



RETURN TO VOCATIONS POST STROKE TOOLKIT FOR PROVIDERS



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

This is the first iteration of this resource, and your feedback is welcomed. The content of this toolkit is expected to expand over time as more research in these areas emerge and new resources are identified.

Please send feedback and inquires to :

westgtastroke@thp.ca

cesnstroke@rvh.on.ca

ABOUT THE WEST GTA & CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORKS

The West GTA (WGTSN) and Central East Stroke Networks (CESN) are two of eleven Stroke Networks in the province of Ontario.

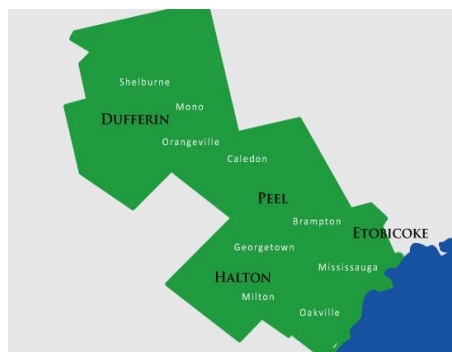
The Stroke Networks :

- provide leadership and support development, implementation, and integration of stroke best practices across the continuum of care
- support health system-change, stroke best practice implementation, professional education, and knowledge translation.

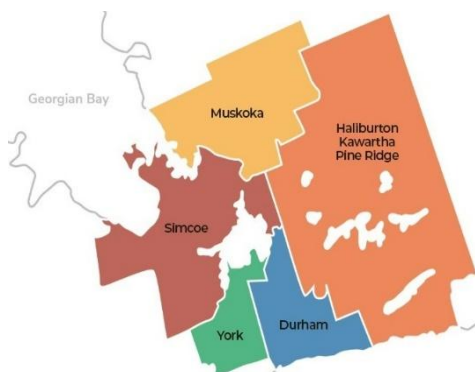
The WGTSN covers a 1500 square kilometer area which consists of the regions of Peel, Halton, Dufferin and Etobicoke. The WGTSN is part of the Central Region of Ontario Health.

The CESN consists of the districts of York, Durham, Haliburton/Kawartha/Pine Ridge, Muskoka and Simcoe. The CESN is part of the Central and East Regions of Ontario Health.

The WGTSN and CESN have created various resources for stroke clinicians and have posted these on their websites. Please visit the WGTSN and CESN website for more information.



Map of the West GTA Stroke Network.



Map of the Central East Stroke Network.



<https://cesnstroke.ca/>



<https://westgtastroke.ca/>



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Central East and West GTA Stroke Networks would like to thank all those who helped to shape the content in this toolkit; clinicians who participated in the provider survey, persons with stroke and key informants.

A special thanks to the following individuals who wrote sections of the resource:

- Paula-Jane Bellizzi (Social Worker, Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs)
- Carol Ferguson (Accessibility Coach, Access and Support Centre Durham College)
- Liza Pain (Occupational Therapist, Rehabilitation Day Hospital Senior Services Program, Trillium Health Partners-Credit Valley Site)
- Sophia Smith (Regional Manager Employment Services, March of Dimes Canada)

We would also like to acknowledge the reviewers who dedicated considerable time and expertise to provide feedback on the resource.

- Paula-Jane Bellizzi (Social Worker, Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs)
- Denise Carpenter (Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, Community Program & After Stroke, March of Dimes Canada)
- Amy Gargal (Interim Manager Intensive Care & District Stroke Coordinator, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare)
- Abigail James (Recreation Therapist, Trillium Health Partners-Credit Valley Site)
- Violetta Krichevski (Speech-Language Pathologist, Community Outreach Stroke Rehabilitation Program, William Osler Health System)
- Nancy Lovatt (Physiotherapist, Professional Practice Leader Physiotherapy, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital)
- Michele Mitchell (Speech and Language Pathologist, Professional Practice Leader Clinical Support Services, Mackenzie Health-Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital)
- Erica Mugan (Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, Community Program & After Stroke, March of Dimes Canada)
- Laura Newell (Interim Abilities Consultant, Occupational Health and Wellness, Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre)
- Michelle O'Brien (Psychologist, Lakeridge Health)
- Stefanie Richards (District Stroke Coordinator, York Region)
- Valentina Rumeo (Occupational Therapist, Integrated Stroke Unit, Mackenzie Health-Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital)
- Suzanne Smith-Bayley (National Manager, After Stroke and Professional Practice, March of Dimes Canada)

We recognize that some reviewers may have incorporated feedback from other colleagues, and we would like to acknowledge their contribution as well.

We gratefully acknowledge that the content of this toolkit is built on the work previously done in the area of Return to Work by the Southwestern and Southeastern Ontario Stroke Networks.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

CANADIAN STROKE BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

The Return to Vocations Post Stroke Toolkit was developed to:

- support front-line providers in addressing recovery goals related to return to work, school or volunteering post stroke
- facilitate conversations on the topic of return to vocations post stroke in the Central East and West GTA Stroke Network regions.

Prior to initiating the development of this toolkit, the West GTA and Central East Stroke Networks conducted a survey with front-line providers about the return to vocations process. A total of 49 responses were received from healthcare professionals across the continuum of stroke care, working in both the Central East and West GTA Stroke Regions. Their responses revealed gaps in knowledge related to addressing return to vocations post stroke:

- 27% of front-line providers felt that the topic of return to vocations was well addressed by the interprofessional team
- 20% felt that they had access to resources to support addressing goals related to return to vocations with clients
- 27% of the respondents knew what local services and supports that are available and how to access them.

The contents of this resource have been identified through:

- the above-mentioned front-line provider survey
- focus groups with persons with stroke
- interviews with key informants
- literature review
- and the Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations: [Optimizing Activity and Community Participation following Stroke](#)



DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this toolkit is for general information purposes only. The Central East and West GTA Stroke Networks assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions in the toolkit content. This toolkit contains links to external websites that are not provided, maintained or affiliated with the Central East and West GTA Stroke Networks. The Central East and West GTA Stroke Networks does not guarantee the accuracy, relevance or completeness of any information on these websites.

BACKGROUND

In addition to the Return to Vocations Survey for Providers, the West GTA and Central East Stroke Networks conducted focus groups with persons with stroke to learn about their experience with the return to vocations (work, school and volunteering) process. Their lived experiences further highlighted the gaps that exist in supporting persons with stroke to return to vocations.



LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

"I don't recall anyone discussing return to work –either inpatients or outpatients, it just wasn't on the radar... need to start looking at this earlier instead of waiting to see what happens first".

-Ken



TARGET AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

The primary target audience for this toolkit is **front-line providers** working across the care continuum. However, relevant sections may be printed and shared as a handout with persons with stroke if required. Development of a patient resource to support this toolkit has been identified as potential future work.

This toolkit is intended to serve as a **"starting point"** that will assist front-line providers to address recovery goals related to return to vocations (work, school and volunteering) by providing:

- practical resources and
- information on local community services

Both persons with stroke and front-line providers identified additional information which they felt was important to include. These items are in the "Appendix" section of the resource.



FRONT-LINE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE FROM SURVEY RESPONSES

- "It would be helpful to have a package of updated information regarding these topics. My knowledge and information is limited."
- "I don't know where to start."
- "I am not aware of community services that are available, which can assist in addressing return to vocations goals."
- "Include resources/support on rights as an employee...more information on how financial supports work."
- "Informational guides are helpful, especially with financial aid, access to vocational services/counsellors."

CANADIAN STROKE BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations on Transitions and Community Participation Following Stroke (2020) highlight several recommendations to facilitate return to vocations. Currently the recommendations for returning to vocations is based on writing group consensus due to limited evidence.

The Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations highlight the need for assessment of vocational interest and potential for return to these activities. The assessment should be started early in the rehabilitation process and at transition points, but it does not identify the exact tool to use.

An assessment by an occupational therapist or neuropsychologist should be a part of the return to work process. The findings from a vocational assessment could be incorporated into the rehabilitation process including goal setting. A gradual resumption of activities and community referrals to services such as vocational rehabilitation are encouraged.

In addition, a designated member of the team, should initiate a discussion with the person with stroke about:

- legal rights
- employment benefits
- financial concerns and
- private benefit options.

Whenever possible, the healthcare team should work with employers on a return to work plan. Similarly, employers should incorporate the healthcare teams recommendations in the return to work process.



The Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.strokebestpractices.ca/recommendations>

RETURN TO WORK POST STROKE

WHY FOCUS ON RETURN TO WORK?

FACTORS THAT MAY IMPACT RETURN TO WORK POST STROKE

RETURN TO WORK ASSESSMENT

RETURN TO WORK POST STROKE GUIDE FOR STROKE CLINICIANS

RETURN TO WORK COMMUNITY RESOURCES

WHY FOCUS ON RETURN TO WORK?

Return to work is an important element of community reintegration after a stroke, especially in working age adults. The ability to return to work has financial consequences, and can impact psychological well being, productivity and life satisfaction (Ganesh et al., 2017; Duong & Sauve-Schenk, 2022).

The desire to return to work is high among persons with stroke in Ontario. In a recent study Duong, Egan, Meyer & Morrison (2020) examined the prevalence of the intention to return to work after stroke. This study examined individuals on stroke rehabilitation units in Ontario and found that 18.2% persons with stroke were employed prior to their stroke. Of those employed, 44% intended to return to work. Persons with stroke who were younger (35-54) and had milder impairments (Total FIM >80) had a stronger desire to return to work. This study highlighted that a large proportion of persons with stroke who were previously employed expressed a desire to return to work after a stroke. Data on young stroke survivors suggests that less than half of young persons with stroke return to work and 25% require modification (Pikula, 2021).

Return to work after stroke is complex and is impacted by the functional impairment of the person with stroke (physical, cognitive, psychological), job aspects (demands, workplace) and system (social support, policies, services) (Duong & Sauve-Schenk, 2022). The literature is clear in outlining that return to work post stroke is a topic of great interest. Regrettably, many gaps in knowledge exist in how to facilitate return to work post stroke including the process, optimal interventions and outcomes. A collaborative effort by clinicians, government, academics and community agencies will be required to advance knowledge and practices in this area.



Lived Experience Perspective

“I received very little support. I would not have been able to return to work if I was not an over achiever and did not self-manage the process.”

- Deborah

“Anytime I talked about returning to work, no one gave straight answers. I had to rely on my sister to navigate the whole process- return to school and return to work.”

– Marie

FACTORS THAT MAY IMPACT RETURN TO WORK POST STROKE

There are numerous factors that can impact whether a person is able to return to work after their stroke. The following list was compiled based on the environmental scan, literature review, focus group with persons with stroke and provider survey.

- **Impact of Stroke and Residual Deficits:** Individuals with a more severe stroke may find it difficult to return to work. Physical ability, communication, thinking skills, fatigue and emotions may pose extra challenges when returning to work.
- **Type of Work that the Person is Hoping to Return to:** Can the person do the work that is asked of them with or without adaptation?
- **Return to Work Supports:** Is return to work integrated in the rehabilitation process? Is there access to community resources to assist? Does the person have additional benefits to cover additional services such as vocational rehabilitation or counselling?
- **Employer Characteristics:** Is the person self employed? Is the employer flexible and accommodating? Does the employer have an understanding of stroke? Does the employer have experience with the return to work process post stroke? Does the employer have “in house” return to work specialists? Does the employer provide a flexible workday? Is there opportunity to work from home? Is the employer committed to implementing the suggested adaptations? Are the employees supportive? Are there additional resources available through a benefits program?
- **Unique Characteristic of the Person:** Is the person motivated to return to work? What is their attitude to returning to work? How old is the person? Are they close to retirement? What is the person’s education level and literacy? Do they have transferrable skills that they could use somewhere else? Other factors which may play a role include culture, gender and language.
- **External factors:** Family support, financial resources, and community transportation (driving, ability to use public transportation and/or assistance from a family member/friend to get around).



Lived Experience Perspective

“My wife drove me to and from work. I would often sleep the whole way home in the early days until I built up the tolerance and endurance. It was a brand new level of exertion. I wish I had worked on my endurance more. I underestimated the amount of walking required throughout the day.”

– Ken

RETURN TO WORK SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations does not outline validated tools that should be used in the return to work process after a stroke. When conducting the environmental scan to inform this resource, a self-assessment guide developed by the Stroke Network of Southwestern Ontario for people with stroke returning to work or volunteering was identified. This guide is intended to be completed by a person with stroke with input from their family and healthcare team.

This guide assesses current abilities and compares them with demands of the job in the areas of:

- Physical ability
- Communication
- Thinking skills
- Emotions and
- Driving/Transportation

The strengths and challenges identified can be used to set goals for rehabilitation and recovery.

Are YOU Ready To Return To Work?

A SELF ASSESSMENT GUIDE
FOR PEOPLE WITH STROKE.

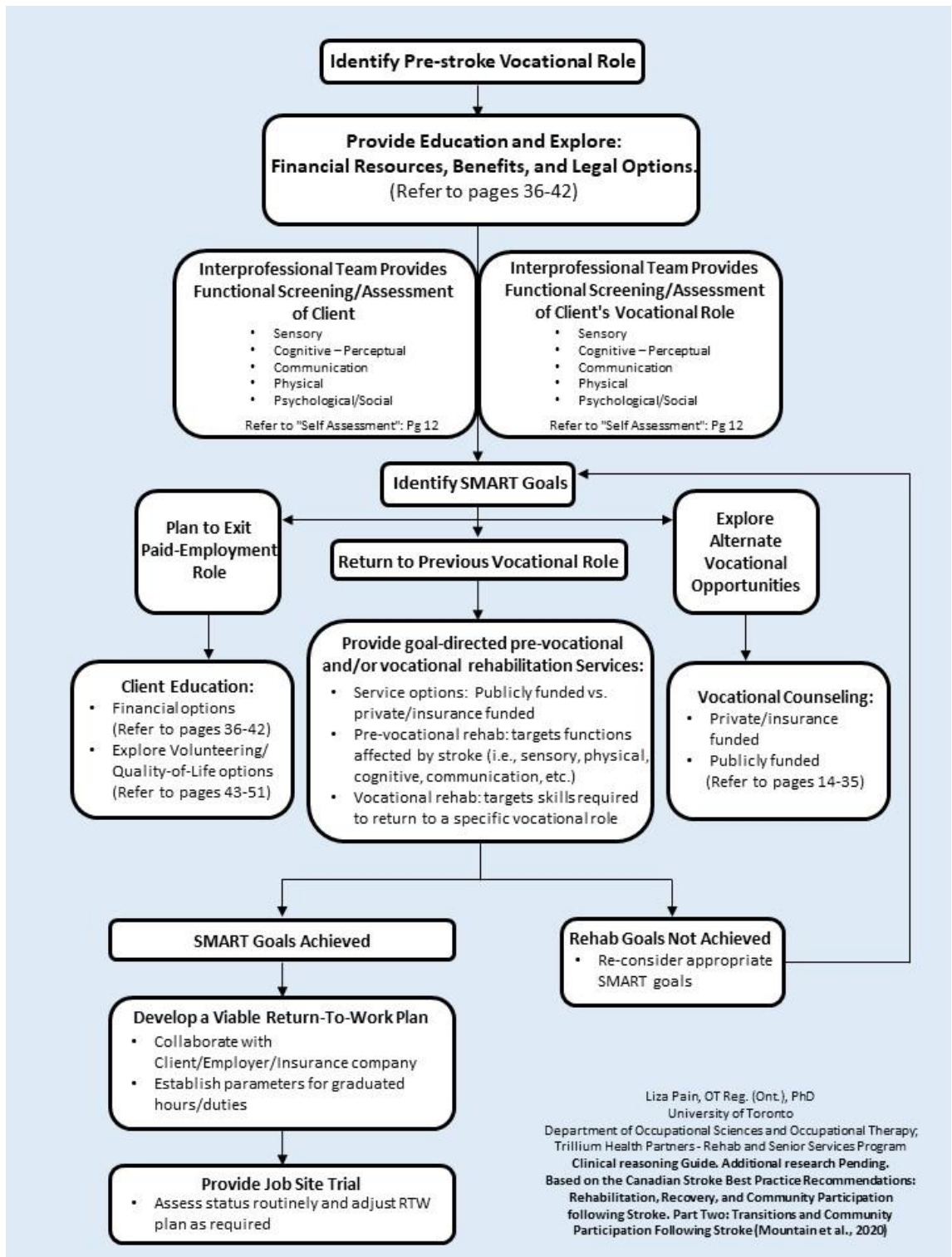


This Guide was developed for people recovering from stroke who are considering part-time, full-time, self-employment or volunteer opportunities. It is designed to support you as you consider all the important parts of a successful return to work plan.



The guide is available for download at the following link <https://cesnstroke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Return-to-Work-Toolkit.pdf>

RETURN TO WORK (RTW) POST STROKE GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS



RETURN TO WORK COMMUNITY RESOURCES

This section highlights some of the available resources and organizations that may assist with return to work. Each of these organizations has specific eligibility criteria to access the services. In most instances, when the client meets eligibility criteria, there are no fees for services. This is not an exhaustive list, there may be additional services available. For the most up to date information, contact the organization directly or visit their website.

Resources are organized by geography:

- **National**
- **Provincial**
- **Central East Stroke Network (Muskoka, Simcoe, York, Durham and Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge)**
- **West GTA Stroke Network (Peel, Halton, Dufferin and Etobicoke)**

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- Call 211
 - Search 211ontario.ca
 - Search thehealthline.ca
- KEY WORDS:**
Employment
Assistance; Vocational
and Skills Training;
Employment
Assistance for People
with Disabilities



Front-line Advice

Before engaging agencies that support back to work activities, it may be helpful to speak with an individual's case managers associated with any financial supports such as Canada Pension Plan Disability or insurance company. This step will help to determine if there is a preferred vendor or other factors which need to be considered.

- Regional Manager Employment Services,
March of Dimes Canada






A designated member of the care team may provide counseling and information on employment benefitsto people who have had a stroke



- Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations

RETURN TO WORK



COMMUNITY RESOURCES: NATIONAL

CANADA PENSION PLAN (CPP) DISABILITY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>The Disability Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a voluntary program that helps Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit recipients return to work.</p>	<p>Individuals <u>may be</u> eligible if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receiving a CPP disability benefit • willing and able to participate in the program • motivated • likely to return to work through the assistance of this program • medically stable <p> https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp-disability-benefit/vocational-rehabilitation.html</p>
CANADIAN COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND WORK	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work provides workplace accommodation assessments, presentations and workshops, and consulting services.</p>	<p> https://www.ccrw.org/</p> <p> 1-800-664-0925</p>

RETURN TO WORK COMMUNITY RESOURCES: NATIONAL





MARCH OF DIMES CANADA - EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>March of Dimes Employment Services offers a variety of services to help persons with disabilities find and keep jobs. Services include assessments, rehabilitation, job placement, coaching, and job retention support.</p>	 https://www.modcemploymentservices.ca/
OPPORTUNITIES FUND FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Assists people with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare for, obtain and maintain employment or self-employment • overcome barriers to participation in the Canadian labour market 	 https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/opportunity-fund-disability.html

RETURN TO WORK COMMUNITY RESOURCES: NATIONAL

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH A HANDICAP EXPLORING THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT (SPHERE)	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Support for People with a Handicap Exploring the Road to Employment (SPHERE) is a Canadian non-profit organization with a focus on integration of persons with a disability into the labor market.</p>	 https://sphere-qc.ca/en/
WORKink™	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Provides job postings by equity employers offering inclusive employment</p>	 https://www.theworkingcentre.org/link/210



RETURN TO WORK

COMMUNITY RESOURCES: PROVINCIAL

ONTARIO JOB OPPORTUNITY INFORMATION NETWORK (JOIN)	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>JOIN works with individuals who have with a disability to develop an action plan to find or maintain employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education and networking • ODSP information • referrals and job postings • information and resources 	<p> https://joininfo.ca/job-seekers/</p> <p> (437) 777-5548</p> <p> contact@joininfo.ca</p>
ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (ODSP) – EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>ODSP offers various supports and services to help with return to work such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help preparing for work • help finding a job that is right for you • help keeping a job • job coaching • on-the-job supports • help to move to the next level in your career • adaptive technology that can help you do your job (for example, accessibility software) • job accommodations and support • interpreter or intervenor services • assistive devices and training to use them (for example, mobility devices or visual hearing aids) 	<p>To qualify for ODSP employment supports, an individual must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be at least 16 years old • be an Ontario resident • be legally allowed to work in Canada • have a substantial physical or mental disability that is expected to last a year or more, and makes it hard for you to find or keep a job <p>An individual doesn't have to be receiving income support from ODSP to be eligible for employment supports.</p> <p> https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/odsp/</p>




RETURN TO WORK

COMMUNITY RESOURCES: PROVINCIAL

ONTARIO WORKS - EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Ontario Works can provide practical help to prepare for and find a job by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with clients to determine what is needed to become employed, and • helping develop a plan based on client's skills, experience and circumstances. <p>Ontario Works provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops on looking for work, résumé writing, and preparing for an interview • referrals to job counselling or training programs • information on who's hiring • access to basic education • access to telephones, faxes, computers and job banks. 	<p>A person maybe eligible for Ontario Works if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a disability, or are exempt from the disability adjudication process • are in financial need, meaning they and their family do not have enough money to cover their living expenses • are 18 or older <p>Applications can be made by phone or in person by visiting the local Ontario works office</p> <p> http://www.officelocator.mcass.gov.on.ca/Index.aspx</p> <p>or online:</p> <p> https://www.ontario.ca/page/social-assistance</p>



RETURN TO WORK

COMMUNITY RESOURCES: PROVINCIAL

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Employment Ontario help job seekers, workers and employers with advice, grants and other services around public and private sector employment. Some examples of services offered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a job board • access to employment counsellors • job placement assistance • assistance with education/skills training through Second Career program. 	<div data-bbox="746 589 835 653"></div> https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario <div data-bbox="746 695 806 753"></div> 1-800-387-5656
BETTER JOBS	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>The Better Jobs program offers up to \$28,000 for costs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tuition • books • manuals, workbooks or other instructional costs • transportation • basic living allowance (maximum up to \$500 per week) <p>Additional funding may be available for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • childcare • disability-related supports 	<p>To access the program, individuals must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • been laid off and have not been working • been laid off and are working a temporary job just to cover costs <p>Individuals receiving Employment Insurance (EI), or who have in the past, can still apply.</p> <div data-bbox="746 1445 835 1508"></div> https://www.ontario.ca/page/better-jobs-ontario <p>Please note that applications may be fast tracked for individuals laid off in one of the sectors most impacted by COVID-19 since March 1, 2020.</p>

RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

ACCES EMPLOYMENT	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION														
<p>Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services offers a variety of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job search workshops (resumé development, job search skills, networking, LinkedIn and virtual networking, interview preparation) • mentoring programs • employment services (job search, one –one support) • online workshops and resources • programs for women • programs for youth (ages 15-29) 	<div>  http://www.accesemployment.ca </div> <div>  info@accesemployment.ca </div> <div>   <table> <tr> <td>• Newmarket</td><td>647-827-1241</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Markham</td><td>905-840-2660</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Brampton</td><td>905-454-2316</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Mississauga</td><td>905-361-2522</td></tr> <tr> <td>• North York</td><td>416-443-9008</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Scarborough</td><td>416-431-5326</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Toronto</td><td>(416) 921-1800</td></tr> </table> </div>	• Newmarket	647-827-1241	• Markham	905-840-2660	• Brampton	905-454-2316	• Mississauga	905-361-2522	• North York	416-443-9008	• Scarborough	416-431-5326	• Toronto	(416) 921-1800
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• Scarborough	416-431-5326														
• Toronto	(416) 921-1800														








RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

AGILEC	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training and professional development • career transition services • vocational rehabilitation • linkage to government services • a job board 	<div data-bbox="739 550 825 608"></div> https://agilec.ca/ <div data-bbox="749 633 806 691"></div> <p>1-800-361-4642</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peterborough • Lakefield • Ajax • Barrie <div data-bbox="753 846 802 917"></div> • Bracebridge • Orillia • Richmond Hill • Minden • Oshawa • Innisfil • Burks Falls
CANADIAN COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND WORK- WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of employment services for persons with disabilities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career exploration • career decision making • skill development • cover letter and resumé development, • interview skill practice • job search strategies • ongoing job maintenance support • workplace accommodation support. 	<div data-bbox="739 1396 825 1454"></div> https://ccrw.org/ <div data-bbox="749 1503 806 1561"></div> <p>1-800-664-0925</p> <div data-bbox="753 1599 802 1671"></div> <p>477 Mount Pleasant Rd Suite 105 Toronto, M4S 2L9</p>







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

FOCUS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>An employment and training agency serving individuals and employers across Simcoe County, including areas like Barrie, Alliston, Angus and Wasaga Beach.</p> <p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment counselling • Resume and interview help • Workshops and resources • Apprenticeship support • Connection with other government program 	<p> https://focuscdc.on.ca/</p> <p> Wasaga Beach 705-429-5543</p> <p>Angus 705-424-6335</p> <p> Alliston 705-435-9821</p>
CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION: HKPR REGION	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>The At Work/Au Travail Employment Program provides specialized vocational assistance to those seeking opportunities to enter or reintegrate into the workforce.</p> <p>The program's goal is to help people obtain competitive employment through the development of an achievable action plan, coupled with the practice of coping skills and mental wellness.</p>	<p>Eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident of Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge • Age 16 years or older, and • Living with a mental health concern <p>Individuals can self-refer.</p> <p> https://cmhahkpr.ca/programs/at-work/ -</p> <p> atworkprogram@cmhahkpr.ca</p> <p> 705-748-6711 extension 2110</p> <p> • Peterborough • Lindsay</p>






RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION: YORK AND SOUTH SIMCOE	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>The Employment Program offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-on-one support from an Employment Specialist • opportunities to develop employment plans, prepare for work, and overcome challenges to gainful employment • Career Café drop-in (job searches, web site information, career assessments, resumé review, cover letter and interview help, along with other pre-employment skills) • groups (Trailblazer training program, Job Retention, Goal Setting, Barriers to Employment, Humble Tiger, Career Cruising, COVID-19 and Work, Disclosure and Workplace Accommodations) 	<p>Individuals who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 years of age or above • experiencing mental health challenges, who are ready and motivated to enter the workforce; and • residents of York Region & South Simcoe. <p>Self-referrals are welcome.</p> <p> https://cmha-yr.on.ca/get-support/employment-program-16/</p> <p> 1.866.345.0183 ext. 3321</p> <p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliston • Newmarket • Markham • Aurora • Vaughan </p>
GEORGIAN COLLEGE CENTER FOR CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job search • resumé and cover letter development • career planning • apprenticeship • effective job searching tips • improving interview skills • educational and training options • workshops • referral to government programs. 	<p> https://www.georgiancollege.ca/community-alumni/centre-for-career-and-employment-services/</p> <p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrie • Orillia • Orangeville </p> <p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 705-722-1505 705-329-3102 519-942-9986, ext. 5641 </p>





RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

MARCH OF DIMES CANADA - EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a full range of Employment Services to help people with disabilities to develop employment plans, prepare for work, overcome any employment barriers, and return to (or enter) the workforce.</p>	<p> https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/es</p> <p> 1-877-427-6990</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midland • Newmarket • Toronto (serves York, Northumberland, Durham, Peterborough and Haliburton)
TRACKS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>TRACKS delivers employment services at no charge, to adults, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities, students and youth. Some services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resumé and cover letter preparation • assistance with job search • job board • mock interviews • job matching and placement 	<p>Serving Clearview, Wasaga Beach and Town of Blue Mountains.</p> <p> https://tracks.on.ca/</p> <p> 705-444-1580</p> <p> 50 Hume St Collingwood</p>




RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

YMCA EMPLOYMENT SERVICE CENTRES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Many YMCAs offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment programs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment resource centres • job search and skills development workshops • placement opportunities • entrepreneurship supports • mentorship and one-on-one supports • apprenticeship information • Learning Services – Free programs to support achieving goals of employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, post-secondary education or independence. Programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading, writing and math skills • computer skills • specialty classes (money smart, cash handling, smart phone use, GED preparation, G1 test preparation) • English as a second language 	<p>Programs vary by location and may not be available in all areas</p> <p> https://www.ymca.ca/what-we-offer/employment-services</p>
FOR MORE RESOURCES	
<div>  Call 211 </div> <div>  Search 211ontario.ca </div> <div>  Search thehealthline.ca </div> <p>KEY WORDS: Employment Assistance; Vocational and Skills Training; Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities</p>	







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK REGION

ACCES EMPLOYMENT	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION														
<p>Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services offers a variety of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job search workshops (resumé development, job search skills, networking, LinkedIn and virtual networking, interview preparation) • mentoring programs • employment services (job search, one-one support) • online workshops and resources • programs for women • programs for youth (ages 15-29) 	<p> http://www.accesemployment.ca</p> <p> info@accesemployment.ca</p> <div>   </div> <table> <tr> <td>• Brampton</td><td>905-454-2316</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Mississauga</td><td>905-361-2522</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Newmarket</td><td>647-827-1241</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Markham</td><td>905-840-2660</td></tr> <tr> <td>• North York</td><td>416-443-9008</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Scarborough</td><td>416-431-5326</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Toronto</td><td>416-921-1800</td></tr> </table>	• Brampton	905-454-2316	• Mississauga	905-361-2522	• Newmarket	647-827-1241	• Markham	905-840-2660	• North York	416-443-9008	• Scarborough	416-431-5326	• Toronto	416-921-1800
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• Scarborough	416-431-5326														
• Toronto	416-921-1800														







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

AGILEC	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training and professional development • career transition services • vocational rehabilitation • linkage to government services • a job board 	<p> https://agilec.ca/</p> <p> 1-800-361-4642</p> <p> 2010 Winston Park Dr. Unit 200 Oakville</p>
CANADIAN COUNCIL ON REHABILITATION AND WORK- WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of employment services for persons with disabilities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career exploration • career decision making • skill development • cover letter and resumé development • interview skill practice • job search strategies • ongoing job maintenance support • workplace accommodation support 	<p>Supports the Greater Toronto Area.</p> <p> https://ccrw.org/</p> <p> 1-800-664-0925</p> <p> 477 Mt Pleasant Rd Apt. 105 Toronto</p>







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION: PEEL DUFFERIN BRANCH-VOCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of employment services to individuals 16 years and over that reside in Peel region and experience mental health concerns. Some services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individualized vocational support around personal growth and recovery • workshops and groups on topics including pre-vocational skills, job searching, resumés and interviewing techniques. 	<p> https://cmhapeeldufferin.ca/programs-services/vocational-support-services/</p> <p> 905-451-2123</p> <p> 314 -7700 Hurontario Street Brampton</p>
GEORGIAN COLLEGE CENTRE FOR CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of resources to assist in successfully reconnecting with the labour market. Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job search • resumé and cover letter development • career planning • apprenticeship • effective job searching tips • improving interview skills • educational and training options • workshops • referral to government programs. 	<p> https://www.georgiancollege.ca/community-alumni/centre-for-career-and-employment-services/</p> <p> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrie 705-722-1505 • Orillia 705-329-3102 • Orangeville 519-942-9986, ext. 5641







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

HUMBER COLLEGE-COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of services such as self-service information and resources, assisted services (supported job search, job matching and placement, job retention services), matching of position/workplace needs to the participants skills, capabilities, interests and experience and support for developing on the job training plans and monitoring of placement to support success and retention.</p>	<p> https://humber.ca/community/ - 905-455-4073</p> <p> 1 Bartley Bull Pkwy 2nd floor, Suite 12 Brampton, L6W 3T7</p> <p></p>
MARCH OF DIMES CANADA – EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a full range of Employment Services to help people with disabilities to develop employment plans, prepare for work, overcome any employment barriers, and return to (or enter) the workforce.</p>	<p> https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/es OR through Employment Ontario Peel @ https://eoworks.ca/peel/</p> <p> 1-877-427-6990</p> <p> 2227 South Millway, Unit 100 Mississauga, ON L5L 3R6</p>







RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

NEXT-STEPS EMPLOYMENT CENTERS	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of employment services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job matching • job search support • resumé and cover letter development • improving interview skills • career exploration • job placement supports • skills development and training 	<p> http://www.thebennettedge.com/</p> <p> 905 - 459- 4060</p> <p> 7900 Hurontario Street Suite #202 Brampton, L6Y OP6</p>
PEEL CAREER ASSESSMENT SERVICES INC.	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Offers a variety of employment services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment supports • work hardening/conditioning • psycho-vocational evaluations. 	<p> www.peelcareer.com</p> <p> 905-670-1967</p> <p> 975 Meyerside Drive Mississauga, L5T 1P9</p>




RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

STRIDE	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>Stride supports youth and adults struggling with mental health or addictions as they seek meaningful employment. Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• employment preparation• job search• workshops• peer mentorship and encouragement	<div><div>https://stride.on.ca/</div><div><div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milton (Ontario St.)• Milton (Commercial St.)• Georgetown• Oakville</div></div><div><div></div><div><div>905-693-4252</div><div>289-627-1861</div><div>519-853-3770</div><div>905-842-8418</div></div></div></div></div>
THE BENNETT EDGE	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assists individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment at no cost to the client or the employer.• Works with both candidates and employers during the pre-hire, hiring and initial period of employment; financial incentives are available to ease this transition.• Provides ongoing monitoring once a candidate is hired.• A service provider for Employment Ontario.	<div><div>http://www.thebennettedge.com/</div><div><div></div><div><div>905 - 459-4060</div></div></div><div><div></div><div><div>7900 Hurontario Street Suite #202 Brampton, L6Y OP6</div></div></div></div>





RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

THE EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRES	ELIGIBILITY/WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<p>The Employment Resource Centres are self-directed resource sites where clients can access job postings and the tools needed for job searching. Services include access to computer, internet, fax, and photocopy services. Staff on hand can provide advice and assistance to anyone in their search for employment or career development.</p>	<div data-bbox="768 562 882 633"></div> <div data-bbox="906 566 1259 676"> https://mydufferin.ca/listing/dufferin-employment-centre </div> <div data-bbox="811 716 858 778"></div> <div data-bbox="1006 716 1068 778"></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="729 794 901 826">• Orangeville <li data-bbox="729 890 886 923">• Shelburne <div data-bbox="963 794 1273 826">519-941-6991 ext. 2010</div> <div data-bbox="963 890 1273 923">519-941-2816 ext. 5711</div>

RETURN TO WORK

LOCAL RESOURCES: WEST GTA STROKE NETWORK REGION

YMCA EMPLOYMENT SERVICE CENTRES	ELIGIBILITY/MORE INFORMATION
<p>Many YMCAs offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment programs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment resource centres • job search and skills development workshops • placement opportunities • entrepreneurship supports • mentorship and one-on-one supports • apprenticeship information • Learning Services – Free programs to support achieving goals of employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, post-secondary education or independence. Programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading, writing and math skills • computer skills • specialty classes (money smart, cash handling, smart phone use, GED preparation, G1 test preparation) • English as a second language 	<p>Programs vary by location and may not be available in all areas</p> <p> https://www.ymca.ca/what-we-offer/employment-services</p>
FOR MORE RESOURCES	
<div>  Call 211 </div> <div>  Search 211ontario.ca </div> <div>  Search thehealthline.ca </div> <p>KEY WORDS: Employment Assistance; Vocational and Skills Training; Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities</p>	

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS & LEGAL RIGHTS

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

INSURANCE BENEFITS

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM





A designated member of the care team may provide counseling and information on
.....legal rights to people who have had a stroke

- Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations

FINANCIAL RESOURCES



Persons with stroke may develop worsening financial circumstances as a result of the stroke. Financial barriers can affect a person's mental and emotional health. Financial challenges may also impact access to health care services, i.e., difficulty paying for indirect costs like transportation to and from appointments or purchasing services such as additional allied health services to facilitate recovery. It is important for the health care team to ask about a person's financial situation and assist with navigating financial resources.

This section highlights provincial and federal programs that offer financial supports. Each of these government programs has specific eligibility criteria. Content has been verified against government websites to ensure accuracy as of April 2022. Please note that criteria for the listed programs may change over time. Contact the agency directly to ensure the most up-to-date information.

ONTARIO WORKS	ELIGIBILITY/HOW TO APPLY
<p>Ontario Works offers two types of assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help with the essential costs of living (such as food, clothing and housing) and health benefits for clients and their eligible family members • help to find and keep a job (such as workshops for resumé writing, job counselling, job-specific training and basic education) <p>For individuals eligible for Ontario Works, the amount of financial assistance available will depend upon the specific situation. In most cases in order to receive financial help, participation in employment related activities is required.</p>	<p>An individual might be eligible for Ontario Works if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need help with living expenses, meaning they do not have enough money to cover their immediate family's living expenses • are 16 or older • live in Ontario (and are not a visitor or a tourist) <p>Applications can be made by phone or in person by visiting the local Ontario works office</p> <p> http://www.officelocator.mcass.gov.on.ca/Index.aspx</p> <p>or</p> <p> https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-works</p>


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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (ODSP)	ELIGIBILITY/HOW TO APPLY
<p>ODSP offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funds to help with living expenses, including food, and rent • health benefits, including prescription drugs and vision care • employment supports <p>To be eligible for ODSP, a person must first qualify financially and then a health care provider must provide information on the disability. The entire review process could take a few months to complete. If the individual has trouble to support themselves while the application is being reviewed, they can apply to Ontario Works first.</p>	<p>An individual might be eligible for ODSP if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a disability • are in financial need and have difficulty covering living expenses • are 18 years or older <p>Applications can be made by phone or in person by visiting the local Ontario Works office</p> <p> http://www.officelocator.mcass.gov.on.ca/Index.aspx</p> <p>or online:</p> <p> https://www.ontario.ca/page/social-assistance</p> <p>*Please note that this support may also be referred to as ODSP Income Supports if client is receiving Ontario Works. If a client is receiving Ontario Works, a case worker can help with the submission of the application.</p>

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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI) SICKNESS BENEFITS	ELIGIBILITY/HOW TO APPLY
<p>Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefit can provide up to 15 weeks of financial assistance if an individual is unable to work for medical reasons.</p> <p>A medical certificate is required. Medical reasons include illness, injury, quarantine or any medical condition that prevents an individual from working.</p>	<p>An individual must demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are unable to work for medical reasons • that their regular weekly earnings from work have decreased by more than 40% for at least 1 week • until September 24, 2022: the individual must demonstrate that they accumulated 420 insured hours* of work in the 52 weeks before the start of the claim or since the start of the last claim, whichever is shorter <p>*As an example, 420 hours are equivalent to 12 weeks of work at 35 hours a week.</p> <p>Applications can be made in person by visiting the Service Canada office or online</p> <p> https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-sickness.html - 1-800-206-7218</p>



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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

CANADA PENSION PLAN (CPP) DISABILITY	ELIGIBILITY/HOW TO APPLY
<p>The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit and the post-retirement disability benefit are taxable monthly payments that are available to people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made valid contributions to the CPP, and • are regularly not able to work because of a disability <p>CPP disability benefits do not provide short-term disability coverage or coverage for medications or medical treatments.</p> <p>It can take up to 120 days (4 months) for a decision to be made from the date the complete application and all required documents are received.</p>	<p>To be eligible for CPP disability benefits, the individual must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be under the age of 65 • have a severe and prolonged mental or physical medical condition, according to the definition in the CPP legislation, and • meet the minimum contributory requirements to CPP <p>Applications can be printed and submitted in person by visiting a Service Canada office</p> <p> https://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/tbsc-fsco/sc-hme.jsp?lang=eng</p> <p>or by mail or online:</p> <p> https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/cpp-disability-benefit/apply.html</p> <p> 1-800-277-9914</p>

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INSURANCE BENEFITS

Individuals that were employed or self-employed when they experienced a stroke may have insurance benefits in addition to financial supports provided through the government. Benefits may have been purchased privately or offered through work. It is important to understand what benefits are available, the amount of coverage, eligibility criteria and the length of time the coverage is available.

The first step to understanding coverage is to encourage the person with stroke to review the information about the benefits provided by an employer. The available benefits can be obtained through review of the benefits package (booklet or online), contacting a human resource representative or discussing the benefits directly with the insurance provider.

Persons with stroke can ask the following questions to find out more information about their benefits.

Short and/or Long-Term Disability Benefits:

- Do I have Short and/or Long-Term Disability Benefits?
- What is the eligibility criteria to receive these benefits?
- What is the amount that I am entitled to?
- What is the length of my benefits?
- What is the benefit period? When do the benefits reset?
- How do I apply?
- Are these benefits taxable?



Extended Health Benefits:

- Which professional services are covered under my benefits? How much coverage do I have?
- Is there any coverage for equipment (walking aid, bath equipment, other assistive devices, splints)?

Return to Work Resources:

- Are there any resources that can help me return to work which are covered by my benefits? How do I go about receiving these benefits?

Other Questions:

- Is there anything else that I need to know about my benefits?

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ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM



LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Individuals with stroke shared that they did not know their legal rights or where to turn if they did not feel adequately supported by their employer, insurance company, or education institution. They suggested including information & key resources on this topic would be helpful to others navigating the return to vocations process post stroke.

The Human Rights system in Ontario has three main components:

- Human Rights Commission which advances human rights through research, education, targeted legal action, and policy. The Human Rights Commission has policies on topics that may be related to return to work such as duty to accommodate <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/8-duty-accommodate>
- The Human Rights Legal Support Center gives legal assistance to individuals who were discriminated against under the code. Services may include advice, support and legal representation. To find out more information please visit www.hrlsc.on.ca or by calling 1-866-625-5179
- Human Rights Tribunal is where Human Rights applications are reviewed and decided. <https://tribunalsontario.ca/> or by calling 1-866-598-0322

The content above was developed using the Ontario Human Rights Commission Website which was retrieved from <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>

Other Useful Website Resources

Ontario Accessibility Laws: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws>

Guide to the Canadian Charter Rights and Freedoms
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/how-rights-protected/guide-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>

Steps to Justice provides information, self-help guides, live chat and email support and referral information for legal and social services across Ontario
<https://stepstojustice.ca/>

Ontario People with Disabilities: information on programs and services available to help prevent, reduce and remove accessibility barriers.
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/people-disabilities>

VOLUNTEERING POST STROKE

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

FINDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

GETTING STARTED

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

There are many benefits to volunteering. Volunteering can be an opportunity to:

- learn new skills or practice skills that are related to recovery goals post stroke
- develop a sense of purpose
- give back to the community
- make connections with others who have experienced stroke
- gain work experience
- build one's resumé. A reference letter obtained after volunteering outlining the role and skills obtained may assist in resumé building.
- build confidence and self-esteem
- explore new interests
- gradually ease into returning to work



Lived Experience Perspective

"Volunteering made me feel good, very good, I am doing something for someone else. It kept me active. I was always on the go before my stroke. It makes me feel productive, that I am giving back."

– Maria

For more information about the benefits of volunteering post stroke visit:

Volunteering - Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/stroke/recovery-and-support/returning-to-work>

Benefits of Volunteering - Stroke Association UK

<https://www.stroke.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/benefits-volunteering>

Volunteering after Stroke - Stroke Network of Southeastern Ontario

https://www.strokenetworkseo.ca/sites/strokenetworkseo.ca/files/volunteering_after_stroke_final.pdf



Front Line Advice

"Individuals should check with their disability insurance provider to make sure volunteering will not affect their eligibility for benefits."

-Regional Manager Employment Services, March of Dimes Canada

FINDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The following resources can be great sources for volunteer opportunities.

Local Volunteer Centres:

- provide general information about volunteering, local volunteering opportunities and connect individuals to these opportunities
- provide information and support to people seeking to volunteer.
- To find a local volunteer centre visit:
 - Volunteer Canada <https://volunteer.ca/> -
 - Call 211 or visit www.211.ca - Community Navigators will connect individuals with the local volunteer resource centre.

Stroke related organizations

- March of Dimes Canada
<https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/getinvolved/volunteer/volunteering>
- Heart and Stroke <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/how-you-can-help/volunteer>
- Local hospitals and rehabilitation programs. Contact volunteer services directly.

Volunteer opportunity websites:

- [Charity Village](#)
- [Neighbourhood Network](#) (York Region)
- thehealthline.ca (search volunteer referral networks)
- [United Way](#)
- [Volunteer Connection](#) (Simcoe, Muskoka, Peterborough, Northumberland)
- [Volunteer Barrie](#)
- [Volunteer Durham](#)
- [Volunteer Halton](#)
- [Volunteer Markham](#)
- [Volunteer MBC](#) (Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon)
- [York Region.com](#)
- [City of Mississauga](#)

Libraries - may have volunteer positions and have listings of local opportunities. Visit local library websites for more information.

Local media - radio, community TV, newspapers, community social media pages may advertise volunteer opportunities.

Community organizations such as schools, hospitals, food banks, churches, rotary clubs and local community/neighborhood associations. Visit their websites, social media pages or contact them directly.

Helpful Tips



When searching online volunteer databases:

- an individual can create a profile so that opportunities that match their interests will be sent directly to them.
- filter opportunities to identify those suitable for persons with a disability

FINDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

It is important that the volunteer opportunity is a good fit. Some things to consider are:

- personal goals and interests, strengths and abilities
- the time commitment required by the volunteer position and the amount of time a person has available
- availability of transportation
- location, in terms of:
 - accessibility
 - distance from home as travel requirements will add to the time commitment
- police and background check requirements
- options for virtual opportunities
- costs associated with the role (e.g., purchase of uniform, travel, insurance)

For more information about finding the “right” volunteer opportunity visit these resources:

Volunteer Canada:

- Volunteer Quiz - matches volunteers with opportunities based on skills and interests
- Volunteer Etiquette Resource - Information on finding and applying for volunteer positions, and an overview of the recruitment process.
- Develop your passion and Skills Self-Assessment - tools matching skills and interest to volunteer ideas that connect to an individual's passion

Visit: [New to Volunteering - I Want to Volunteer - Volunteer Canada](#)

Questions to ask when choosing a volunteer opportunity: See volunteering section on this webpage. <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/stroke/recovery-and-support/returning-to-work>

Are You Ready to Return to Work? A self assessment for people recovering from stroke who are considering return to work or volunteer opportunities. It can be used to assess current abilities against the demands of a particular volunteer job. Visit: <https://cesnstroke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Return-to-Work-Toolkit.pdf>

Lived Experience Perspective

“Find a volunteer position you will enjoy.” – Hass

“Keep yourself open to things. Opportunities arise.” – Ken

“Just get out there and try. Most people are supportive. I like to mix activities so I volunteer with stroke organizations as well as other organizations.” – Scott

GETTING STARTED

The following considerations were identified via key informant interviews with individuals representing volunteer coordinators and recreation therapy.

- Health care providers can support a successful transition to volunteering by
 - opening the conversation about volunteering
 - Assessing skills and abilities to help identify appropriate volunteer opportunities
 - Assisting with goal setting and identifying small action steps to take
- Short term opportunities such as volunteering for a one-time or special event are a great way to get started and try out volunteering.
- Transportation can be a challenge and sometimes a barrier to volunteering. This was also identified by persons with lived experience as an important consideration when seeking out a volunteer opportunity.

Conversation starters for volunteering post stroke

- Abby, Recreation Therapist

- Explore interests by asking – What activities are you currently doing? What hobbies or interests do you enjoy?
- Have you thought about applying your skills to a volunteer role? (consider skills from previous employment roles, or personal interests)
- Are you looking for activities that are meaningful, or give you a sense of purpose?



Front-line Advice

“If someone is interested and ready to start, we will welcome them and can support them to try volunteering. They may not need to be years into their recovery to start volunteering.”

-Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, March of Dimes Canada

“Find (or create) an opportunity that focuses on strengths and what you CAN do. Don't fall into the thought pattern that just because you can't do things the way you used to you don't have a valuable contribution to make.”

-Ellen, SLP

RETURN TO SCHOOL

RETURN TO SCHOOL POST STROKE

FUNDING ASSISTANCE

USEFUL WEBSITES

RETURN TO SCHOOL

Acknowledgement - Many thanks to Carol Ferguson (Accessibility Coach, Access and Support Centre Durham College) for her contribution to this section.

Some individuals may want to start or return to school after their stroke. Before enrolling in a program, workshops, online courses and webinars can be accessed to help determine readiness. Some educational institutions may offer general electives which can be taken without being enrolled in a formal program, yet still can be applied toward the program at a future time. Taking one course to trial, is one way to ease into the education environment after a stroke. Please see the Return to School: Useful Websites and Resources Section

Each publicly funded college and university in Ontario has an accessibility office that can support the student based on their individual needs. The accommodation process may vary from institution to institution and is aligned with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Ontario Human Rights Code. Students are encouraged to contact the accessibility office soon after they receive their admission letter. The accessibility office may require documentation from a healthcare provider to identify the accommodation(s) that may be required. The accessibility office will arrange an intake appointment to recommend accommodations and strategies that may assist the student. The accessibility office will liaise with the instructor on how to implement the accommodations. Some examples of accommodations that may be provided:

- reduced course load
- changes to assignment deadlines
- assistive technology (one-handed keyboards, dictation software)
- testing accommodations (increased time for test completion).

Most accommodations do not cost anything. If there is a cost, funding support may be available through various programs. Each program has varying benefits and eligibility requirements. Please see the Return to School: Funding Assistance Resources section.

LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

“Before you even enroll in a program, try out online courses and webinars that are free and interest you. This will help you try it out and help you determine if you are ready to return to school.” - Hass

“Take your time. Do it slowly, take less courses per semester, even if you have to take another semester. I would have been able to absorb the information more. Fatigue was still an issue for me.” - Marie

RETURN TO SCHOOL: FUNDING ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

This section highlights programs that may provide financial supports and other assistance to support individuals return to school post stroke. This is not an exhaustive list, individuals should also speak with the accessibility office at their education institution for more information.

Ontario Student Assistance Program



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program>

Ontario Student Assistance Program - Bursary for Students with Disabilities



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/students-special-circumstances#section-3>

Ontario Student Assistance Program - Financial Aid Offices and National Student Loans Service Centre



<https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/PostsecondaryEducation/OSAP/Help/Contacts/index.htm>

Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities



<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html>

Canada Study Grant for High Need Part Time Students



<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/education/student-aid/grants-loans/part-time.html>

Better Jobs Ontario



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/better-jobs-ontario>

RETURN TO SCHOOL: USEFUL WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

WORKSHOPS AND ONLINE COURSES

- There are numerous free courses or workshops that can help determine readiness and prepare for enrollment in an education program. The following websites are provided as examples of free courses available online.
 - GCF Learning <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/>
 - Seneca College <https://www.senecacollege.ca/innovation/helix/career-recharge.html>
- Local libraries often offer free courses or workshops.

YMCA LEARNING SERVICES

- Free programs to support achieving goals of employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, post-secondary education or independence. Programs include:
 - reading, writing and math skills
 - computer skills
 - specialty classes (money smart, cash handling, smart phone use, GED preparation, G1 test preparation)
 - English as a second language
- Programs vary by location. Contact your local YMCA for more details.
<https://www.ymca.ca/>

ADULT LEARNING SERVICES

- Courses available to improve reading, writing and math skills for Ontario residents 19 years old through to seniors of any age.
- For more information visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/adult-learning>

APPENDIX

This section includes additional information on other topics that impact the resumption of vocations (work, school, volunteering) post stroke. These topics have been selected based on the suggestions from lived experience advisors and key informants who have been integral in the development of this resource.

INFOGRAPHIC : STROKE AND SOME COMMON EFFECTS OF STROKE

A resource that individuals with stroke can use in the workplace, school or volunteer settings to increase awareness of stroke and its effects on an individual.

RETURN TO WORK & SCHOOL: MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

A resource for individuals with stroke

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

GETTING AROUND

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

REFERENCES

What is a stroke?

A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function due to a sudden interruption or reduction of blood supply to the brain. It can be caused by bleeding in the brain from a ruptured or leaking blood vessel. This is known as a hemorrhagic stroke. A stroke can also happen when blood flow in the brain is blocked by a blood clot. This is called an ischemic stroke and is the most common cause of stroke.

Every stroke is unique. A stroke affects each person differently. How a stroke affects a person depends on many factors including where in the brain the stroke occurred.



Stroke Statistics



Stroke is the **leading cause** of adult disability in Canada.

25% of Canadians who have a stroke are under the age of 65. A stroke can happen at any age.

Some of the Common Effects of Stroke

Physical

- Weakness or paralysis on one side of the body
- Pain
- Decreased balance
- Lack of co-ordination
- Persistent fatigue



Communication

- Slurred speech
- Difficulty expressing thoughts verbally
- Word finding difficulties
- Difficulty understanding what others are saying
- Trouble reading or writing



Emotional Changes

- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Post stroke depression
- Emotional control



Stroke is a medical emergency

Vision & Perception

- Blurry or double vision
- Vision loss in part of their visual field
- Depth perception problems
- Lack of awareness of objects or space on one side of the body



Memory & Thinking

- Memory loss
- Difficulty with planning and problem solving
- Attention and concentration difficulties



Learn the signs of stroke

Face is it drooping?
Arms can you raise both?
Speech is it slurred or jumbled?
Time to call 9-1-1 right away.

For more information about stroke

Visit: www.heartandstroke.ca

Information sources: www.heartandstroke.ca
https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/public-health/migration/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/stroke-accident-vasculaire-cerebral/alt/64-03-1731_PHAC_Stroke-Infograph_eng.pdf

Act **FAST**. Lifesaving treatment begins the second you call 9-1-1.



MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS AND RETURN TO WORK & SCHOOL: A RESOURCE FOR PERSONS WITH STROKE

- There are 5 key areas to consider when thinking about returning to work: communication, physical ability, cognitive ability, transportation and **emotional ability**.
- Depression and anxiety are common after a stroke, but there are other mental health concerns to think about when returning to work including: frustration, stress, ability to cope with the demands of the job, and level of confidence.
- Returning to work can be overwhelming and stress-provoking.
- It is important to seek mental health support to ensure emotional readiness to return to work.
- Mental health support can help examine the barriers that may impact the ability to return to work and help provide the necessary tools and coping strategies to reduce stress, improve confidence, and enhance readiness to return to work.
- Mental health support is not just for individuals with a diagnosed mental health condition such as depression and anxiety. Mental health support is beneficial for everyone, especially when considering a return-to-work after a stroke.

Acknowledgement- This section has been provided by Paula-Jane Bellizzi, MSW, RSW Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs, c/o Evergreen Communication Therapy
www.h-pcap.com ; <https://evergreen-therapy.ca>









LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

“Include mental health resources, that would be helpful. Wish I had realized just how much an impact it had on the whole process, on going back to school and work. I only really considered the physical things.”









- Marie

RETURN TO WORK: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

The following section is a list of websites that provide search engines for local mental health services, access to online services or additional information addressing mental health concerns. It may not reflect all services that may be available locally.

RESOURCE	CONTACT/WEBSITE
211 Ontario 211 is a free and confidential service that easily connects people to the critical social and community supports they need.	 2-1-1 1-877-330-3213  https://211ontario.ca/
ConnexGO - App Provides on the go, guided navigation to mental health, substance use and problem gambling services within Ontario. Connect with Information and Referral Specialists via phone, email, chat. Connects users to 24/7 crisis services based on geographical location.	Available on Google Play and App Store.
ConnexOntario Discover mental health, addiction and problem gambling services in your local area. Phone, text, email and webchat services 24/7.	 1-866-531-2600  https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/
eMentalHealth.ca Find Mental Health Services. Help and support in your community.	 https://www.ementalhealth.ca/
Employee Assistance Programs Many Employee Assistance Programs include mental health supports.	Contact individual employer
thehealthline.ca Assists in finding local health and community services across Ontario. Can search by typing "Community Mental Health Programs, Counselling"	 https://www.thehealthline.ca/

RETURN TO WORK: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

AGENCY NAME/LOCATION	CONTACT/WEBSITE
Ontario Psychological Association Find a psychologist in your area.	 http://www.psych.on.ca
Ontario Social Work Association Find a Social Worker in private practice in your area.	 https://www.oasw.org  (416) 923-4848
Canadian Mental Health Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual support • Short-term, solution focused counselling • Crisis Support (not for life threatening emergencies). 	 https://cmha.ca/find-help/find-cmha-in-your-area/
Rocket Doctor (covered by OHIP) Book a virtual appointment with an Ontario Dr. for psychological and mental health concerns the same day.	 www.rocketdoctor.ca  1-867-670-2273
Bounce Back (no cost) Self-help program for people with mild to moderate anxiety, and depression, or those dealing with stress and worry.	 https://bouncebackontario.ca  1-866-345-0224

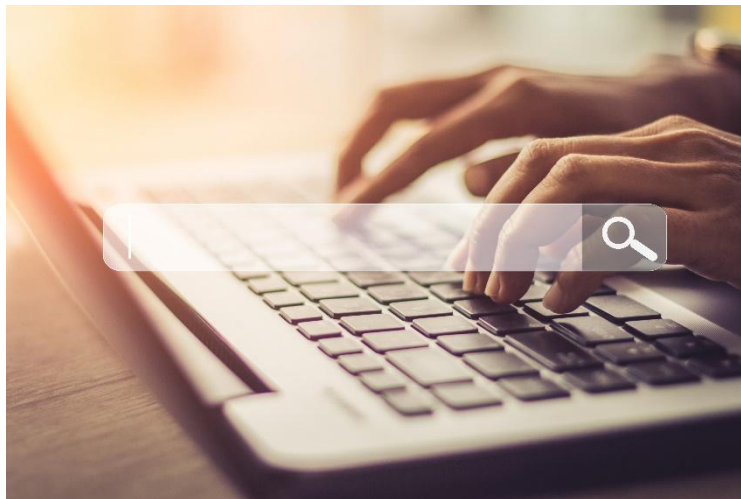
NEUROPSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

A neuropsychologist conducts assessments which help understand how the damage in the brain impacts cognitive, behavioral and psychological functioning.

Neuropsychological testing consists of paper and pencil tests which measure a range of cognitive domains such as, learning, attention, memory, receptive and expressive language, visuo-perceptual abilities, motor functions, and executive functioning (e.g., planning, problem-solving, sequencing, flexibility). The purpose of a neuropsychological assessment is to identify an individual's cognitive strengths and weaknesses, create a treatment plan and offer specific guidelines/recommendations regarding return to work/school and a way to track improvements.

A comprehensive neuropsychological assessment can range between 8 to 20 hours to complete, depending on the psychologist, the severity of the stroke, and what vocational goals are identified. Fees can range from \$100 to \$300 per hour. Currently, there is no cost to patients when these services are provided in public institutions such as a hospital. However, the availability of a neuropsychologist in these settings is limited. The service of a neuropsychologist is not covered by provincial health plans outside of publicly funded institutions. Some insurance plans have coverage for psychological services but often these funds are limited.

To find a neuropsychologist in Ontario please search through College of Psychologists of Ontario Find a member portal <https://cpbao.ca/> - or call 416-961-8817



The content of this page has been developed using the Neuropsychological Services in Canada Position Statement (2015) by the Canadian Psychological Association and the Association Quebecoise des Neuropsychologues Retrieved from <https://cpa.ca/>

GETTING AROUND

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

Medical Review for Ontario Drivers. Visit this webpage for information about:

- Medical reports and license suspensions
- Reinstating a license
- Appealing a medical suspension or downgrade of license
- Functional Assessments
- Functional Assessment Centers
- Driver medical review online services and much more...



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/medical-review-ontario-drivers>



1-800-268-1481

Get an Accessible Parking Permit. Visit this webpage for information about:

- Eligibility
- Cost and delivery
- How to apply for an accessible parking permit and much more...



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-accessible-parking-permit>



1-800-387-3445

GETTING AROUND

DRIVER ASSESSMENT AND REHABILITATION SERVICES











Driver rehabilitation assists individuals post stroke return to driving through rehabilitation and modification. In most cases, driver rehabilitation requires out of pocket expenses. The list is provided for information purposes. The mention of services should not be assumed to be an endorsement of any kind.

AGENCY NAME/LOCATION	CONTACT/WEBSITE
 CBI Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation Barrie, Mississauga, Toronto, Whitby, more locations on website.	 1-800-558-4599  www.cbi.ca
 DriveLab Inc. Woodbridge	 1-844-413-7483 Ext. 201  www.drivelab.ca
 Saint Elizabeth Healthcare Whitby, Toronto, more locations on website.	 1-877-397-1035  https://drive.sehc.com/
 Skillbuilders Driver Assessment & Rehabilitation Barrie	 705-727-0319  www.skillbuildersrehab.com
 Neuro-Rehab Services Driver Assessment and Training Toronto	 416-667-3422  www.neurorehab.ca
 Drive Again Driver Rehabilitation Services Toronto, Burlington	 416-640-0292  www.driveagain.ca





GETTING AROUND

VEHICLE MODIFICATION RESOURCES

Vehicle modifications may help some individuals post stroke resume driving. The following list will outline companies that perform vehicle modification. The list is provided for information purposes. The mention of services should not be assumed to be an endorsement of any kind.




AGENCY NAME/LOCATION	CONTACT/WEBSITE
GM Canada Mobility Program	 1-800-463-7483  https://www.gmccanada.ca/content/dam/gmc/na/ca/en/index/special-offers/pdf/GM_Mobility_Program_Overview-EN_2023.pdf
Humberview Mobility	 1-877-969-3159  https://www.humberviewmobility.com/
Savaria Vehicle Group	 1-855-728-2742  https://wheelchairvans.ca/
Silver Cross Automotive	 1-844-799-5464  https://silvercrossauto.com/
Universal Motion	 1-877-899-0699  https://universalmotion.com/on/index.html

FUNDING SUPPORT

AGENCY NAME/LOCATION	CONTACT/WEBSITE
March of Dimes Canada Home and Vehicle Modification Program	 1-877-369-4867  https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/programs/am/hvmp
Veterans Affairs	 1-866-522-2122  https://www.veterans.gc.ca/








GETTING AROUND: ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

The resources listed below provide lists of transportation services in vehicles specifically designed for individuals with physical limitations and disabilities. Accessible transportation services require payment.

AGENCY NAME/LOCATION	CONTACT/WEBSITE
<p>211 Ontario</p> <p>211 is a free and confidential service that easily connects people to the critical social and community supports they need.</p>	<p> Call 2-1-1 1-877-330-3213</p> <p> https://211ontario.ca/</p>
<p>The Healthline</p> <p>Assists in finding local health and community services across Ontario. Can search by typing "Transportation-Accessible"</p>	<p> https://www.thehealthline.ca/</p>

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The following list of organizations provides funding support for equipment.
Each program has specific eligibility criteria to access funding.

FUNDING SUPPORT	
AGENCY NAME	CONTACT/WEBSITE
March of Dimes Canada Assistive Devices Program	 1-866-765-7237  adp@marchofdimes.ca  www.marchofdimes.ca
Assistive Devices Program, Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care	 1-800-268-6021  www.health.gov.on.ca
Veterans Affairs Canada	 1-866-522-2122  www.veterans.gc.ca

Looking for where to purchase equipment
or assistive devices?



Call 2-1-1



Search thehealthline.ca

Assists in finding local health and community services across Ontario. Can search using categories “medical equipment- donations, and medical equipment and supplies-sales and rentals”

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