

**COMMON ASSESSMENT
AND INFORMATION & REFERRAL
AGREEMENTS AND PROTOCOLS**

**for Literacy & Basic Skills and
Academic Career Entrance Service Providers
in Toronto and York Region/Bradford**

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List of Acronyms

ACE	Academic & Career Entrance
CAA	Common Assessment Agreements
CAWG	Common Assessment Working Group
EO	Employment Ontario
EOIS-CaMS	Employment Ontario Information System – Case Management
EOPG	Employment Ontario Partners’ Gateway (www.eopg.ca)
I&R	Information and Referral
IRPA	Information & Referral Protocol Agreements
LBS	Literacy and Basic Skills
LLC	Local Literacy Committee
MTCU	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
OALCF	Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework

1. Introduction

This document outlines agreements and protocols that are held in common by member *service providers* of the Toronto and York Region/Bradford Local Literacy Committees - agreements related to Common Assessment and Information and Referral services and agreements for Service Coordination and Referral.

The purpose and overall objectives of these agreements and protocols are:

- to ensure the best possible access to appropriate services and programs for LBS clients;
- to establish and maintain consistency and continuity for learners transitioning between LBS-funded *service providers*;
- to ensure common understanding and language for effective communications and efficient processes between LBS *service providers* and with EO partners;
- to ensure that LBS-funded *service providers* in these regions are well-equipped a) to provide up-to-date and effective Information & Referral services, b) to coordinate and support seamless transitions for learners within the LBS/ACE system and c) to ensure that learners continually benefit from effective service coordination for other learning, training, employment and community supports and services that will help them to achieve their learning goals.

1.1. Assumptions

1) All programs are committed first and foremost to learner-centred assessment and referrals.

2) The agreements laid out in this document:

- a) do not require programs to use the same assessment tools
- b) do not weaken program autonomy
- c) do require a common understanding of OALCF complexity levels, as outlined in the *OALCF Curriculum Framework master document*¹
- d) do require a common understanding of LBS suitability and eligibility criteria, as outlined in the *LBS Service Provider Guidelines*²
- e) do require a common understanding Ministry expectations re: service coordination and referral.

¹ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Curriculum Framework*, 2011

² Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Literacy and Basic Skills: Service Provider Guidelines*, Effective April 2013.

- 3) Common Assessment and Information & Referral are integrated and co-dependent processes and should not be viewed in isolation.
- 4) Common Assessment and Information & Referral will take into consideration external barriers, including financial need, lack of transportation and the need for childcare.
- 5) All programs will keep up-to-date with Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) requirements for Common Assessment and Service Coordination and Referrals via new postings to the EOPG website.³
- 6) All programs will endeavour to implement the Common Assessment and Information Referral Agreements to the best of their ability.

1.2. Background

A Common Assessment Working Group (CAWG) was assembled in the fall of 2005 to develop the agreements and work with the Local Literacy Committees to adopt them.⁴ The membership of this original working group was established by the MTCU Literacy & Basic Skills Field Consultant and consisted of representatives from each of the Local Literacy Committees and the three delivery sectors (community-based, school board, and college).

In the spring of 2010, the Working Group reconvened to review the document that had been finalized in December 2006 and to evaluate the agreements and procedures that had been put in place. At this time, the membership of the Working Group consisted of representatives from the same LBS agencies that made up the original working group.

In January of 2013, MTML drafted a new agreement document to align with the OALCF and current MTCU documents including the 2013-2014 *LBS Service Providers Guidelines* and the October 2011 OALCF document, *Supporting Learners through Service Coordination and Referral*. The draft document was presented to the Toronto and York Region/Bradford Local Literacy Committees in January 2013 for review.

1.3. Definitions

Common Assessment:

³ LBS service providers are encouraged to access the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway (www.eopg.ca) for updates to LBS documents, reference materials and forms. Please see Appendices A and B for a list of relevant materials.

⁴ For a complete list of Common Assessment Working Group members, please see Appendix D.

Assessment refers to any process or procedure that gathers information for making decisions about a learner's knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. It forms a critical part of everyday activity in a literacy program as decisions are made on how to best meet learners' needs. Assessment includes a wide range of approaches from informal procedures to formal standardized assessments or tests. LBS *service providers* conduct assessments at intake (upon registration and placement), during programming (as part of program delivery), and at exit (when learners complete the learner plan).⁵

Common Assessment refers to agreement among participating *service providers* and/or individuals and a common understanding of a range of assessment methods and tools and interpretation of assessment results that are generated.

Information and Referral:

Information and Referral is an LBS service that ensures that information about the LBS *service provider's* literacy training opportunities, approaches and targeted clients is available to learners, potential learners, clients, volunteers, other interested individuals and referring organizations.⁶

2. Common Assessment, Information & Referral, and Service Coordination and Referral Agreements

Goal:

The goal of the Common Assessment, Information & Referral, and Service Coordination and Referral Agreements is to provide learners with seamless, effective transitions between Literacy and Basic Skills/Academic & Career Entrance (LBS/ACE)⁷ programs, and to ensure that LBS/ACE *service providers* and program locations have the necessary supports and information for referrals to EO programs and services and/or to other programs and services offered in the community.

⁵ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Literacy and Basic Skills: Service Provider Guidelines*, Effective April, 2013

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS): "The Literacy and Basic Skills Program contributes to the Ministry vision by delivering literacy and basic skills training to adult...learners who have goals to successfully transition to employment, postsecondary, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, and independence including learners who may have a range of barriers to learning." Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Literacy and Basic Skills: Service Provider Guidelines*, Effective April, 2013. Academic & Career Entrance (ACE) is the highest level of literacy training provided by MTCU.

Common Assessment, Information & Referral, and Service Coordination and Referral Agreements:

The LBS/ACE *service providers* in Toronto and York Region/Bradford agree to the following seven agreements:

Agreement 1: Learner Assessment

Commitments:

1. LBS/ACE *service providers* will establish an individual's eligibility and suitability for LBS services.

When assessing eligibility and suitability, *service providers* will

- a) be guided by the *LBS Service Provider Guidelines*
- b) evaluate the learners' needs and goals in relation to the *service provider's* service delivery including but not limited to: location, delivery mode, program offerings, (language of instruction, specialized programs and learning supports) and class schedule.

Eligibility and suitability assessment may be done in a number of ways including:

- initial screening only, through telephone conversation or meeting;
- a face-to-face interview that includes:
 - a. an initial assessment of reading, writing, English and/or numeracy
 - b. completion of the learner's LBS Participant Registration form;
- for prospective learners already registered as EO clients, but not currently in LBS/ACE, a review and confirmation of participant registration information followed by a literacy assessment;
- for incoming learners already registered as LBS clients, a review and confirmation of information and previous assessment results.

2. LBS/ACE *service providers* will determine an individual's primary service need and determine most appropriate referral if applicant is not appropriate for LBS services.

3. LBS/ACE *service providers* will conduct initial, ongoing and exit assessment related to an applicant's knowledge, skills and task performance.

Service providers will create and update individual learner plans (service plans) using initial and ongoing assessment to monitor learner progress towards goal completion.

Service providers will use a variety of assessment tools and methods, including *Milestones* and *culminating tasks*, that are goal-related, appropriate, meaningful, and understandable to the learner and suitable for planning *learning activities* outlined in the learner plan.

Service providers will ensure that *service provider* staff responsible for LBS assessment have the appropriate skills and training to select, administer, interpret and track assessment results.

Service providers will ensure that *Milestone* and *culminating task* assessment activities are kept secure and are administered according to the established guidelines.

Service providers will maintain up-to-date learner files that contain all required assessment information.

Service providers will ensure that assessment results can be understood by other LBS/ACE *service providers* and key referral agencies, as agreed through the literacy services planning and coordination process.

4. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will conduct regular and ongoing assessment to determine a learner's need for coordinated services.**
5. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will engage in inter-agency cooperation, and support integrated programming with partners on behalf of learners.**

Agreement 2: Collection of Client Information

Commitments:

1. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will collect personal information on each client entering the program and complete the LBS Participant Registration form.**

In completing the LBS Participant Registration form, LBS/ACE *service providers* will procure two signatures from each client for the Ministry's indirect collection and use of personal information and the *service provider's* own collection and use of personal information for their purposes.

2. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will collect assessment results related to initial, ongoing and exit assessment of learner performance.**
3. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will collect information related to initial, ongoing and exit assessment of each client's need for additional supports and services.**

4. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will implement a systematic approach to tracking, reporting, and analysing collected information and referral activity and follow-up.**

Agreement 3: Information and Referral within the LBS/ACE system

Commitments:

1. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will make learners aware of learning and training options on an ongoing basis and will provide support to learners to find appropriate learning and training opportunities that fit the learner's goals.**
2. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will encourage learners to access training and or services at agencies that are best suited to meeting their needs.**
3. **In the event of a waiting list, LBS/ACE *service providers* will refer clients to the next appropriate program or service.**
4. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will provide information and referral services that follow the established processes of literacy services planning and coordination.**
5. **During ongoing assessment interviews with learners, LBS/ACE *service providers* will, if necessary familiarize learners with other LBS/ACE *service providers* and initiate referrals based on the learner's goals, assessment results and new and relevant information provided by the learner.**
6. **The referring LBS/ACE *service provider* will ensure that the receiving agency is informed that a referral has taken place before the learner contacts them.**
7. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will provide assessment results and documentation using OALCF complexity levels.**
8. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will provide any relevant, completed assessment materials to the referral agency.**
9. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will verify EOIS-CaMS data with incoming learners.**
10. **LBS/ACE *service providers* will accept assessment results "as is" and not require the learner to complete another full intake assessment.**

Agreement 4: Service Coordination and Referral

Commitments:

- 1. LBS/ACE *service providers* will maintain an up-to-date, printed record of key EO and community partners and their contact information.**
- 2. During ongoing assessment interviews with learners, LBS/ACE *service providers* will provide learners with information about additional supports and services and initiate a referral process if necessary based on the learner’s goals, assessment results and information provided by the learner about his/her challenges and needs.**
- 3. LBS/ACE *service providers* will coordinate and/or integrate services to provide learners with supported access to services that help learners achieve their goals.**
- 4. Referring LBS/ACE *service providers* will ensure that the receiving partner is informed that a referral has taken place before the client contacts them.**
- 5. LBS/ACE *service providers* will conduct research on local learning, training and employment opportunities and services.**
- 6. LBS/ACE *service providers* will share lists of community partners and experiences of effective practices and experiences with service coordination and referral with their local cluster groups.**

Agreement 5: Common Learner Referral Form and Supporting Documentation

Commitment:

- 1. When referring learners who have been assessed, LBS/ACE *service providers* will use the common “Learner Referral Form” that provides the basic learner information in an easily recognized format (see Appendix B).**

If only an initial conversation has taken place LBS/ACE *service providers* are not required to use the Learner Referral Form nor follow the full procedures outlined here.

The completed Learner Referral Form will include information from the learner’s LBS Participant Registration form, including the learner’s EOIS-CaMS client number (if applicable), contact information, previous educational history, and any special needs (i.e., hearing loss, learning disabilities, etc.) and/or required training supports.

Agreement 6: Dissemination of Information

Commitments:

- 1. LBS/ACE *service providers* will ensure that staff is well-aware of the Common Assessment and Information Referral Agreements.**
- 2. LBS/ACE *service providers* will ensure that staff is well aware of LBS/ACE referral service providers' entry requirements, niches, contact information, referral protocols and any necessary forms.**
- 3. LBS/ACE *service providers* will ensure staff is well aware of EO and community partners and services, referral protocols and any necessary documentation and forms.**
- 4. LBS/ACE *service providers* will ensure staff receives adequate training on requirements for documentation and record-keeping that may be needed for additional service coordination and referral.**
- 5. LBS/ACE *service providers* will establish connections with next-step transition institutions or organizations in order to effect successful learner transitions after LBS/ACE.**
- 6. LBS/ACE *service providers* will maintain complete and up-to-date information on referral programs and services and share with their cluster groups on a regular basis about available EO and community partners and services.**

Agreement 7: Complaint and Issue Resolution

Commitments:

- 1. LBS/ACE *service providers* can bring referral issues or conflicts, as they arise, to their respective Local Literacy Committee (LLC) meetings for discussion.**
- 2. MTML will ensure that records are kept of these discussions and the solutions reached and that these records inform the annual review of the agreements.**

3. Information & Referral Protocols

Information & Referral (I&R) is a broad process that is evident in many of the day-to-day activities at a literacy program. I&R refers to the ongoing research, dissemination, and exchange of information by learners, program staff, and other community stakeholders to assist learners in meeting their learning and training goals.

It is important that all LBS *service providers* and practitioners are aware of the resources available in the community and have the ability to work with a range of community service providers. Strong working relations with community partners will help in the development of the tools and processes that identify (a) which learners might require each type of support and (b) options for providing these supports.⁸

Both of these tasks should be priorities for service coordination between LBS *service providers* and other agencies in each community. Regional networks have an important role to play in facilitating an increase in knowledge of community information and strengthening service coordination.⁹

Four principal approaches to service coordination and referral have been identified by the Ministry in the OALCF document, *Supporting Learners through Service Coordination and Referral*:¹⁰

ACTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT occurs when a practitioner oversees the identification of a learner's needs, coordinates referrals to the appropriate services and supports and monitors the provision of the supports and their effectiveness in meeting the learner's needs. Active case management can strengthen a program's capacity to assess learner barriers and provide referrals or direct services more efficiently. Employment Service providers under Employment Ontario currently use this approach to service coordination.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION occurs when agencies are able to cooperate to ensure that learner supports are in place. For example, an agency might provide all the assessment services in a community and track the effectiveness of referrals. Cooperation might be either formal or informal, and involve different agencies (or distinct departments within a complex organization such as a college or multi- service agency) sharing responsibility for learners' programs by offering different elements which, taken together, provide a broader range of supports.

⁸ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Supporting Learners Through Service Coordination and Referral*, 2011.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ These four approaches, including examples of each from Ontario LBS programs and full reference information on the studies cited, are presented in more detail in Rowen, *Approaches to Service Coordination* (Ontario Literacy Coalition, March 2011) www.on.literacy.ca

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING occurs when employment and training services are provided concurrently, ideally through a single service provider. The most common form of integrated programming involves literacy and vocational skills training.

A COMMUNITY-WIDE PLANNING PROCESS occurs when community service providers cooperate to ensure that their services are accessible to learners and effective in meeting their range of needs. While LBS agencies have long participated in a literacy services planning process, a broader community-wide process would link LBS service providers with providers of a range of other services and supports such as health or social service providers.

Information

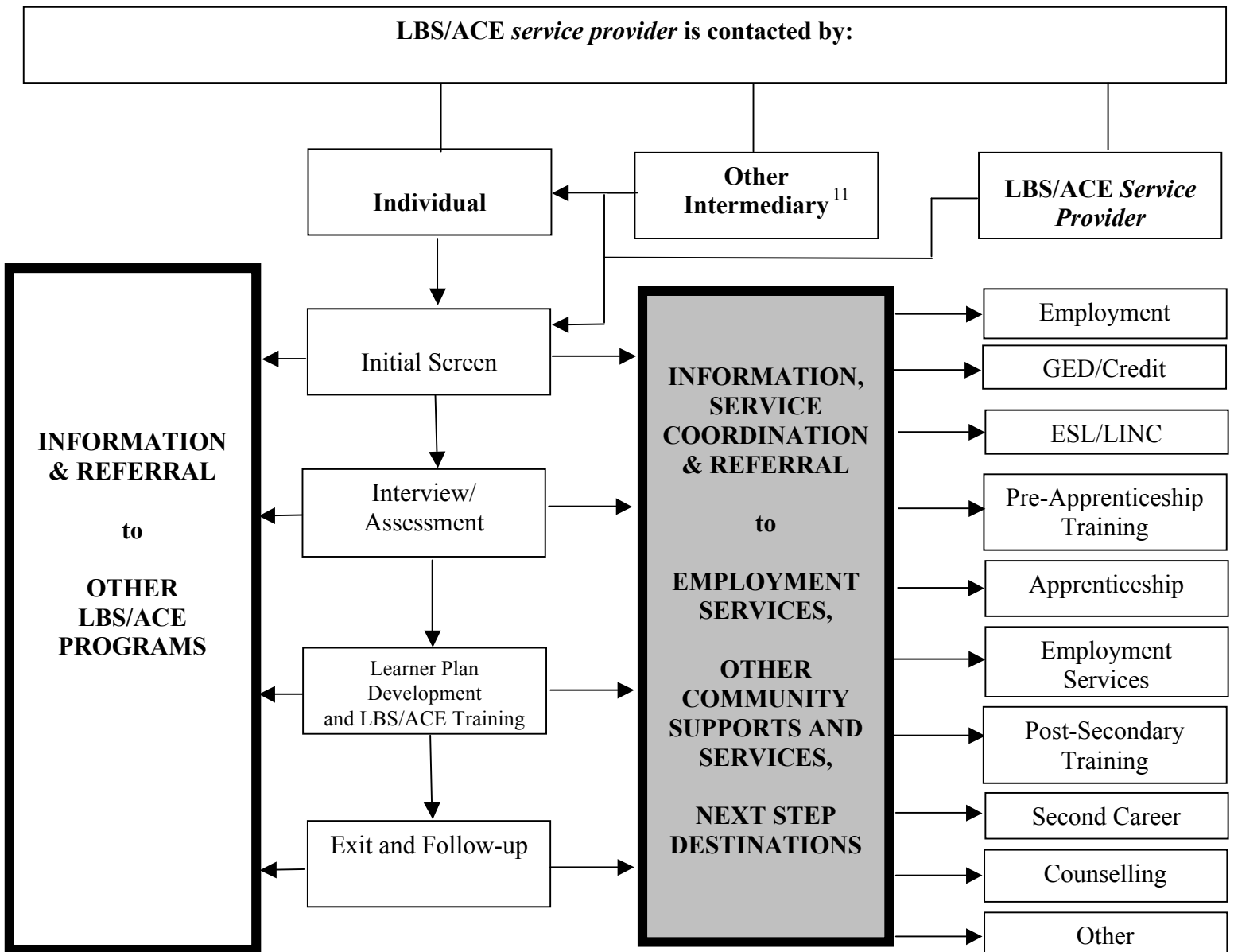
Based on a client's goals or needs, the client or an intermediary is provided with information about the most appropriate (or best-fit) employment services, learning programs or training supports, along with descriptions of the services provided by those *service providers*. LBS/ACE *service providers* will also provide the necessary supports for learners to independently research and gather information necessary to achieve their goal.

All information is made available to clients on an ongoing, general basis or on an "as needed" specific basis.

Referral

Referrals occur when a *service provider* contacts another *service provider* on behalf of a client. During the referral process, the client is introduced and arrangements are made for an introductory meeting. Referrals actively assist the learner in making progress toward achieving his/her goal.

Figure 1: Common Assessment and Information & Referral Process for LBS Funded Service Providers in Toronto and York Region/Bradford



¹¹ Other Intermediary: Whenever possible, it is preferable to speak directly with the learner. This is an indication of the learner's speaking skills, commitment, and motivation, and is part of the assessment process.

¹² LBS Agencies include Anglophone, Francophone, Native, and Deaf streams. In the case of Francophone learners, please direct all learners to Alpha Toronto. In the case of Deaf and Deaf/Blind learners, please direct all learners to the Deaf/Deaf Blind Committee (DDBC). See the MTML Referral Contact charts for agency contact information.

4. Appendices

Appendix A: MTCU Common Assessment and Information & Referral Material

Common Assessment

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Literacy and Basic Skills: Service Provider Guidelines, effective 2013.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Curriculum Framework, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Foundations of Assessment, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Glossary, 2011.

Goal Directed Assessment

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Selected Assessment Tools, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Assessment Tool Evaluation Form, 2011.

Referral

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Foundations of Transition-Oriented Programming, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: An Introduction to Goal Path Descriptions for Practitioners and Learners, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Goal Path Descriptions for Practitioners and Learners, 2011.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework: Supporting Learners Through Service Coordination and Referral, 2011.

Appendix B: Other valuable Common Assessment and Information & Referral Material

Appendix C: Learner Referral Form

LBS/ACE Learner Referral Form for Toronto and York Region/Bradford		
Learner name:		Learner contact number:
Referring service provider:		Date of referral:
Contact person(s) at referring service provider:		
Phone:	Email:	Other:
Referred to service provider:		
Reason for referral:		
Special needs:		
Training supports: <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		
LBS Participant Registration form completed? <input type="checkbox"/> YES If YES, Learner EOIS-CaMS Client Number: # _____ Learner Goal Path (please check): <input type="checkbox"/> Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Postsecondary <input type="checkbox"/> Independence		Assessment materials attached? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Date of Assessment: _____ Assessment tool: _____ Type of assessment/documentation (please check): <input type="checkbox"/> Intake <input type="checkbox"/> Exit <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> Learner Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
Comments:		
I (Learner's name), _____, agree that this information is correct and may be shared for educational purposes only. Signature of Learner and/or representative: _____ Date: _____ Consent on file? <input type="checkbox"/> YES		

Appendix D: Original Members of the Common Assessment Working Group

Original Members of the Common Assessment Working Group (as of January 2013)	
Organization	Member
Ontario Literacy Coalition/ Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre	Jason Ashkewe
Toronto District School Board	Susan Boyer
George Brown College	Gerry Conrad
Humber College	Rob Frank
Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto	Darlene King
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre	Ken MacDonald
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre	Joan McDougall
Preparatory Training Programs of Toronto	Barbara McFater
Lakeshore Area Multi-Service Project (LAMP)	Johanna Pax-Milic
Seneca College	Elise Sheridan
Toronto East End Literacy	Brenda Silver
Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy	Becky Barber
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities	Evadne Wilkinson

Local Literacy Committee Feedback

Read the *Common Assessment and Information & Referral Agreement and Protocols for Toronto and York Region/Bradford*.

Answer the four questions below in reviewing each of the following sections:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Common Assessment, Information & Referral, and Service Coordination and Referral Agreements**
- 3. Information and Referral Protocols**
- 4. Appendices**

Discussion Questions

- a) Are the statements in this section what we want? If not – what do we want?**
- b) Are they realistic? If not – how can we fix them?**
- c) Are they adequate? If not – what is missing?**
- d) What improvements/changes can you recommend?**