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***Deaf Literacy  
Initiative***



**Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum**

**Report on Program  
and Service Delivery Gaps**





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# Research Report:

## Program and Service Delivery Gaps

Prepared by Deaf Literacy Initiative

May 31, 2010

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### Purpose

This report serves as an initiation for investigation of Deaf-specific requirements for different pathways and its gaps to be considered for this stream. This report has been developed for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Literacy and Basic Skills Capacity in order to expand the Deaf stream to be available in all five pathways: personal independence, employment, post-secondary, adult credit and apprenticeship.

### Methodology

In order to collect data for this report, interviews with practitioners from all 14 literacy programs were conducted throughout the time span of six months. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis and recorded through videotape for the purpose to capture feedback in American Sign Language, and then transcribed into English. Two literacy programs were asked to do a questionnaire about their experiences trying to establish an apprenticeship program for the Deaf stream. Six individuals were interviewed regarding the establishment of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in certain areas in Ontario. The former co-coordinator from the Adult Continuing Education program was also interviewed to collect information about the former Post Secondary program for Deaf adults. The research team also attended to a Deaf Youth in Transition Steering Committee meeting to collect data from individuals from the Provincial Schools Branch and different agencies serving Deaf adults in Ontario.

With information collected from interviews, questionnaires, books and articles, a report was created for the purpose of providing the Ministry with detailed information

regarding the program and service gaps in these programs and of ways to find solutions to these barriers.

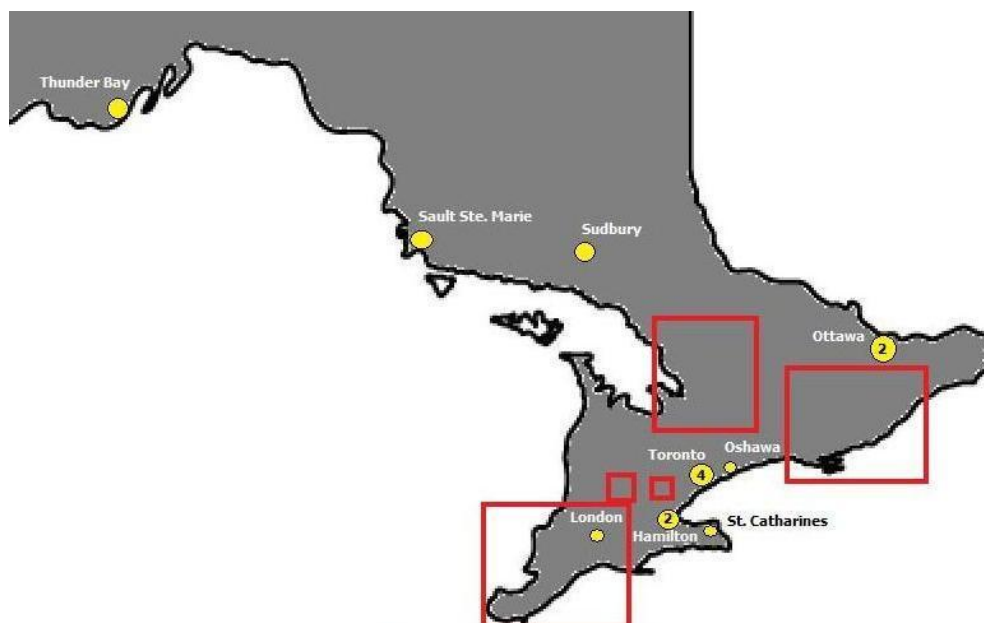
## Findings

### **Program Gaps**

There are currently fourteen literacy programs in Ontario serving Deaf and DeafBlind adults. The majority of these programs focus on two pathways which are Independence and Employment. There are only two programs that offer services in Adult Upgrading (Post Secondary) to their learners and these programs are George Brown College and Mohawk College.

To date, there are no Post Secondary, Adult Credit, Apprenticeship or Vocational Training pathways for Deaf adults in Ontario. There are several areas in Ontario that poses a need for a literacy program for Deaf adults based on number of Deaf adults requiring literacy upgrading in that area. Services readily available to them such as mental health, employment services, general social services and colleges will ensure success of learners in the area. Further research will be shown below.

Below is a map of Ontario to illustrate the gaps in literacy services for Deaf adults in Ontario. Cities with a yellow dot indicates a literacy program, however the red boxes indicates the lack of a Deaf literacy program in that area.



As you can see, there is a need for at least five more literacy programs for Deaf adult learners in the areas illustrated in these red boxes. These areas are Barrie, Belleville, Kitchener/Waterloo, Windsor and Milton.

Barrie is a region that is largely populated with Deaf adults due to the expansion of the city and the services available for Deaf people. To date, Barrie has three organizations serving Deaf people in the area such as the Canadian Hearing Society, Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka and the Bob Rumball Home for the Deaf. The Canadian Hearing Society in Barrie serves Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafened adults over the age of 55 while the Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka provides interpreting, advocacy, counseling and employment services for Deaf adults between the ages of 18-55. The Bob Rumball Home for the Deaf provides long term care for Deaf seniors. There are families and individuals who have relocated to Barrie to work or to be closer to their parents who live in the Bob Rumball Home for the Deaf. A literacy program is much needed in the area of Barrie, serving the Simcoe/Muskoka area. During an interview with the Executive Director from the Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka (DASM) and she said that there is a definite need for a literacy program, focusing on English, American Sign Language (ASL) and Mathematics in Barrie. In fact, 75% of Deaf adults between the ages of 25 to 55 and 88% of the seniors are interested in participating in a literacy program.

In the Kitchener-Waterloo region, there is a Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) available in the area. The CHS provides services in counseling, interpreting and employment. During an interview with the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, it has been expressed that there is a need for a Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program in the western Ontario region. There was a LBS program at the CHS Kitchener-Waterloo site, and it eventually closed down due to insufficient number of learners and lack of staff. The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region (TLC) had 5 to 6 Deaf learners but there were not enough interpreters or funding. CHS Kitchener-Waterloo has mentioned that they are willing to do a partnership with an Anglophone program to serve Deaf adults. They mentioned that they would like to do this with Project Read, an Anglophone literacy network for the Kitchener region. CHS Kitchener-Waterloo is willing to run the program, but they will need sufficient funding to be able

to hire a minimum of two staff to run the program. In the past, their program was run by one person, and this proved to be challenging and overwhelming for that person.

In an interview with a Regional Director at the Canadian Hearing Society in Windsor, it was evident that there is a high demand for a literacy program in the area. For the past 8 years, CHS Windsor have requested verbally with a representative from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for the establishment for a literacy program in Windsor for Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults. His request was never granted. The Regional Director at CHS Windsor did an informal tracking of how many people required literacy skills upgrading and claims that there is a need for a literacy program so that Deaf adults can work on their literacy, employment and independence skills. Five years ago, the Regional Director proposed to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that they set up a literacy program but at the time, the Ministry said that there were no money available.

Belleville is the home of the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, one of the three provincial schools for the Deaf in Ontario. The city of Belleville has approximately 1,600 Deaf adults who reside there and have access to services provided by the Canadian Hearing Society in areas such as counseling, employment and interpreting. There are a lot of recent graduates from the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf and graduates from mainstreamed programs in public schools who continue to live in the area. Milton is also the home of the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf, one of the three provincial schools for the Deaf in Ontario. The city of Milton has a larger population of Deaf individuals living in the area than it is in Belleville, due to its close proximity to the Greater Toronto Area and a large number of families consisting of Deaf family members. A lot of the students in Milton and Belleville often stay in the area after graduating and are unable to move on to employment or college due to insufficient literacy skills from not being able to access to their natural language, American Sign Language. A lot of these students did not learn American Sign Language until later in life and had communicated through the use of spoken English and/or Signed Exact English which resulted in lack of having a strong foundation in a first language. Therefore, there is a need for a literacy program in Belleville and Milton as a

way for enabling these Deaf adults to transition onto college. Further information about what types of resources are available for a literacy program in Belleville and the possible partnership with Loyalist College and in Milton with its possible partnership with the Adult Continuing Education program, which will be explained further later in the report under the Post-Secondary Gaps section.

Despite having wonderful programs in 14 different areas in Ontario, there are definite needs as shown through our research above for Literacy and Basic Skills programs for Deaf adults in certain areas such as Barrie, Belleville, Kitchener/Waterloo, Windsor and Milton. With the establishment of new literacy programs in these areas, it would provide Deaf adults with more opportunities to pursue the advancement of their literacy skills in order to attain skills needed for life, employment and education.

### **Post Secondary Gaps**

Currently, there are no post secondary programs for Deaf learners. In the past, there was a post secondary program for Deaf adults, where they can continue their education upon graduating from high school. This program was known as the Adult Continuing Education (ACE) program in Milton, Ontario. This program closed in 2004 due to a number of reasons: the Halton School Board decided to leave the program due to Individual Staff funding by the boards for Special Education (ISU), which forced the ACE program to depend on the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf for funding, which was derived from the Ministry of Education (MED) to keep the program running. Ultimately, restrictions were imposed by the school and then the program had to come to an end. A similar situation occurred at the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf. Literacy classes were offered for Deaf adults by two teachers employed by the provincial school. By 1996, these classes ceased due to the fact that the school could no longer financially support students over the age of 21.

At the present time, there is no such program for Deaf adults in Ontario, and a former teacher and co-coordinator whom we interviewed said that she still gets requests from students who would like to see the ACE program become available to

them due to its success rate and partnership agreement with the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, New York. The ACE program established a partnership with NTID in terms that the courses aligned with the English and Math courses offered at NTID. Students who successfully completed the ACE program in English and Math and applied to NTID were waived from taking the same courses at NTID and could move on the next level at NTID therefore saving time and money. The common courses students took at the ACE program were English Literature Writing, Grammar, Algebra and Geometry. Currently, there is an Anglophone ACE program in Milton. Unfortunately, there is no such funding for the Deaf stream in Milton or elsewhere in Ontario.

There has been a significant impact on Deaf adults in Ontario since the closure of the ACE program. Deaf adults have only two programs to go to and these are Mohawk College's Deaf Empowerment Program in Hamilton and the Deaf Academic Upgrading Program at George Brown College in Toronto. Therefore, there are limited choices for Deaf adults in Ontario as to where to go for upgrading, especially in English and mathematics. In order to attend to one of these programs, Deaf adults are required to commute or relocate to Hamilton or Toronto. It has been expressed that Mohawk College and George Brown College is simply too far for Deaf adults from Belleville and Milton to commute to classes.

During an interview with an Anglophone literacy networking agency in Kitchener, it has been expressed that there are Deaf learners in the area who need literacy skills, that there is "quite an unmet need out there, especially at the lower LBS levels." The only option for Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners in Kitchener/Waterloo is to go to Anglophone LBS programs such as Conestoga College, The Literacy Group and Waterloo Regional District School Board. However, this is not the best approach for Deaf adults since it is paramount for Deaf learners to have instruction in American Sign Language due to its qualities of being a visual mode of communication. Deaf adults gain full access to what is being discussed in the classroom and are able to engage in group discussions and conversations with their own peers. Deaf adults need to be in an ASL rich

environment so that they can fully acquire and learn the skills that they need. They would not have the same results if they were in an Anglophone-based LBS program.

There is a definite need to have a post secondary program for Deaf learners in the cities of Milton and Belleville. It is important to have a post secondary program to be conveniently located near the provincial schools because it will provide recent graduates from these schools or from mainstreamed programs in public schools in the area with a smoother transition to college upon graduating from high school. A literacy program for Deaf learners could possibly be located at Loyalist College in Belleville, which is located just four kilometers from the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, which would benefit Deaf adults in the area. In fact, the Disability Advisor at Loyalist College has been discussing with a teacher from the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf about the possibility of establishing a Deaf Literacy and Basic Skills program there. There has been an interest in possibly hiring Deaf teachers at the college. There are 1,697 Deaf adults living in Belleville and some of these adults have tried enrolling at Loyalist College but the college could not provide sufficient accommodation due to a shortage of interpreters in the area. As a result of this, Deaf learners have nowhere to go to, except to relocate to distant cities such as Toronto and Hamilton to pursue their education. The same goes for Deaf adults in Milton and with the return of the ACE program on the campus of the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton would help Deaf adults upgrade their literacy skills.

With the implementation of literacy programs near the provincial schools, recent graduates would be provided the tools to be able to have a smoother transition to colleges and universities.

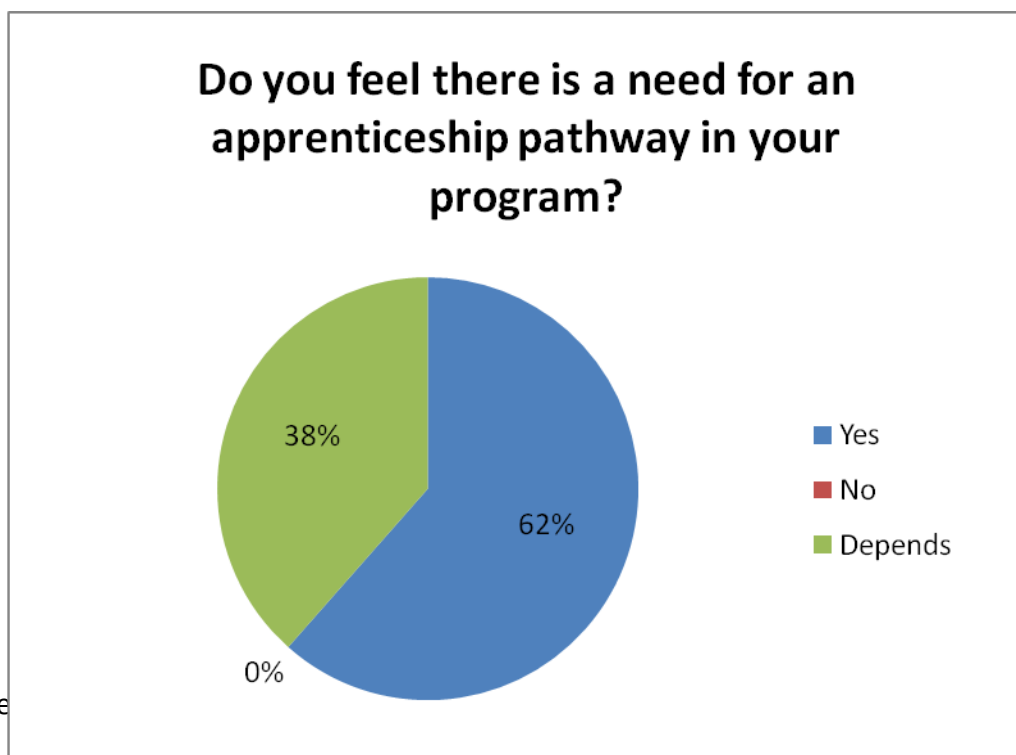
### **Secondary Credits Gaps**

In order to meet the requirements mandated by the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum, it is paramount to provide Deaf learners access to all the pathways. This includes the Secondary Credits pathway, which is currently not made available to the Deaf stream. With sufficient funding, training and support, it is possible to provide Deaf adults with this opportunity, especially to earn the Ontario Secondary Schools Diploma

or the Ontario Secondary Schools Certificate. Recommended sites are Mohawk College's Deaf Empowerment Program in Hamilton or George Brown College's Deaf Academic Upgrading Program in Toronto. It is also possible to provide these credits upon the implementation of a Literacy and Basic Skills program at Loyalist College in Belleville and the Adult Continuing Education program at the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton.

### Apprenticeship Gaps

Like the Secondary Credits pathway, there are no apprenticeship programs for the Deaf stream. In order for the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum to be effective, it is essential that Deaf adult learners are given the option to have apprenticeship services made available to them. In fact, 90% of the practitioners who were interviewed all said that they do not have such an opportunity. These practitioners also claimed they need a pre-apprenticeship program where they can help their learners prepare before enrolling to a vocational apprenticeship training program. When the practitioners were interviewed, 62% claimed that they would like an apprenticeship program for their learners, while 38% felt that it depended on the amount of learners that are interested or due to the fact that it is not viewed as important since there are societal pressure for them to focus on their English literacy skills rather than learning a trade.



The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program provided by Employment Ontario does not offer services for Deaf learners. There are services for Aboriginal people, but not for Deaf people, which creates a gap of inequality in services.

Currently, there is a high demand for work experience opportunities and sheltered work programs at the end of high school and beyond. Deaf youth in Provincial Schools are currently enrolled in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Dual Credit programs and Life Skills Stream. These programs are excellent for Deaf youth; however, there is a gap in transition for these Deaf youth upon graduating from high school. They do not have anywhere to go to continue their Apprenticeship experience. This proves to be a transitional barrier; therefore, there is a need for an apprenticeship program for these graduates.

At the present time, programs at Mohawk College and George Brown College have learners who expressed a desire to participate in a pre-apprenticeship program. Both programs would like to have the training and funding to provide a *pre*-apprenticeship program to prepare their learners by teaching them the tools required for entry to an apprenticeship program. This includes using the apprenticeship curriculum as a tool in instructing their Deaf learners about the basics of the trade of their choice, attaining entry-level skills and vocabulary frequently used in the trade. This way, practitioners can provide their learners with the tools they would need to enroll in apprenticeship programs.

At George Brown College, it has been mentioned that their learners would like to learn carpentry and sheet-metal. At Mohawk, they would like to pursue the following positions: Automotive Painter, Automotive Technician, Construction Electrician, Logistics and Distribution, Drywall Finisher, Forklift Operator, Carpenter, Janitorial, Tool and Die, Machinist and Baker. In fact, these academic programs have tried creating an apprenticeship program for their Deaf learners, but it fell through due to several barriers:

1. Lack of funding for the establishment of an apprenticeship program. George Brown College tried establishing a “pre-apprenticeship” program focusing on Sheet Metal for Deaf adults during the 2008-2009 academic year. However, this

- issue has not been resolved and there was no follow up by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
2. Entry requirements for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs require all learners to have grade 11 and 12 English credentials. This has been a barrier since the average grade level for Deaf learners tends to range up to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Not only that, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English credentials for Deaf graduates from provincial schools do not align with the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs' expectations due to different terminology. Provincial schools use the word "English as a Second Language" instead of "English," leading the programs not to recognize these courses to be equal to their expectations. A possible solution is for learners to participate in Secondary Credits programs as previously discussed, where Deaf adults can earn an Ontario Secondary Schools Diploma (OSSD) or Ontario Secondary Schools Certificate (OSSC) in order to meet the requirements for enrollment in an apprenticeship program.
  3. Learners struggle to find a job and an employer who is willing to sponsor them, which is a requirement for enrollment in a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program. The employer would act as a mentor, teaching the Deaf learner about the trade. However, most employers are reluctant to work with a Deaf individual in the first place, creating a barrier for our Deaf adult learners.
  4. Anglophone apprenticeship programs are not familiar when it comes to accommodating accessibility to Deaf learners. This has been the case for the Deaf Empowerment Program at Mohawk College who had several learners enrolled in an Anglophone program with the program's support in the classroom and on-site. Unfortunately, this experience was unsuccessful for their learners due to the lack of accommodation provided by the Anglophone programs.

It is recommended for a pre-apprenticeship program to be implemented at a Literacy and Basic Skills program that also offers Secondary Credits to their Deaf learners so that they can obtain their OSSD or OSSC in order to meet the entry-level requirements mandated by the Apprenticeship pathway. Suggested sites would be at

Mohawk College and/or George Brown College since they have learners who are eager to learn an apprenticeship trade.

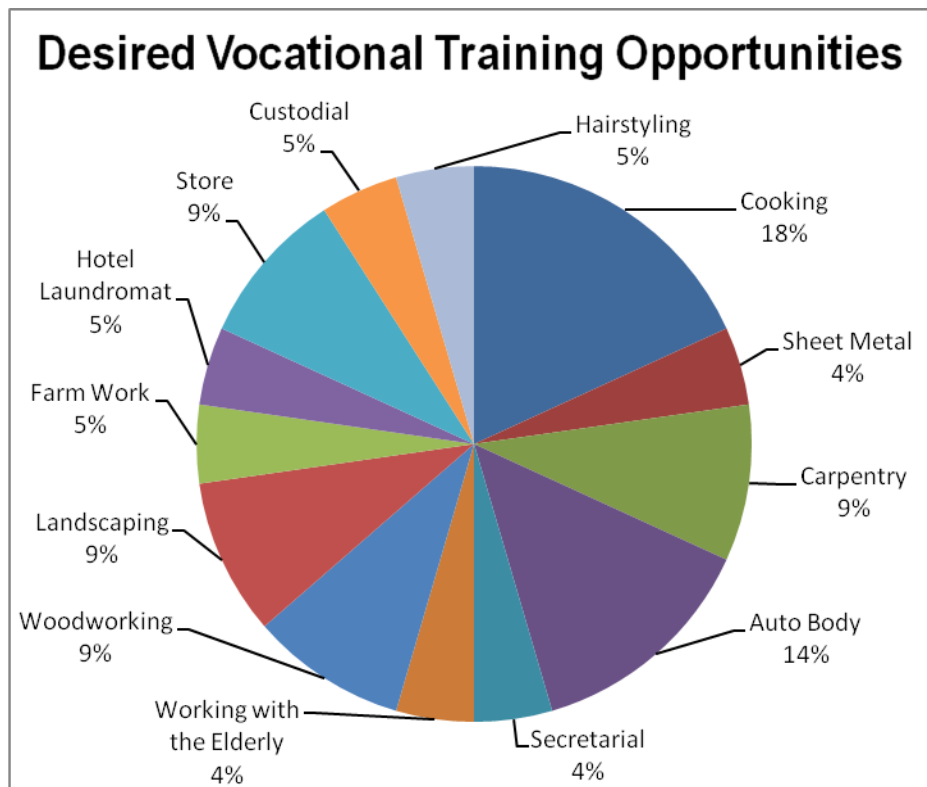
### **Vocational Training Gaps**

There are no vocational training opportunities for the majority of the Deaf Literacy and Basic Skills programs, with an exception for just one program which used to offer the Personal Support Worker (PSW) program at the Bob Rumball Centre of the Deaf. This program partnered with Integracare to offer the PSW training. Funding was redirected over the past year for training to upgrade the current Personal Support Workers employed at the Bob Rumball Home for the Deaf in Barrie. The Director of Educational Services is not sure if there will be any PSW programs provided by the Bob Rumball Centre of the Deaf in the near future due to insufficient funding.

When the practitioners were interviewed, 62% expressed a desire for a vocational program made available for the Deaf stream since their learners would prefer to seek employment that are more hands-on. Providing them with opportunities to try out different fields such as having co-op placements where Deaf learners would be closely monitored by the program and employer are recommended.

During the interviews, the practitioners expressed that their learners would like to see vocational opportunities in the following areas:

- cooking
- carpentry
- auto body
- sheet-metal
- secretarial
- landscaping
- farm work
- laundry at a hotel
- convenience store
- custodial
- hairstyling
- Work with the elderly



When asked about what kind of resources and support needed to ensure that a vocational opportunity becomes a possibility, practitioners said that they would like more partnerships with other programs, and/or individuals from the community who has the expertise to teach different vocational training opportunities. They would need funding to be able to operate a vocational training program and to purchase items such as liability insurance, a cashier machine and fridge to ensure it becomes a reality.

### Barriers to Transition

Transitioning into and out of an LBS program is a definite barrier for Deaf adults in Ontario due to a number of reasons described below:

1. Varying educational backgrounds or learning experiences (Deaf school or mainstreamed; lack of a formal education)
2. Weak proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL)
3. Lack of sufficient soft skills and self-esteem
4. Fear of transitioning to another program or pathway

5. Accessibility issues
6. Lack of financial and material resources, as well as outside support

Deaf adult learners in Ontario all range from a variety of educational backgrounds or learning experiences. Some learners graduated from a provincial school such as the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton; The Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville and the Robarts School for the Deaf in London. However, there is quite a large number of Deaf adults who graduated from local public schools, either through the use of spoken English, a form of signed language (Signed Exact English or signing and speaking simultaneously) and/or through an interpreter. Some learners came from self-contained classrooms with a teacher who used ASL or a form of signed language as mentioned above. For learners who come from these kinds of backgrounds, they have never truly experienced being in an environment that is rich in ASL and strongly embrace the culture of the Deaf community. They also have been in schools that have teachers who do not challenge them and lowered their expectations for these learners. This has resulted in the lack of proper academic behaviour in the current literacy programs. Learners are not taught to be accountable for their own work, or taught proper academic behaviours such as coming into class on time; bringing their homework, a pen, paper or pencil to class. For some, they have never been taught how to think critically, but to mimic certain English phrases/structures or signs. Some learners simply have never had any kind of formal education in their native countries prior to immigrating to Canada. They are also not prepared for life beyond high school and this causes a strain for our practitioners to try to teach them these basic skills such as living up to higher expectations, attaining proper academic behaviours, and so on. This proves to be challenging for the practitioners, as these learners lack the background knowledge in a first language to draw information from.

Another barrier that parallels to having weak educational backgrounds is the lack of proficiency in their American Sign Language (ASL) Skills. Noam Chomsky, a linguist, cognitive scientist and philosopher, claims that the principles developed through a first language are vital for learning a second language, which is known as second language

acquisition (White, 2003). Deaf learners who have very weak ASL skills are posed with a barrier because they have yet acquired the skills need to learn a language in the first place and are pushed to learn a second language. English is not the natural language for Deaf adults living in Ontario. American Sign Language (ASL) is the natural language for Deaf people, since it is a visual language, using the hands, body and face to convey a message. ASL is a language, having its own set of linguistic rules such as *syntax* (grammar and word order), *morphology* (a unit of language that is meaningful and cannot be taken apart), and *semantics* (meaning) (Valli, Lucas & Mulrooney, 2005). Learners who enroll into LBS programs in Ontario often do not have a solid foundation in this language, and this proves to be difficult for practitioners to try to communicate through ASL with these individuals through gestures and drawing pictures. Not only that, they have very little to use as a tool when learning a language and this proves to be difficult in learning the English language. Deaf learners need to have a strong foundation in ASL in order to acquire English. They will need to use the skills and tools they gained while acquiring/learning ASL prior to learning English. This ultimately leads practitioners to put a heavy emphasis for Deaf learners who do not have strong skills in ASL, to learn ASL prior to learning English. Once they have strong skills in ASL, they can transfer the skills they acquired to use it as a tool to learning English. English is *not* the language for Deaf people, while ASL is the true, natural language for Deaf people.

Another barrier is that learners constantly struggle with is the lack of sufficient soft skills. First of all, they are wary of people, especially the practitioners in the beginning. Practitioners often have to earn their trust in order to let them teach. Not only that, the majority of Deaf learners in the 14 LBS programs in Ontario lacked the confidence in themselves. Often, learners see the literacy program as a safe haven, where they can feel comfortable because they are among learners who use the same language and live in the same culture. They constantly believe that they are less capable than hearing people (people who can hear) and that hearing people are far superior to them. This leads to a lower sense of self esteem and lack of pride in their Deaf identity. They do not want to make any ambitions for themselves and often settle for less, such as relying on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for financial assistance

instead of finding a job. As part of this barrier, Deaf adults also suffer from mental health issues such as depression, identity crises, or even trauma from oppression. Transition is needed for these adults who require mental health counseling beyond high school. Partnerships with agencies are recommended to work with the Deaf adult, to make appropriate mental health connections in their home communities. Oftentimes, for these adults, they require counseling in order to be able to make progress in finding employment, or succeeding in a certain pathway, whether it may be post-secondary or independence. Practitioners find themselves continuously trying to boost their self-esteem that they can do anything they aspire to and this is a long and painful process for the Deaf learners. There are cases where Deaf learners regress to their old ways after leaving the program due to finding a job. They often end up being unsure of themselves and their abilities, leading them to be isolated from the Deaf community. This greatly frustrates the practitioners, who often want to see them being successful and use the skills they learned after leaving the program.

One of the main reasons why Deaf learners have low expectations of themselves is due to the lack of knowledge about Deaf people in Canadian society. Deaf people are the minority in Canadian society and there is insufficient awareness about Deaf people. Often, employers are unwilling or very hesitant to hire a Deaf person to work for them, regardless whether they have the skills to do the job. Lack of awareness about Deaf people and Deaf culture is prevalent in our society and this proves to be challenging. Due to this very reason, learners frequently stay in the LBS programs for such a long time essentially because these programs are a safe haven for them. Often, they face rejection from potential employers, and are often isolated and lonely. Being in a LBS program is therapeutic for them, since they can discuss with other Deaf adults in an ASL environment. In fact, a practitioner said, “When they are here, all the worries from the outside world all melt away from their shoulders.” They often have a fear of transitioning to another program, or into the real world, as it appears “scary” to them. This applies to recent graduates from high school. Even if they have obtained the OSSD, they continue to question their ability to handle the literacy requirements of colleges and universities in Ontario. This ultimately leads them to having less ambitious goals.

Deaf adult learners experience fear and this proves to be another barrier for Deaf adults. They are afraid to transition to another program or pathway, due to the fear that they will not be properly accommodated by the Anglophone programs. Accessibility is a huge barrier for Deaf learners in Ontario. Deaf learners struggle in being properly accommodated by the Anglophone programs. Also, when these learners do transition to another program or pathway, Deaf learners encounter barriers in receiving accessibility to accommodate to their needs. Some Deaf learners are being placed into certain Anglophone programs whose agencies could not properly accommodate them since they “did not have the availability or dollars for an interpreter for some of the students... having an ASL interpreter is a definite asset but the cost is prohibitive for agencies such as ours.” These agencies tried using tutors who communicated through the use of writing and using computers. However, it was a “difficult process and didn’t last long” as explained by practitioners in Deaf literacy programs because natural pace of communication does not occur through writing and computers, thus making the process very long and complicated. Also, time spent on communicating through writing and computers had taken away time that could have been spent on actual learning process. It becomes increasingly complicated if learners have not yet developed foundational skills in reading and writing which makes the process of communicating through writing and computers much more difficult and frustrating.

Suggested solutions to these barriers are promoting partnerships between programs and potential employers. In fact, one of the major responses when the practitioners were asked about what was missing in transitions is that there is a definite need to improve the partnerships between the Deaf LBS programs and Anglophone programs (of a different pathway), to help make the transition process as smooth as possible. Creating partnerships will also help Anglophone programs become more informed about how to properly accommodate their Deaf learners. It is also suggested to create solid partnerships between Deaf LBS programs and companies/businesses. This way, it will give employers opportunities to become more aware of how to work with Deaf people and ultimately lead to potential co-op placements, apprenticeship and employment opportunities. A partnership between employers and practitioners is vital

so that practitioners can also properly give instruction about the skills and tools needed to succeed in the workplace (or trade).

A better partnership between the Deaf LBS programs is also needed, such as better transparency between the programs. Practitioners suggested having a resource made available to them, such as a system where programs can smoothly transition its learner from one program to another. Some programs are very small and short-staffed, while others are protected by their union. This affects the delivery of the programs. Practitioners have expressed the need for a better support system from all programs, to promote teambuilding and trust between the practitioners. They feel that some programs were not willing to share information or freely participate in partnership due to pressures on retaining students and due to fear of being criticized by other programs. They would like to see partnerships happen within the Deaf literacy community but require support from Deaf Literacy Initiative and other stakeholders as this would require time spent on professional development, brainstorming and transition from the “old way” to new way of engaging with one and other.

Practitioners also expressed the need for a common and accessible assessment tool for Deaf adult learners. They feel that if they had the training and a certificate, it will help them to properly and effectively identify which level their learners are at, making it easier for them to deliver level-appropriate instruction to their learners. This leads to the need for a proper tool to assess ASL skills of Deaf learners and further training which would help practitioners to identify Deaf learners’ literacy skills in their first language. Practitioners also expressed the need for more culturally-relevant resources to promote the skills for independence. These resources also need to be available in ASL as well.

It is also recommended to have a place where Deaf adults can go to for consultation like the system formerly imposed by the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP). This way, Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults can get the guidance they need in order to know which program is best for them based on their goals and needs. Often, most Deaf adults are not aware that there are literacy programs available for them, or that it is possible to get a post-secondary education

without getting in too much debt. This would be a great solution to the decline of Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults in literacy and post-secondary programs in Ontario.

## Recommendations

Here is a list of recommended short-term and long-term goals to resolve the services gaps in the Deaf literacy community in Ontario:

### Short Term Goals

1. Funding for an ASL assessment tool and the development of ASL resources (DVDs and workbooks) to promote proficiency in ASL to resolve the barriers as discussed in this report.
2. Funding for the development of a resource focusing on the soft skills to help promote a better sense of self-confidence in our Deaf adult learners. Workbooks and DVDs are needed to make this possible.
3. Funding for the establishment of a project at Deaf Literacy Initiative in order to develop strong partnerships between Deaf LBS programs and other companies/businesses for placements in apprenticeship and/or vocational training. Another suggestion is to have a provincial Deaf and Deaf Blind Coalition (DDBC), instead of just having one for LBS programs in Toronto. This will help strengthen the partnerships between the Deaf LBS programs in Ontario.
4. Funding for more teachers and support workers for programs such as Niagara, George Brown College and CHS Toronto to work one-on-one with their learners to help them meet their goals.
5. Funding for ASL-English interpreters in Anglophone programs.

### Long Term Goals

6. Establishing post secondary literacy programs near the provincial schools in Milton and Belleville will provide recent graduates with the tools to be able to

have a smoother transition to a collegiate program. Recommended sites would be an Adult Continuing Education program at the Ernest C. Drury School in Milton and an academic upgrading program at Loyalist College in Belleville.

7. It is highly recommended to launch Literacy and Basic Skills programs for Deaf adults in Barrie, Kitchener/Waterloo and London/Windsor so that Deaf adults in these areas are given the opportunity to improve their literacy skills.
8. Funding to be made available for the hiring of qualified practitioners to teach Secondary Credits and pre-Apprenticeship courses at Mohawk College, George Brown College, Adult Continuing Education and Loyalist College.
9. Funding is needed in order to provide Professional Development courses for current and prospective practitioners.

It is important that the Deaf stream to be available in all five pathways: personal independence, employment, post-secondary, adult credit and apprenticeship in order to be able to use the new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum fully and effectively. With solutions in place as recommended above, the Deaf stream will increase its capacity to serve Deaf adults in Ontario and to contribute to communities all across Ontario, while breaking down existing barriers.

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