

# 2 Coping Strategies

**Question #1: How do adults with limited literacy skills perform activities or tasks that require literacy skills they may not have mastered?**

Relying on friends and family members.

Adults with limited literacy skills rely heavily on family members and friends to provide them support with meeting their day-to-day needs or completing commonplace activities.

She would fill out just a regular application for me and I would take that with me. It was my cheat sheet and that's what I had to do and right now that's where I'm at right now. Looking for a job ain't easy. (High School Dropout)

I went to go look for a job and I mean I was motivated and ready to go but I had to call and check to see what she [a friend] was doing. See, if my next door neighbor isn't home, it was always somebody I had to go get to help me or I had to bring the applications back and I get frustrated if I can't get nobody to fill it out so I can take it back so I got to the point I had so many bags of applications. (High School Dropout)

...my older kids, they help me. They say, "ma, do your homework." (Single Mother)

My sister taught me one on one. (Previously Incarcerated Female)

I would call my sister or somebody or anybody a friend and ask them to read it [a letter] to me and explain it to me. (TANF Recipient)

I came here because I have a few friends who are studying here. They told me about the school and they said I could come here to study if I prove that I was living in Washington. Then, I saw an opportunity for me to study. (Single Mother)

I rely on my mother because I know that some things I know I can't do probably at school or that teach me how to do something. She kind of thinks like in advance for me and like for me while I've been in school getting my high school diploma. Since I learned special education they said that in case I need to have a certificate and I know that with a certificate I can mostly do a lot of stuff I wouldn't have been able to do. So right now I'm taking you know like regular classes

and everything and its putting pressure on me. So I try to do my best and work and try to make sure I keep up. I'm not trying to fall back. (Young Adult)

The only person who I mostly really rely is my mother and my sister because right now she's on a higher level than me. Like she's in the 9th but she's already learning 11th grade stuff and right now I'm going to the 11th and I only know the stuff mostly in the past. (Young Adult)

Mine, I didn't have no parents growing up so they out the question you know. Like I told Dr. Kelly, right now, I rely on my wife and the streets. Street knowledge that's what I rely on right now. What I know what to do on these streets and my wife, she legit, you know what I'm saying. See her head is level-headed, you know what I'm saying and she ain't really a street person so when it come down to it I go to my wife... That's what I rely on basically myself and my wife that's all. (Young Adult)

## Photographic memory.

Adults with limited literacy learn to master some tasks by memorizing, repetition or using technical aides to help with travel directions, completing employment applications, and other common activities.

... I learned by watching other people do things... (Previously Incarcerated Female)

For me, taking the subway because I'm from California and I didn't know how to read maps and all that stuff... It took me about two months, three months to

figure out the trains... (Young Adult)

When I get mail I get tired of asking people to come over and asking what is that. I don't know what are the right and wrong things to do. What I did was I searched and found this thing for the blind. It's called a Kirstoff (sic) that you put on your computer and I have it, and it's like I can scan it [written correspondence] and it will read it, and if it's Spanish it will tell me if it's in Spanish, or what it means, or anything. It will do everything for me. (High School Dropout)

When I started to learn, what I did was I used everything; music, television, and all the aspects of day by day life. And there were many phrases that I couldn't understand when I heard them. And sometimes, I said "I am not going to keep doing this" and I stopped doing it because it is difficult. When I came to class it was very difficult because I took more than one class of English. And after two weeks the pressure was very heavy because they didn't let you speak Spanish in the class. (Single Mother)

Step by step you can learn. Day after day. It is difficult because sometimes words sound one way and you write it differently. I have a friend who is an English teacher and he told me that watching TV, especially programs for children, with subtitles in English, practicing talking, and reading books... that will help me. Because I couldn't talk I was embarrassed to speak. And I couldn't read either. I was reading English in my way with the pronunciation; more or less what I knew. I was asking my boss for help. They are old people and they were trying to explain to me but sometimes it was very difficult because there would be one word I didn't understand. But I kept watching TV with subtitles and that helped me a lot. (Single Mother)