

SUPPORT FOR ADULT LEARNERS ENGAGED IN A PERSONAL PLAN

Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services (SARCA)

Reference document



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INTRODUCTION

This guide for school boards is designed to explore in some depth a fundamental dimension of the reception, referral, counselling and support services (SARCA)—that of support. Closely related to the adult learner's personal plan, support is an important tool for all adult learners who are seeking to improve their situations.

The personal plan permits adult learners to focus on their goals and gives meaning to their actions. It helps them find the motivation and means to complete their personal plan. This process, which consists of defining a personal plan and carrying it out, requires that adult learners receive individual assistance. In SARCA, this assistance is provided by the support service, which gives adult learners the benefit of an ongoing relationship, helping them to understand their situation and their possibilities, the choices these involve, and the processes inherent in their personal plan. This support service may be provided prior to the adult learner's enrolment in general education or vocational training or it may be offered to adult learners who are already enrolled in a program of studies.

This guide is intended for administrators of training centres and services offered by school boards and for everyone working directly with adult learners in SARCA services. The first part provides details on the concept of a personal plan: its definition, the process of carrying it out and the phases to be considered. The second part clarifies the concept of support: its definition, objective and scope as well as some practical considerations. The third part deals with the personal plan from the point of view of support; it describes the nature of the service within the framework of a personal plan illustrated by examples of interventions. The fourth part examines some conditions and methods to be considered by organizations that seek to optimize their support activities. The fifth part highlights the possible benefits of this support for adult learners, school boards and partners concerned. Lastly, an appendix containing examples of tools developed by the working group responsible for producing the document illustrates the practice of support.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) thanks the school boards who participated in producing this guide.

1 THE PERSONAL PLAN

SARCA interventions related to the personal plan of an adult learner occur in the context of a process in which the learner is guided to become involved in a personal plan that gives him or her a sense of ownership, meaning and the motivation to persevere and succeed.

1.1 The concept of a personal plan

The personal plan stems from an intention, a desire to change the current situation. For adult learners, such a plan begins with a reflection on their situations, an intention that emerges, a desire that pushes them to take action, a goal that becomes defined. Measures are then implemented to move into action and reach this goal. The personal plan is an activity, one that has been intentionally chosen and coordinated, focused on attaining a goal that is meaningful for the adult learner. The personal plan is part of a process that has a specific time frame. It is equipped with parameters that help bring it to fruition.

Whether adult learners come to the reception service on their own or are contacted in their community, the personal plan is both the starting and finish line of the process. The starting line is the motor that propels them to take action. It consists of knowing that they can be empowered to improve their situation in the desired area or areas at this point in their lives. The finish line is finding what they were looking for, at the successful conclusion of the personal plan.

As a general rule, education is not considered the objective of the adult learner's personal plan, but rather as one of the ways to accomplish it.

1.2 The personal plan

From an operational viewpoint, the process by which a project is carried out within the established time frame is called the "personal plan" and can be defined as follows:¹

A specific process that involves imagining, planning and taking the necessary steps to turn an aspiration into a reality.

It is through the personal plan that SARCA staff guide and support adult learners so that, with a full knowledge of the facts, they can set a goal and decide upon the means to achieve it.

1. This definition is inspired by the work of various authors, including Jean-Pierre Boutinet, editor of *L'ABC de la VAE*. Toulouse: Éditions Érès, 2009, 181.

1.2.1 Essential points of reference for developing a personal plan with adult learners

Certain essential elements are to be considered when developing a personal plan, and consequently, when planning support for adult learners engaged in such a plan.

The author of the personal plan

Although external players may have a part in constructing the personal plans, the adult learners themselves retain authorship. The personal plans must be their *own*, originated by them, and not devised by others for them.

Initially, the adult learners may not have a clear idea of what their personal plan should be. They need to discover this “something yet to bring about”² by reflecting on the difficulties they face, their sources of motivation and their general life situation. However, people who find themselves in very difficult or desperate situations devote all their resources to managing the present. They are in no position to plan for the future. Therefore, support more attuned to this context is essential to help them envision a personal plan.

The author of a personal plan can also be a group of adult learners with a common concern. The plan then becomes a collective one aimed at improving a situation that affects all of them personally.

The unique nature of the personal plan

Just as each adult learner has a unique life story, so his or her personal plan is always unique, involving situations that he or she has never before encountered. It is the first time the adult has embarked on an unfamiliar course of this type, decided to do such a thing or carry out such an action. The unique nature of the personal plan is both an assurance of meaningfulness and a source of uncertainty for the adult learner.

A two-phase process

The personal plan unfolds within an interrelated, two-phase process—each phase featuring a distinctive aspect:

- **Conception:** This phase is a period of reflection sustained by the determination to do something in the foreseeable future. It involves imagining and defining what is desirable and possible, as well as carefully contemplating the actions to be taken.

2. Informal translation of “cet inexistant à faire advenir,” from Jean-Pierre Boutinet, *Grammaires des conduites à projet*, Paris: PUF, 2010, 8.

- Production: This phase consists in planning the actions required to attain the chosen goal and beginning to carry out those actions, with the inevitable adjustments and reorientations involved due to the demands of daily life.

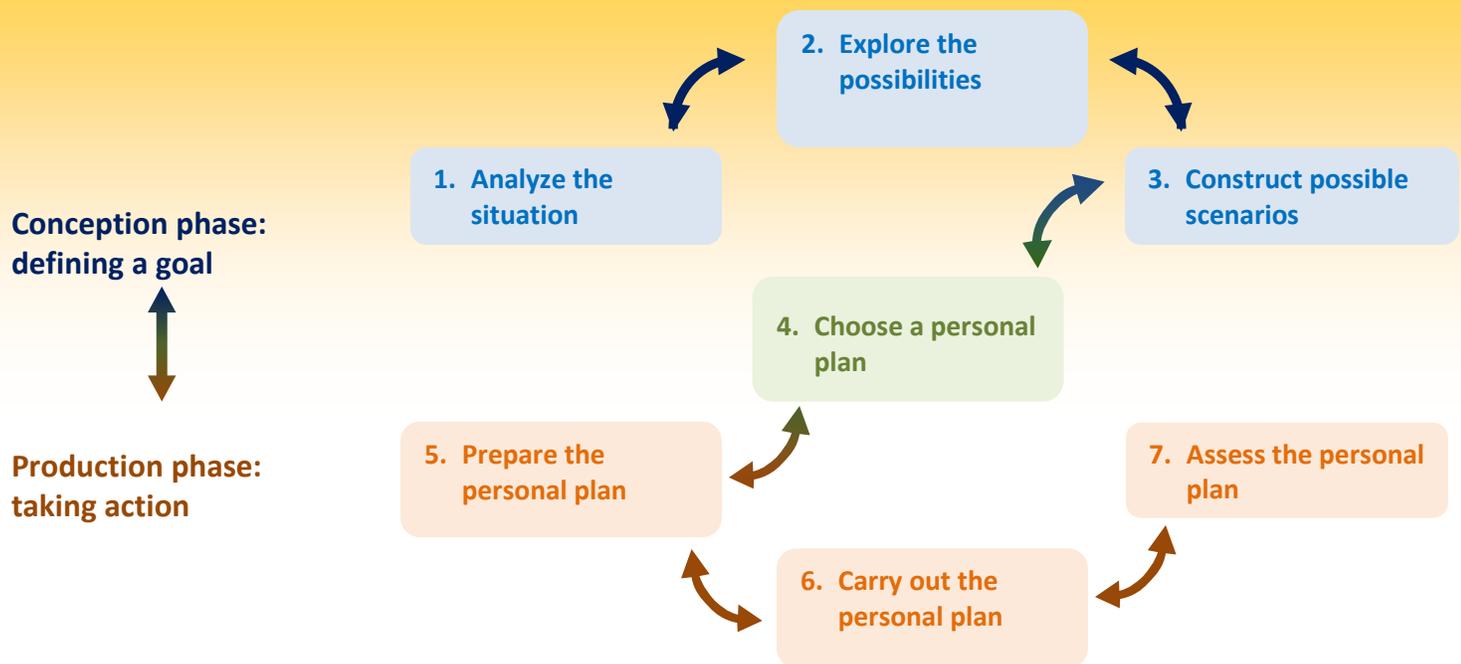
1.3 The phases of the personal plan in SARCA services

The personal plan, with its two phases, includes a number of steps that do not succeed each other in a linear way, but rather unfold dynamically. The process may therefore involve an often necessary overlap between some steps, revisiting previous steps (essential or non-essential steps) and pauses.

Figure 1 illustrates the two phases of the process and its different steps in a systemic perspective (adapted from *Grammaires des conduites à projet*, p. 65-84). Steps 1 to 3 involve the conception of the personal plan and help the adult learner to focus on defining a goal. They shed light on the current situation that the adult learner wishes to change in accordance with his or her aspirations and prior learning. The construction of different scenarios enables the adult learner to envision various avenues before making a final decision. Step 4, in which a personal plan is chosen, represents the transition between the conception phase and the production phase.

The production phase begins with a preparation step that looks toward implementing actions and materializing the chosen personal plan. In steps 5 to 7, that which has been thought out is validated by real experience, which often involves adjustments and further dialogue between conception and production. The personal plan will be defined through action, and its conception will continue to develop during the production phase. Finally, the assessment of the personal plan serves to conclude the process and to review the learning that has been accomplished.

Figure 1 – The phases and steps of a personal plan



THE CONCEPTION PHASE (STEPS 1 TO 4)

Step 1: Analyze the situation

The analysis of the situation is the step that precedes any personal plan. The counsellor should start by understanding why the adult learners wish to make changes in their life situation. It is also important to examine these reasons in the context of their reality and grasp the different facets of their situation, especially their background and expectations, life experience in various areas and certain relevant elements of their environment. The analysis of these elements can make it possible to see the hidden potential of a situation and study the feasibility of the personal plan. This step might lead to dropping the personal plan if the adult learners realize, for various reasons, that the time is not right for them to carry out such a plan. They can then envision more promising avenues of endeavour.

Step 2: Explore the adult learner's possibilities

In order to have a clearer picture of their situation, prior learning, abilities, fields of interest and aspirations, the adult learners can further explore the different elements highlighted in the analysis of the situation. For example, in order to define their prior learning more precisely, they can undertake a process to explore that learning, or they can consult the service for the recognition of acquired competencies (RAC). Adult learners can write certification examinations

or obtain evaluations or equivalences in order to confirm their general level of education or their proficiency in the prerequisites for vocational training. They may also register for one or two courses to test their ability to undertake a personal learning plan or carry out activities to clarify their career path.

Moreover, in this step the adult learners examine the feasibility of their personal plans. They anticipate possible constraints or obstacles, as well as factors conducive to carrying out the plan or opportunities available in their environment. Indeed, favourable opportunities can provide crucial support for a personal plan and ensure that the adult learners persevere.

Step 3: Construct possible scenarios

The adult learners may have the option of different scenarios when undertaking their personal plan. These scenarios can be recognized by taking into account the facts of a situation, the adult learners' aspirations, desires and intentions, the constraints and possibilities of the situation, the means available and the advice of supporting players (SARCA, partners, training personnel) contributing their experience and expertise.

These possible scenarios include aspects of feasibility (costs and advantages, available resources) as well as indications of the constraints and obstacles that every adult learner faces. Reflections on planning the steps of the production phase can also contribute to the development of the scenarios.

Step 4: Choose a personal plan

The adult learners choose a scenario in spite of the complexity of the situation and any uncertainties that may remain. The scenario selected is sometimes a compromise between different possibilities considered, reflecting the reality of their situation. It is important for adult learners to examine the feasibility of the personal plan chosen and the resources available to them before embarking on the plan. Identifying constraints and obstacles to be taken into consideration also enables them to be realistic and to start thinking about how to face them or get around them.

In this way, according to their fields of interest, the adult learners choose a personal plan that will motivate them. This motivation is essential for them to realize their plan because it leads them to mobilize their resources and gives them the power to act within their environment.

THE PRODUCTION PHASE (STEPS 5 TO 7)

Step 5: Prepare the personal plan

This step involves determining all the means required to implement a personal plan. These are specified in the adult learner's action plan and confirmed in consultation with the counsellor.

The action plan is distinctly different from a learning profile. While an action plan may include a learning profile, it is much broader in scope. The actions required of the adult learner to carry out his or her personal plan may involve several areas, such as balancing family obligations with studies, and the importance of all areas must be carefully considered.

This action plan enables adult learners to consolidate the decisions they have made, to understand clearly the gestures or actions required to enter the active phase of their personal plan and to follow their progress, in relation to what was agreed on. It is worth noting that this action plan may have been developed concurrently with the preceding steps, before becoming consolidated at this point. Furthermore, it remains a work in progress and can be adapted or redefined, even during the active phase of the personal plan.

The action plan must remain a tool to guide and motivate the adult learner in pursuing his or her personal plan. The record made by SARCA of the information contained in the action plan, in one form or another, must conform to the *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and protection of personal information*.

Step 6: Carry out the personal plan

While the adult learner pursues a personal plan, a dialogue is carried on between the adult learner and SARCA personnel, based on the action plan. They will periodically review the situation, according to the terms agreed upon or to the adult learner's needs while the plan is being carried out. If corrections are necessary, they will be discussed and carried out. It may happen that the adult learner will substantially modify his or her initial personal plan, transform it radically, or even abandon it. The SARCA personnel should encourage the adult learner not to make such a decision before discussing it with them.

If the adult learner is attending a training centre, coordination and collaboration between SARCA personnel and the training centre staff is essential.

Step 7: Assess the personal plan

The different resources that are involved with or concerned by the adult learner's personal plan (such as SARCA, the training centre or Emploi-Québec) should record the outcome of the personal plan and take note of its success. It is also recommended that they provide support for the adult learner in a final self-evaluation to point out where he or she succeeded or had

difficulties. They can help the adult learner assess the learning accomplished throughout the personal plan and understand the added value this represents and how this could eventually be applied in other situations.

2 SUPPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF SARCA SERVICES

Support for adult learners in their personal plan includes the whole range of other services related to SARCA, such as reception, information, exploration of acquired competencies or career orientation. Support begins at the point when the adult learner decides to proceed beyond initial contact (whether he or she has taken the initiative to approach SARCA or whether SARCA personnel have contacted him or her through an outreach effort in the community).

Other services offered by the school board or by SARCA partners may also be involved in carrying out the personal plan. This combination of services must be delivered with attention to consistency and continuity. It is the responsibility of SARCA to ensure communication between the various services in order to support the adult learner throughout the personal plan.

2.1 The concept of support

Within the context of SARCA services, support is designed to enable the adult learner to:

- receive the help and counselling he or she needs throughout the personal plan, in a context that ensures continuity in terms of time and other services
- benefit from guidance and follow-up that favours reflection and reinforces his or her motivation and involvement in the personal plan

Support suggests the idea of walking beside or accompanying another person in a certain spirit of positive complicity. The establishment of a trusting relationship is the keystone of the support process. It involves “being present in the relationship, paying careful attention to observing, listening, understanding and signifying, decoding implicit messages in order to act”³ Such a relationship begins with dialogue and reflection, initiating a quest for meaning. It is also said that support implies progress in a particular direction. At first, this direction may not always be clearly defined; it becomes more precise as the personal plan advances and as actions acquire more meaning.

Authors on the subject have identified some common components of the notion of support. These are entirely compatible with the type of support offered by SARCA. Along these lines, the act of support includes three inseparable dimensions:⁴

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3. Françoise Leplâtre, “L’accompagnement des personnes en difficultés.” *L’Actualité de la formation permanente*, 176, January-February (2002), 20-24.
 4. See in particular [Maëla Paul, “Ce qu’accompagner veut dire.” *Carriérologie*, vol. 9, nos. 1 and 2, 7](#); Jean-Pierre Boutinet, “Les pratiques d’accompagnement individuel, entre symbole et symptôme.” *Carriérologie*, vol. 9, 67-78; Alexandre Lhôtellier, “Accompagner et tenir conseil: démarche fondamentale ou anesthésie sociale.” *Penser l’accompagnement adulte – Ruptures, transitions, rebonds*, Jean-Pierre Boutinet et al, eds. Paris: PUF, 2007, 99-113.

- a relational dimension: to meet with someone, to establish a connection, to act as a mediator
- a movement dimension: to go towards someone, to go to the place where they are going, to go from something familiar toward something unknown that will become apparent en route, to be on a journey
- a time dimension: to share time with someone, to be in sync with them for a certain period of time

2.2 People who accompany adult learners and their role

In SARCA centres, a number of people can provide support. They play an indispensable role in guiding the adult learner through every step of the personal plan. This type of support differs from that offered the adult learner to meet specific training needs. Consider, for example, the pedagogical support provided by teaching personnel or by complementary educational services personnel.

The SARCA personnel who accompany adult learners have a distinctive role that is centred on the adult learners and their personal plan. This implies providing ongoing support for the duration of the process and requires coordination with all the actions involved in the process. At times this will mean including several services or resources so that the adult learner can choose among the various possibilities available. To this end, the SARCA personnel must work in close collaboration with the other departments of the school board and, if applicable, with external partners. However, it is important that they maintain a certain distance from the training services offered by the school board in order to allow the adult learner to explore all his or her possibilities.

2.3 Duration of the support provided by the school board

Throughout the conception and production phases of the personal plan, the school board provides support to meet the adult learners' different needs. This support ends when the adult learners have successfully achieved the goals of their personal plan or have voluntarily terminated it, knowing that it is possible to return to it at any time they feel they need to. In some cases another partner, such as another school board or a community organization, might take over and continue to provide service and follow-up. Before turning things over to this new partner, the person providing support should facilitate the transition by making sure the adult learner feels confident enough to continue with his or her personal plan.

3 SUPPORT AT EACH STEP OF THE PERSONAL PLAN

At each step in the personal plan, support is composed of interventions that are planned and adapted for the adult learner. Within the SARCA services, these interventions may be carried out by different people, according to the particular operating methods of each school board.

For each step in the adult learners' personal plan, Table 1 on the following page presents an example of the SARCA services that may be involved and an overview of the possible interventions during the period when support is provided. Note that these interventions are given as suggestions only, to guide the person accompanying and supporting the adult learner. These educational interventions form part of a path that encourages the adult learners to reflect on their progress and take charge of their own personal plan. Such interventions also help the adult learners make connections with different steps in the process. Without undervaluing the result to be achieved, it is important to keep in mind the major importance of the process itself and the learning acquired by means of it, as these are transferrable to other contexts.

3.1 Tools for the support process

The support provided during the personal plan often involves the use of tools to facilitate the process. These may be intended for the adult learner directly, or for the use of SARCA personnel.

Some tools developed by the working group assigned to produce the present document are presented in the appendices. These are examples that can be adapted and used throughout the adult learner's personal plan.

In addition to these tools, there is an electronic directory of SARCA activities, developed by school boards, which can be consulted online.⁵ Various documents dealing with SARCA and published by MELS⁶ also appear in the bibliography.

5. Online: [<http://www3.recitfga.qc.ca/SARCA/home.php>], May 30, 2014.

6. Online: [<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/commissions-scolaires/aide-et-soutien/formation-des-adultes/services-daccueil-de-reference-de-conseil-et-daccompagnement-sarca>], May 30, 2014.

Table 1 – SARCA SERVICES INVOLVED AND EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN A PERSONAL PLAN

Steps in the adult learner's personal plan	SARCA service that may be involved	Examples of support
<p>1. Analyze the situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expressing his/her intentions ◆ Developing a profile of his/her situation and the context of this profile ◆ Exploring his/her possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial reception - Second level of reception - General information about services offered in the community - Information about general education and vocational training - Exploration of acquired knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine the adult learner's intentions and the needs related to his/her request and evaluate the necessity of proceeding to the second level of reception - Work with the adult learner to create a picture of his/her situation, using the report from the second level of reception - With the adult learner, make a summary of his/her: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ academic achievements (studies certified by MELS or by a school board, comparative evaluation from the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles [MICC]) ○ experiential and informal learning⁷ (cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR], qualification card, learning acquired on the job, etc.) ○ informal learning⁸ acquired in the context of daily life activities - Guide the adult learner toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ educational services ○ the RAC service, first explaining the possibilities of receiving recognition in General Education in the Adult Sector and in Vocational Training - Ensure continuity between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the first and second levels of reception ○ the second level of reception and the recommended services or organizations (e.g. registration, RAC, external organizations) - Help the adult learner start over after a period of inactivity following the initial reception or second level of reception

7. Informal learning is acquired in the context of an educational activity planned and given by a community organization or in the workplace, but for which no official recognition is possible.

8. Informal learning refers to learning experiences acquired through occupations and activities of daily life, such as family responsibilities, leisure activities and volunteer work.

Steps in the adult learner's personal plan	SARCA service that may be involved	Examples of support
<p>2. Explore the adult learner's possibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Analyzing his/her situation in depth ◆ Exploring in depth his/her acquired competencies and abilities ◆ Determining the feasibility of the personal plan: constraints, obstacles, favourable factors, possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second level of reception - Exploration of acquired competencies - Career orientation - General information about services offered in the community - Information about general education and vocational training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore with the adult learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ his/her acquired or experiential learning and life experience, offering advice as to their value and possible recognition ○ the environmental factors (social, political, economic, familial) in which he/she can or could evolve - Suggest to the adult learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an update of his/her acquired competencies ○ activities of self-understanding ○ activities for exploring different training programs (e.g. a "Student for a day" activity) ○ activities for exploring the job market (e.g. observation practicum, orientation process) - Direct the adult learner (if it seems relevant) toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the RAC service, first explaining the possibilities of receiving recognition in adult general education or in vocational training ○ education services, complementary educational services, external resources or organizations (e.g. joint action and cooperation with other resources) - Support the adult learner in the search for supplementary documents that might be useful for exploring his/her possibilities - Ensure communication between the different services that the adult learner may be encouraged to use - Guide the adult learner through a reflection on his/her exploration process
<p>3. Construct possible scenarios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Constructing scenarios based on data collected in Steps 1 and 2 ◆ Identifying feasible elements of possible scenarios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second level of reception - Information about general education and vocational training - Career orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise the adult learner on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identifying the feasible elements of the scenarios (e.g. costs, duration, advantages) ○ evaluating the feasibility of each scenario ○ structuring the elements of his/her analysis to compare the different scenarios - Guide the adult learner toward an awareness of his/her reality (e.g. aspirations, ability, family situation) - Ensure that the scenarios chosen by the adult learner have meaning for him or her and are motivating - Direct the adult learner (if it seems relevant) toward education services, external resources or organizations - Ensure communication between the different services that the adult learner may be encouraged to use

Steps in the adult learner's personal plan	SARCA service that may be involved	Examples of support
4. Choose a personal plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Deciding on and choosing a personal plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second level of reception - Exploration of acquired competencies - Career orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guide the adult learner in choosing a personal plan - Enable the adult learner to make a decision - Suggest concrete ways to help the adult learner make an enlightened choice (e.g. selection criteria) - Ensure that the adult learner is motivated and committed to his/her choice - Help the adult learner to evaluate the choice in terms of his/her situation
5. Prepare the personal plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepare the terms for carrying out the personal plan and drawing up an action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services involved in the preceding steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidate the adult learner's decision - Draw up a detailed action plan with the adult learner, structuring it and including a deadline - Advise the adult learner on planning his/her personal plan in the short, medium or long term - Explain to the adult learner that he/she can return at any time to take stock of his/her situation, discuss any difficulties encountered, review the terms of the personal plan or even rethink the whole personal plan itself - Prepare for consultation with complementary services, if it is judged relevant
6. Carry out the personal plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementing the action plan ◆ Regulating⁹ the action plan ◆ Providing for follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General information related to services offered in the community - Information about general education and vocational training - Exploration of acquired competencies - Career orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with the adult learner to take stock of the progress of his/her personal plan - Facilitate the revision of the adult learner's personal plan (e.g. new variables, loss of motivation) - Explain to the adult learner that he/she can return at any time to take stock of his/her situation - Validate the adult learner's accomplishments - Guide the adult learner through a reflection on his/her exploration process - Help the adult learner return following an interruption or abandonment of the personal plan - Direct the adult learner (if it seems relevant) toward complementary educational services - Ensure communication between the different services that the adult learner may be encouraged to use

9. Regulation refers to reviewing actions carried out to ensure they are consistent with the selected personal plan. If necessary, adjustments are made to preserve the intent of the adult's personal plan and sustain his or her motivation.

Steps in the adult learner's personal plan	SARCA service that may be involved	Examples of support
<p>7. Assess the personal plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing a self-evaluation of the completed personal plan and the learning accomplished throughout the process ◆ Recognizing the success of the personal plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services involved in the preceding steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the adult learner, take stock of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ his/her process ○ his/her learning ○ the completion of his/her personal plan ○ the results obtained - Help the adult learner to envision follow-up personal plans or his/her future - Explain to the adult learner that he/she can return at any time to take stock of his/her situation

4 TERMS AND CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO THE SUPPORT PROCESS

Various types of support services are offered at school boards and training centres to foster the perseverance and success of adult learners. These services are carried out by teaching personnel as pedagogical or andragogical monitoring, general monitoring or pedagogical supervision and may take the form of tutoring or individual consultations integrated into the timetable. Complementary services may also be involved in this line of intervention as their objective is to foster the success of the adult learner's personal plan by ensuring favourable learning conditions, providing a stimulating environment and sustaining positive interpersonal relations. These services are also concerned with the health and well-being of the adult learner.

The addition of support services to SARCA provides a common thread and enriches the connection, in a spirit of continuity and consistency, with all the resource persons at the school board and partners until the adult learner has succeeded with his or her personal plan. In this respect, certain conditions are useful to the support process and certain measures facilitate it.

4.1 First condition: roles and responsibilities of personnel

As with any service, support requires time. It also requires a will to cooperate shared by those who interact with the adult learner. Consequently, the assignment of roles and clarification of each person's responsibilities are indispensable to maximize the effectiveness of complementary services. The specific terms established with the various agents responsible are unique to each environment and must take into account the resources available, among other things.

The diversity of organizational structures makes for a variety of possibilities in the distribution of roles and responsibilities among personnel. Certain means can facilitate the support process, such as:

- the designation of a "pivot," a person responsible for coordinating the actions carried out by teaching personnel, SARCA and complementary services
- a clear description of each staff member's support tasks

4.2 Second condition: method of operation

The establishment of a support service requires a definition of the method of operation that enables those who provide support to know their working conditions. These parameters can include the following:

- details about the transfer of the adult learner's file from SARCA to the training centre, the information it must contain and the adult learner's action plan
- details about the terms of cooperation between the teaching personnel and complementary services personnel on referring adult learners to SARCA in order to provide, when necessary, career orientation, follow-up on the status of the personal plan or other services
- details about working conditions (e.g. rules of confidentiality, closed offices for meetings with adult learners)
- meetings to follow-up on the adult learner's action plan, individually or collectively
- three-way meetings (adult learner, teacher-tutor and SARCA) to follow up on the adult learner's action plan
- the terms for referral and support regarding partners and the reception of adult learners directed to SARCA by partners

These terms are adapted and personalized according to the groups of adult learners concerned (e.g. differentiated approach according to gender, obligations, community of origin or age).¹⁰ Some groups may also be based on their common need for services and may eventually receive services collectively.

4.3 Third condition: tools for recording information

The continuity and consistency of support services are greatly improved when school personnel use a tool to record relevant information about the adult learner and the services he or she has received over time. Records stored electronically can facilitate the planning of future services or follow-up to be conducted with the adult learner.

10. See the findings of the action-research project done by the Commission scolaire de Saint-Hyacinthe on support for adults according to their age: *L'accompagnement : un dispositif prometteur – Rapport de recherche-action*.

5 THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORT

Support services have been conceived to maximize the contribution of SARCA to the adult learner's personal plan and success, but they also provide important benefits for the school board and, to some extent, for the partners involved.

5.1 Benefits for the adult learner

- *Support for motivation and perseverance in his or her personal plan*

The adult learners have the feeling of being at the heart of a joint process, of being supported and being at the right place where there are people to help them when the need arises. With the help they receive in their personal plan, during both its conception and production, they increase their potential for success and achieve their objectives more surely.

- *Increased self-esteem and autonomy*

Through the learning they acquire, the success they achieve, and the respect they earn, adult learners regain confidence in their own abilities. This alone makes them better prepared to meet the challenge of life-long learning.

- *A wider network of social support*

Having had the advantages of effective services, counselling and guidance toward the right resources at the right time, adult learners reinforce their self-confidence and sense of belonging to the organization that serves them. Their motivation is thus enhanced. Gaining a better understanding of their environment and the resources available in it also contributes to breaking down a certain feeling of isolation and to creating a social network.

- *A more integrated vision of his or her learning*

The creation of meaning for their personal plans leads adult learners toward a point of self-realization. They are following a direction that they have determined for themselves. Everything unites to form a coherent whole. Connections are woven between their own reality, their personal plan and their objective. The reflections and reviews of their work that they carry out with SARCA personnel enable them to articulate their process and their learning, and to find new meaning in these. Gradually, this meaning comes to life in each person. The result is a change in the individual that can be observed in his or her behaviour, attitude and speech.

5.2 Benefits for the school board

- *Better collaboration among services*

Ongoing support for adult learners can only be sustained through a close collaboration among the staff members of the school board, which leads to a greater complementarity of resources, less overlap of services, more optimal use of the resources and competencies of everyone, and a better access to services for the adult learners.

- *More effective services for training centres*

When their personal plans go well, the adult learners feel motivated, which produces a positive effect on their attendance and perseverance. Their encouraging attitudes serve to raise the success rate and level of satisfaction among the centre teams. Moreover, collaboration between services and their interdependence make for a better use of resources.

- *Improved reputation and credibility*

With the adult learners achieving increased success, the services offered by the school board benefit from a more positive public perception of them. Following the success of their personal plans, the adult learners promote the services they received. This added credibility might even attract adult learners who are hesitating to take action and commit to a personal plan.

- *A greater feeling of effectiveness*

With all the actors working together in the same direction, the actions of each one acquire a broader scope. The resources and strengths of each are put to better use and they receive greater satisfaction, recognition and validation.

Another result of this networking effect is a sharing of responsibility for supporting the adult learners, which lessens the burden of pressure on each contributor's shoulders.

5.3 Benefits for the partners

- *Greater synergy and increased mutual effectiveness*

The use of partners and mutual referrals is more targeted and more effective. The partners become better known and their services used to greater advantage. Likewise, the partners come to know the school boards better. The follow-up related to support helps to ensure a continuum of services for the adult learners and better complementarity among all of them

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to note that support is one of the fundamental SARCA services. The objective of this guide is to provide some reflections on this service and the concepts that underlie it, with suggestions concerning concrete tools that could facilitate the work of those who provide the service.

This educational support service is centred on the adult learner and offered at each step of the personal plan, from the conception phase through the production phase. The process is a dynamic and evolving one. In this sense, the person who supports the adult learners in the realization of their personal plan plays an extremely important role—that of creating a relationship of trust with the adult learners and ensuring that they receive continuous support through each step of their process.

The tools presented in this guide provide some foundations for SARCA personnel and aim to inspire the development of other resources. In this sense, MELS encourages school boards to share their tools by adding them to the electronic directory of SARCA activities. Thus, with a selection of quality tools at his or her disposal, the counsellor can offer adult learners a high quality of support and give them the means necessary to get started and realize their personal plans.

The benefits of a personal plan supported by SARCA are visible, of course, in the adult learners themselves. The process enables them to become aware of their own resources and those in their communities in order to meet new challenges and experience them autonomously and responsibly. The positive repercussions of their personal plans will also be evident in their own environments, in the places where their personal plans were conceived and developed. They constitute an example of how actions, large or small in scope, can challenge adult learners to surpass themselves and to improve their situations and their communities.



APPENDICES

Each tool presented in the appendices is preceded by an explanatory sheet in the form of a table, which indicates the user of the tool, the steps of the process in which it could be useful, the objective(s) of the tool, its description, the procedure suggested and the nature of the support involved.

Appendix 1 – Consent form to relaunch a personal plan with the adult learner

USER	STEPS OF THE PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SARCA counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step 1: Analyze the situation Step 2: Explore the adult learner's possibilities Step 3: Construct possible scenarios Step 4: Choose a personal plan
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check in with the adult learner when he or she seems on the point of interrupting or abandoning the personal plan
DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model form requiring the adult learner's signature as consent to relaunch the personal plan at a critical moment in the process
PROCEDURE	<p>The school board counsellor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fills out the form in the presence of the adult learner when he or she judges that the trusting relationship is established and the time is right has the adult learner sign the form returns a copy of the form to the adult learner and keeps the original in his or her file
SUPPORT	<p>This tool fosters support for the adult learner in his or her personal plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> because it authorizes the counsellor, with the adult learner's consent, to relaunch the personal plan at a critical point in his or her process, at a time when he or she may need to talk, to be encouraged, to question the personal plan or to envision other possibilities

Consent form to relaunch a personal plan with the adult learner

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ADULT LEARNER	
Name:	
Date of birth:	Sex: F <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone (home):	Telephone (other):
PERSONAL PLAN	
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTED	
Name:	
Telephone:	
Address of educational institution:	
CONSENT	
<p>I hereby authorize personnel from the reception, referral, counselling and support services (SARCA) to contact me in the case of an interruption of my personal plan.</p> <p>I have read this form and understand its implications. I declare that the information provided is complete and accurate.</p>	
Adult learner's signature _____	Date _____

Appendix 2 – Scenario Selection Guide

USER	STEPS OF THE PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult learner • SARCA Counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 3: Construct possible scenarios • Step 4: Choose a personal plan
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate comparison of scenarios and determine the adult learner's priorities. • Identify the advantages and disadvantages of each scenario. • Facilitate the decision-making process.
DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table presenting possible scenarios and factors to consider in the choice of a personal plan • Guide that may be modified and include other factors to consider, specific to each case
PROCEDURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The counsellor shows the tool to the adult learner. • The adult learner fills in the table alone, based on information gathered in the previous steps. Reference tools may be suggested to him or her. • The adult learner presents the results of his or her work.
SUPPORT	<p>This tool facilitates the counsellor's support in these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising the adult learner's awareness by having him or her reflect on different aspects to consider in each scenario, according to the situation • advising, counselling and suggesting aspects to consider that the adult learner would not have thought of, providing supplementary information, if applicable

Scenario Selection Guide

	Scenario 1 (brief description)	Scenario 2 (brief description)	Scenario 3 (brief description)	Scenario 4 (brief description)	Scenario 5 (brief description)
Objectives					
Steps to take	First step				
	Second step				
	Third step				
Time frame					
Principal difficulties					
My resources					
What I like about this scenario					
What I don't like about this scenario					
Impact on those close to me					
Costs and financing					

Appendix 3 – Action plan for carrying out the adult learner’s personal plan

USER	STEPS OF THE PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult learner • SARCA Counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 5: Prepare the personal plan • Step 6: Carry out the personal plan
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the different steps of the adult learner’s chosen personal plan • Provide reference points for the adult learner so that he or she can have a clear picture of the actions required to undertake the personal plan selected
DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL	<p>Action plan in the form of a table and provision of support for short, medium and long term planning</p> <p>Table composed of four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on the adult learner • description of the personal plan • steps of realization (actions to carry out, resource persons, deadlines and results) • results of the process
PROCEDURE	<p>The counsellor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents the tool to the adult learner, explaining its use <p>The adult learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes out, with the counsellor’s help, the different steps involved in the chosen personal plan and the means for taking them • consults the plan throughout the process to regularly assess his or her progress; the action plan is not an end in itself; it may be modified at any time during the process
SUPPORT	<p>During the realization phase, this tool will assist the counsellor in the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the adult learner in planning actions to be carried out • fostering the adult learner’s awareness of the actions accomplished to stimulate motivation and facilitate learning about the process • providing expertise and advice on how to determine the planning steps

Personal Action Plan

Information about the adult learner			
Name of the adult learner:			
Permanent code:			
Telephone:			
Description of the personal plan (Plan A)		Date:	
Personal plan selected:			
Steps of realization			
Actions to be carried out by the adult learner	Services/resources ¹¹	Deadlines	Results
Description of the personal plan (Plan B)		Date:	
Personal plan chosen:			
Steps			
Actions to be carried out by the adult learner	Services/resources	Deadlines	Results
Results of the process			

Signature of the adult learner

Date

Signature of the resource person

Date

11. See the following lists for examples of actions and services. (These lists may be presented in a drop-down menu if they exist in electronic format.)

Examples (non-exhaustive list, for information purposes only)			
The adult learner carries out the following actions	Services/resources	Deadlines	Results
<p>Fills out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An application • A registration form • A questionnaire <p>Consults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Web site <p>Participates in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workshop • An information session <p>Obtains or requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official documents • A letter of recommendation • Evaluations or assessments <p>Meets with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A professional • An employer • A resource person <p>Visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training centre • A company <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and employment Information • Student financial assistance • Prospects in the job market • Entrepreneurship <p>Admission or registration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training activity (adult education, vocational training, other) • Other activity (“Student for a day,” visit to a company, practicum with a company) <p>Career orientation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual or group approach • Courses related to vocational orientation (Basic General Education, Orientation Services, Social Integration Services, Sociovocational Integration) • Education and employment information activity • Psychometric tests • Activity related to employability <p>Exploration of acquired learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of academic learning • Analysis of experiential learning • Presentation of possibilities available through RAC <p>Recognition of acquired learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic competencies • Prior learning • Attestation of Equivalence of Secondary Studies (AESS), General Educational Diploma (GED) • General Development Test (GDT) • Vocational training <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local employment centre • Social assistance • Comparative evaluation of studies from the Ministère de l’Immigration et des communautés culturelles (MICC) • Community organizations • Job search assistance • Complementary services 	<p>One week</p> <p>Two weeks</p> <p>One month</p> <p>By: _____</p>	<p>To come:</p> <p>Deferred:</p> <p>Cancelled:</p> <p>Completed:</p>

Appendix 4 – Tool to facilitate dialogue: Assessment of the process

USER	STEPS OF THE PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult learner • SARCA Counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 6: Carry out the personal plan • Step 7: Assess the personal plan
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the process • Relaunch the adult learner’s personal plan at a critical point in the process (Step 6) • Identify the learning acquired throughout the process • Identify the situations or actions that helped the adult learner to persevere • Show the adult learner the importance of reflection and regulation of learning to thoroughly assimilate it
DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of questions designed to stimulate dialogue between the adult learner and the counsellor
PROCEDURE	<p>The counsellor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meets with the adult learner • uses the questions in the tool to direct the interview • recommends that the adult learner take notes to keep a record of what he or she retains of the process
SUPPORT	<p>This tool will assist the counsellor in the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulating self-awareness by leading the adult learner to assess his or her personal plan • supporting the adult learner by validating his or her process and successes and encouraging him or her to pursue personal plans that keep him or her active • counselling the adult learner by discussing the tools he or she now possesses, following the process, and presenting avenues to ensure that he or she uses the learning acquired

TOOL TO FACILITATE DIALOGUE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROCESS

1. How satisfied are you with the personal plan you undertook?
2. How is your personal plan similar to or different from your initial expectations?
3. In what ways has your personal plan been a success?
4. What difficulties did you experience? What was difficult for you?
5. What did you enjoy most while carrying out your personal plan?
 - a. What did you like about the process of defining your goal?
 - b. What did you appreciate when planning the means to be taken to realize your personal plan?
 - c. What was your favourite part of carrying out your personal plan?
6. What did you learn during this process?
 - a. About yourself?
 - b. About the resources you consulted?
 - c. About how to make decisions?
7. How will this process help you with future personal plans?

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