



**CNIB's Guide Dog Program**  
Mobility. Independence. Partnership.

**cnib**  
a century of change



# Sight Loss Changes Everything

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**“I am more engaged in the world, and my guide dog Tiffany has given me a freedom of spirit that I hadn’t had since before I started using my cane. I have always loved to be active and move around quickly, and working with Tiffany has given that back to me.”**

- Kathleen F.,  
Toronto, ON

In Canada today, more than two million people are living with a sight-threatening eye disease (age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma) and are at serious risk of losing their sight. With almost 100 years of history serving blind and partially sighted Canadians, CNIB can help to meet these challenges and ensure Canadians with sight loss have the support they need to live connected, rewarding and independent lives – **but only with your support.**

For people who are blind or partially sighted, mobility is a cornerstone of independence. The ability to participate fully in life and in the community is intrinsically linked to the ability to navigate one’s surroundings safely and with confidence. Safe mobility can be facilitated through in-depth training and the use of different tools, from the widely-used and recognized white cane to innovative, high-tech devices.

Guide dogs, which are specially bred and trained to provide mobility assistance to people who are blind or partially sighted, are more than just a tool – rather, they are a partner in independence that can open up the world in a profoundly different way. For many people, the use of a guide dog can instill greater confidence in exploring unfamiliar environments, knowing the dog is also trained to avoid obstacles and hazards.

# A Partner in Independence

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Sight loss can lead to a range of practical challenges that isolate and disconnect people from their communities and from the activities they enjoy. The freedom and independence that can be achieved with a guide dog can help overcome these challenges and enable people not just to enjoy their everyday lives, but also a sense of adventure and the bravery to explore new experiences and locations.

**In comparison to their sighted peers, people with sight loss experience:**

- **Less independence in daily life**, with 84% needing practical assistance from family and friends for such things as mobility, personal care and basic household management.
- **Triple the risk of clinical depression**, (three times the national average), particularly among mature adults.
- **Greater risk of social isolation** and reduced community participation.
- **Less physical activity**, with only 26% of blind and partially sighted youth participating in sports.



# A Guide, Partner and Best Friend

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Kathleen, who has been legally blind since birth, is a 'free spirit' who grew up in Ottawa, enjoying long-distance trips with her family. At 29, she wanted to travel to Ireland on her own, but knew that she could not travel safely without a companion.

Owning a guide dog gave Kathleen new-found confidence to travel everywhere independently, "Tiffany is everything to me: my guide, partner, and best friend. We are a team, and we work together to meet each other's needs. She gives me so much confidence and independence. We are a relatively new team; seven months into our relationship, and I have seen so much change and growth in both of us. I am curious and excited to see how our relationship continues to evolve and grow!"

Where Kathleen felt that her cane could often be a social barrier, "a guide dog breaks down those very same barriers. Everyone wants to ask you about a dog, nobody asks about a cane!"

Kathleen found the courage to move forward and find new ways of celebrating her curiosity and passion for adventure with a trained guide dog. She travelled to Ireland with Tiffany last summer and they safely navigated busy airports, unfamiliar streets and crowded train stations – with confidence.



# My Guide Dog Does...Everything

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Diane can't truly express the magnitude of the change that her guide dog has added to her life. "Prior to getting a dog, I felt very uncomfortable travelling within my environment. I would hear people on the bus noting that I was blind, 'That girl is blind'. It always made me feel like I was different and somehow less than those around me."

Diane got her first guide dog in 1984. While people still recognized that she was blind, they focused on the dog and what the dog was doing. No more did she feel like an outsider who was less than others, and the focus was now on that beautiful dog who was so amazing in how well he guided her. "They still knew I was blind, but I was now being watched for what I could do and not what I couldn't."

Since that first day that she held the harness handle, Diane hasn't gone back. "My life has changed from being a person who is lacking in confidence to a person with a Master's degree in Leadership, an athlete in triathlon, and a successful career woman, all while raising a family of my own. When people ask me what my guide dog does for me, the answer is ... everything!"

# We Did Our Homework

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North America's first guide dog school was founded in 1929 in Morristown, N.J. Today, the United States has 16 schools, several of which are among the world's best. The first Canadian school, located in Quebec, opened in 1981 to provide French-language training. Over the next 15 years, four more schools opened to serve the English-speaking market, operating in different areas of the country.

A detailed environmental scan conducted for CNIB in 2016 indicates there is a significant potential market for hundreds of new guide dogs in Canada – and shows there are not enough dogs trained in the country to specifically meet the needs of people with sight loss:

- **About 800 Canadians with sight loss are active guide dog users but only one-quarter of them (200) trained with their dogs in Canada.**
- **In order to obtain a guide dog in a reasonable timeframe, many Canadians end up getting their dogs from U.S.-based schools.**
- **The wait time to be trained and appropriately paired with a guide dog in Canada in some cases can be a considerable period of time.**



# Our Vision

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We believe that everyone who would like to have a guide dog should have the opportunity. That's why over the next few years, CNIB's aspiration is to expand the choices and opportunities available to blind and partially sighted Canadians wishing to acquire a guide dog to enhance their mobility and independence.

To do so, we will deliver a best-in-class guide dog program that will not only be designed to meet the specific needs and preferences of the blind community and managed to the most rigorous of quality standards, but will also include ongoing efforts to ensure the built environment and social attitudes change to a universal acceptance, recognition and understanding of guide dogs.

## Through our Guide Dog Program, we will:

- **Provide every Canadian** who is experiencing sight loss or blindness and is interested in acquiring a guide dog with a best-in-class, made-in-Canada option for guide dog training.
- **Give people confidence and mobility**, so they can achieve not only independence, but self-actualization.
- **Build a vibrant, connected and supportive in-person and online community** of Canadians with sight loss who are guide dog users.
- **Raise a powerful voice for universal access and the rights of guide dog users in Canada.**

**Research indicates that a guide dog reduces the incidence of depression and isolation associated with sight loss while helping people gain self-confidence and improve the quality of their lives.**

# Building Connections, Mobility and Independence

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The CNIB Guide Dog Program will provide a convenient and accessible option for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted in every part of the country. It will also enable donors and volunteers in different regions to actively and fully participate.

The program has been designed to provide the range of choices, services and opportunities that Canadians with sight loss have told us they want:

- **A dedicated focus on training guide dogs for people who are blind** – not for any other disability or need. This singular focus will ensure the needs of those who are blind drive every aspect of the program including quality of dogs, training philosophy and methods.
- **Training options that maximize success** – and provide flexibility and convenience for participants. Our program will provide training where it best meets the needs of the guide dog partnership and offers the maximum potential for success, whether that is a central location or the guide dog user's own community.
- **A suite of follow-up support services to graduates** – to maximize the immediate and long-term success of the partnership. Graduates will have access to a full suite of information and support services provided in-person, by phone and online.
- **Puppies raised by trained and caring volunteers** – who play a vital role in preparing the dogs for their future careers. Applications from volunteer puppy raisers are strongly encouraged!



# A Person-Centered Approach

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All elements of the CNIB Guide Dog Program will be orchestrated around a complete view of the needs and interests of Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. Every decision about this program will be made with a view to maximizing value, choice and opportunity for those we serve, and ultimately changing what it is to be blind today.

This means:

- **Finances will never be a barrier to participation** – CNIB will fully subsidize all costs, including feeding and obtaining proper veterinary care for their guide dog throughout its working life.
- **Applicants will be supported to meet the necessary skill qualifications** – To maximize the success of the guide dog partnership, prospective guide dog users need to have excellent orientation and mobility skills. Where applicants do not initially meet this high standard, we will provide personalized training plans to maximize their chances of success on reapplication.
- **CNIB will deliver value-added programs designed to dog users' knowledge, skills and enjoyment of their guide dogs.** This will include peer support, social groups, supplementary training and other such initiatives delivered in person or via technology. CNIB's guide dog program will also feature self-advocacy as an essential component of training.
- **CNIB will work together with guide dog users to advocate for a barrier-free world.** CNIB's ongoing advocacy and educational outreach activities will likewise focus on attitudinal barriers and accessibility in the built environment, with an emphasis on guide dog issues.

# Building Best-In-Class Programs

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CNIB is committed to delivering best-in-class, evidence-based programs for Canadians with sight loss. Through an inclusive process of program development and delivery, we strive to make the greatest possible difference in their lives.

The CNIB Guide Dog Program will be offered free of charge to all participants, but the process of developing and delivering it is resource-intensive. In each program area, this ongoing work involves:

**Consultation and Planning** – We review research, collaborate with experts and, most importantly, consult those we serve to gain a robust understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by people with sight loss, the needs they have and the programs they want and need.

**Program Development** – We work with our in-house experts, volunteer advisors and other leaders in the blindness and guide dog training fields to develop innovative programs and partnerships that respond to participant needs and reflect international best practices.

**Program Implementation** – We recruit and train dynamic staff and volunteer leaders to roll out programs in selected locations across the country. As programs are launched and piloted, we seek to optimize all aspects of delivery and marketing and improve participant experiences.

**Impact Reporting and Expansion** – We routinely monitor program effectiveness to ensure participants have the best possible outcomes and reaching their individual goals. We use the data we gather to continually evolve and expand our programs, and identify emerging needs for the future.



# Measuring Success

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When it comes to helping Canadians cope with the challenges of sight loss and blindness, success is our only option. That's why it's vital that each of our programs will lead to proven, positive outcomes in the lives of those we serve.

CNIB is committed to measuring and maximizing the impact of each of our programs. Leveraging a range of methodologies, we examine the impact of our programs from a range of perspectives:

- **Uptake and demand** – How many people are registered and participating actively in each of our programs? How many classes and groups can we fill, how many effective, mutually-beneficial partnerships can we establish – and how many more are needed?
- **Participant outcomes** – To what extent are participants meeting the goals and objectives of the program? How much more knowledgeable, independent, mobile, connected and confident do they feel?
- **Participant experiences** – What do participants like most about the programs? What learnings have been the most helpful? Was the post-training follow-up supporting helpful and practical? Where do they see opportunities to enhance and expand the program?
- **Online engagement (future)** – How engaged are participants with our phone and online resources? How do participants rate the quality of information and education provided?

**“I can’t tell you what it meant to me to have a guide dog by my side. She’s my companion – she’s my eyes.”**

**- Kathleen F.,  
Toronto ON**

# We Need Your Support

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As we approach CNIB's centenary in 2018, we are proud to unveil a new path for the future – one that sees us working in partnership with those who we serve, as well as provincial governments, the medical community, volunteers and supporters, to create a future in which every Canadian has the opportunity to fully participate in life, regardless of sight loss.

CNIB is levelling the playing field for Canadians with sight loss by developing life-changing programs, imparting vital knowledge, enabling people to lead fuller, more independent lives, demanding societal reform and inspiring change. **But we cannot do it alone.**

It is critical that we work together to ensure that these programs are successful. We can only accomplish this with your support.

We are raising money to establish the CNIB Guide Dog Program in order that more Canadians can have access to the supports they need – and want. We need your support for puppy supplies and wares, guide dog instruction, dog boarding, training etc.

**Please consider making a gift to support CNIB's Guide Dog Program. Your gift will change lives and empower people who are blind or partially sighted to achieve their goals and reach their highest potential.**

**Join us today!**

# To Make a Donation or Learn More:

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Phone: 1.800.563.2642



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Web: cnib.ca



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## Local Contact Information:

Charitable registration #:119219459 RR0003

# Introducing...

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We are pleased to introduce you to CNIB's first two future guide dogs, Piper and Baker! Both male, pure-bred golden retrievers hailing from Australia, Piper and Baker have settled in nicely to their new homes in Toronto. Named for the Piper family of Saskatchewan who made the first donation to the guide dog program, Piper is a fun-loving pup who loves long walks and cuddling up for naps with his brother, Baker. Named for Col. E.A. Baker, who founded CNIB in 1918, Baker is more laid back than his brother and happily naps as often as he can.

Want to bring one of these little guys home? Apply to be a Volunteer Puppy Raiser for an adorable pup like Piper and Baker, and give a future guide dog a loving start to their journey!

**You can follow the future guide dogs' journey on Instagram @cnibguidedogs**



Child  
GUIDE  
DOGS

Future  
Guide Dog

## CNIB Mission

To change what it is to be blind through innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable Canadians impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose.

## About CNIB

Celebrating 100 years in 2018, the CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast.

CNIB  
1929 Bayview Avenue  
Toronto, ON M4G 3E8  
1.800.563.2642  
[cnib.ca](http://cnib.ca)



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