



Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

Vision Loss ADP Reform
Working Group

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February 9, 2022

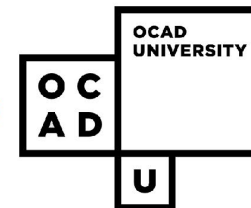
ADP

THE ADP REFORM WORKING GROUP



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Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program - Background

- For over 30 years, Ontarians with vision loss (VL) have benefited from the Assistive Devices Program (ADP)
- The technology revolution has impacted the lives of people living with VL to such a dramatic degree that there are now very few activities that a person who is blind or partially-sighted cannot participate in when equipped with the appropriate technology
- Only 6,000 people with vision loss received ADP funding in 2019/2020 out of a population of 466,000 Ontarians living with VL

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Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program - Background

- Reports from people living with VL who had applied to ADP:
 - Frustration with the length of time everything takes
 - Frustration with newer devices not being funded
 - Frustration with long wait time for authorization
 - Frustration with travel required to get authorization
 - Frustration with lack of response from ADP staff in a number of cases
- Similar frustration experienced by vendors/authorizers

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Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program - Background

Vision Loss ADP Reform Working Group

- Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) Toronto Chapter (Chair)
- Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) Toronto Visionaries Chapter
- The CNIB Foundation
- Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC), the FBC Young Leaders Program
- BALANCE for blind adults
- CCB Get Together with Technology (GTT) Program
- Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) at OCAD University

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Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Survey of People Living with VL

- Survey conducted November 1st – November 22nd, 2021

- Conducted via Survey Monkey

- Email to Ontario residents:
 - CCB Members Email List (2X),
 - CCB Newsletter (2X)
 - Balance E-newsletter,
 - AEBC Email List
 - Fighting Blindness Canada Email Patient List
 - CNIB Email list
 - IRDC at OCAD University client list

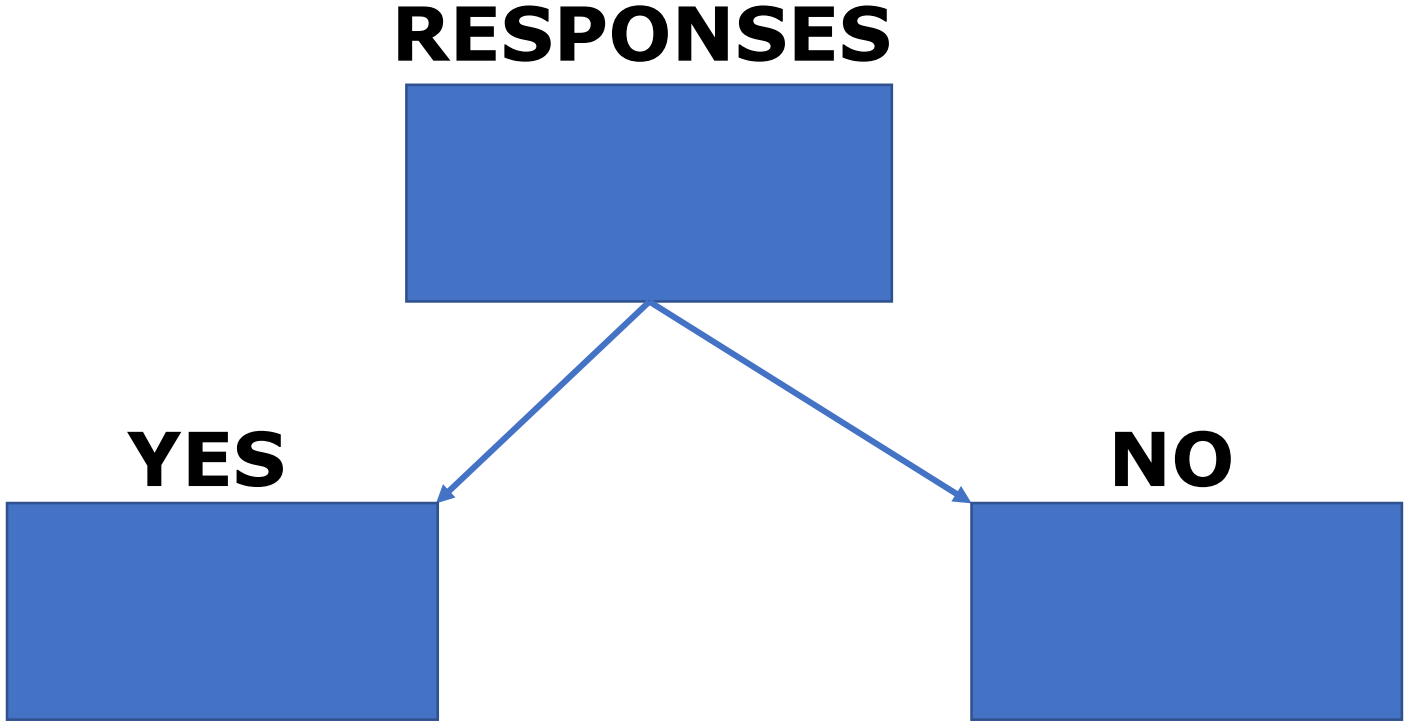
Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program – Survey of ADP Authorizers and Vendors

- Survey conducted December 27th, 2021– January 7th, 2022
- Conducted via Survey Monkey
- Email (3X) to list of ADP approved authorizers/vendors:

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

"The primary goal of the survey, outlined in this report, is to develop a rigorous and patient-centred evidence-base from which to make recommendations to ADP governing bodies that are informed, substantive, and reflective of the needs of Ontarians living with vision loss."

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program – Results



Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program – Results

Respondent Information	% Respondents (n=446)
Working age (18-64)	61
Blind	41
Partially Sighted	55
Deaf-blind	4
Additional disability	34
Household pre-tax income less than \$35K	33
Household pre-tax income less than \$50K	42

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Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

Key Findings

- **Many people are dissatisfied with the overall process of acquiring ADP funding for their device**
- **Length of time required for ADP funding approval is unacceptable.**
- **ADP reimbursements to all parties at all levels are taking too long.**
- **Many people living with vision loss are required to travel great distances often on public transportation to access approved authorizers and vendors.**
- **Many of today's essential devices, most notably smartphones, are not funded by ADP.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

Key Findings

- **People who needed their device for employment, even though that employment was at home, are denied ADP funding.**
- **Product choice and availability through many vendors is limited, often restricting an individual's options, and leaving them dissatisfied with their final choice.**
- **Cost of devices listed by ADP-approved vendors is often too high when compared with other retailers.**
- **Several respondents who had not accessed the ADP said that they could not afford to do so even though 75% of the cost would be funded through ADP.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

Key Findings

- **The number of ADP funded training hours included in the set-up of some devices is quite often inadequate and funding for ongoing training needs to be included in the funding of the device.**
- **Some experienced device users, who are aware of technology changes, and who have been previously funded by the ADP, are still required to go through the full ADP authorization process even though they are well aware of their own needs.**
- **Certain software programs require additional payments when the software is upgraded making the software unaffordable.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program

Key Findings

- **ADP staff are not always as responsive or as communicative as they could be. Many respondents reported difficulty communicating in a timely manner with ADP staff.**
- **Authorizers and vendors are frustrated by the time it takes to negotiate the seemingly endless red tape associated with applying for and receiving reimbursement.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Recommendations

- **Conduct a thorough review and re-evaluation of the administration and delivery of the ADP to Ontario's vision loss community**
- **Bring the ADP in line with Ontario commitments to service design.**
- **Explore a more participatory system that leverages and supports community knowledge, ongoing feedback, and information sharing.**
- **Review the cost, efficacy, and impact of all administrative gatekeeping processes.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Recommendations

**Establish an ADP Reform Committee for visual aids
tasked with re-evaluating the ADP.**

Composition of committee:

- **People with lived experience at the table –
“Nothing about us without us”**
- **Stakeholder organizations**
- **Assistive technology experts**
- **Experts in service redesign and digital
transformation**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Recommendations

- **Shorten the time at every step involved in acquiring approval of ADP funding.**
 - **Virtual authorization**
 - **Evaluate the current process and associated forms to ensure that they are both accessible and simple, and that red tape is minimized**
 - **Automatically fund all applications for white canes annually**

- **Establish a Device Review Group to regularly review available visual aid devices and make recommendations for the addition or deletion of those funded by the ADP.**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Recommendations

- **All visual aid devices funded by the ADP should be exempt from HST.**
- **No assessment fees or additional fees should be charged by authorizers**
- **All visual aid devices should be available at no cost to people receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement.**
- **People who have been funded by the ADP should not have to be re-authorized when they apply for funding on a subsequent occasion.**
- **Facilitate online purchase of devices from vendors and major retailers.**
- **Funding for all devices needs to include the costs associated with training**

Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Recommendations

- **All devices funded by the ADP should include unlimited free software upgrades within the effective life span of their acquisition.**
- **The ADP, through its application process, should collect client contact information, including email addresses. Email should be the primary method of communication with people living with VL. All direct mail should be fully accessible.**
- **The ADP should conduct brief customer satisfaction surveys (with five to seven questions), by email, immediately after the client's ADP experience as well regular surveys of all people accessing ADP funding.**
- **The ADP should undertake a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy designed to increase awareness of the availability and benefits of the program for people living with vision loss.**



Reforming Ontario's Assistive Devices Program Conclusion

The ADP is a unique and excellent program that requires reform if it is to be of real value to Ontarians living with vision loss.

It may seem like a long road, but we all need to work together to make sure that this happens.

Thank You - We Couldn't Do It Without You

As we celebrate White Cane Week 2022, the Canadian Council of the Blind wishes to express its most sincere appreciation and gratitude to all our sponsors for their important contributions and ongoing support.

Your continued presence is necessary if the CCB and this celebration of White Cane Week are to continue to grow and develop. Therefore, it is important, that you as a group at the corporate level, as fellow stakeholders and partners, and as individuals, understand our gratitude and appreciation for your confidence in, and support of, the Council not only this week but year round.

We couldn't do it without you. Together we are working to "change what it means to be blind" and that's important. Again, thank you!

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