



Empowering Success: Transition to Post-Secondary Education with Low Vision and Blindness

Transitioning to post-secondary education can be both exciting and challenging. This document provides an overview of services, accommodations, and funding options available to support a successful transition. By understanding these resources, students and families can better navigate the academic environment and ensure equal access to learning opportunities.

A few general tips can help ensure a smooth process:

Be your own advocate: Accommodations are not automatic in post-secondary institutions. When researching post-secondary institutions, check that they have robust accessibility offices and can accommodate a wide range of needs.

Reach out early: Contact accessibility services by phone or email before applying to get your questions answered. Have a list of specific questions to ask such as peer support groups, accommodations for labs, practicums etc.

Visit the campus: Ensure the environment is the right fit for your needs and comfort. Think about size and layout, signage, winter navigation etc.

Have the right tools: If a student is using technology from their high school, this will need to be returned upon graduation. It is helpful to have a list of the equipment currently in use so students know what they are asking for and receive the right equipment. See below for funding options for post-secondary students.

Update paperwork: Having an updated Individualized Education Plan (IEP) prior to leaving high school can help streamline the transition and avoid delays in paperwork. Some institutions require letters from medical professionals such as ophthalmologists or optometrists that are up to date within 1 year of application.

Funding and Services

Accessibility Offices/ Office for Students with Disabilities: Each post-secondary institution in Ontario has an accessibility office.

- These offices offer different services depending on the institution so it is important to consider when choosing the right school for you.
- It is the student's responsibility to reach out to the accessibility office as soon as possible and set up an appointment to meet with them prior to school entry.
- They can help support what learning accommodations are offered and help students navigate funding options (institution specific and provincial/federal funding).



South East Ontario Vision Rehabilitation Service

General Inquiries – Phone: 613-544-3400 ext. 3203, Fax: 613-544-1454

Email: visionrehab@kingstonhsc.ca

Referrals – Phone: 613-542-4975 ext. 5069, Fax: 613-542-8639

Vision Loss Rehab Ontario/Canada: [VLRO](#) are providers of rehabilitation services for people who are blind or who have experienced a significant loss of vision. OHIP funded Vision Rehab Specialist work in the community to increase independence for people living with low vision and blindness. You can [self-refer](#) to this program or ask your health care professional to complete a referral.

- Client Navigators guide clients not only through their services, but other health care and community services that are relevant. These highly trained specialists coordinate and integrate post-vision loss rehabilitation services. There are specific Client Navigators that support Child and Youth.
- An Orientation & Mobility Specialist can help with orientation to the new campus, learning where classrooms are, washrooms, food offering, residence, library, bus routes to and from school etc.
- If student is living on campus or away from home, an Independent Living Skills Specialist can help with learning life skills in a new environment (kitchen skills, laundry skills etc.).

Funding options: Applications to post-secondary institutions will often have to option to disclose disabilities or learning needs and may offer scholarships or institution specific funding. Always take the time to check for updated funding options on Government of Ontario and Federal websites as these options can change annually.

- [Assistive Device Program \(ADP\)](#): This provincial program funds low vision devices such as computers, magnifiers, software (screen readers), white canes, audio players etc. It can cover up to 75% of the cost of the aid every 5 years. ADP funding can be accessed through Assistive Technology Specialist through VLRO. ADP only covers the cost of devices if the devices/aids are used for personal use.
- [Ontario Student Assistance Program \(OSAP\)](#): is Ontario's flagship student support program, offering a mix of grants and loans to thousands of students each year. This should be the first step when looking for financial support or accessing any scholarships or bursaries.
- [OSAP Bursary for Students with Disabilities \(BSWD\)](#): The Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) is part of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). The BSWD offers bursary funding to cover eligible disability-related costs up to \$2000/year. Some disability-related expenses have a maximum amount per academic year. The amount of BSWD used to purchase equipment or services does not need to be repaid, and is taxable. The BSWD can only be used for disability-related needs. Any purchases made prior to funding BSWD approval are not guaranteed for reimbursement.



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- [Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment](#) – Students with Disabilities (CSG-DSE): CSG-DSE is part of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). It covers up to a maximum of \$20,000, with eligible service and equipment items each subject to individual caps and based on your specific disability-related functional limitations.
- [Canada Student Grant for Students with Disabilities \(CSG-D\)](#): This grant is available to students with disabilities for each year of study through OSAP. You can apply at the same time as you apply for student aid with your province or territory. This grant funds up to \$2,800 per year and is available for each year of study.
- [Ontario Disability Support Program](#) (ODSP): If you are 18 years or older and get income support through the ODSP, you can also apply for OSAP. You can continue to get ODSP income support to help with living costs while receiving OSAP. ODSP provides a 100% exemption on any income earned while you are enrolled in full-time postsecondary studies.

Scholarships and Bursaries:

Check the school's financial aid office and Accessibility office for up-to-date listings of internal awards and external opportunities.

- [CNIB](#) keeps an updated list of scholarships on their website.
- [Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians \(AEBC\)](#): The AEBC/Allyant Scholarship Program provides four to six \$1,000 annual scholarships to blind, deafblind and partially sighted students. A varying number of the scholarships are offered through funds provided by external grants.
- [DisabilityAwards.ca Scholarship Database](#): Created by the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS). This website was created to help post-secondary students search hundreds of scholarships available across Canada specifically for students with disabilities.

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