



BRIDGING THE GAP:

# Employment Supports for Childhood Cancer Survivors



# PRESENTER

BERNICE D'SOUZA



Occupational Therapist

Cancer Rehabilitation and  
Survivorship (CRS) Program

Department of Supportive care

Princess Margaret Cancer Centre


University Health Network

A special shoutout and thank you to **Sharon D'Souza, POGO Work/School transitions counsellor** for her shared assistance with putting together today's slides and who could not be here to co-present today.

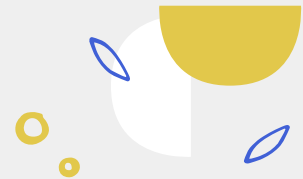
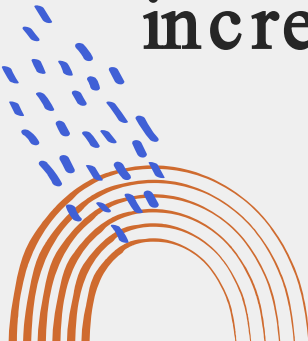
# Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of employment for childhood cancer survivors/ AYA and the supports available
- Identify key factors in assessing and facilitating job readiness
- Understand work limitations, medical restrictions, and workplace accommodations
- Explore human rights and legislation on workplace accommodations
- Gain insights into effective communication and disclosure techniques





“The ability to return to or maintain occupational and educational pursuits after a cancer diagnosis has been demonstrated to improve the quality of life of patients with cancer, reducing social isolation and increasing self-esteem” – Parsons et al., 2012



# Background

Advances in childhood  
cancer treatment  
=  
Increased survival rates

Increased survival rates  
=  
more are returning to  
work/school (RTW/RTS)  
after treatment

AYA clients who are  
diagnosed and treated  
earlier in life, will spend  
many years living with late-  
effects/cancer related  
impairments

Multiple motivations to  
RTW - financial, sense of  
normalcy, productivity,  
meaningful roles

Concerns impacting RTW -  
managing late-effects,  
disclosure, negotiating  
workplace accommodations

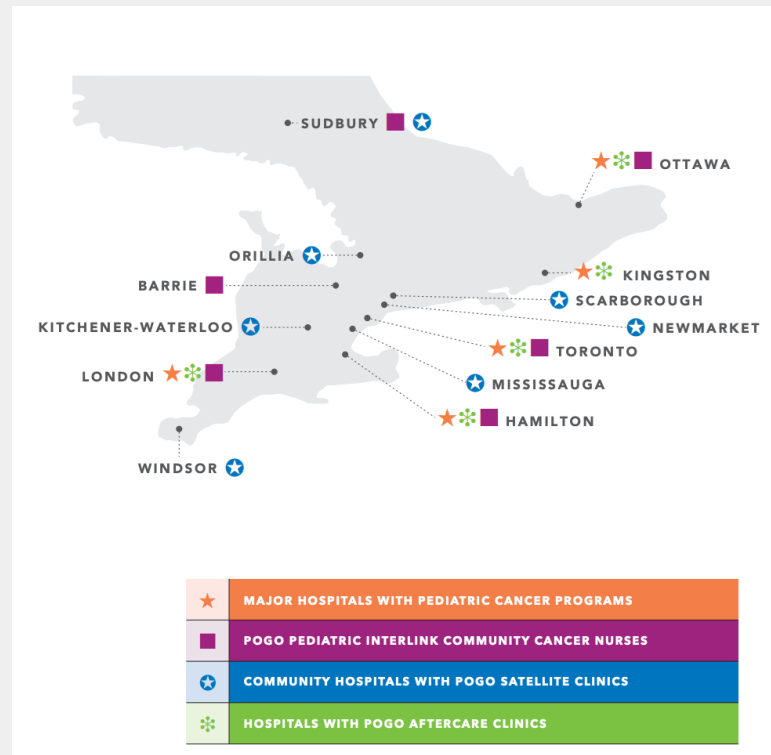
More than 50% of full-time  
workers/students reported  
problems with work/studies  
after diagnosis

50% experience  
work/school challenges 1-3  
years after returning



# POGO School & Work Transitions Program

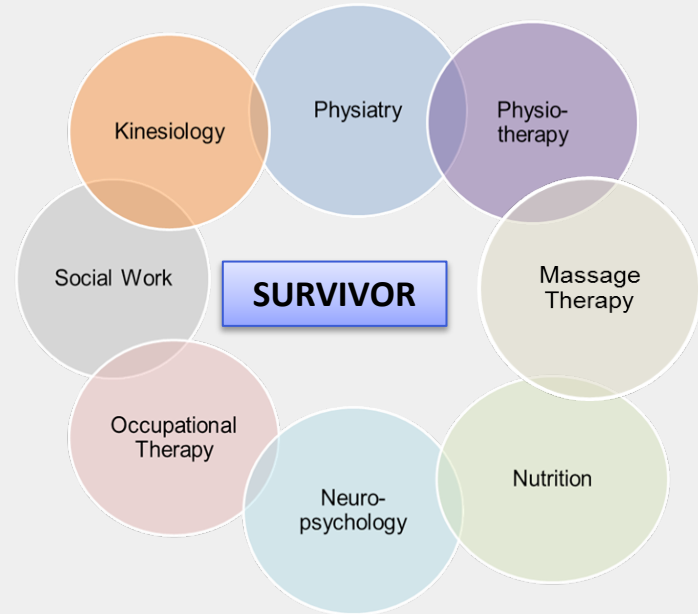
- Referred from the POGO AfterCare clinic
- Eligibility
- Services provided



# CANCER REHABILITATION AND SURVIVORSHIP (CRS) PROGRAM

## Eligibility Requirements:

- Survivor must be seen by oncologist for cancer treatment at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre
- Reason for referral must be cancer related impairment.  
(Return to work support can be an add-on but not primary or sole reason for referral)



# How to determine readiness to work?

4 areas to consider:

<b>Medical</b>	<b>Physical</b>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Emotional</b>





# Common Concerns faced by Survivors

Fatigue

Cognitive  
challenges

Sleep issues

Psychosocial  
concerns

Pain impacting  
function

Musculoskeletal  
issues

# Facilitating preparation to RTW

- Review symptom list and current functional impact of late effects
- Refer to appropriate supports for assistance with symptom self-management where possible and/ or providing information regarding available resources.

# Facilitating preparation to RTW

- Encourage trial of “Live like you’re working”
- Practice work related skills
- Thinking about being at work – what does your client anticipate will be challenging? What do they expect will go well?

# Employment Resources

## Ontario Disability Support Program employment supports

If you have a disability, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) employment supports may help you find work, keep a job, start a business or advance your career. Community-based service providers deliver ODSP employment supports.



**Say yes! Dire oui!**

- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Accessibilité

An empowering program for persons with disabilities that meets their needs and focusses on their abilities!

**YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

**yes**

*The Employment Champion for Youth  
Champion de l'emploi chez les jeunes*

**yes ability**

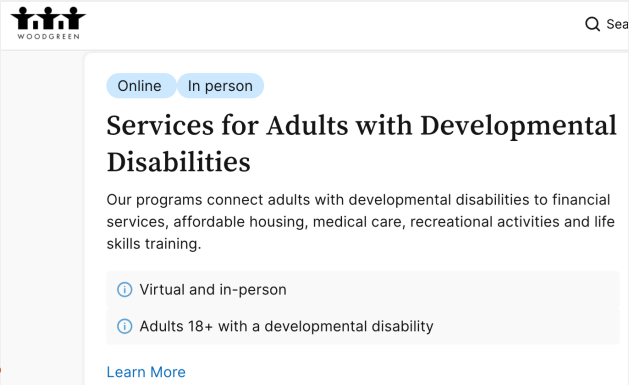


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### Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Our programs connect adults with developmental disabilities to financial services, affordable housing, medical care, recreational activities and life skills training.

- Virtual and in-person
- Adults 18+ with a developmental disability

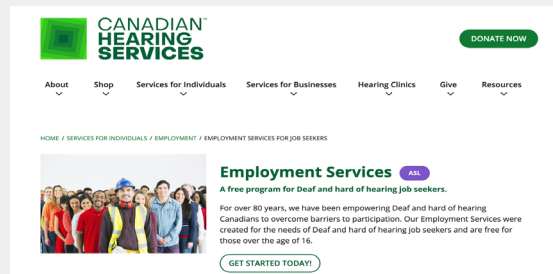
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CANCER SUPPORT

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## Resumes and Interviews



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### Employment Services ASL

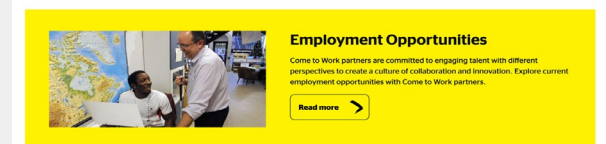
A free program for Deaf and hard of hearing job seekers.

For over 80 years, we have been empowering Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians to overcome barriers to participation. Our Employment Services were created for the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing job seekers and are free for those over the age of 16.

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**Employment Opportunities**

Come to Work partners are committed to engaging talent with different perspectives to create a culture of collaboration and innovation. Explore current employment opportunities with Come to Work partners.

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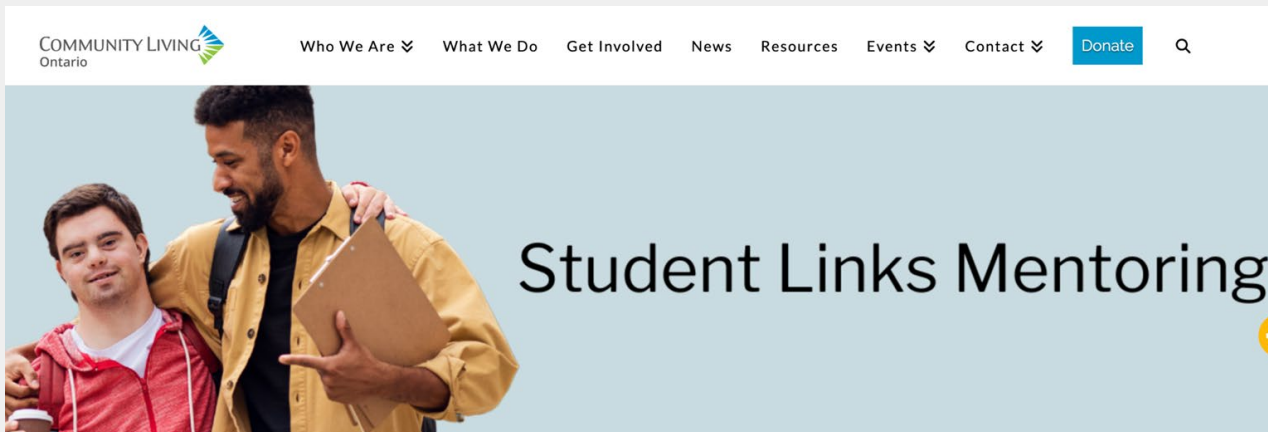
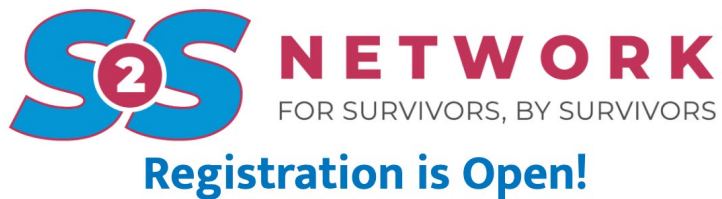
**CNIB VENTURE ZONE**

### I Want to Work for Myself: The Venture Zone

CNIB's entrepreneur program gives you the resources and inspiration you need to succeed in your business venture.

[Read more](#)

# Community & Mentorship



# Understanding work limitations, accommodations and medical restrictions

- **Work limitations:** Functional impact of a client's symptoms on their job duties, that may require accommodations and/ or a medical restriction.
- **Medical restriction:** Medical restrictions are physical and/ or mental tasks the employee is not capable of performing as a result of their medical condition. Medical restrictions can be expressed as limitations (such as no heavy lifting) – *Ontario Nurses' Association, FAQ: Medical Restrictions and Modified Work – February 2017*
- **Accommodation:** Adapting or adjusting job duties or workplaces to suit the needs of people with health challenges (such as limit repetitive lifting)

# Human Rights Legislation

**Duty to Accommodate:** By law, employers must provide accommodation to the point of “undue hardship”

- Accommodation costs too much for the employers
- Is too hard for the employer to provide
- Compromises the safety of other workers

**Employment Standards Act:**

Outlines rules related to termination, severance, vacation and other issues



# Accommodations

- Consider: Ability to work full time vs. part time
- Gradual Return To Work Plan (8 or 12 weeks of modified hours and duties), if returning to an existing job
- Accommodations to allow for symptom management and to prevent symptom exacerbation





# Accommodations

Client challenges	Consider recommending the following accommodations where possible (depending on symptoms and job type):
Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Microbreaks for symptom management (in addition to regularly scheduled breaks such as lunch)</li><li>•Work from home or hybrid, where possible</li><li>•Flexibility of work hours (for example: “Client should not be assigned evening and night shifts at this time” if sleep is an issue)</li></ul>
Medical appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Flexibility of work hours to allow them to attend medical appointments (for example: “Client should be allowed time to attend medical appointments and may require flexibility of work hours and/ or time off to attend medical appointments.</li></ul>
Cognitive concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Access to distraction free work environment where possible</li><li>•Work from home or hybrid model where possible</li><li>•Noise cancelling headphones</li></ul>
Neuropathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Access to voice dictation software</li></ul>
Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Ergonomic assessment</li><li>•Work from home</li><li>•Microbreaks for symptom management</li></ul>



# Accommodations

We've pulled together this list of questions that may help you identify possible modifications.

Is it reasonable in your job to:

- Work the same number of hours every week, but at different times (e.g., instead of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, work 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM)?
- Do some or all of your work from home?
- Rearrange your work space so equipment (e.g., printer, telephone) is easily reachable, thereby reducing unnecessary energy spend?
- Move to a different workstation (e.g., closer to the restroom or farther away from the cafeteria, to avoid food smells that make you nauseated)?
- Ask for special furniture (e.g., a movie theater ticket-taker who is given a chair to sit in while working)?
- Ask for special equipment (e.g., an anti-glare screen for your computer or a cooling vest to help balance heat sensitivity)?
- Ask if an exception can be made to a policy (e.g., being allowed to use headphones at your work station to help reduce distractions)?

# Accommodations Support



[ABOUT THE PROJECT](#) ▾ [ACED TOOLKIT](#) ▾ [RESOURCES](#) ▾ |

Job Demands and Accommodation Planning Tool (JDAPT)

## JDAPT for workers

### How to complete the JDAPT

The JDAPT begins by asking you to think about the demands of your job as they relate to your health condition in four key areas.



**Physical  
Demands**



**Cognitive  
Demands**



**Working  
with Others**




**Working  
Conditions**



# Disclosure



- Consider and practice what you want to say to colleagues
  - Personal/ health information should not be requested from your workplace. Insurance (and sometimes HR) requires this information
  - Pros/ cons of disclosing
- 

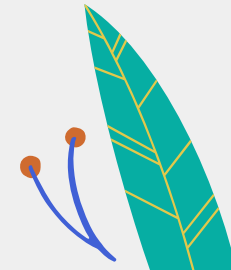



# Disclosure: Communication tips for clients



Use the Swivel Technique to change the topic if you are having a conversation, you are uncomfortable with

“Thank you for asking – some days are better than others. Can you explain the project we discussed in the meeting this morning?”



# Resources

- **Referral to the PM-AYA program:**  
[https://www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Clinics/Adolescent\\_Young\\_Adult\\_Oncology](https://www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Clinics/Adolescent_Young_Adult_Oncology)
- **Referral to Cancer Rehab and Survivorship program (CRS)** if you have ongoing symptoms and require RTW support:  
[https://www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Clinics/Cancer\\_Rehab\\_Survivorship](https://www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Clinics/Cancer_Rehab_Survivorship)  
Eligibility Requirements: \_\_\_\_\_ • Patient must be seen by oncologist for cancer treatment at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre • Reason for referral must be cancer related impairment
- **[www.pmcancerclasses.ca](http://www.pmcancerclasses.ca)** : Find online learning modules on RTW and other symptom management resources
- **<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/elearning/duty-accommodate>** : Online learning module on accommodation legislation



# Resources

- **Wellspring: Money Matters Program:**  
<https://wellspring.ca/resource/money-matters-income-replacement-programs-std-and-ltd/>
- **Wellspring: Returning to Work** - 6 week educational support program on considerations and planning for return to work.
- **Wellspring: Resumes and Interviews** - educational workshop on preparing for a new job
- **Wellspring: Brain fog** - 8 week cognitive enhancement program designed to address cognitive changes associated with cancer treatment.
- **Other helpful websites:**
  - [www.cancerandwork.ca](http://www.cancerandwork.ca)
  - [www.cancerandcareers.org](http://www.cancerandcareers.org)
  - <https://askjan.org/links/atoz.htm> Helpful list of accommodations





# Thanks!

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# QUESTIONS



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