

2026

REMAND, RECIDIVISM AND CORRECTIONS LITERACY

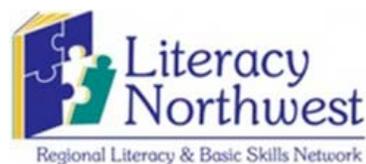




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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



REMAND, RECIDIVISM AND CORRECTIONS LITERACY

The Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SOLGEN) that delivers Get SET (Skills, Education and Training) programs to adults in remand or custody within Ontario correctional facilities. The program aims to address educational gaps among justice-involved individuals and provides training to support rehabilitation, employability, and successful reintegration into the community, with the broader goal of reducing recidivism.

Launched in 2017, CLI provides highly barriered correctional learners with essential skills development, and life stabilization supports while they are in custody. The initiative currently funds 13 service providers operating in 16 correctional institutions across Ontario, with the capacity to serve up to 1,200 learners annually.

In 2025, Literacy Link Eastern Ontario and Literacy Northwest jointly coordinated and facilitated this Corrections Literacy deliverable. The project involved an environmental scan, literature review, and engagement with CLI service providers through online Communities of Practice. The objective was to strengthen sector-wide understanding of correctional literacy, enhance peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, identify program successes and challenges, and support ongoing program development through improved coordination, access resources, and professional learning.

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- an environmental scan and assessment of the Correctional Literacy Initiative
- plan, coordinate and facilitate online Community of Practice meetings focused on connecting practitioners for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing
- Regional Networks, Provincial Support Organizations, and Get SET Service Providers will have increased understanding of correctional literacy programs and resources



The CLI program supports learners' skills development in reading, writing, numeracy, communication, employment readiness, wellness, self-reflection, and confidence building, often within very short and unpredictable remand timelines.

Throughout our discussions it's clear that CLI service providers demonstrate exceptional strengths in practitioner expertise, relationship-building with correctional staff and community partners, flexible learner-centred programming, and innovative instructional approaches adapted to institutional constraints.

At the same time, the project identified persistent systemic challenges that limit program effectiveness. Operationally, these include inadequate data capture and performance measurement within existing reporting systems, limited availability of corrections-specific instructional resources, as well as gaps in professional development and onboarding for practitioners.

Inconsistent communication and coordination across ministries and institutions, inconsistent access to space and learners due to remand conditions and correctional facility operations are additional systemic cross-ministry challenges. Ultimately, this becomes a barrier to post-release training and employment pathways.

Approximately 71% of individuals in Ontario provincial correctional facilities are there on remand.



The broader correctional context underscores the urgency of this work. Evidence from Canadian and international research consistently demonstrates that correctional education reduces recidivism, improves post-release employment outcomes, and generates significant economic and social returns on investment.

This report concludes that the Corrections Literacy Initiative is an education intervention that successfully meets the intended goal of providing training to adults in remand or custody in Ontario correctional facilities. CLI is also a public safety, community health, and economic strategy.

Enhanced service coordination, resource sharing, professional development, and inter-ministry collaboration will enhance learner outcomes, support reintegration, post-release training and employment pathways, and could contribute to safer, healthier communities.

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a practical roadmap for advancing the Corrections Literacy Initiative in Ontario. With a focus on addressing remand realities, developing more coordinated and effective communication channels and building clear post-release pathways we will start to reduce the impact of systemic barriers in the Corrections Literacy Initiative.

OUTCOMES

- An updated shared directory of Get SET Corrections Literacy service providers.
- A shared collection of corrections-specific literacy resources.
- An increased awareness within the CLI programs.
- Identified common strengths, gaps, and systemic barriers across the CLI program.
- Practical forward-looking recommendations for ongoing Corrections Literacy program development.



BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE GET SET CORRECTIONS LITERACY INITIATIVE (CLI)

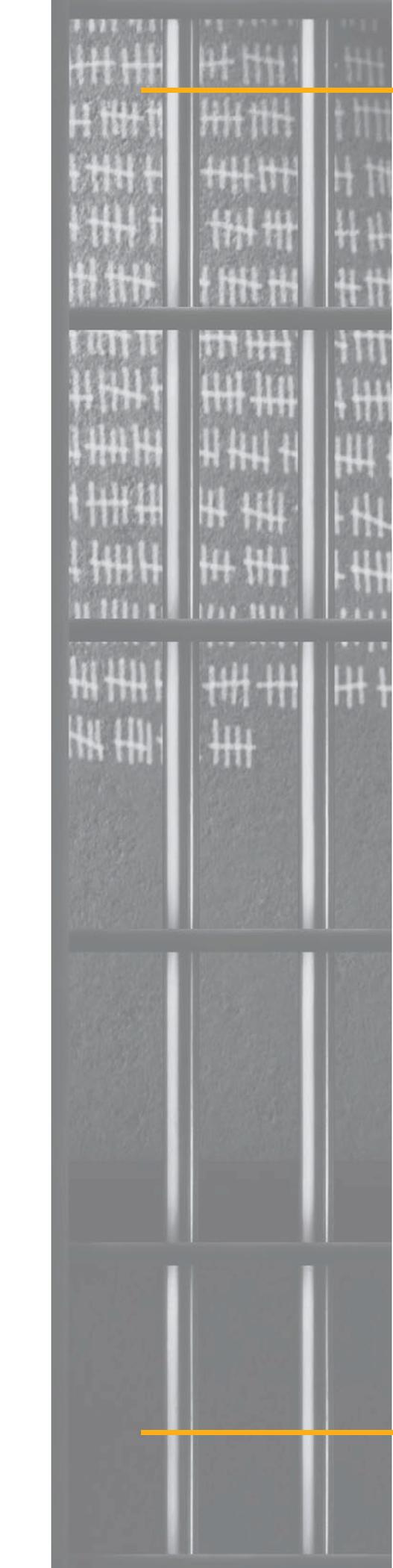
The Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) is a joint effort between the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SOLGEN) to deliver Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) training to adults in remand or custody at select Ontario correctional facilities.

The program addresses significant educational gaps and aims to support reintegration by improving learning opportunities, employability, and rehabilitation outcomes.

Launched in 2017 to create a more consistent approach to literacy and essential skills training within correctional institutions, CLI provides highly barriered learners with foundational skills that can support further education, training, and employment. According to the EOPG site one of the pilot's goals is to act as a conduit for the participants to connect with other government programs and services in the community once they are released from incarceration.

The initiative funds 13 service providers at 16 correctional institutions across the province. The aim is to reach up to 1,200 learners annually.

[EOPG, 2024](#)



ABOUT THIS CLI PROJECT

A need for ongoing Corrections Literacy support was identified through provincial and local service planning and coordination discussions. This project was proposed and coordinated as a continuation of CLI program service coordination, resource development and professional development support for practitioners.

Literacy Link Eastern Ontario and Literacy Northwest coordinated and facilitated online Community of Practice meetings for literacy practitioners who support skills, education and training at correctional institutions. The meetings focused on knowledge mobilization and peer-to-peer sharing of experiences, current practices, procedures, challenges, solutions, and resources. Throughout the process we gathered updated information about current Get SET CLI service providers, corrections associated shareholders and community partners, literacy programming offered, instructional resources, practitioner professional development and training, as well as gaps, challenges, successes and solutions.

The objective of this Corrections Literacy deliverable is to:

- conduct an environmental scan and assessment to gain a deeper understanding of the Correctional Literacy Initiative and corrections operations in Ontario
- plan, coordinate and facilitate online Community of Practice meetings focused on connecting practitioners for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.
- share our findings with Regional Networks, Provincial Support Organizations, and Get SET Service Providers to increase understanding of correctional literacy programs and resources

CLI PROJECT OUTCOMES

Key outcomes of the project include

- an updated shared directory of Get SET Corrections Literacy service providers
- a shared collection of corrections-specific literacy resources
- Community of Practice participants reported that they have an increased awareness of correctional literacy programs and resources and that it's important to continue with the CoP
- the identification of common strengths, gaps, and systemic barriers across the CLI program
- practical forward-looking recommendations for ongoing Corrections Literacy program development.

“When I got arrested, my number one concern was: what am I going to do with my education?”

[Mah, 2025](#)

Literacy in Corrections: Strengths & Challenges

An analysis of the Get SET Corrections Literacy Initiative reveals its internal effectiveness is constrained by external systemic challenges.

STRENGTHS



Expert Staff & Flexible Programs

Highly competent practitioners deliver innovative, learner-centered programming with a strong safety record despite significant barriers.

WEAKNESSES



Critical Data Gaps

Key performance measures, such as post-release engagement and employment outcomes, cannot be tracked due to data system limitations.

OPPORTUNITIES



Enhance Stakeholder Communication

Building stronger communication channels between ministries, correctional facilities, and service providers can unlock program potential.

THREATS



Systemic Barriers Hinder Learning

The correctional environment—with its lockdowns, unpredictable transfers, and security restrictions—creates an unstable setting for education.

CLI STRENGTHS

Throughout the project we identified key internal strengths of the Get SET Corrections Literacy Initiative.



Practitioners. The current Get SET CLI service providers are highly competent professional practitioners and are remarkably innovative and dynamic in their approach to teaching in correctional facilities.



Relationship building. Get SET literacy practitioners have built trust and developed valuable relationships with corrections facility staff, social workers, and sector partners like John Howard Society and Community Legal Education Ontario.



Safety and operations are well managed. Service providers follow strict institutional protocols, have capped class sizes, and have a strong safety record. SPs have emphasized a zero-incident history and respect for correctional staff roles.



Innovative programming. Corrections Literacy programs and services are invaluable in their flexibility and learner centred program delivery despite barriers and challenges due to communication and access to facilities.

Corrections learners benefit from valuable skills development in

- goal setting
- reading and writing
- wellness
- conflict resolution
- self-reflection
- life stabilization
- employment skills
- communication skills
- healthy relationships
- confidence building

Innovative CLI friendly training programs and resources have been developed and adapted to align with OALCF including

- customized curriculum and supplies like workbooks bound without staples
- motivating incentives like colouring pages
- prepared registration packages with assessments and contact information for post release available for unexpected drop in learners
- short courses and lessons
- processes for sharing learner progress including sharing digital copies of learner progress and completions with social workers
- strategies for promoting post release contact like sending hard copies of learner progress and completions to be stored with learner personal items
- pathway planning and literacy assessment services in coordination with discharge coordinators
- developed digital literacy strategies that enable access to technology and computer skills
- strong foundations and excellent results measured by milestones.

One CLI provider developed the OnTRACK program. This training is designed to equip participants with essential life-stabilization and employability skills aimed at reducing recidivism. Since the launch of the OnTRACK pilot in August 2024, 54 participants have successfully completed the training and obtained certification.

Another CLI service provided planned, coordinated and delivered a 'Second Chances Month' program in collaboration with facility staff to promote self-esteem, reintegration, and the importance of second chances.

For Moka Dawkins, education on the inside was a welcome change from her experiences with school before incarceration.

[Mah, 2025](#)

CLI WEAKNESSES

We identified key internal weaknesses of the Get SET Corrections Literacy Initiative.

Throughout the history of the Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) provincial Support organizations and CLI practitioners have identified common challenges and significant barriers.

Data Integrity. The characteristics of CLI are not adequately measured or valued by Get SET reporting. According to Get SET service providers data is not available to accurately measure and achieve performance goals due to CaMS recording limitations. One SP reported “It would be useful to relay more accurate data, if a CLI registration form could be developed or different reports in CaMS designed to easily differentiate our learners and their changing demographics year to year.” This issue in CaMS can also affect SP performance measures in showing short length of training. Some Service Providers (SPs) track corrections learners’ profiles and progressions internally which requires additional administrative steps.

One SP reported that “A substantial number of Lost Contact cases hinder timely file closure and follow-up procedures. Many participants awaiting sentencing at QDC are transferred to other provincial or federal institutions, disrupting the continuity of service. In addition, the transient nature of much of the participant population—many of whom list QDC as their primary point of contact due to housing instability—creates ongoing difficulties in maintaining contact during the 3-, 6-, and 12-month follow-up periods.”

MLITSD has identified the following four performance measures to evaluate the Corrections Literacy program. Access to information about these performance measures and outcomes has been identified as an internal weakness.

Table: MLITSD Corrections Literacy Initiative Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Present Evaluation
<p>Learner Progress: The progress of participants, who are in a provincial correctional facility for a longer period, in completing the activities as per the learning plan they developed (with their service provider) after they have registered for the LBS program</p>	<p>Performing well based on SP reports of milestones achieved and learners served.</p>
<p>Re-Registration: The number of participants that re-register in the Literacy and Basic Skills program (and respectively Corrections Literacy Initiative pilot), if they return to a provincial correctional facility.</p>	<p>Data not available</p>
<p>Post-Release Engagement: The number of participants who engage in the Literacy and Basic Skills and/or other Employment Ontario programs following release from provincial correctional facilities.</p>	<p>Data not available</p>
<p>Employment and Training Outcomes: The outcomes achieved by former corrections literacy participants who engaged in the Get SET and/or another Employment Ontario program following release from provincial correctional facilities.</p>	<p>Data not available</p>

Additional challenges and barriers identified include:

Limited internal coordination to promote resource sharing. There has been inconsistent engagement and connectedness with CLI service providers. The Community of Practice has been coordinated by different provincial support organizations, with no clear leadership, varying frequency, outcomes and continuous support. As a result, resource sharing, knowledge mobilization, and program development has been restricted.

Limited instructional materials tailored for corrections and remand conditions. Throughout our conversations and research there is an identified need for

- youth centred resources and programming
- culturally centred resources and programming
- digital literacy training and protocols for access to technology
- resources and goals designed for short training times

Need for professional development and onboarding. There is currently no standard orientation or professional development for CLI service providers. Some providers have developed their own internal onboarding, while some SPs do not have capacity to or access to information about corrections based professional development.

Internal Communication. The CLI program has achieved significant program successes and Get SET service providers are reporting need for transparency, communication, and involvement from MLITSD.

On average, remand inmates are in custody for 43 days.

[Auditor General, 2019](#)

CLI OPPORTUNITIES

We see opportunities to build on these foundations externally.

The Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) has proven successful in providing training and documented countless learner achievements through milestones. CLI service providers have established a foundation of strong professional training and relationship building practices to provide skills development within the corrections landscape. Building on these foundations externally will enhance and develop the CLI program infrastructure for ongoing success.

Communication and relationship building. Develop continuous communication about objectives, guidelines, access, programs and services, challenges and barriers through

- establishing a committee of MLITSD, Get SET, and SOLGEN representatives
- ongoing CLI service providers connections
- developing shared facility calendars with facilities administrators to promote reliable access to facility training space.
- pursuing and enhancing relationships with corrections facility staff, social workers, discharge planners and sector partners like John Howard Society, Community Legal Education Ontario and the Ontario Justice and Human Service Coordination Committee to develop and promote post-release pathways.

Program development. This includes opportunities to collaborate with institutions and partners to expand and model existing workforce readiness and internal work placement pipelines.

In the first six months of 2025, Ontario jails held an average of 10,800 inmates.

[CBC, 2025](#)

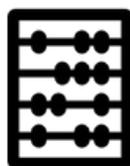
THREATS TO CLI PROGRAMMING

The primary gaps in Corrections Literacy training delivery relate to limitations from external legal and correctional system capacity challenges and limitations.



The correctional facility environment itself is not conducive to meaningful learning. Training is impeded by inconsistent access to space, competition for rooms, lockdowns, and frequent institutional and learner transfers or remand release. Get SET SPs have reported that programs are often displaced due to higher-priority institutional services.

Inmate remand legislation is creating pressure on the system. There has been an increase in demand due to rising remand populations, without an increase in funding. The systemic challenges have led to limited resources, staffing and inconsistent Corrections Officer availability to facilitate access to training. This causes barriers to training through limited access and space.



Differences in programming expectations and metrics between facility administration. Communication and coordination gaps exist between SOLGEN, MLITSD and Get SET. Varying program expectations and objectives further complicate training delivery. In some cases, attendance is the only metric. While metrics include referrals, completions and follow up. Some SPs report that attendance is lower due to low referrals and inmates not informed or aware of training available.



Inconsistent communication and rules

between social workers, guards, and Get SET program staff causes unclear guidelines on what materials or supports can be brought into facilities, and a lack of shared understanding of program priorities and logistics. For example, some training providers are permitted to bring in technology like pre-inspected offline laptops, while others are not permitted, and have been told they are 'only there to teach reading and writing.



Security restrictions and lack of access to internet due to facility security restricts digital skills development. This affects post release employment readiness because of an inability to build essential digital literacy skills needed to access EI, OW, ODSP, and healthcare supports.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

THIS SECTION INCLUDES A SUMMARY OF KEY RESOURCES AND WHAT WE LEARNED.

Throughout the project we consulted many readings, resources, and some AI insights.

As a result we've identified key resources, readings and potential partnerships to support Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) program development.

The two notable resources we accessed to learn about the criminal justice system are

- the Human Service and Justice Coordinating Committee Conference
- Chapter One of the Ministry of the Auditor General Annual Report 2019.

Incarceration rates continue to be inequitably high for people who are Indigenous and Black in Ontario, and the inequity worsened between 2016 and 2021 for Indigenous males, Indigenous females, and Black males.

[Owusu-Bempah, Akwasi, et al., 2025](#)



We compiled useful resources, professional development, and instructional materials from various sources and corrections shareholders. All the resources have been added to an online shared [Corrections Literacy](#) folder that can be accessed by anyone. hosted by Literacy Link Eastern Ontario,

Corrections Shareholders and Online Resources

Community Legal Education Ontario ([CLEO](#))

- [Steps to Justice](#)
- [Training - CLEO Connect](#)
- [Guided Pathways - Steps to Justice](#)
- [Lesson plans - CLEO Connect](#)
- [Legal Info for Prisoners – Legal information for people in jail or prison](#)
- [Discard List - December 10, 2025 - CLEO \(Community Legal Education Ontario / Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario\).](#)

Human Services & Justice Coordinating Committee ([HSJCC](#))

- [HSJCC Resource Library](#)
- [HSJCC Events](#)

[John Howard Society Resource Hub](#)

[MTML Justice Involved: Moving Beyond Barriers Resource Booklet](#) and Literacy Legacy Podcasts

- [The Nervous System and Learning](#)
- [The Impact of Violence on Learning](#)
- [Teaching in a Correctional Institution](#)

[Probation and Parole Office Locations](#)

[GEO Reentry Connect](#)

65% of people entering prisons have less than a Grade 8 education or skill level, and 79% of incarcerated people in Canada did not complete high school.

[Decoda, 2023](#)

Key Takeaways from the HSJCC Conference

As part of the project we participated in a two day online conference hosted by the Human Services & Justice Coordinating Committee. The conference is hosted every two years, and this year the focus was on the critical importance of early identification and intervention for individuals with complex needs within the criminal justice system. In addition to identifying HSJCC and other shareholders as potential coordination partners we learned about current experiences, best practices and innovative programs with the corrections environment.

About the corrections population

- 30% of incarcerated people are Indigenous
- Brain Injury (BI) is overrepresented among criminal-legal populations
- significant numbers of incarcerated have substance use disorder
- individuals in custody have higher rates of trauma, mental illness, substance use, and complex health needs than in the community.

Strategic planning and training methods indicate

- a need for a collaborative approach across many partners
- cultural connection is essential
- peer to peer / learner to learner support is valuable and successful

The Pathology of Poverty

Those with known provincial criminal justice system involvement had 20 times the rate of healthcare visits for alcohol use, drug use, and illicit drug-related overdoses.

The criminal justice system is used as mental health care system. People will break the law to get care.



Auditor General Annual Report 2019: Chapter 1 Adult Correctional Institutions - Summary

In 2019 the Ministry of the Auditor General published an audit review of the correctional system as part of its annual report. From this report we learned about the purpose, general corrections system information, systemic challenges, remand, training programs provided. This report provides valuable insight and information useful to Get SET service providers and support organizations in CLI literacy service planning and coordination.

A correctional system is, first, to protect the public from crime, and second, to provide the necessary supports and programming to individuals who continually reoffend so that they can successfully reintegrate into the community and reduce future incarceration and cost to taxpayers.

In Canada, the federal and provincial governments share responsibility for administering correctional services as follows:

- The federal government, through Correctional Service of Canada, is responsible for the custody of convicted offenders serving sentences of two years or longer.
- Provincial governments are responsible for the custody and supervision of individuals accused of a crime who have been remanded into custody by the courts, and convicted offenders sentenced to less than two years.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General operates 25 provincial correctional institutions that are classified into four types—correctional centres, detention centres, jails and treatment centres—based on whether the inmates are on remand, sentenced, or are exhibiting mental health and behavioural issues.



The institutions are also divided by whether they are medium or maximum-security facilities. The security level defines the extent of restriction on inmates' movements and how fixtures, such as beds, tables and chairs, are installed. Ontario does not have minimum security facilities.

The Ministry of Correctional Services Act governs the Ministry's operation of correctional institutions and requires the Ministry to provide programs and facilities designed to assist in the rehabilitation of inmates.

Educational programs in carceral institutions are delivered by teachers, literacy instructors and volunteer tutors who teach basic literacy skills and prepare inmates for the Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC, formerly GED) or high school equivalency test. In some institutions, inmates may be able to participate in programs to earn secondary or post-secondary school credits.

SOLGEN has developed a 'Life Skills' training program. Sessions are provided in some locations and offer general information about factors that contribute to criminal behaviour (for example, anger management, substance use and gambling) and improving lifestyles (for example, problem solving, managing stress and changing habits). Because the sessions are standalone and only one hour each to complete, inmates do not need a significant amount of time to participate.

In many cases, programming staff have multiple opportunities to deliver programming to remanded inmates and obtain more information about the inmates to determine the programming that is appropriate for them.



Work programs are provided as opportunities for sentenced and low-risk remanded inmates to serve as kitchen, housekeeping or maintenance assistants, or work at Trilco, the Ministry program that uses inmate labour to, for example, manufacture licence plates. Inmates do not receive compensation for participating in work programs.

Other programs provided for inmates with the corrections system include rehabilitation, life skills, budgeting, job searching and parenting, recreational opportunities, such as physical, social and cultural activities, and programs designed for Indigenous offenders.

The audit indicated that efforts to reach out to and educate inmates about available programs were limited to program staff showing up at their units and asking whether anyone wanted to attend the sessions.

Significant Systemic Challenges

The corrections system in Ontario is facing including overcrowding, understaffing, not equipped to deal with challenges of inmates with mental illness, the electronic data management system has insufficient capacity for fulsome inmate profiles.

From Appendix 12: “Top challenges faced by correctional institutions”: (ranked)

1. Staffing shortages and staff sick leave
2. Aging infrastructure or infrastructure upgrade requirements
3. Lack of program space
4. New Ministry policy changes
5. Staff accommodations
6. Segregation requirements
7. Ability to provide or complete mandatory training for staff



Remand

Although the number of individuals admitted into correctional institutions has generally decreased in the last 15 years, the proportion of remanded inmates has increased.

71% of inmates are on remand and have not been convicted or sentenced but are occupying space in correctional institutions.

On average, remand inmates were in custody for 43 days, while sentenced inmates were in custody for 59 days.

Remanded inmates' previous incarceration history indicates that three quarters of the remanded inmates admitted into custody in 2018/19 had an average of 13 (median of seven) previous charges.

The audit reports that correctional institutions do not provide appropriate programming and discharge planning supports for remanded inmates, who comprise most of the inmate population.

According to the report, for SOLGEN staff it is difficult to deliver rehabilitative programming to remanded inmates because they are often in custody for a short time.

Mental Illness

The prevalence of mental illness in inmates has increased in a system that is not designed to accommodate them. The system does not have capacity to provide specialized health care – beds, nurses, physicians, psychologists etc. Data from the Ministry's information system indicates that the percentage of the inmate population with potential mental health issues has increased by an average of 6% per year since 1998/99.

Auditor General, 2019



Why this is important to the Corrections Literacy Initiative

The common challenges and barriers experienced by literacy practitioners are systemic. Our ability to effect change is highly limited, however there are opportunities as mentioned above and with the following examples.

This information can be used to gain a deeper understanding of SOLGEN and the correctional system in Ontario. With this information we can strategically plan service coordination, progress toward seamless access, develop appropriate resources, provide relevant professional development and enhance reintegration planning.

Get SET CLI service providers can use this information to better understand the corrections environment to develop best practices, and continue to build trusting relationships with corrections staff and key partners to collaborate on joint planning that will enhance teaching and learning capacity, and support clear post-release pathways to access to services and training.

For example, understanding that remanded inmates who were in custody have, on average, nine in-person court appearances and 10 video court appearances; we can strategically plan for remand stays that are short. This can approach can be used to inform goal setting and program instructional design that is short and targeted for one to eight weeks of training with a focus on promoting post-release connections.

With an understanding that the corrections system has limited supports available to help remand inmates reintegrate and remanded inmates do not always receive information about community supports they can access upon release from custody; as partners, networks and CLI program providers could plan and work to develop resources that support access to community services and reintegration.



REDUCING RECIDIVISM

THE BENEFITS OF CORRECTIONS LITERACY

“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.” (EOPG 2024)



Evidence of the Effectiveness of Correctional Education

A robust international evidence base demonstrates that correctional education programs yield measurable reductions in reoffending. The landmark RAND Corporation meta-analysis found that participants in correctional education programs have 43% lower odds of recidivation compared to non-participants, representing a 13% reduction in absolute recidivism risk.

Canadian federal data corroborates these findings with compelling results. Correctional Service Canada research on Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs shows a clear dose-response relationship: program completers demonstrated a 30.1% readmission rate compared to 41.6% for those who withdrew from programming. Notably, these positive effects were most pronounced among individuals assessed as high-risk to reoffend, demonstrating program effectiveness where it is most needed.



Employment and Reintegration Outcomes

Correctional education directly addresses unemployment—a critical barrier to successful reintegration. Research demonstrates that program participants are 13% more likely to secure post-release employment, with career-focused vocational programs showing even stronger effects (28% increased employment likelihood). A CSC study found that 79% of released ABE participants secured full-time employment, with most finding work within the first month of release.



Economic Returns

Correctional literacy programming represents a high-yield public investment rather than a discretionary expenditure. The most widely cited finding indicates that for every \$1 invested in prison education, taxpayers save between \$4 and \$5 in reincarceration costs during the first three years post-release. Canadian-specific research demonstrates even stronger returns, with taxpayers receiving \$6.37 in direct savings for every dollar spent due to reduced recidivism.

This cost-effectiveness becomes clear when contrasted with alternative approaches. The approximate annual cost to provide education for one student is \$2,900, while the annual cost of incarcerating a single federal prisoner exceeds \$120,000. Beyond these direct fiscal returns, formerly incarcerated individuals who gain stable employment become taxpayers, contribute to economic productivity, and reduce reliance on social assistance programs.



Educational Deficits are a Public Safety Concern

The literacy profile of individuals entering correctional facilities represents a significant barrier to successful reintegration.

Approximately 65% of individuals entering Canadian correctional facilities demonstrate literacy skills below a Grade 8 level, while nearly 80% do not possess a high school diploma. These educational deficits directly impede access to stable employment, adequate housing, and essential services—factors that contribute substantially to recidivism risk.

Inmates who participated in correctional education programs had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating than inmates who did not.

[RAND, 2013](#)



Broader Community Impacts

The benefits of correctional literacy programming extend beyond individual outcomes to generate positive effects throughout families and communities. Educational participation is consistently linked to improved institutional behaviour, with one study documenting a 75% reduction in infractions among incarcerated students. Programs also foster personal transformation, with 75% of CSC's ABE participants reporting feeling "more in control" of their lives post-program.

Family literacy initiatives, such as parent-child reading programs, strengthen bonds between incarcerated parents and their children while disrupting intergenerational cycles of low literacy and justice involvement. These approaches address root causes rather than symptoms of criminal involvement.



Implications for Community Literacy Practice

The evidence supports several key principles for effective programming in the Corrections Literacy landscape:

- sustained investment in correctional literacy as a public safety strategy
- build on existing infrastructure and partnerships to enhance continuums of care between institutional and community shareholders
- culturally responsive, trauma-informed pedagogy that addresses the overrepresentation of Indigenous and racialized learners
- robust evaluation frameworks to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.



NEXT STEPS AND AREAS OF FOCUS

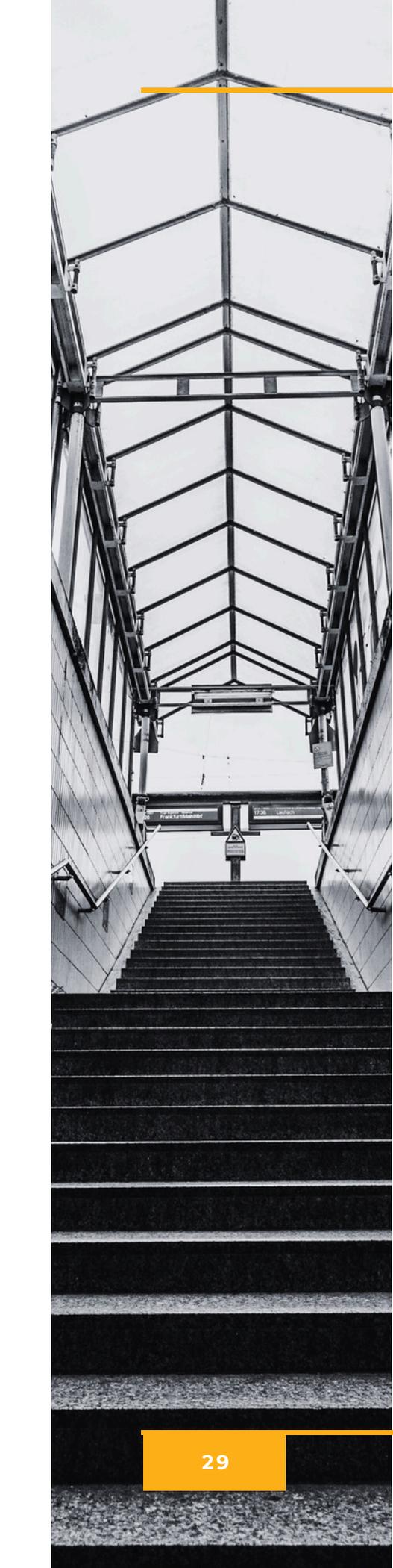
HOW CAN WE BEST PROVIDE TRAINING WITHIN REMAND CONDITIONS?

From where we're at now, training for employment and achieving post release employment is a lengthy complicated process with many obstacles and systemic challenges. Get SET Corrections Literacy programs are limited in impacting systems level changes, however with ongoing commitments and strategic planning long-term learner successes is achievable.

Through Community of Practice group surveys, we've identified some forward actions. Practitioners reported that they value connecting with other CLI providers to share best practices, resources, and creative approaches specific to the unique context of correctional literacy.

Opportunities to network with like-minded practitioners, particularly through face-to-face meetings, were described as highly informative, helping providers learn how others address common challenges, build relationships with correctional staff, and navigate institutional barriers.

Respondents noted that CLI programs face distinct struggles not well understood by other adult literacy programs, making CLI-specific forums essential for mutual support, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. Some participants felt they gained more from in-person exchanges than from existing communities of practice, while still valuing the ability to contribute knowledge to others.



AREAS OF FOCUS

Service Coordination

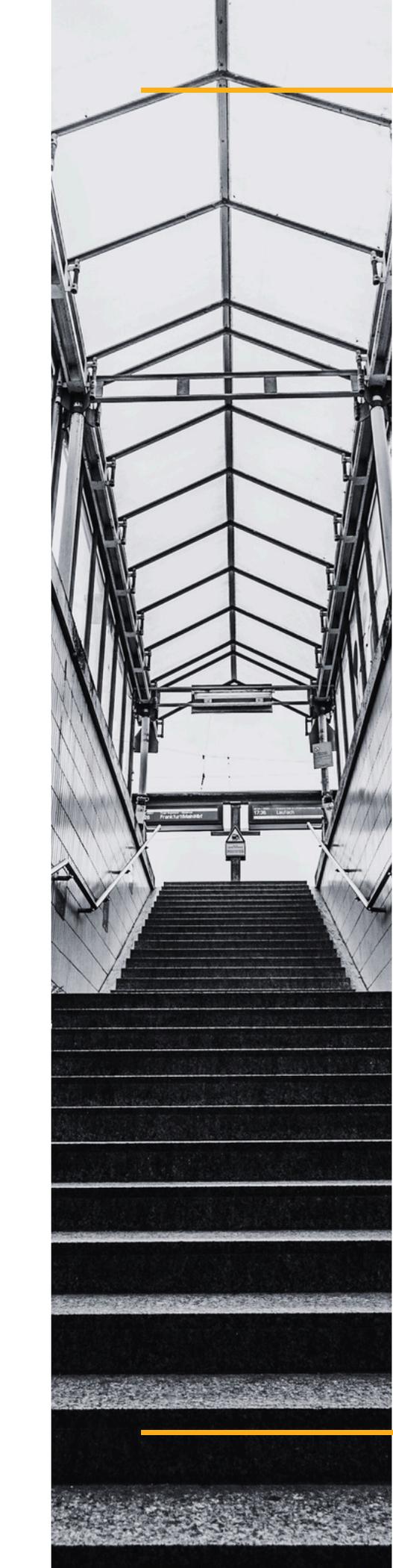
- evaluate options to enhance data collection, and update corrections learner plans in CaMS (MLITSD role)
- consistently integrate CLI into the annual Literacy Service Planning process
- explore and expand partnerships with John Howard Society, Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee, social workers, discharge planners, parole offices and employment service partners to increase awareness, promote seamless access to services post-release, professional capacity and best practices
- re-create ministry business card with Get SET information for outreach and initial meetings to improve follow up with learners

Resource Sharing and Development tailored to remand conditions

- curriculum: incorporate technology, AI and digital literacy training modules in all training
- curriculum: How to access Get SET and community services on release
- develop and maintain a centralized CLI resource hub
- develop a simple self-assessment checklist/survey to help identify suitable candidates
- develop a set of 'providing access to technology' resources for instructors

Professional Development

- ongoing Community of Practice for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing
- plan and coordinate a Get SET CLI conference
- develop an onboarding guide with a corrections system overview and training modules for CLI practitioners that reflects the unique needs and considerations of CLI learners
- explore training options specific to the cultural needs and support for Indigenous and Black learners, trauma awareness and training to support learners with mental illness, and professional workplace boundaries.



CONCLUSION

Get SET service providers are dedicated to learning practical ways to be more effective in their roles by deepening their understanding of the population they serve and enhancing the support they can offer.

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a practical roadmap for advancing the Corrections Literacy Initiative in Ontario. With a focus on a more consistent approach, addressing remand realities, reducing systemic barriers, together we can better support service coordination practices that enhance and build capacity for Get SET service providers, SOLGEN, and most importantly corrections learners post release pathways to training and employment.

This report concludes that the Corrections Literacy Initiative is an education intervention that successfully meets the intended goal of providing training to adults in remand or custody in Ontario correctional facilities. CLI is also a public safety, community health, and economic strategy.

Improved service coordination, resource sharing, professional development, and inter-ministry collaboration will enhance learner outcomes, support reintegration through post-release pathways, and contribute to safer, healthier communities.



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