



At least one in every ten Canadians has a learning disability. More than 80% of these people have difficulty learning to read.

People now know that learning disabilities (LDs) are lifelong differences in the brain and nervous system and the ways in which they work. Learning disabilities can make it harder to learn language skills and how to read, write and do math.

There are five types of LDs

- Visual problems: poor visual memory, reversals in writing.
- Auditory problems: poor auditory memory, speech problems.
- Motor problems: poor hand-eye coordination.
- Organizational problems: poor ability in organizing time or space.
- Conceptual problems: poor social skills and difficulty with relationships.

People with LDs *can* learn with the right supports

LDs are not due to a low IQ. People with LDs often have average or above-average intelligence but the LD affects how they interpret what they see and hear, or how they link information from different parts of the brain.

At least 30 people out of every 100 with literacy difficulties have LDs

Researchers say children with LDs need special supports before they reach the age of 8 or they will still have problems reading in high school.

More than one third of students known to have LDs drop out of high school

- This is twice the rate of their non-LD peers. As adults many may come to literacy and basic skills programs but drop out when funding limits support for their special needs.
- In up to 75% of children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), symptoms will persist into adolescence and may cause teens to continue to experience academic struggles.¹

Learning and literacy difficulties limit how people can take part in society

Many adults are not aware that the problems they had in school, jobs or relationships are due to “hidden” or undiagnosed LDs.

Here are figures, which show how LDs can affect people’s lives.

- Between 30% and 70% of adults in prisons have LDs.
- Between 25% and 40% of adults on welfare have LDs.
- Between 15% and 30% of adults in job training programs have LDs.

¹ Reference: Wilens TE, Biederman J, and Spencer TJ. Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder across the lifespan. *Annu Rev Med* 2002;53:113-131.

What can people do?

- People of all ages must be able to receive testing for LDs.
- There should be good funding to support people with LDs while they learn.
- Policy-makers, schools, colleges, and medical staff must accept the scientific evidence of LDs. They must make policies and match the content, pace and goals of teaching to the learning needs of people with LDs. In this way, people can succeed.
- Teachers play a critical role in helping to identify symptoms of LDs in the classroom, and in working together with students, parents, and health care professionals to set goals and to help students reach their highest potential.
- Federal and provincial governments need to understand how their policies affect people with LDs, in all areas of society. We all need to understand, accept and support the learning challenges of everyone in our communities, workplaces and families.

For more information on how you can be part of the literacy solution, contact:

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Updated August 2007