the following topics:

1. [Successes](#)
2. [Challenges](#)
3. [Strategies](#)

This is the third fact sheet in the series, and it focuses on life stabilization *strategies* for LBS practitioners and learners.

## CURRENT STRATEGIES

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Most Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies that were surveyed advocate regularly on behalf of the learner for life stabilization supports. They also offer unique and innovative strategies for assisting learners.

One agency teaches math skills through a program which builds the skills of the learner through participation in a local market. Skills range from working in a local market to taking orders for the market and preparing for the market day.

Another strategy being used by an agency has been to open their space to other agencies one day per week. This allows learners to become comfortable with other community partners and potentially receive assistance.

An example of another strategy was shared from the Kingston area, where there is a Pathways Coach co-located with the City of Kingston. Their role is to have a conversation with OW clients and refer them to the most appropriate support. Although the Pathways Coach works part-time with the Literacy and Basic Skills agency, the role is funded through the city.

However, not all communities have the resources for the above strategies. To create reliable solutions for life stabilization challenges experienced by learners, a formal partnership agreement with appropriate funding attached is needed for LBS agencies across Ontario.

## MORE STRATEGIES

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LBS agency staff shared some of the strategies they use to support life stabilization:

*“We do a combination of things to support learners while they are with us. This includes a food bank on site, a lunch program, sharing of supports/contacts to call depending on needs, and referral back to the worker if they have one to discuss needs.”*

*“Another form of support for food insecurity is the availability of cooking classes. These classes may be delivered through the local health units or the Literacy and Basic Skills agency. Although not always, there may be a food voucher provided once the learner completes their participation in these classes.”*

*“We are always trying to support learners with the tools they need to advocate for themselves. We will take learners to different community agencies if they are nervous to make the initial meeting on their own.”*



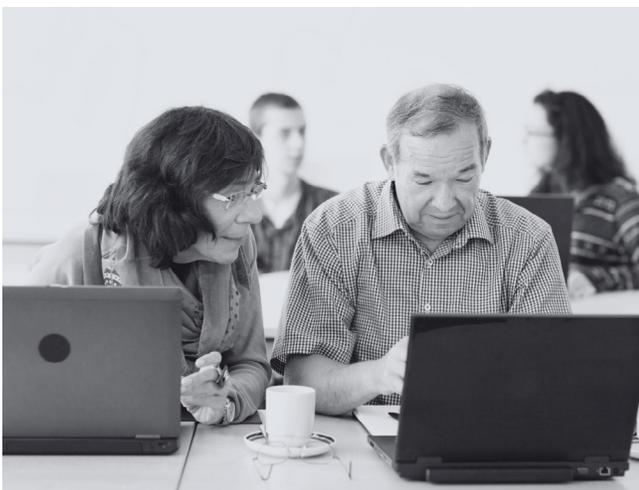
*"We have a small office where we invite community partners to meet with learners so they can meet in a space they feel comfortable in. We also support learners with writing letters of enrollment for childcare support or for their OW worker to support their education path."*

*"Tutors sometimes assist with filling in forms; computer instructor sometimes assists with password recovery, phone set-up, online forms, and navigating email use."*

*"We have a small food pantry, that if someone comes in hungry we can provide a snack and possibly send them home with a meal. We have computers that we lend out. We provide a phone for people who need to make a phone call."*

*"We have a couple of in-house programs such as our financial empowerment program and our good food market. We have funding through Food for Learning with the local school board to provide meals to learners."*

*"We ensure that our agency website is easily accessible to learners."*



*"We have our own small food pantry; we occasionally have clothing or other items available for students."*

*"Most impactful is creating a trustful relationship and investing time in that individual."*

*"Our Executive Director sits at many interagency tables and shares opportunities with the team. ED recently learned of a learner struggling to make the food bank due to a part-time job and inquired with the leadership to find out how this learner might navigate this and what options exist."*

*"We have had the most success where learners are placed 1:1 with a volunteer tutor."*

*"Childcare was provided through another literacy program in our building - this did help the learner attend our program."*

*"We offer physical support through providing a safe space and food in the day, and we advocate for our learners by reaching out to community organizations that could help to facilitate a meeting."*

*"We also support learners with writing letters of enrollment for childcare support or for their OW worker to support their education path."*

*"If learners have successes they usually stay in the program."*

*"We do the best we can with the expertise we have and the contacts that we have in our region. A more centralized way to find services would be helpful and a huge time saver."*

## WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

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Since the transformation of the province's Integrated Employment Services began, LBS agencies have received far fewer referrals from social service agencies who are no longer mandated to offer community referrals to clients.

Without this mandate, LBS staff likely need to reach out to caseworkers for OW/ODSP/ES to let them know about the LBS programs being offered at their agency to encourage referrals based on client needs instead.

This way, more learners will be supported with life stabilization issues so that they can move closer to employment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

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For Ontario to succeed at its goal of moving people from social services to employment, LBS agencies must be included as valued partners and funded appropriately. The need for more resources to create consistent services has never been greater, as the number of clients needing support is increasing due to rising expenses.

100% of the agencies surveyed indicated that additional funding is required to provide support for life stabilization challenges with learners, and they mentioned some of the following needs:

*“Training support for staff for crisis prevention, suicide intervention, and a trained counsellor or LBS Case manager that can liaise between LBS agency and stabilization supports.”*

*“We need more funding to hire more staff to help with counselling on site; we have not received an increase in funding in over 7 years for our regular programming - this is not working!”*

*“More funding to make community stabilization support a core role on our team rather than existing staff wearing multiple hats.”*

In addition, the common assessment that is in place as part of the transformation of Integrated Employment Services should be used by ES and OW/ODSP as the referral point for Literacy and Basic Skills agencies.

Literacy and Basic Skills agencies are poised to be the strategic partner that can be a driving force in helping Ontario meet its objectives and assist Ontarians with working their way out of the never-ending cycle of poverty.



## CONCLUSION

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To learn more about the successes and challenges LBS agencies encounter with life stabilization issues, and the strategies used to support learners, please [see the other two factsheets](#) in this series titled *Challenges and Successes*.

The factsheets based on the [Report on Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs](#) were researched and written by Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO). CLO is a provincial literacy network that serves english language, community-based Literacy and Basic Skills agencies. To learn more about our organization, [visit our website here](#).

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