



DeafBlind
ONTARIO SERVICES

2023

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2024



08



15



04

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DeafBlind Ontario Services
is a leader in the field with
programs in remote
communities and urban
centres across the province.



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

Passionate. Collaborative. Leaders. Resilient. Limitless.

We are **Passionate**

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

We demonstrate being passionate by:

- Embracing challenges and opportunities with energy and enthusiasm;
- Extending the reach of the people we support into the community, where they can achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations;
- Creating and providing unique opportunities to learn and grow; and
- Motivating and encouraging our co-workers, as well as the people we support, to challenge themselves every day.

We are **Collaborative**

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

We demonstrate being collaborative by:

- Fostering partnerships with the people we support, their families, other community

resources, government, funders and organizations with similar goals—locally, nationally and around the world;

- Committing to open communication and transparency when working with each other and our partners; and
- Supporting each other and seeking input from others for solutions that benefit all.

We are **Leaders**

We set the standard and promote excellence in our field.

We demonstrate being leaders by:

- Constantly evolving and striving for excellence in everything we do;
- Mentoring, educating and encouraging ourselves and others;
- Generating and being receptive to new ideas;
- Advocating for people's rights, beliefs and dreams; and
- Holding ourselves accountable to the people we support, families, employees, funders and other stakeholders.

Our Values

Passionate. Collaborative. Leaders. **Resilient. Limitless.**

We are **Resilient**

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

We demonstrate being resilient by:

- Providing holistic services that are responsive to the ever-changing needs of individuals supported;
- Being proactive in identifying and addressing circumstances that may present challenges; and
- Learning from setbacks and being persistent and flexible in our efforts to find creative, workable solutions.

We are **Limitless**

We believe in endless possibilities.

We demonstrate being Limitless by:

- Being courageous, open-minded and creative; and
- Empowering each other to go outside the box and achieve goals and dreams.



Strategic Plan Update

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

Continuing the evolution and growth of services remains the cornerstone of our strategic plan.

An ever-evolving growth strategy guides work in key focus areas, including assessing areas of potential growth and service delivery expansion. DeafBlind Ontario Services has put measures in place to ensure technology keeps pace with its evolution and growth, with a financial platform transition and optimization of our IT landscape, and implementation of an employee engagement platform.

Our risk management approach has matured to include a quality assurance framework that was implemented in May 2023.



Our Employees – Support to Thrive

Our focus remains on enhancing our employee culture, through multi-faceted Employee Engagement and Retention strategies. A new Employee Connection Specialist position was created to support employee engagement – we are proud to be cutting-edge in this area. In January 2024 we launched “Viva Engage” to improve employee communication and support a positive culture. These efforts supported a positive shift in employee retention, with a 24% reduction in turnover from the previous year.

A succession planning strategy has been developed, with the first phase well underway and the next steps clearly identified.



Collaboration – Enhance, enrich and create

We continue to foster external collaboration at the local, provincial, national, and international levels. Our government relations strategy remains responsive; a highlight of this work is our ongoing collective work with Intervenor Services sector partners on a joint 2024 Ontario pre-budget submission.

Our connection with National Deafblind Awareness Month (NDBAM) celebrated each June - remains strong. DeafBlind Ontario Services was a founding member of the NDBAM Working Group in 2015 and has helped lead its work since 2018.

On the international level, we remain a strong supporter of Deafblind International (DbI). We were proud to have the largest employee group (50 strong, many of whom are Certified DeafBlind Intervenor Specialists) attend the 18th DbI World Conference in Ottawa in July 2023. We have representation on DbI's Board and committees, and our CEO Roxanna Spruyt was elected DbI Governance Officer in January 2024.

To better understand the people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services, we continue to search for opportunities to link data to service delivery, training and certification. We are excited about our collaborations with research partners, including post-secondary institutions, on data collection and best practices, including the development of International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Sets on Deafblindness.



Letter from the Board Chair & CEO

Throughout this past year, DeafBlind Ontario Services has been privileged to celebrate numerous achievements and milestones.

We continue to be guided by our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, which features three core principles and objectives: to be the service provider of choice, to support our employees to thrive, and to enhance, enrich and create through collaboration.

Since launching on September 29, 2022, our Living My Best Life service model has been growing and successful. In 2023, an evaluation plan for Living My Best Life was created that includes the collection of data through reports and interviews of people supported, their families, and employees involved in contributing to Living My Best Life plans. People supported and their families are impressed and satisfied with the Living My Best Life planning meetings, and how goals are progressing to ensure the people we support truly are living their best lives.

After months of hard work, we were thrilled to announce the grand re-opening in March of our Water Street location in Peterborough. The Water Street location, formerly a 4-unit apartment style home, has undergone extensive renovations to better serve the needs of the people we support. With the addition of two more units, the capacity has increased from 6 to 9 individuals. The renovation project also focused on enhancing accessibility, incorporating state-of-the-art equipment and design elements to promote maneuverability, functionality, safety, and independence.

Over the past year we have deepened our involvement in partnerships and global initiatives. Through research collaborations and strengthening our involvement with DeafBlind International, we are making a positive name for our organization and amplifying awareness for the people we support.

We continue to collaborate with research partners on data collection and best practices, including the development of International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Sets, allowing us to stay relevant and better equipped to serve the people we support. We also continue our collaboration with different advocacy groups, including the Deafblind Advocacy Group Canada and the National Deafblind Awareness Month Working Group.

In our Strategic Plan, “Services: Be the Provider of Choice” stands as a cornerstone principle. Within this strategic framework, our aim is to continuously advance and expand the reach of our services. To achieve this, we are committed to embracing new technologies tailored to enhance the lives of the people we support.

We also recognize the importance of ensuring that our technological infrastructure remains adaptable and aligned with the evolving needs and growth of our organization, which led us to implement a full IT refresh.

The new position of Employee Connection Specialist was added to the Communications department. This position was created to support the employee experience and serve as the expert in leading employee experience trends, practices and internal programs to ensure our employees feel valued and heard. We also launched our Viva Engage platform allowing employees a space for sharing positive experiences, stories, questions, and connection across the province.

With our robust strategic plan guiding us, and the unwavering dedication of our team, DeafBlind Ontario Services has a strong foundation for continued success.



Lise Gagnon
Board Chair



Roxanna Spruyt
CEO

DeafBlind Ontario Services

Board Members

Lise Gagnon – Chair
Tiffany Barker – Vice Chair
Raymond Coutu
Kelly O'Neill
Greg Paget



Kathy Peters
Donald Spink
Kevin Daoust
Joe Filippelli
Rick Boychuk

Living My Best Life: Service Model Update

On September 29, 2022, DeafBlind Ontario Services launched a new service model called Living My Best Life (LMBL). This innovative approach empowers individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations, fostering a journey towards greater independence. With a personalized plan, determined by the person supported, their family, and close friends, this model ensures we are focusing on what's meaningful in life to them, like starting a new hobby or going on a dream vacation.

In 2023, an evaluation plan for Living My Best Life was created that includes the collection of data through reports and interviews of people supported, their families and employees involved in creating Living My Best Life plans.



To date, here is what we have learned so far about the Living My Best Life planning process through the interviews of people supported and their families:



Overall, families and people supported are impressed with the Living My Best Life planning meeting



Families are appreciative of how individualized the meetings are and feel that the goals created during the planning meetings truly represent what is 'important to' and 'important for' the person



Families and people supported are satisfied with how goals are progressing



75

Living My Best
Life meetings
held



632

active goals
across the
organization



100%

of family members
asked were impressed
with the Living My
Best Life meetings

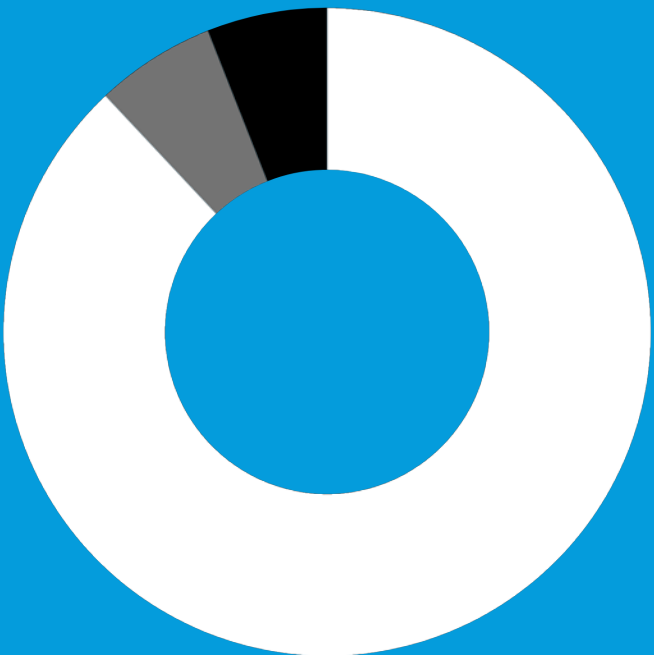
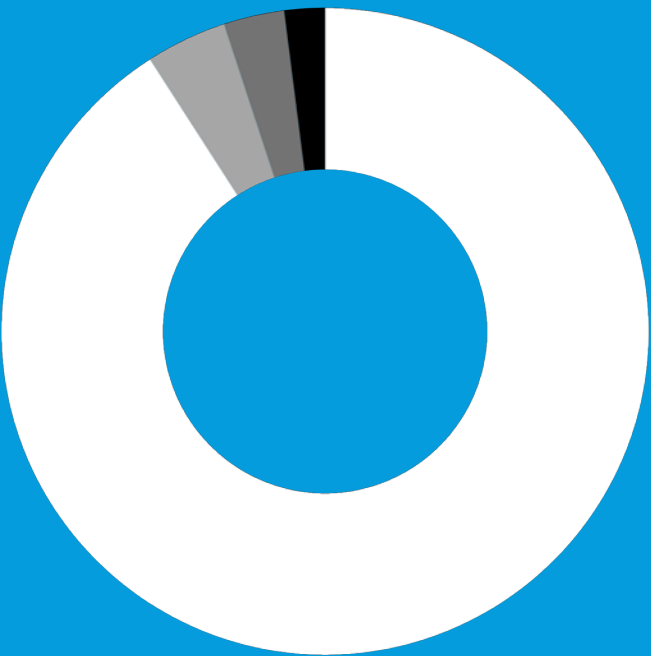
We are excited to continue implementing this service model in the future to continue to help the people we support to live their best lives!



Our Financials

Revenue-Operating Fund

- 2% Amortization of restricted fund transfers
- 3% Rental & Other
- 4% Accommodation & Care
- 90% Government Funding



Expenses-Operating Fund

- 6% Amortization
- 6% Management & Administration
- 88% Programs

The above was summarized from the draft audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2024. The complete audited financial statements are available online deafblindontario.com.

Our Impact

DeafBlind Ontario Services is committed to providing high quality support 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. Specialized services are customized to each person's unique needs, method of communication, and goals to live their best life.



35

years
of service



2

people on the
internal interest
list



3

new people
supported



111

people
supported
in total



88

Supported Living
Homes &
Tremplin
Programs



12

Community
Partnerships



11

Supported
Independent
Living Programs

Our Employees



321 skilled employees
(as of March 31, 2024)

- 240 Full-Time
- 81 Part-Time
- 81% are in direct service



**\$59.66 - Cost of one hour of
direct service for Supported Living
Homes (based on 2022-2023 fiscal
year)**



6.16 average years of service



**344,458 - Hours of direct
services delivered in
Supported Living Homes
(based on 2022-2023 fiscal
year)**

**Community
Training**

201

Total Training
Sessions

882

Total
Attendees

Community
Training
Attendees

79

Introduction to
Sensory Loss

37

Sensory
Integration

51

Communication
101 Bridging the
Gap

49

Adapting
Environments for
Sensory Loss

27

Aging in Place
with Sensory
Loss

34

Sensory Loss
and Aging

**Specialized
Training**

TOUCH (Training Ongoing
Unique Committed Holistic)
strengthens the competencies
of those who touch the lives of
people who are Deaf, hard of
hearing, non-verbal and
deafblind.

76

TOUCH 1 Trained
Employees

26

TOUCH 1 Trained
Community
Agency Employees

110

TOUCH 2 Trained
Employees

4

TOUCH 2 Trained
Community
Agency Employees



Service Awards

Volunteer Service Awards

5 Years

Raymond Coutu

Employee Service Awards

5 Years

Aswathi Uppazhakattu
John
Catherine Clayton-Wynia
Chelsey McGrath-Gushue
Cheryl Bright
Christiane Dion-Prevost
Deanna Somerville
Emily Tabone
Emily Wurster
Helen Wolf
Jaclyn McConkey
Janet Jordan
Karlee Pattenden
Kelly Pushcar
Litty Raphael
Lynn Houle
Mathew Jose
Rita Castro
William McGovern

10 Years

Holly Pflanze
Jessica Steele
Kaila Boyle
Marlene Quinton
Renu Minhas
Samatha Byers
Sanja Saric
Valerie Huffman
Carley Godin
Dana Donaldson

15 Years

Christine Firetto
Jesse Downes
Katherine Logan

20 Years

Amber Reid

25 Years

Shannon Girard

30 Years

Andrea Pringle
Karen Keyes
Tracey Veldhuis





Vision for Tomorrow

As we plan for the future, DeafBlind Ontario Services is building on the progress made in 2023-24, growing with our new service model and strategic plan that stays responsive to the community's needs now and for tomorrow.

Our Living My Best Life service model has been successful in empowering individuals to achieve their goals and fostering a limitless journey towards fulfilling their aspirations. People supported and their families have indicated they are impressed and satisfied with the Living My Best Life planning meetings and how goals are progressing, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Our goal remains to be leaders in our field, and the 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. Strengthening our mission, we continue to deepen our collaboration in partnerships and global initiatives. Through keynote speaking and presentations at international, national and provincial events and conferences, research collaborations, and strengthening our involvement with Deafblind International, we are amplifying awareness and enhancing our capabilities for the people we support.

DeafBlind Ontario Services is not a static organization; we embrace change and prioritize continuous learning to ensure excellence in our services. Our commitment to adaptability is evident through ongoing collaboration within our field, bolstered by investments in our employee's professional development. We continue to encourage direct service employees to earn their Certified DeafBlind Intervenor Specialist designation, and we have also started developing a new certification for those who work with people who are Deaf. This certification recognizes standards to ensure the highest quality and accountability for the level of service we provide to the people we support.

In DeafBlind Ontario Services' 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, "Services: Be the Provider of Choice" stands as a cornerstone principle. Within this strategic framework, our aim is to continuously advance and expand the reach of our services. To achieve this, we are committed to embracing new technologies tailored to enhance the lives of the people we support. We also recognize the importance of ensuring that our technological infrastructure remains adaptable and aligned with the evolving needs and growth of our organization.

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





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