

# **Literacy and Basic Skills Corrections Literacy Initiative Employment Ontario Network Qs and As**

## **General**

### **1. What is the Corrections Literacy Initiative?**

The Corrections Literacy Initiative is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (the ministry) and the Ministry of the Solicitor General. It offers Literacy and Basic Skills services to those in remand or custody in select correctional institutions in Ontario. The pilot is an extension of Employment Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills program.

The initiative currently funds 11 service providers to offer Literacy and Basic Skills training to approximately 500 learners annually at 11 correctional institutions across the province.

### **2. Why was this initiative implemented?**

Adults in custody face significant barriers to education, training, employment and social inclusion. Approximately 75 per cent of the correctional population has not completed Grade 12, and 20 per cent has less than a Grade 9 education.

Successful community reintegration on release from custody is enhanced when there are greater opportunities for offenders to engage in learning, education and rehabilitation, which increases prospects for employment, and ultimately assists with reducing the risk of reoffending.

There is currently no uniform approach to providing literacy and essential skills training in Ontario's correctional institutions. As a way to help fill this gap, the Corrections Literacy Initiative was launched in fall 2017.

The program participants, many highly-barriered, are provided the opportunity to learn skills on which to build further learning, enhance training opportunities, and potentially help with future employment.

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### **3. Why is the initiative being expanded?**

The ministry conducted an evaluation of the initiative, covering a period from September 2017 to December 2018. A participant survey and administrative data drawn from the ministry's data system (Employment Ontario Information System – Case Management System) were used to inform the analysis. Evaluation findings indicated some early positive results, including:

- Participant feedback indicated that most were very satisfied with the training they received.
- Participants would benefit from an increase in the amount of training through more class time/instructor time and access to materials to support their learning.
- In most cases, participants claimed they intended to continue their training after release.

The results of the evaluation and the feedback from service providers, participants, and the ministry's regional offices indicated a strong interest in not only maintaining but expanding the initiative as well.

The pilot will be expanded to five additional correctional institutions and will serve up to 700 more learners annually (in total, 16 correctional institutions and up to 1,200 learners). These new learners will be allocated among current and new service providers.

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### **4. Further to the evaluation, what will the ministry to do increase accountability to ensure positive outcomes?**

The ministry will work closely with the Ministry of the Solicitor General to better share client data, enhance performance measures, and more accurately understand and report client outcomes. Additionally, the ministries will work together to develop a more robust evaluation framework, grounded in more outcome-based data and focused on the effective and efficient use of public resources.

### **5. At what locations is the Corrections Literacy Initiative offered?**

Currently, the Corrections Literacy Initiative is offered at the following correctional institutions across Ontario:

1. Kenora Jail
2. Algoma Treatment & Remand Centre
3. Sudbury Jail
4. Thunder Bay Jail
5. Toronto East Detention Centre
6. Vanier Centre for Women (Milton)
7. Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre
8. Niagara Detention Centre
9. South West Detention Centre
10. Quinte Detention Centre
11. Ottawa Carlton Detention Centre.

With the expansion, the initiative will be also be delivered at:

1. Thunder Bay Correctional Centre
2. Ontario Correctional Institute (Brampton)
3. Toronto South Detention Centre

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4. Maplehurst Complex (Milton)
5. Central East Correctional Centre (Lindsay).

### **6. How many service providers are taking part in this initiative?**

Initially, 11 service providers were selected to deliver Literacy and Basic Skills programming at the chosen correctional institutions across the province. With the expansion, this number has increased to 14.

## **Selection Process**

### **7. How were service providers chosen to participate in this initiative?**

The assessment and selection of service providers were undertaken using service provider performance data and local intelligence inputs to ensure an evidence-based approach. The following criteria were applied in the process:

- Organizational capacity to deliver in-year, and time-limited essential skills training.
- Experience working with populations facing complex barriers to success, including Indigenous groups and vulnerable women.
- Experience delivering programming in correctional institutions or ability to develop the relationships needed to do so.
- Knowledge of the community, the local region, and its Employment Ontario network.
- Proven ability to meet provincial Service Quality Standard (SQS) targets; and to meet or exceed learner targets.

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- Not on official review in the previous year.

### **8. Can a service provider be delivering the Corrections Literacy Initiative at more than one correctional institution?**

Yes. If the service provider meets the selection criteria, they can deliver at more than one institution.

### **9. How were correctional institutions chosen to take part in this initiative?**

The correctional institutions were chosen based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, lack of available educational/training-related programming, total inmate population, and high demand for programming based on inmate population. Priority was given to institutions with Indigenous and women inmate populations.

### **10. What are the next steps for new service providers invited to participate in this initiative and for current service providers that have agreed to serve more learners?**

Service providers will work with their Employment and Training Consultants to amend their agreements to include new learner targets, funding, and activities specific to this initiative.

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## **Learners**

### **11. How many learners will this initiative help, and how was the number chosen?**

The annual learner target of up to 1,200 is based on the Ministry of the Solicitor General's estimation that 20 percent of the institutions' offender population would be interested in Literacy and Basic Skills programming.

However, the percentage of learners served at each institution will differ based on class sizes in an institutional environment, security protocols, and service providers' capacity.

### **12. What if a learner leaves a correctional institution before completing training?**

If a learner leaves a correctional institution before completing training and wants to continue in the Literacy and Basic Skills program, the learner will be referred to other Literacy and Basic Skills service providers in their area.