

## Province boosts support for Direct Funding Program

The Ontario government announced recently it was increasing the funding to the Direct Funding program to help more people with disabilities live independently in their homes and become self-managers of their own attendant services.

The funding expansion was announced in London, Ont., in January by Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who called Direct Funding a "beautiful program, which is about empowerment." The expanded program will provide direct funding to approximately 1,000 Ontarians with physical disabilities by 2016 to help them self-manage their care, said Ms. Matthews.

"Many people with disabilities want to manage their own care because it provides them with greater choice, control and flexibility," said Ms. Matthews. "Direct Funding also results in better value for our precious health dollars, because it relieves pressure on our health care system and frees up resources to provide care for others."

Speaking at the announcement of the funding increase, one long-time Direct Funding participant who has a university degree and a college diploma said she would not have been able to accomplish her post-secondary dreams without the help of the program.

"If it weren't for Direct Funding, my education would have stopped after



Minister Deb Matthews with Self-Manager Hibaq Abdi, from London, Ont.

high school," said Hibaq Abdi, a university student in London, Ont., who has been a Direct Funding participant since 2007 and is working on completing a degree in social work. "My life would have been chosen for me."

Leisa DeBono, manager of the Direct Funding Program, noted that in the nearly 20 years since its inception the program has served more than 1,100

people. While the wait for an interview used to be off-putting to some potential applicants, it's now been shortened to just over two years, with the possibility of becoming even shorter with the funding increase.

"With almost 400 people on the waiting list, we routinely hear from people in difficult situations who are in desperate need," said Ms. DeBono. "I think one of the hardest positions in our program is that of our intake co-ordinator, who has had to tell people over and over that we are doing our best but that the program is full. So, you can imagine our absolute joy at hearing about the expansion funding."

Ms. Matthews noted that the program is still one of the province's "best-kept secrets"; to that end, Self-Managers will be receiving postcards promoting Direct Funding. Self-Managers are asked to distribute them to friends and acquaintances or in venues where they

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**The Direct Funding Program is growing!**

Spread the word! Postcards enclosed!





## Keep in touch

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# Keeping track of time

Recommended by a Self-Manager from the Hamilton area, the TimeStation app can be a useful tool for tracking your attendants' hours. The app is available for Apple devices like the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. It is not yet available for Android devices, but you can use it on your home computer or laptop. The use of this app is free for those with fewer than 10 employees. The software allows you to set up your device to capture employee hours much like a punch clock. It's easy to set up all your attendants with their hourly wages in the program. Using their email accounts as their user identification, you can choose to have emails sent to them every time they "punch" in or out, so they have a record of their own clocking times. The employees choose their own passwords to secure their accounts. You can also choose to issue each employee with their own timecard badge to punch in and out. This works with a QR code, but we did not test this feature.

The app also supports situations where an attendant has different hourly rates for different shifts. As the app "administrator", you would set up these



individuals up with two or more rates by assigning a different rate for different "Departments" of work. They would select the appropriate "Department" (shift) when clocking in.

Staff can also download the app on their own Apple device, and once they are set up in your system and linked by their user name, they can log in and punch in or out using their own device.

TimeStation has more than a dozen reports that help you monitor the hours and dollars used during any time period. This will allow you to compare past pay periods, yearly, or current usage to date, based on the dates you request. The entries of all clock times are stored indefinitely. Reports for pay period hours and gross wages are easily printed or saved as Excel spreadsheets for electronic transmission to your bookkeeper. (Remember, you must keep all financial records for seven years.)

This app is very easy to use once set up. This is not required or recommended by Direct Funding, just something that might be of interest to Self-Managers. The app is available for free at [www.mytimestation.com](http://www.mytimestation.com) ■

## New Team Member

Direct Funding is pleased to welcome John Tam to the position of Auditing Clerk. John brings to the program a 15-year background in financial software implementation; consulting has taken him throughout the United States, but being homesick for Toronto's diverse ethnic foods has brought him home permanently. In his spare time, John volunteers as a pilot of a bicycle-built-for-two for the vision-impaired members of the Trailblazers Tandem Cycling Club (often out cycling in search of the city's best ice cream and desserts). He will be riding tandem in the Cycle for Sight fundraiser to Collingwood for the fourth consecutive year this summer. In his remaining leisure hours, he repairs bikes for a not-for-profit and ventures out to enjoy all of the city's festivals. ■





## Are you prepared for an emergency?

This past year has seen a number of unusual emergency situations across the province. Most recently, in Toronto, an ice storm in December affected a number of Self-Managers, including some who use ventilators and lost electricity for several days.

Self-Manager Audrey King had a few recommendations after being without electricity for 72 hours following Toronto's ice storm, including having a printed contact list, back up batteries, power inverter, and a phone that will work during a power outage. Audrey also suggests ensuring you have a way to schedule your attendants in a long-term emergency, find out if your building has an emergency generator, ask what your local emergency services would do if your neighbourhood experienced an emergency and check with your local municipal office whether emergency shelters in your area are wheelchair accessible.

We found some tips for a basic emergency kit at [www.getprepared.gc.ca](http://www.getprepared.gc.ca) and added our own to the list below:

- Water – at least two litres per person per day;
- Food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods (replace food and water once a year);
- Manual can opener;
- Wind-up or battery-powered flashlight and radio (and extra batteries);
- First aid kit;
- Toilet paper;
- Prescription medications, MedicAlert® bracelet or identification;
- Extra keys to your car and house;
- Cash in smaller bills, such as \$10 bills and change for payphones;
- A copy of your emergency plan and contact information;
- Tire patch kit, a can of seal-in-air product and a supply of inner tubes (to repair flat tires on your wheelchair or scooter);
- Pair of heavy gloves (to protect your hands while wheeling over glass or other sharp debris);
- Latex-free gloves (for anyone providing personal care to you);
- Spare deep-cycle battery for a motorized wheelchair or scooter;
- A lightweight, manual wheelchair as a backup to a motorized wheelchair (if feasible).

Read more about Audrey King's ice storm experience at [bit.ly/1103Lis](http://bit.ly/1103Lis). ■

## The new Direct Funding website is waiting for YOU!



Have you visited the fresh, new website for the Direct Funding Program, [www.dfontario.ca](http://www.dfontario.ca)?

Program participants are encouraged to register for the site's special Self-Managers' section by visiting:

[www.dfontario.ca/session/register.html](http://www.dfontario.ca/session/register.html)

and submitting your request. The Self-Managers' section is only available to program participants; there, you will find useful information and an array of resources to assist you with the management of your attendant services. Once registered on the site, you can begin to explore the various sections of the site and have access to:

- Program news and updates
- Tips to make Direct Funding easier
- Tips and information on recruiting and hiring staff
- Record keeping tools
- Documents and templates available to download
- Access to program staff's contact information

For the first time we have a single website that provides comprehensive information for the public and resources for Self-Managers, all in an accessible, bilingual user-friendly site.

While you're browsing the site, let us know what you think about the program and the difference it makes in your life by submitting a testimonial.

We're proud of our work to date but realize there is still more to do. So, please share your suggestions and observations while we continue to improve the site to its fullest potential. Please send your comments and feedback to [web@dfontario.ca](mailto:web@dfontario.ca)



## Funding

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encounter other consumers of attendant services who might be looking for a change (like at offices of physiotherapists or on accessible transit vehicles).

"Direct Funding is an ideal solution for consumers who don't mind taking on some responsibility in exchange for choice, flexibility and control in their attendant services," said Ms. DeBono.

The Direct Funding Program provides monthly funding to over 700 people across the province to recruit, hire and manage their own attendants to assist with their activities of daily living; participants determine how and when their services are provided. The program is administered by the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto through the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network. ■

### Did you know?

**We can't fund you if we can't find you.**

Your Direct Funding Agreement requires you to notify the DF program when you are hospitalized for more than 30 consecutive days. Please note, your attendants may provide you with some assistance while you're in hospital, so please check with us if you have any questions.

Additionally, program staff might need to reach you from time to time, so please advise us if you'll be away from home for more than a week or two. Remember: your funding is intended for use in the province of Ontario, but we can fund you for up to 21 days out of province in a calendar year. ■



## Self-Managers share insights into life transitions on Direct Funding



Discussion panel included Self-Managers (from left) Hazel Self, Tara Gersondé, Sakina Sadikot, Rob Randhawa and Enza Ronaldi.

Welcoming a new baby. Parenting teenaged children. Caring for an aging parent. Moving into your first apartment alone.

The flexibility of the Direct Funding Program was on display when Self-Managers from the Toronto area gathered recently for a day-long workshop that featured a panel discussion on life transitions.

The panel was moderated by Hazel Self, co-ordinator of community services at the Gage Transition to Independent Living, a community-based program of West Park Healthcare Centre in Toronto.

Panelists included three Self-Managers who were parents (Enza Ronaldi, Rob Randhawa and Sakina Sadikot) who discussed the realities of raising children while living with a disability. Another panelist, Tara Gersondé, talked about attending university and moving out of her parents' home in 2013.

More workshops are planned this year and Direct Funding staff are always interested to hear what topics you would like to discuss. Please forward suggestions to Melissa Graham at [dfresource@cilt.ca](mailto:dfresource@cilt.ca) ■

### Would you like to receive this newsletter online?

If you would like to receive this newsletter by **email only**, please contact Melissa at [dfresource@cilt.ca](mailto:dfresource@cilt.ca) or (416) 599-2458, ext. 241

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