



Infinite Potential. Limitless Futures. CNIB's Youth Leadership Programs





Giving Young People with Sight Loss the Head Start They Need

Each year, CNIB helps 10,000 Canadian children and youth build their daily living skills, improve their confidence and overcome the challenges of growing up without vision.

For children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, moving through the developmental stages of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood can bring unique practical, emotional and social challenges. These years are critical for developing confidence, independence and a sense of self-identity. Children and youth who are blind or partially sighted have the same sense of curiosity that sighted children do, and they want to run, jump, play and be included. Unfortunately, they face many challenges their sighted peers can never truly understand.

CNIB's Youth Leadership program is one of several innovative programs we're building to help youth with sight loss develop and thrive, but we need to broaden our impact and increase access. With almost 100 years of history serving blind and partially sighted Ontarians, CNIB as a leader in this area can help to meet these challenges and ensure Ontarians of all ages with sight loss have the support they need to live connected, rewarding and independent lives - **but only with your support.**

Research into the experiences of young people with disabilities, including sight loss, suggests they are more likely than their sighted peers to report feeling socially excluded and “like an outsider,” and less likely to be satisfied with their lives, or themselves.



A Brighter Future for Our Youth

“Asli” arrived in Canada at age 14, three years ago. Programs and services for people who are blind or partially sighted were limited in her home country, so she can now embrace all that CNIB can offer. When Asli moved here, she had only her mom for support and was used to having things done for her.

As a result of participating in a program like CNIB’s new Youth Leadership program, children and youth like Asli can benefit from an increased sense of social confidence and physical activity level, participate in extracurricular activities at school and visit the mall with friends. Their circles will include other blind and partially sighted young people, who they meet through this program and see regularly in a social context. Youth can now aspire to pursue their professional goals and expand their career horizons.

This program is essential to helping young people like Asli find their voice and develop the leadership and self-advocacy skills needed to make change in their community.

**CNIB
understands
that each
Ontarian with
sight loss has
a different
story, but
shares similar
challenges.**



Why Youth Leadership Matters

For those who are blind or partially sighted, moving through the developmentally critical stages of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood can bring unique challenges on a practical, emotional and social level. These early years are a critical period in which individuals develop the confidence, independence, sense of self-identity and worth necessary for long-term success in life.

Research indicates that youth leadership programs reduce the incidence of feelings of isolation associated with sight loss while helping young people gain self-confidence, offering practical skills and social supports. CNIB's Youth Leadership programs are designed to improve graduation rates, develop key skills and increase the sense of inclusion and confidence that will address some of these troubling statistics. Our programs provide youth with the inspiration, tools and opportunities to develop to their maximum potential – becoming not only confident and competent adults, but inspiring leaders of tomorrow.



65%

Only 65 per cent of youth with sight loss graduate from high school, compared to 81 per cent of their sighted peers



74%

74 per cent of young people with sight loss do not play sports



70%

Over 70 per cent of partially sighted persons in Canada are not gainfully employed



1/2

Over half of Canadian working-age people with sight loss are struggling to make ends meet on \$20,000 a year - or less



Our Vision

Our Youth Leadership program will provide young people who are blind or partially sighted with an inclusive support network, the opportunity to learn and share a wide range of practical strategies, and embrace all the challenges and opportunities of life with confidence, independence, happiness and hope.

It will set them on a positive and empowering pathway to success, helping them realize their true potential as the leaders of tomorrow.

CNIB's Youth Leadership program will give young people a chance to learn valuable skills to help them achieve success in high school and beyond. Participants will increase their teamwork skills, networking and presentation skills, all while developing their sense of connection and belonging with their peers. They will enjoy leading and participating in group activities and organizing special events while they develop their ability to coach, guide and mentor others. Young people who participate in the program will enjoy networking and job-search support while increasing their sense of confidence in seeking employment and their overall self-worth.

CNIB is determined to provide this inspiring program to every young Ontarian who could benefit, regardless of location or mobility.

Participants will leave each session of this program feeling energized, motivated to try new skills and seeing possibilities for a brighter future.

Confidence.
Skills.
Opportunities.

CNSB provides community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life.

To find out more
or to get involved
CNSB Helpline
1-800-387-2020



Building Best-In-Class Programs

CNIB is committed to delivering best-in-class, evidence-based programs for Ontarians with sight loss. Through an inclusive process of program development and delivery, we strive to make the greatest possible difference in their lives. Continuity of care is an important part of our philosophy, especially for children and youth who typically receive a range of additional rehabilitation and educational support services.

Our Youth Leadership program is offered free of charge to all who need it, but the process of developing and delivering programs like this is resource-intensive. 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.

Program Development – We work with our in-house experts, volunteer advisors and other leaders in the blindness field to develop innovative programs 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 province. 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 reach their individual goals. We use the data we gather to continually evolve and expand our programs, and identify emerging needs for the future.



Cultivating Friendships and Valuable Skills

This new program will offer youth between 14 and 18 years of age who are blind or partially sighted an ongoing opportunity to come together for learning, skills development, social interaction and good fun.

Our Youth Leadership program will bring participants together on a weekly basis during the school year. Participants will move at their own pace through three progressive program tiers, and develop a range of skills that are key to their success in social, education, employment and community life.

The first tier of the program will explore themes of social skills, healthy relationships, safety, anti-bullying strategies and hobbies and interests, just like all of their peers. Youth will then move on to focus on pre-employment skills development, where topics such as career exploration, personal branding, cover letter and resume writing, disability disclosure, personal presentation, interviewing and networking techniques will be explored and practiced.

An accessible online forum will be created to enhance and supplement program activities. This will also help participants build vital technology and social media literacy skills and encourage friendships to deepen.

As participants progress in the program, they will have opportunities to mentor those in the lower tiers – sharing their knowledge, experience, ideas and advice while serving as positive role models. At the same time, they will build their own leadership skills and confidence.



Adam

Menak

Measuring Success

When it comes to helping young Ontarians cope with the challenges of sight loss, success is our only option. That's why it's vital that our Youth Leadership program leads to proven, positive outcomes in the lives of those we serve. Interaction with CNIB's certified Post Vision Loss Rehabilitation Therapists (PVLRT) is key throughout this process, in order to ensure there is alignment with each individual's rehabilitation therapy.

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 variety 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 mentoring 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, connected, optimistic do they feel?
- **Participant experiences** – What do participants like most about the programs? What learnings have been the most helpful? Where do they see opportunities to enhance and expand the programs?
- **Online engagement** – How engaged are participants with our phone and online resources? How do participants rate the quality of information and education provided?



We Need Your Support

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.

Please consider making a donation to support our new Youth Leadership program in Ontario. 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!

twilight



To Make a Donation or Learn More

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Contact Information:

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

