



DIRECT FUNDING GENERAL INFORMATION

Self-manage your attendant services

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Administered by:
Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), Inc.

In partnership with:
Ontario Network of Independent Living Centres (ONILC)

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Direct Funding General Information

Adults with physical disabilities who want to take full responsibility for managing a budget and hiring and supervising their own attendants are invited to apply to the Direct Funding Program.

Available province-wide, the Direct Funding Program enables you to receive monthly funds for attendants of your own choosing, to schedule as you please – whether your needs are at home, at work, or in the community. You self-manage your life, making your own choices with greater flexibility and control.



“I used to view my disability as being in bed chained down at my shoulders and my hips, waiting for someone to free me. Well, I can honestly say that Direct Funding has come along and done that!” – 25-year-old man living with parents

1. What is the Direct Funding Program?

The Direct Funding Program (DF) is administered by the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), Inc. in partnership with the Ontario Network of Independent Living Centres (ONILC). It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

Different people have different needs. DF is intended as an option suited to people with physical disabilities who are willing and able to take on the extra management responsibilities the program demands.

Under the attendant services programs operating through Supportive Housing (SSLUs) and Attendant Outreach Services, an agency employs attendants and sends them to your apartment or house. However, through DF you are the employer, taking full responsibility for hiring and managing your own attendants. You become the self-manager, determining how and when your services are provided.

DF began as a pilot project, developed by consumers and the provincial government in 1994. It was so successful that it became a permanent program in July 1998.



“The freedom and flexibility that I am experiencing were not imaginable in the other settings.” – 46-year-old man living alone

2. For whom is DF intended?

Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and other referral sources should consider the following when referring a client to the Direct Funding program:

- ◆ Clients must be able to self-direct, which means they know their disability and needs, and can instruct their attendants as to how and when they need assistance. They must be able to help train their attendants accordingly.
- ◆ In addition to the ability to self-direct, they must be able to self-manage. A self-manager is a person in control of his or her own situation and not easily manipulated. A self-manager is a person who knows what services he or she wants and needs, someone with plans – perhaps to move, work or study – or simply a clear desire to take responsibility for improving his or her own services. Self-managers are capable of interviewing, training, hiring and, if necessary, firing attendants, and handling the financial and reporting duties of an employer. They are willing to take risks in return for the choice, flexibility and control over their attendant services made possible under DF.

3. Do I qualify?

DF operates within guidelines set by the Ontario government. You can apply if:

- ◆ you are age 16 or over;
- ◆ you are a resident of Ontario;
- ◆ you require attendant services due to a permanent physical disability;
- ◆ you are able to complete the written application on your own initiative and in

your own words (you may receive physical assistance to complete the form; however, submissions may not be made by professionals, family members or others on your behalf);

- ◆ you are able to meet with a Selection Panel to discuss your needs and determine your eligibility for the program;
- ◆ you are able to schedule attendants;
- ◆ you are able to hire (and fire, if necessary), train and supervise one or more attendant workers;
- ◆ you are able to meet all the legal requirements associated with being an employer (these will be clearly explained during the application process);
- ◆ you are capable of managing and accounting for your funding, according to DF guidelines.

Please note: *The responsibilities of employer as outlined above may not be assumed by any other person on your behalf. Management by a family member, or via power of attorney, is not permitted under DF guidelines.*



“I began to create files for all the important documents and forms that are necessary, for example, employee time cards, contracts, bank statements, etc. After organizing all of these, I found it not as overwhelming as it first looked.” – 42-year-old woman living with spouse

4. What are “attendant services”?

“Attendant services” refer to physical assistance provided by another person for routine activities of living, such as transferring, showering, dressing or undressing. You would do these for yourself if it were not for your physical disability. The consumer takes responsibility for directing the way in which this assistance is provided.

Please note: Attendant services do not include services such as physiotherapy, rehabilitation, life-skills teaching, active nursing, socializing, etc. Some of these professional services are provided through Community Care Access Centres (CCACs).



“I have found self-managing wonderful! There are no words that can describe the change. I now know that I can get up when I want, I can decide who I want to help me in and out of my bath, I don’t have to worry about having so many people in my home from so many different agencies. There are no more supervisors telling me about my disability and how to improve it. I don’t have to be re-assessed every three months (at different times of the year) by different case managers, supervisors and directors.”
 – 26-year-old woman living with children

5. How many hours of attendant service are available under DF?

The amount of service required is individually negotiated. Current guidelines specify that the total service funded for any one individual cannot exceed an average of 6 hours per day (182.5 hours per month).

Please note: *There is a possibility this amount may increase for people who need assistance with breathing.*

DF allows for greater flexibility in arranging attendant services. For example, although direct attendant services are paid at a regular hourly wage rate, a flat rate could also be paid for indirect services. You could arrange for an attendant to stay overnight, for example, or to carry a pager for emergency or unscheduled assistance. Another idea would be to offer an attendant room and board as a means of extending coverage over more hours in the day.



“Direct Funding has made my life easier in so many ways. Flexibility is the key. I had a chance to go on a job training trip to Denver last year for a week, and my attendant came with me and was able to meet all my needs there. Without Direct Funding, I would have been unable to go – it’s as simple as that.” – 33-year-old man living with spouse

6. What would my administrative responsibilities be?

Funds are provided monthly to DF participants. Expenditures must be properly accounted for, and are reported quarterly (every three months). Appropriate forms and instructions are provided. Funding is available for payroll and bookkeeping assistance.

As a participant in the program, you must be able to:

- ♦ manage money, time and personnel;
- ♦ apply for a business number from Revenue Canada;
- ♦ make payroll deductions related to CPP, EI (formerly UI), Income Tax, WSIB (formerly WCB);
- ♦ keep records for employer/employee tax purposes;
- ♦ comply with Ontario labour standards and human rights;
- ♦ follow occupational health and safety standards, and workplace safety and insurance requirements.

A legally binding agreement between the participant and CILT specifies allowable expenditures, and is closely monitored. Where there is misuse of funds or other breach of the agreement, the participant may be subject to legal action and required to withdraw from the program.

Liability related to attendant services rests with the participant as employer, who is required to have suitable insurance coverage.

If a participant's needs change, he or she and the program administration will review the situation. The budget portion of the agreement can be amended, if appropriate.

Voluntary withdrawal from the program can be arranged at any time. Generally, participants are responsible for making suitable new arrangements with a service delivery agency.



"The few hours a month I spend doing administrative work is minimal compared to the endless hours of frustration I used to spend negotiating with administrators of a managed care program." – 28-year-old woman living alone

7. What else should I know about Direct Funding?

- ◆ Under most circumstances, program funding would be your only source of government-funded attendant services.
- ◆ If you are living in Supportive Housing, e.g., an SSLU, when selected to participate in the program, you must move out within three months in order to receive ongoing direct funds.
- ◆ Under DF, you may not hire or pay immediate family members – including parents, children, siblings, spouses or the equivalent – to provide services, including bookkeeping.
- ◆ You are responsible for training your own attendants. However, if special training is required, training support may be available free of charge in the community. Your local Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) has further information about these resources.
- ◆ Funds must be used within Ontario, but are not restricted to one place. You therefore have the flexibility to have your personal needs met in various locations, such as at home, in the community and while travelling within the province.
- ◆ Funds are portable if you wish to move to another community in Ontario.



“Direct Funding has allowed me to have the freedom in my life that I thought was long gone. The challenge of self-managing means financial responsibility – but shopping, visiting, banking and taking part in my community are the rewards that I have achieved.” – 42-year-old woman living with spouse

8. How do I apply?

If you are interested in applying to this program, you should contact your local ILRC. Ask for the **Direct Funding Application Guide**, which explains how to complete a self-assessment of your needs, how to plan your attendant services and how to prepare a budget, all of which will be part of your application. The Guide will be accompanied by an **Application**.

After you have completed your application form and mailed it to the DF Program at CILT, you will be invited to meet with staff at the ILRC most convenient to you. A Selection Panel, which may include a consumer of attendant services from your region, a representative from the ILRC and/or a representative from CILT, will consider your needs and eligibility for the program. A funding level will be negotiated at that meeting. If your application is approved, you will be sent a standard agreement to sign. You will also receive two comprehensive resource and training manuals, which include step-by-step instructions on how to get started. You will find tips on recruiting, employing and supervising your own attendants, and managing your finances, as well as information on employment and tax laws, employer/employee relations, labour and employment standards, payroll issues and accounting procedures.

Please note: Because the application process consists of a number of steps, be prepared for a short wait before hearing back from CILT regarding the next step. Selection Panel meetings will be held at different times throughout the province. All applicants will be advised of the next available meeting dates for your region.

“To prepare for Direct Funding, I read through all the manuals available. Any questions I may have had after reading were answered by people at my ILRC, who were very helpful.”
– 42-year-old woman living with spouse



consumer
feedback

9. What information and support are available to DF applicants, participants and attendants?

The **Application Guide** contains complete information on eligibility requirements and the application process. You may request personal assistance in applying for the program from one of the ILRCs listed below.

ILRCs provide information and support to new self-managers and others interested in the program. They may also provide orientation sessions, peer networking and advice, and general disability information and referral. The Self-Managers Network, an informal group of DF participants willing to share information and experiences, has proven to be a very helpful resource for new self-managers. You can access this network through your local ILRC or CILT.

“I highly recommend Direct Funding to anyone interested in managing their attendant care. After becoming a self-manager, I have become more employable and can contribute more to the community. My increased independence boosts my self-esteem. My marital relationship is stronger and my family life is improving significantly. My future is more stable

and promising. Fourteen years ago I became disabled. Direct Funding has helped me to finally regain control of my life.” – 38-year-old man living with family



“In return for taking on more risk and responsibility, DF participants gain greater choice, flexibility and control. Why don’t you see if this program is for you?”

– Vic Willi, Executive Director, CILT

“Self-manager satisfaction . . .”

In a 1997 evaluation conducted by The Roeher Institute, most self-managers (89% of survey respondents) said they are “very satisfied” with their participation in the Direct Funding Program. In fact, all respondents felt that they would recommend DF to others.

Self-managers value the greater flexibility and control over their attendant services made possible by DF. Some have even had increased opportunities for paid employment and career advancement come about as a result of DF.

“Attendant satisfaction . . .”

More than 90% of the attendants surveyed report being “very satisfied” or “generally satisfied” with their jobs.

Attendants also indicate that positive spin-offs of the employer/employee relationship (as compared to the more traditional client/service provider relationship) include increased mutual respect and flexibility for both self-manager and attendant, and improved accountability.

“Satisfaction with supportive resources . . .”

DF makes a range of resources available to self-managers through ILRCs. Self-managers participating in the 1997 survey highly valued the support provided by ILRCs in addressing issues and supplying practical information.

