

# what you **NEED TO KNOW** about...

## Financial Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs

Children and youth with special needs have medical, emotional, developmental, mental or behavioural problems that require ongoing help and support. Ontario has a number of provincial programs to help families and caregivers of children and youth with special needs. The federal government also offers tax deductions. This fact sheet will outline the main sources of financial help.

### Provincial programs (Ontario)

#### Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)

The ACSD program, (once called the Handicapped Children's Benefit, or HCB), helps parents with some of the extra costs of caring for a child with a disability. This funding aims to help children with disabilities live as normal a life as possible at home and in the community.

#### What funding and/or services are provided under the ACSD program?

1. Monthly financial assistance. This ranges from \$25 to \$410 per month depending on:
  - Your family's income
  - The costs of caring for your child
  - The severity of the disability
  - The type of support needed to help your child
2. Help for extra costs related to a child's disability, like:
  - Travel to doctors and hospitals
  - Parental relief
  - Special shoes and clothing
  - Basic dental care, drugs, eyeglasses, hearing aids and prescription medication not covered by another plan.

#### Who can get help?

A parent or legal guardian, whose child:

- Is under 18 years of age;
- Lives at home;
- Has a severe disability;

may be able to get help from this program, depending on the family's income.

#### How do we apply?

- The Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) manages the ACSD program. Visit the website at: [www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/disabilities/index.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/disabilities/index.aspx) or call your local MCYS office to ask for an application form [In the area served by CHEO, call (613) 787-4064.]
- You may need to include other documents, like a letter or report from a mental health professional that states your child's diagnosis.
- In your application, you need to list the extra expenses you have due to your child's disability.
- Your application will be reviewed by a Special Agreements officer, who may also contact you to gather more information.

## Special Services at Home (SSAH)

This program helps families who are caring for a child with a developmental or physical disability, or an adult with a developmental disability at home. The purpose of this program is to help families care for children with developmental disabilities in their own home and community.

### Families can get help for:

- Respite services. In some areas, it's hard to find special needs caregivers. This funding can now be used to pay family members (but not parents) to care for a child to give parents a break (respite care).
- Programs like special summer camps, which are not covered by other community services.
- Developmental services, like paying someone to help the child develop skills.

### Who can get help?

- Families of children with a developmental disability (a diagnosis of either Autism Spectrum Disorder or Developmental Delay).
- Families of children with a physical disability.
- Families whose children need more help than most families can give.
- Family income does not affect whether a family qualifies for this program.
- The amount of money received depends on the child's needs.

### How do we apply?

The Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) manages the SSAH program. Visit the website at: [www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/specialservices/index.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/specialservices/index.aspx), or call your local MCYS office to ask for an application form [In the area served by CHEO, call 1-800-267-5111 (ext. 2399 or 4064)]

- The application form is quite detailed. If you are connected to a community agency for support with your child, (like Service Coordination), you may want to ask your case manager or worker to help you fill it out.
- You will need to include a medical statement or psychological assessment, outlining your child's diagnosis.
- Your application will be reviewed by a Special Agreements officer, who may also contact you to gather more information.

## Provincial Assistive Devices Program (ADP)

This program helps people with physical disabilities. It provides financial help for many kinds of equipment and supplies, like:

- Wheelchairs
- Walkers and strollers
- Hearing aids
- Artificial limbs
- Personal FM systems
- Communication boards

For more information, contact the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, at the Assistive Devices Program, at 1-800-268-6021. Website: [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/adp/adp\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/adp/adp_mn.html)

## Federal Income Tax (deductions, credits and benefits available to parents or guardians of people with disabilities)

### **Disability Tax Credit** (Disability Amount) From a Dependant (Line 316 / 318):

If you have a child with special needs, the Disability Amount Tax Credit (or the 'Disability Amount') is a non-refundable tax credit that can be transferred to a family member who supplied some or all of the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing to the person. This credit can potentially save \$1,500 a year in income taxes.

#### Who can get this tax credit?

Parents or legal guardians, whose child:

- Has on-going, marked limits in activities of daily living
- Has cognitive (intellectual), developmental, physical or mental limitations

Once approved, the credit is transferred from the child who qualifies (and who usually has no taxable income) to a parent or other supporting person. The tax credit is only useful to someone who pays taxes.

#### How do we apply for this tax credit?

Have your child's doctor fill out the T2201 Disability Tax Credit Certificate. For more info, visit [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html).

If the person with the disability is under age 18 at the time you apply for the Disability Tax Credit, a **Disability Tax Credit Supplement** of \$3933 will be added to the disability amount each year until the child turns 18. The Disability Tax Credit Supplement can also be transferred to a parent or guardian.

**Caregiver Tax Credit (Caregiver Amount-line 315):** If you have a dependant (aged 18+) that lives with you at home, you may be able to claim this amount.

#### Who can get this tax credit?

- Dependent aged 18 or older, who is on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Must be dependent on you as a result of a mental or physical infirmity.

It cannot also be claimed if you claim the "Infirm Dependant Credit", an amount of similar value to "The Caregiver Tax Credit". If you qualify, you may potentially pay ~ \$500 a year less in taxes.

- **Child Disability Benefit:** Families with children who qualify for the disability amount may be eligible for the Child Disability Benefit. The value of the benefit is based on family income.
- **Child Care Expenses:** If you have paid someone to look after your child who qualifies for the Disability Amount, you may be able to deduct up to \$10,000 for child care expenses.
- **Amount for Eligible Dependant:** If you did not have a spouse or common-law partner and you supported a dependant with whom you lived in a home you maintained you may be able to claim this amount.
- **Amount for Infirm Dependants Age 18 and Over:** You may be able to claim an amount for a dependent child or grandchild if that child was mentally or physically infirm and was born in 1988 or earlier.
- **Tuition, Education and Textbook Amounts Transferred from a Child:** If the person with a disability does not require these amounts, a supporting person may be able to claim all or part of the unused amount.

- **Medical Expenses:** You can claim medical expenses for your child under age 18, yourself, your spouse or common law partner on line 330 of your return. For all other dependants, you can claim them on line 331 of your return. The amount claimed for a person with a disability is based on his or her income and is limited to a maximum of \$10,000 for each dependant.

**A brief list of other services/items that may be claimed with a medical certificate includes:**

- **Devices or software** designed to be used by someone who is blind or has a severe learning disability to enable them to read print.
- **Note-taking services** used by someone with a physical or mental impairment and paid to someone in the business of providing such services. A medical practitioner must certify in writing that this expense is necessary.
- **School for people with an impairment in physical or mental functions**, which requires a medical practitioner to certify in writing that the equipment, facilities or personnel specially provided by that school are required because of the person's mental or physical impairment.
- **Tutoring services:** the cost of hiring a tutor to help your child learn.
- **Talking textbooks** - prescription required
- **Therapy:** The cost of therapy may be covered. The therapy has to be prescribed and supervised by a doctor, a psychologist (for a mental disability), or an occupational therapist (for a physical disability) - **Form T2201, Disability Tax Credit Certificate** required.

## Filing claims for past expenses (filing for tax credits retroactively)

If you are just learning about these tax credits now, and haven't claimed them yet, don't worry! You can still claim these credits up to 10 years retroactively.

To re-file your income tax returns for previous years, visit the Canada Revenue Agency website and download the T1 Adjustment Request form.

## For more information

### Federal taxes and deductions

- Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)  
Web: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca>
- Special Needs Planning Group  
Web: <http://www.specialneedsplanning.ca>

- Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN), a “non-profit organization for families committed to future planning and securing a good life for their relative with a disability”. They have an excellent document “Tax Tips for Families” at <http://www.plan.ca/documents/taxtips2006.pdf>.  
Main website: <http://www.plan.ca>

## Ontario programs

- Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) for information about ACSD and SSAH.  
Web: [www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/specservices/index.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/specservices/index.aspx)

## Other sources of financial assistance

**The Easter Seal Society** [www.easterseals.org](http://www.easterseals.org)  
Toll Free: 1 (800) 668-6252

- Children and youth with physical disabilities are eligible
- Financial assistance for the remaining 25 % portion, not covered by Assistive Devices Program
- Home and vehicle modifications
- Camp fees for Easter Seal Society camps
- Community camp experience

## About this Document:

Written by the mental health professionals at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). Reviewed by the Mental Health Information Committee at CHEO.

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