



Supporting Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs

FACTSHEET #1: Successes

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 foundational 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 Life Stabilization for Adult Learners in LBS Programs*. The factsheets summarize the following topics:

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

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

Life stabilization broadly refers to basic needs being met such as food, housing, finances, health, and mental health supports. Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies offer innovative programs that support life stabilization.

LBS staff play a significant role in supporting learners while teaching literacy and basic skills, as their relationship is built on continuous interaction over time. To understand how learners are assisted with life stabilization issues, CLO surveyed twenty-five LBS agencies across Ontario who shared their experiences with successes in the following key areas.

CONTINUOUS SUPPORT

Although they are not mandated to do this, the very nature of the LBS program builds trust and rapport with learners through continuous support as they spend a significant amount of time at the agency.

LBS agencies and staff offer support by:

- taking time to listen to learners, particularly when they are in crisis
- taking steps to find out if learners have a plan
- guiding learners to identify resources and solutions
- discussing strategies to help solve immediate needs

In the survey, Literacy and Basic Skills staff shared the following ways that they accommodate the needs of the learner to ensure success:

“We offer food, snacks, and a safe space to stay during the day whether they are studying or not.”

“We spend a lot of our time showing our care, compassion, and understanding by trying to help on a day-to-day basis.”

“When learners don’t have their basic needs or health addressed, they cannot focus on learning; if their life stabilization needs have been addressed, they are more likely to stay in the program and do well.”

“We provide lunch to learners most days because if they are hungry, they cannot learn. We have an approved kitchen by the health unit in the back.”

In addition, LBS staff help to support learners by:

- lending out computers
- providing phones
- assisting learners with finding contact information and making phone calls
- advocating to case workers
- calling hotels to find housing
- contacting doctors to help with medical appointments or waitlists



BASIC NEEDS

Many LBS agencies have onsite food available which may be in the form of a food bank or pantry, and they also provide transportation support. Clothing, sleeping bags, and tents are sometimes available to learners as well.

LBS staff provided many examples of supporting learners with basic life stabilization needs:

“We have an on-site food bank that we add to when we can with donations from local board members, staff, or community members.”

“We provide transit fare to come to the LBS program to help them get a better job.”

“Often if a learner is in crisis, we take time to listen and come up with a plan.”

“A learner was referred by a case worker who was precariously housed. They now have housing and are working towards a higher education.”



ONSITE PROGRAMMING

Literacy and Basic Skills agencies also deliver workshops and classes to support learners who need life stabilization skills on topics such as:

- financial empowerment
- digital literacy
- soft skills

One agency created a program that supports basic food needs where the learner gains math skills through participation in a local market project. The learner works through many aspects of the market including:

- the math involved in ordering products
- counting the products needed for the market inventory
- the math involved in the purchase of the final product

Another example is an LBS agency that has opened its site on Fridays which enables them to offer space to other agencies. This strategy makes a variety of services accessible to learners and provides much-needed support. Other onsite programming includes:

- assistance with filling in online forms
- email use and password recovery
- phone set-up

“We also offer a Soft Skills class that can help the learner maintain stable employment and relationships in general. And basic computer classes are definitely a form of life stabilization.”

COMMUNITY REFERRALS

Community partnerships are key to learner success. LBS agencies often refer learners to multiple organizations that provide:

- food
- financial support
- housing
- mental health support
- education
- healthcare
- clothing
- employment services
- transit passes
- addiction recovery programs
- newcomer services
- ESL classes
- court navigation services
- counselling
- parental training
- domestic violence support
- grief counselling
- mobile crisis services
- childcare

LBS staff do their best to create as many connections as possible to help their learners succeed in solving life stabilization issues.



“We are well connected with other agencies and have a local group called Helping Hands where we all come together, share new initiatives and problem solve.”

“We had a learner going to Alliance Centre for mental health support while coming to us, plus did a March of Dimes program to help with finding a job. These were successful and we navigated through them with the learner and other agencies to do the best for the learner.”

“We often utilize mobile crisis and counselling services for our learners. Many of our learners have mental health illnesses and addiction problems...mobile crisis has provided assistance for health issues that enables learners to return to LBS participation.”

“Domestic violence and shelter support have allowed many of our learners to stay in LBS programs.”

“Sometimes part of the life stabilization process is being someone the learner knows they can come and talk to. We encourage learners to advocate for themselves, however sometimes this takes a couple of conversations to get them comfortable.”

“We try to surround learners with as many wrap around services that are available. We ask permission from the learners to communicate their progress with supports such as case managers and care providers. Rather than falling off the grid, learners are able to be cared for quickly and resume LBS engagement.”

CONCLUSION

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

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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