

Empowering Independence Through Self-Directed Care

These programs are self-managed attendant services that empower eligible adults with physical disabilities to live independently in their homes and communities. This model replaces traditional home care agencies by providing government funding directly to participants to recruit, hire, train, schedule, and manage their own attendants—building a support team tailored to their unique needs.

Rooted in the Independent Living movement, the program treats people with disabilities as the experts in their own lives. Founded on principles of independence, dignity, choice, and self-determination, it gives participants total freedom to decide who provides their care, when services are delivered, and how their support is organized. This model has transformed many lives by fostering inclusion, increasing community participation, enabling people to pursue education, employment, family life, personal goals, while maintaining true control over their daily lives.

The Bigger Picture

This self-directed model is growing around the world under names like Consumer-Directed Care, Self-Managed Care, Personal Assistance Services, or Individualized Funding.

Across North America, Europe, and beyond, governments are increasingly adopting these models recognizing that giving people choice and control over their support leads to better outcomes. While eligibility criteria and funding structures differ by region, the shared goal remains the same: empowering people with disabilities to direct their own care and live as independently as possible.

My Perspective as a Self-Manager

In Ontario, Canada, this program is known as the Direct Funding Program. Living in a rural area, I found that the choices in resources meeting my criteria and needs were severely lacking. Constantly advocating for myself while living with a rare disease, I found myself at a crossroads. I was genuinely unsure about the responsibilities of becoming an employer and trainer, wondering if I was capable of it all.

Gigi is wonderful and helped me see that I could take this on. I will admit, there is definitely a learning curve to this lifestyle, but the program is there to support you. I am finally getting the help I need because I direct it. Yes, it does involve some work and time, but the trade-off is total control over how I live, work, and connect with my community on my own terms. It is entirely worth it!

Getting Started

If you are looking for self-directed services, contact your local Independent Living organization, disability resource centre, regional health department, or the government agency responsible for disability services or community support to learn what programs are available in your area.

In Ontario, Direct Funding is funded by the Ministry of Health and administered by the Centre for Independent Living Toronto in partnership with local centres. To learn more, contact the Independent Living Centre London & Area at ed@ilcla.ca.

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