



ARCH Bulletin on COVID-19: Ontario's Assistive Devices Program no longer available

On March 24, 2020, the Ontario Government decided that the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) was no longer going to be considered an essential service, as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that the ADP offices are closed until further notice because of COVID-19.

Many types of devices are covered under the ADP program. These include, but are not limited to: mobility devices; prostheses; specialized seating systems; diabetic monitoring and testing strips for people who take insulin; insulin pumps; hearing aids; visual and communication aids.

ADP provides funds to vendors to cover 75% of the cost of a device. Persons with disabilities are asked to contribute 25% of the cost of the device, known as a co-payment. ADP can also provide grants to persons with disabilities to cover the co-payment. ADP will cover 100% of a device required by persons on social assistance.

Assistive devices are very important to persons with disabilities. Assistive devices can be the difference between independence, inclusion and participation in daily activities or a lack of independence and reliance on others.

At this time, some vendors continue to operate as they have in the past. As long as vendors continue to be considered as an essential service, they may provide an assistive device if ADP eligibility guidelines are followed. These vendors will continue to provide an assistive device and send invoices to ADP to cover 75% cost of the device. One significant concern that the closure of ADP creates is that persons with disabilities must pay the 25% co-payment up front. Many people rely on insurance companies to cover the co-payment amount. Without prior ADP approval, the co-payment will not be paid for by an insurance company. This means that people with disabilities will have to pay the 25% co-payment to a vendor before they get an assistive device. This creates a significant financial barrier to getting a necessary assistive device.

As usual, ADP will not pay for the cost of fixing a broken or damaged assistive device. The cost of repairs must be paid for by the consumer. However, if a device needs to be replaced, at present ADP will not consider whether it is still under warranty, or

whether it can be replaced by a used device. ADP will not consider whether they will contribute to the cost of a replacement vehicle during their office closure.

In addition, any consumer applications submitted to ADP after March 24, 2020 will not be processed. This will also affect some applications made before March 24, 2020.

ARCH has launched a campaign to collect data about the effect the closure of ADP has on persons with disabilities. This data will support a request that the government reinstate ADP, and declare it an essential service. To participate in the campaign, please follow this link:

www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/survey-adp-closure

For more information

ARCH continues to be open to assist persons with disabilities who experience problems getting the supports and services they need. You can contact us at:

Tel.: (416) 482-8255; Toll-free: 1-866-482-2724
TTY: (416) 482-1254; Toll-free: 1-866-482-2728
Email: archintake@lao.on.ca

Persons with disabilities who live in Ontario can call ARCH for free, confidential legal information and summary advice. To find out about the kind of legal advice ARCH provides and how to book an appointment, please use the following link:

<http://archdisabilitylaw.ca/services/>