

keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Fall 2022



LIVING MY BEST LIFE

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Our New Service Model

We are excited to announce the launch of our new service model, 'Living My Best Life', on September 29, 2022!

Over the last year, DeafBlind Ontario Services has worked on creating a new service model that provides consistent services for the people we support who are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal, and deafblind across the province.

As a leader in the field, adapting our service model and infrastructure supports us in remaining innovative and resilient.

Exciting roles have been created to assist the people we support with expanding their awareness and understanding about life experiences available to them. This will help to create meaningful goals and new opportunities.

Living My Best Life is comprised of four pillars; My Wellbeing, My Experiences, My Independence, and My Relationships. Each pillar is of equal importance and will be carefully considered, guiding the planning process and full participation of each person supported in the creation of their unique plan.

One of the benefits of working for DeafBlind Ontario Services is the opportunity to learn new skills and receive on-going specialized training. Within the Living My Best Life service model, all employees in direct support roles will have more room to grow in their careers and advance to new levels.

Learn more about exciting opportunities and updates as deafblindontario.com.

A Great Opportunity.

Make it Yours.

Do you want to be an agent of change and an advocate for inclusion in your community?
Do you want to help someone to live their best life?

This is YOUR opportunity! We are hiring many direct support roles across the province.

Working at DeafBlind Ontario Services means:

- Rewarding, meaningful career
- Competitive salary & vacation time
- Ongoing, continuous training
- Comprehensive benefits plan
- Employer sponsored group RRSP.

Apply today! Visit deafblindontario.com/careers.

**MEET
SARA**



Inclusion Starts with Learning Your ABCs... In ASL

“Deaf people are the same as hearing people.” This message is one that 34-year-old Sara is passionate about.

Worldwide, there are more than 70 million Deaf people, like Sara¹. In Canada, 5% of Canadians and 4.19% of Ontarians aged 15+ have a hearing disability². Yet, access to and use of national sign languages remains a challenge.

Communication is essential to inclusion and equity in every aspect of day-to-day life.

Sarah strives to accomplish inclusivity through teaching and advocating for the use of American Sign Language (ASL).

Born profoundly Deaf, Sara communicates with the hearing population through written English. However, her first language is ASL, one of more than 200 different sign languages used around the globe. ASL is a visual language with the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, but different grammar than English.

Sara teaches her Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and friends ASL through an ever-growing book of signs she created. “She is amazing at teaching sign, I’ve learned so much from her... We started with the ABCs and built on them with

a new sign each day,” said April Ferguson, a DSP at DeafBlind Ontario Services.

Direct Support Professionals assist people with communication, whether they are Deaf, hard of hearing or non-verbal in addition to living with a developmental disability.

“Learning sign is really fun... You use facial expressions, body posture, and gestures,” said

Sara. “A great place to start is with your ASL alphabet. Taking steps to learn ASL is an important way to connect hearing and Deaf people.”

In 2019, the Accessible Canada Act, which

removes barriers for people with disabilities, received royal ascent, meaning it officially became an act in Canada. The act acknowledges ASL, Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) and Indigenous sign languages as the primary languages for communication by people who are Deaf in Canada.

You can support inclusion in your community by learning your ABCs in ASL with many helpful resources online, including on DeafBlind Ontario Services’ blog <https://deafblindontario.com/the-asl-alphabet/>.

¹ <https://wfdeaf.org/our-work/>

² Canadian Survey on Disability (2017)

“I want people to know that hearing, hard of hearing and Deaf persons can all be friends.”

Sara Quick

GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday, an annual movement for giving and volunteering following Black Friday and Cyber Monday, is on **November 29, 2022**. Will you join us in celebrating this global day of giving back? Your support helps people like Sara to live their best lives. Watch for details on our social media for more information on how you can participate in this year’s Giving Tuesday. Now more than ever, we are called upon to make a difference.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026



VISION

Enriching lives one touch and sign at a time.

MISSION

DeafBlind Ontario Services is focused on individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal, and deafblind. We offer an array of services that support people to live their best lives.

VALUES

Passionate

We are driven to empower the people we support and to celebrate their uniqueness

Collaborative

Engaging others makes us better. Each of us has something to learn and something to teach

Leaders

We set the standard and promote excellence in our field

Resilient

When faced with challenges, we adapt and grow - becoming stronger together

Limitless

We believe in endless possibilities

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

Our Services: Be the Provider of Choice

1. Continue the evolution and growth of DeafBlind Ontario Services
2. Enhance external communications
3. Implement & manage risk to the organization objectives

Our Employees: Support to Thrive

4. Continue to enhance our employee engagement
5. Create and implement a succession planning strategy

Our Collaboration: Enhance, Enrich, and Create

6. Investigate resources to develop a Northern Ontario strategy
7. Continue to evolve and implement a government relations strategy
8. Foster external collaboration (Local, Provincial, National, International)
9. Create a community of practice around evidence-based, data-driven care and share best practices

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026



DeafBlind
ONTARIO FOUNDATION

VISION

Transforming lives, one gift at a time.

MISSION

Inspiring investment in the future of individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal and deafblind.

VALUES

Passionate

We are driven to empower the people we support and to celebrate their uniqueness

Collaborative

Engaging others makes us better. Each of us has something to learn and something to teach

Leaders

We set the standard and promote excellence in our field

Resilient

When faced with challenges, we adapt and grow - becoming stronger together

Limitless

We believe in endless possibilities

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

We will increase our capacity to manage and grow our housing and accommodation assets

1. Identify and address immediate-term housing and accommodation needs
2. Develop Accommodation & Housing strategy (to link with Growth and Development strategies)

We will increase our capacity to raise funds

3. Oversee and manage ongoing volunteer activities and donor relationships
4. Develop a long term Development strategy to increase revenue
5. Increase Board capacity on fundraising

We will ensure continued effective stewardship and accountability

6. Ensure stewardship of the investments and the ongoing financial health and wellbeing of DBOF
7. Implement Board governance initiatives
8. Develop and implement internal and external communications strategies

Debunking misconceptions to break down barriers to inclusivity



“They can’t live independent lives.” According to Annette Piggott, Quality Assurance & Planning Lead at DeafBlind Ontario Services, this is a common misconception about people with diverse abilities, like deafblindness.

When people think about deafblindness, they often think of Helen Keller, one of the most internationally recognized people with deafblindness. However, a person may be born with deafblindness or acquire deafblindness during their lifetime. This is an important distinction as sensory loss can impact concept development, communication, and mobility.

In her 15 years at DeafBlind Ontario Services, Annette has learned that independence is unique and attainable to each person and their individual needs.

“The word ‘independence’ is often put in a box,” says Annette. These myths and misconceptions stem from misinformation and stereotypes. Annette aims to debunk misconceptions and break down barriers to inclusivity.

“Independence looks different for everyone. For one person, this may mean more choices, more ways to communicate preferences, likes and dislikes, or goals. While for another, it may be achieved with support in daily living, increasing the person’s quality of life,” says Annette.

For individuals with deafblindness, this support comes from intervenors. They help people with deafblindness to gain independence, build their life skills, and actively participate in all areas of

their lives through an approach of ‘do with, not for’.

Communicating thoughts, feelings and ideas is a basic human need. Another common misconception about deafblindness is that the person cannot communicate... Often, this is because people are misinformed about how the person communicates.

Because every person with deafblindness experiences a varying degree of sensory loss, each person has their own unique and individual way to communicate. The intervenor may take an Enriched Communication Approach, using as many methods of communication as needed – like American Sign Language (ASL), fingerspelling, print on palm, tangible symbols, and technology with speech generative devices, to name a few – to facilitate the exchange of information.

“I’ve learned that there is always a way to teach new concepts and understand each person’s individual communication method(s). I let the person lead and take direction as their communication partner... they are the greatest teachers.”

“Being an intervenor teaches you skills that are applicable in all areas of your life. You learn how to collaborate with a team, brainstorm and think outside the box, be a communication partner, and advocate in many different scenarios. The result being empowerment for the resilient and determined people supported,” says Annette, who started her career as an intervenor.

“The intervenor helps the person with deafblindness be the best version of themselves and live their best life with increased independence. It’s a rewarding career with the opportunity to not only discover the potential of each person supported, but your own potential too.”

Learn more and apply today at deafblindontario.com/careers

Research Spotlight

Development of Global Framework on Deafblindness

Progress has been made in the development of a Global Framework on Deafblindness, called 'International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)' Core Sets. This framework will provide universal terminology that facilitates communication among stakeholders involved in service provision of individuals with deafblindness, a scientific basis for the assessment of functional status, goal setting, treatment planning and monitoring, as well as measurement of the outcome(s).

Given the scale of this project, global collaboration is required. DeafBlind Ontario Services is working with Principal Investigators: Dr. Walter Wittich (University of Montreal, Canada), Dr. Sarah Granberg (Orebro University, Sweden), Dr. Atul Jaiswal (University of Montreal, Canada), and Dr. Mahadeo Sukhai (CNIB Deafblind

Community Services). Along with Stakeholder Groups: Deafblind International (DbI), Ricard Lopez (Parent, Founder, and Board Member of European DeafBlind Network, Spain), Centre de réadaptation Lethbridge-Layton Mackay du CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de l'Île-de-Montréal, Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille du CISSS de la Montérégie-Centre, Canadian Hearing Society, and Canadian Helen Keller Center.

Phase 1 of this framework development – Systemic Literature Review – was completed in July 2022 with the support of 50 trained clinicians and researchers. Phase 2 – Qualitative Study – is currently underway.

To read the full study protocol, visit journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261413.

National Deafblind Awareness Month 2022

Throughout June, large trees, fronts of buildings, fences, and lampposts in community spaces across the country were decorated with vibrant knit and crochet squares – a form of street art known as yarn bombing – to raise awareness during National Deafblind Awareness Month.

DeafBlind Ontario Services yarn bombed community objects and spaces in many of our service regions across the province, including: Ayr, Georgina, Innisfil, London, Newmarket, Ottawa, Peterborough, and Sudbury.

June is National Deafblind Awareness Month, a time when many around the world celebrate and raise awareness about deafblindness. It is the birth month of Helen Keller, one of the most internationally recognized people with deafblindness. Each year,

members of the National Deafblind Awareness Month Working Group, who are service providers and people with deafblindness, come together in June to make a wave from coast to coast in Canada.

In its second year, yarn bombing is a largescale tactile arts awareness initiative of Deafblind International's (DbI) Communication Committee, also known as ComCom.

A BIG thank you to everyone who donated squares to our yarn bombing movement - we couldn't have created these beautiful tactile art installations without you.

Exciting plans for our awareness efforts in June 2023 are already in the works. Stay tuned!

Fundraising Events



The Finer Senses - Tour and Tasting: June 10, 2022

DeafBlind Ontario Foundation hosted their third virtual tasting experience, The Finer Senses, Tour and Tasting. Prior to the event, three bottles of wine were delivered via contactless delivery.

unique opportunity to discover their senses and engage in discussions about wine pairings, varietals, and more, while making a difference for a local non-profit organization. It was a great way to bring people together during June's National Deafblind Awareness Month.

Throughout the evening, guests 'travelled' to three wine producing countries, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, with the guidance of Robin Macdonald, a travel expert with MLS Custom Travel. During their travels, guests enjoyed rest stops to sip and learn about wines from each region, led by Tim Reed Manessy of The Living Vine. At The Finer Senses, guests had the

A warm thank you to our guests, volunteers, and generous sponsors for making The Finer Senses a memorable evening!

Sponsors



Savour the Senses - Suds & Cider: October 22, 2022

Guests tested their beer IQ and experienced a sampling of the Ottawa area's finest beers – without their eyes – at the third annual Savour the Senses.

"It was exciting to be back in person this year with a new, fun, and informative tasting experience. Our guests learned more about local craft breweries and their beers... and discovered some new favourites!" said Susan Manahan, Director of Development and Communications at DeafBlind Ontario Foundation.

This unique blindfolded tasting experience included lagers, ales, pilsners, and IPAs led by local beer and cider makers. Stray Dog Brewing company supplied the selection of craft beer.

Thank you to our guests, volunteers, and generous sponsors for making Savour the Senses a memorable evening!

This exploration of the senses was followed by a gourmet dinner, along with a dessert and cider pairing.



Sponsors



November is Make a Will Month - Make a lasting gift, for years to come

Making a bequest through your Will is one of the easiest ways to support our mission. Make an impact on those who depend on the programs and services we offer for years to come. Leave your personal legacy while making a gift in your will.

Please contact a member of the Fund Development team at 1-855-340-3267 or email development@deafblindontario.com to discuss the options. You may also make your donation of securities and mutual funds directly to us by visiting Canada Helps at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/deafblind-ontario-foundation/>

 Learn more: <https://deafblindontario.com/foundation/ways-to-give/>



Our Donors: April - October 2022

Accessibil-iT, Mr. and Mrs. Albert and Joan Webster, Andrew Van Pelt Electric Ltd, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur and Emily Chiu, Ms. Ashleigh Eldridge, B & G Automotive Inc., Bertrand Plumbing & Heating, BlueSky Communications Inc., BMO Bank of Montreal, BNI Saskatchewan, Bradford Family Dentistry, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce and June Webster, Canadian Medical Equipment Protection Plan, CO Broadcasting, Crate Designs Furniture, Davidson Works Mechanical, Mr. Edward Abela, Electrical Elite, Gary's Service & Towing, Hughes Landscape Design and Construction, ICOR Technology, Innisfil Community Foundation, Jessie Primeau - Bowes & Cocks Limited Brokerage, Mr. and Mrs. John & Josie Watson, Jump 106.9, Luke Four Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Ken and Susan Molnar, MacEwen Petroleum Inc., MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy, Magna for Community, Morrison CPA Professional Corporation, National Mah Jongg League Inc., Needham Promotions Inc., Ontario Power Generation, Open Plan Architects, Pam Bechard - Royal Lepage RCR Realty, Peterborough Foundation, Quickie, Resident Care Pharmacy, Robert Campeau Family Foundation, Russell Lions Club, Santos Hair Studio, Silver Linings Healthcare, Snyder Construction, Star Metroland Media, Starbucks c/o Vancouver Foundation, TD Commercial, The Chesterville Record, The Oakville Foundation for Intellectually Handicapped People, The Organic Moment Photography, The Printing House Charitable Foundation, The Review, The Victor & Rhoda Shields Charitable Foundation, United Way Waterloo Region, Valley East Lions Club, Werner E. Faihst Limited, Mr. William Donaldson, World Class Photo & Video, Xpertek Construction Ltd

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Adapting Environments for Sensory Loss



Join DeafBlind Ontario Services for an interactive virtual workshop exploring adaptations to create spaces that are functional, user-friendly and inclusive for individuals with sensory loss in their homes and communities.



January 25, 2023



1:00 - 4:00 p.m.



Virtual

Register:

deafblindontario.com/events

For more information contact Community Services at mcs@deafblindontario.com or call 1-855-340-3267 x 273.

deafblindontario.com

A laptop screen displaying the workshop title "SHINE A LIGHT ON ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES" in bold, blue, sans-serif capital letters. To the right of the screen is a close-up image of a white light switch on a black wall.

**SHINE A LIGHT ON
ACCESSIBILITY
CHALLENGES**

Review the impact of sensory loss related to accessibility

Increasing awareness of accessibility needs & barriers in the home and community for individuals experiencing sensory loss

Introducing ideas on adapting environments to meet their unique including DIY tips and solutions