



DeafBlind
ONTARIO SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

What We Do



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Our 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.



Our Vision



Enriching lives one *touch* and *sign* at a time.

Our Values

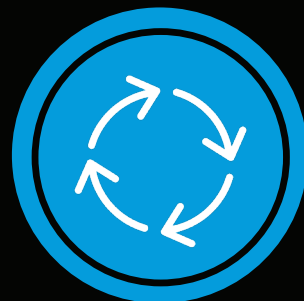
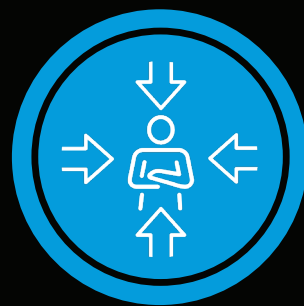
DeafBlind Ontario Services believes in the power of our employees' voices. That's why we embarked on a comprehensive journey to redefine our values, ensuring they authentically represent who we are now and what we aspire to be as we grow as an organization. Through employee feedback, surveys, roadshows, and virtual connections, we listened and learned. The result? Two new Foundational Principles and four Core Values that truly reflect our collective vision and aspirations.

Foundational Principles

This is our 'why' - the deep purpose and inspiration behind everything we do at DeafBlind Ontario Services.

Core Values

This is our 'how' - the guide to our day-to-day interactions, decisions and practices.



Rooted in **Values**,
Growing with Purpose



Person-Centered Dedication:

At the heart of everything we do, we place the Individual. We allow their voice, choices, and experiences to guide our actions. We are committed to deeply knowing each individual—understanding their history, dreams, strengths, and needs—so that our support is as unique as they are.



Infinite Possibilities:

We are driven by an unwavering belief that every person, regardless of their abilities or challenges, possesses 'Infinite Possibilities.' At its core, this belief ensures that our services are not just about meeting needs but about unlocking potential, -paving the way for all individuals to live their best lives.



Pursuit of Excellence:

- Adhering to high organizational standards and accountability
- Stepping out of comfort zones with continuous learning and growth
- Delivering high-quality care while maintaining the dignity of people supported



Accountability in Action:

- Acting with integrity and transparency, learning from mistakes
- Recognizing the impact of behaviors and committing to improvement
- Valuing feedback as a learning and growth opportunity



Fearless Empowerment:

- Championing autonomy and potential of individuals
- Boldly removing barriers and advocating for rights and needs
- Viewing successes and failures as learning opportunities



Collective Success:

- Fostering a positive, inclusive, and psychologically safe environment
- Ensuring transparent and consistent communication for meaningful outcomes
- Empowering employees to thrive through leadership and support

Strategic Plan Update 2024-2025

DeafBlind Ontario Services continues to be guided by its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, which features three core principles and objectives:

Services – Be the provider of choice

Our Employees – Support to thrive

Collaboration – Enhance, enrich and create

Services – Be the provider of choice

Our strategic plan is anchored in the ongoing development and expansion of our services.

The two-year anniversary of our “Living My Best Life” service model was celebrated on September 29, 2024. This model ensures the people we support receive services that encourage them to fulfill their wishes and desires – our specialized support team use a wide range of tools and processes to ascertain what is important to and for each person, to ensure that they can live their best life.

Certification remains a strong focus within the organization. In addition to the Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist (CDBIS) certification launched in 2022, DeafBlind Ontario Services was proud to announce the development of a new internal certification for specialized professionals who work with people living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication.

Our dynamic growth strategy shapes efforts in crucial areas, such as identifying potential growth opportunities and expanding service delivery.

DeafBlind Ontario Services continues to be guided by our objective-centric risk management and quality assurance frameworks, with regular reporting to the board and committees.

Our Employees – Support to thrive

We are committed to enhancing our employee culture, through multi-faceted Employee Engagement and Retention strategies. Highlights include regular “Engage and Discover” meetings, a wellness series with communications aimed at supporting employees mental and physical health, and the “Culture by Design” organizational values refresh that created new Foundational Principles and Core Values in February 2025. Our performance appraisal process has been refreshed to reflect the new Foundational Principles and Core Values and will be implemented in September 2025.

These efforts continue to support improvements in employee retention, resulting in our lowest turnover rate since 2020/21.

Collaboration – Enhance, enrich and create

DeafBlind Ontario Services continues to cultivate external collaborations at the local, provincial, national, and international levels. These efforts are guided by strategies for community development, community engagement, and partnerships.

We collaborated with other Canadian disability organizations to prepare a report for the Monitoring Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The report captures the lived experience of persons with disabilities and advocates for the distinct rights of people who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication.

Our government relations strategy remains agile and proactive at the local, provincial and federal levels. DeafBlind Ontario Services’ ongoing collective work with Intervenor Services sector partners has produced joint 2024 and 2025 Ontario pre-budget submissions.

We remain strong supporters of Deafblind International (DBI), with employee representation on their board and various committees. For the past four years, we participated in DBI’s global yarn bombing awareness initiative that brings attention to National Deafblind Awareness Month.

Creating a community of practice around evidence-based, data-driven care and sharing of best practices is essential to better understand people supported. DeafBlind Ontario Services is proud of its collaborative role (together with the World Federation of the Deafblind and Deafblind International) in the development of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) core sets on deafblindness.

Letter from the Board Chair & CEO



Lise Gagnon
Board Chair



Roxanna Spruyt
CEO

Over the past year, DeafBlind Ontario Services has continued our **pursuit of excellence** and proudly celebrated numerous achievements and milestones. Guided by our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, we focus on three core principles: being the preferred service provider, fostering employee success, and enhancing, enriching, and innovating through collaboration.

On September 29, 2024 we proudly celebrated the two-year anniversary of our “Living My Best Life” service model, reaffirming our commitment to our **person-centered dedication**. This model continues to ensure that the people we support receive services that **fearlessly empower** them to fulfill their dreams and desires. Our specialized support team uses a wide range of tools and processes to identify what is important to and for each person, ensuring they can truly live their best life.

We continued to work collaboratively with sector partners CNIB Deafblind Community Services, Canadian Helen Keller Centre, Sensity and Lions McInnes House to request a revision to the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services’ (MCCSS) Needs-Based Funding Model. Our messaging emphasized the need to address employee retention challenges due to funding pressures exacerbated by rising inflation and outdated (2015) salary data. Collectively, the sector garnered media coverage across the province, highlighting the importance of Intervenor Services for people who are deafblind. We also presented and submitted recommendations during the annual Pre Budget-Consultations, proactively identifying barriers and advocating for necessary changes.

As an honorary Patron Organization of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honorable Edith Dumont, DeafBlind Ontario Services was given the opportunity to nominate individuals to receive the King Charles III Coronation Medal. Administered by the federal government in collaboration with partner organizations, the medal commemorates the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on May 6, 2023. This distinguished award recognizes 30,000 Canadians who exemplify service, sustainability, and inclusivity—values deeply cherished by both His Majesty and Canadians across the country. On March 13, 2025, DeafBlind Ontario Services had the privilege to host a Coronation Medal Ceremony to honor medal recipients Diane Gabay, David Lepofsky, Lorraine Simpson, Roxanna Spruyt, Tracey Veldhuis, and John Watson for their remarkable contributions.

DeafBlind Ontario Services believes in the power of our employees’ voices. Because of this, we embarked on a comprehensive journey to redefine our values, ensuring they authentically represent who we are now and what we aspire to be as we grow as an organization. Through employee feedback, surveys, roadshows, and virtual connections, we listened and learned. The result? Two new Foundational Principles and four Core Values that truly reflect our collective vision and aspirations.

In January we were thrilled to share our hour in the spotlight on *An Hour to Give* with Sam Laprade on Rogers TV Ottawa. This was an amazing opportunity to celebrate our dedicated employees and the incredible individuals we support.

The hour-long episode included an ‘About Us’ segment, a family’s heartfelt experience, highlights of our Community Services and Supported Independent Living (SIL) programs, and insights from two of our Ottawa employees.

We are excited to announce the completion of the World Health Organization ICF Core Sets for deafblindness. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) provides a comprehensive and universally accepted framework to describe functioning, disability, and health across various diseases and conditions. Given the diverse nature of deafblindness, the ICF serves as a common language, aiding in the standardization of outcome measures for service delivery to individuals with deafblindness.

The development of the ICF Core Sets for Deafblindness was a global collaborative effort. Renu Minhas, our Research Coordinator, led the DeafBlind Ontario Services initiative, supported by many dedicated employees and the individuals we serve. In partnership with the World Federation of the Deafblind and Deafblind International, DeafBlind Ontario Services played a pivotal role in this monumental achievement.

We are continually expanding our involvement in partnerships, research collaborations, and global initiatives, enhancing our organization’s reputation and raising awareness for the people we support. We play a vital role in DeafBlind International’s mission, actively participating in multiple committees. DeafBlind

Ontario Services was pleased to present at the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) International Conference 2024. The session highlighted our specialized services, including our new service model and global partnerships. Additionally, our COO, Karen Keyes delivered a keynote lecture titled “The Importance of Global Partnerships for Multiple Disabilities” at the Hearing Across the Lifespan (HEAL) 2024 Conference in Lake Como, Italy, on June 7, 2024.

We are committed to maintaining our leadership in the field by offering ongoing professional development to our employees. This year we implemented psychological safety training for all employees, enhancing the **collective success** of our team, which ultimately benefits the individuals we serve. We continue to encourage direct service employees who work with people who are deafblind to earn their Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist (CDBIS) certification and continue to develop our new internal certification for professionals who work with people living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication. These certifications embody our **accountability in action**, ensuring the highest standards and quality of service for the individuals we support.

As we look to the future, we believe in **infinite possibilities** as we remain dedicated to our mission and values, striving to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we support.



**Board
Members**

Lise Gagnon – Chair
Tiffany Barker – Vice Chair
Rick Boychuk
Raymond Coutu
Kevin Daoust

Joe Filippelli
Kathryn Heier-Siemens
Greg Paget
Kathy Peters
Sunny Shah

Living My Best Life: Service Model Update



17

Living My Best Life
meetings held from
April 1, 2024,
to April 1, 2025



101

Living My Best Life
meetings held
since the model's
implementation



614

active goals
across the
organization

“It’s incredible to think that over two years have passed since DeafBlind Ontario Services introduced our innovative service model, **Living My Best Life**. This progressive approach fearlessly empowers the individuals we support to achieve their goals and aspirations, paving the way to greater independence. Through personalized plans, developed collaboratively by the supported individual, their family, and close friends, this model focuses on what truly matters to them, whether it’s starting a new hobby or embarking on a dream vacation.”

– Annette Piggott,
Quality Assurance Planning Lead

In 2024, we implemented an evaluation plan for Living My Best Life, gathering data through reports and interviews with supported individuals and their families. Here’s what we’ve learned so far:



Personalized Planning:

Families and supported individuals continue to be impressed with the Living My Best Life planning meetings. They value the personalized nature of these sessions and believe the goals set genuinely reflect what is ‘important to’ and ‘important for’ the individual.



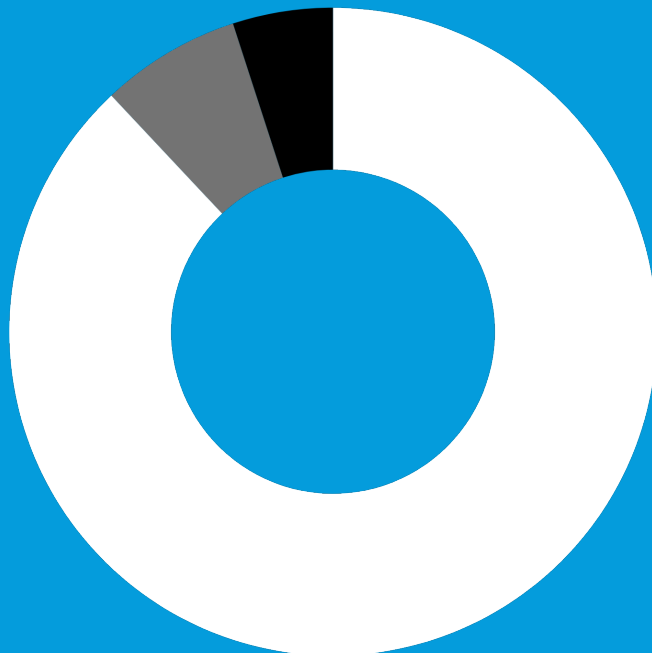
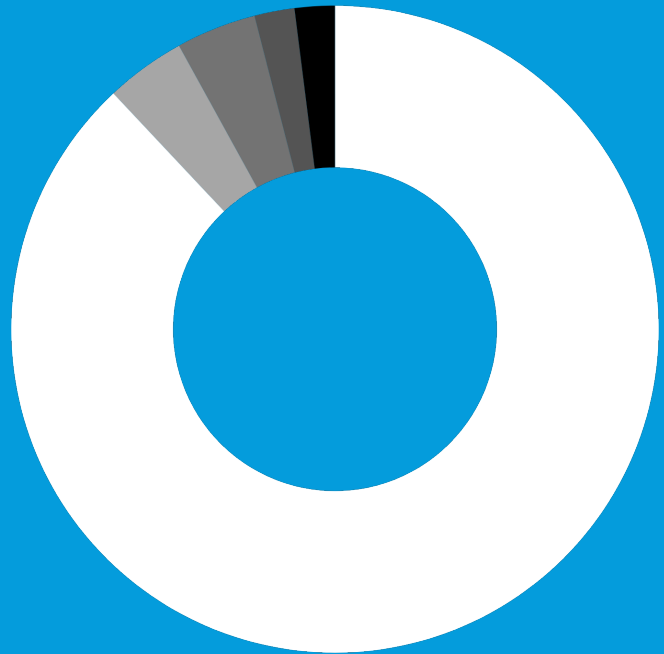
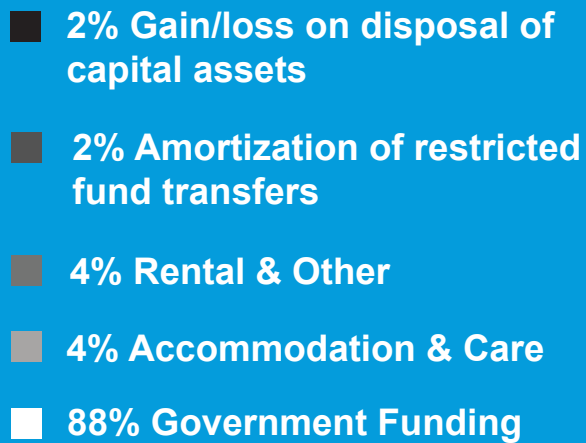
Goal Progress: Both families and those receiving support are pleased with the progress of their Living My Best Life goals.

We remain committed to the ongoing implementation of this service model, ensuring that we support individuals in achieving their highest quality of life. **Together, we look forward to making a positive impact and helping everyone live their best lives!**



Our Financials

Revenue-Operating Fund



Expenses-Operating Fund



The above was summarized from the draft audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2025. The complete audited financial statements are available online deafblindontario.com.

Our Impact

DeafBlind Ontario Services is committed to supporting people who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication. Specialized services are customized to each person's unique needs, method of communication, and goals to live their best life.



113

people supported in total



80

people in Supported Living Homes



8

people in Tremplin Programs



14

Partnerships



11

people in Supported Independent Living Programs



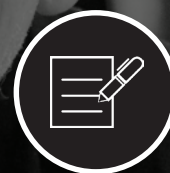
36

years of service



7

new people supported



4

people on the internal interest list

Our Employees



323 total employees
(as of March 31, 2025)

- 243 Full-Time
- 80 Part-Time
- 84.5% are in direct service



\$61.47 - Cost of one Hour of direct service for Supported living homes
(based on 2023-2024 fiscal year)



6.42 average years of service



349,506 - Hours of direct service delivered in Supported Living Homes (based on 2024-2025 fiscal year)

Bridge Community Training 2024-2025



Community Training Attendees

- Introduction to Sensory Loss: 21
- Sensory Integration: 32
- Communication 101 Bridging the Gap: 39
- Adapting Environments for Sensory Loss: 7
- Personality Dimensions: 17
- Sensory Loss and Aging: 26
- The Enriched Communication Approach: 29



171

Total Attendees

13

Total Training Sessions

8

Unique & Specialized Workshops

Knowledge Sharing 2024-2025

DeafBlind Ontario Services stands at the forefront of our field. Committed to our pursuit of excellence, we are consistently leading with innovation and expertise. We have actively shared our knowledge with the community through a variety of channels, including international, national, and provincial presentations and keynote speaking engagements. Our commitment to advancing research is evident through our numerous collaborations and publications, which have significantly contributed to the growth and development of the non-profit industry.



Total Presentations: 6

- International Presentations: 2
- National Presentations: 1
- Provincial Presentations: 3



Total Publications: 7

Specialized Training

2024

610

Total
Attendees

60

Total
Specialized
Training
Sessions

2025

TOUCH™

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

TOUCH™ (Training Ongoing Unique Committed Holistic) enables our specialized support team to expand their knowledge on many aspects of sensory loss, including the impact of related conditions, adaptations required, communication methods, environmental considerations, and sensory complexities.

8

Total
TOUCH™
Sessions

67

TOUCH™
Total Attendees

ASL

13

Total
ASL
Sessions

114

ASL Total
Attendees

**Additional
Employee
Training**

39

Total
Additional
Training
Sessions

429

Total
Attendees

Technical skills –
from medication
to back care and
everything in
between



Service Awards

Employee Service Awards

5 years

Makeda Cosper
Harun Bogore
Roxanne King
Adelaide Karikari
David Johnson
Valerie Crispin
Marie Peralta
Rebecca Brown
Rebecca Lavenuik
Zieorgynn Benosa
Denet Prince
Bemiya Tom
Kirandeep Kaur Mander

15 years

Elisha Shannon
Erin Thomas
Heather Sanford
Racquel Switzer
Terry Jakeman

10 years

Amanda Manley
Ashley Albion
Karen Madho
Devon Gordon
Kirsten Harbottle
Melinda Harris

20 years

Stephanie Schalk
Amanda Mesko
Sarah Nevett
Miriam Cohen

Volunteer Service Awards

20 years – Martha Beaumont
(Combined years of service – DBOS/DBOF)

Vision for Tomorrow

As we plan for tomorrow, our objectives are driven by our commitment to being the service provider of choice for people who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication. To achieve this commitment to **Person-Centered Dedication**, we continue to embrace change and prioritize continuous learning to ensure excellence in our service.

We celebrate the achievements in our **Pursuit of Excellence** in the past fiscal year, including our research collaborations, keynote speaking and presentations at international, national, and provincial events and conferences, and global partnerships that have enhanced our organization's reputation and amplified awareness for the people we support.

In the upcoming fiscal year, we will be looking ahead to lay the foundation for DeafBlind Ontario Services' 2027-2030 strategic plan. Our team will continue to embed our new values – **Person-Centered Dedication, Infinite Possibilities, Pursuit of Excellence, Collective Success, Fearless Empowerment, and Accountability in Action** – into every aspect of our work. These values will serve as our guiding principles, shaping our decisions, interactions, and strategic direction. From prioritizing the individual's voice and choices to fostering a culture of teamwork and accountability, our values will ensure we remain focused on unlocking potential and delivering the highest quality of care.

DeafBlind Ontario Services remains committed to collaborating with all three levels of government to build awareness about the profound impact of our services on the lives of the people we support. We will actively pursue opportunities to share our insights on how to

break down societal barriers, particularly in areas such as accessibility, the necessity for affordable, accessible housing, and the critical role of research to support evidence-based practices.

We're excited to expand our internal podcast, 'The Living Room,' to foster engagement and share enjoyable stories and insights. In the spirit of **Collective Success**, this initiative will amplify new voices within the organization, celebrate strengths across all departments and regions, and strengthen connections within our diverse team. Embracing **Fearless Empowerment**, 'The Living Room' will provide a space for autonomy and open communication, encouraging diverse perspectives and experiences.

We will continue to prove our **Accountability in Action** by providing employees with professional development opportunities, including encouraging our direct service employees working with individuals who are deafblind to obtain their Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist (CDBIS) certification. We will also continue to develop our new internal certification for professionals who work with people living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication, ensuring the highest standards and quality of service for the individuals we support.

Together, our amazing team is building a future where collaboration and inclusivity drive our success, ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to live their best lives.

Looking into the future, our passion only grows to continue enriching lives one touch and sign at a time.





DeafBlind
ONTARIO SERVICES

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