

# Bridging to Adulthood Tips: Life Skills Resources for Young Adults with Disabilities

Life skills are behaviours that help people make decisions, solve problems, communicate, build relationships and live in healthy and productive ways<sup>1</sup>. Life skills programs help people maximize their participation in a variety of activities including directing personal care, shopping, cooking, chores, taking transit, financial management and community engagements.

The following resources may be of interest to youth and young adults who have goals for life skills development.

## Life Skills Programs for Youth Up to 21 Years Old

- **Holland Bloorview** offers a variety of 1:1 and group **Life Skills Programs** for youth with disabilities. Maximum age for participation is 18 or 21 years if still in high school.
- Other **Children's Treatment Centres** in Ontario may offer recreational, life skills or transitions programs for youth up to age 18 or age 21 if still in high school. Contact your local Children's Treatment Centre to explore potential options as applicable.
- The **Ontario Autism Program** offers free **Foundational Family Services** at various agencies across Ontario for registered children, youth, and their families. Many webinars and groups have a life skills focus. E.g. **CHEO** offers virtual programs on life skills and the transition to adulthood.
- **Kerry's Place** offers various groups for youth with autism spectrum disorder that focus on transitions, life skills and independence.
- Holland Bloorview also publishes a **Toronto Recreation Guide** that includes programs with a life skills focus (or ideas of the types of programs you could search for in your local community).

## Life Skills Programs for Adults

### ADHD and/or Learning Disabilities

- The [Y.E.L.P. program](#) at the Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto offers group life skills intervention for young adults with learning disabilities and/or attention challenges up to age 25.

### Acquired Brain Injury

- The [Acquired Brain Injury Community Program](#) at **PACE** provides 6-12 weeks of home or community intervention for adults with acquired brain injuries who meet specific criteria. Intervention focuses on building a range of daily living and life skills. Based in Toronto.
- [Community Head Injury Resource Service \(CHIRS\)](#) offers a variety of programs and services that focus on independence and skill building. Based in Toronto.
- [Thehealthline.ca](#) is a database of programs across Ontario. Select your region using the map → under 'Health Topics' click 'Diseases and Conditions' → select 'Acquired Brain Injury' for local programs.

### Intellectual Disabilities

- [Connectability Fee for Service Program Directory](#) lists community programs in Ontario that are not included in My Community Hub.
- [Community Living](#) programs in Ontario may offer life skills programs. Contact your local office.
- [My Community Hub](#) is an online searchable database of activities, classes and programs from Developmental Services Agencies in Ontario.
- [Student Links Mentorship](#) is a free program through Community Living Ontario. Students with intellectual disabilities (ages 14-21) are matched with a mentor in their local community who shares a common interest or passion. The purpose is to help the student explore possibilities for life after high school
- [Thehealthline.ca](#) is a database of community programs across Ontario. Select your region using the map → under 'Health Topics' click 'People with Disabilities' → select 'Life Skills for People with Disabilities' for local programs.

## Physical Disabilities

- The **Centre for Independent Living Toronto (CILT)** may offer [Training and Information Workshops](#) for people with physical disabilities on rights, self-advocacy, and personal wellness.
- **March of Dimes** offers the [Learning Independence for Future Empowerment \(LIFE\)](#) program to young adults with physical disabilities in Toronto, Mississauga, Calgary and Halifax. The program involves setting goals for personal growth and participating in workshops on a variety of life skills topics.
- **Spinal Cord Injury Ontario** [Peer Connections Workshops](#) include a variety of life skills topics.
- [Thehealthline.ca](#) is a database of community programs across Ontario. Select your region using the map → under 'Health Topics' click 'People with Disabilities' → select 'Life Skills for People with Disabilities' for local programs.
- **Vibrant Healthcare Alliance Health Promotion Programs** has a [Women's Disability Action & Awareness Group In Training \(WDAAG IT\)](#) peer support group based on the Independent Living Philosophy.

## Summer Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) Training Programs

RILS programs teach youth with disabilities life skills through real world learning, while living 1-3 weeks with peers in an accessible residence away from home<sup>1</sup>.

- The **Erinoak Kids** [Independent Living Program](#) is for clients age 16-19. Participants live in an accessible apartment for 11 days and learn a variety of life and independent living skills. Participants have access to 24 hour a day attendant care as needed.
- **Holland Bloorview's** [The Independence Program](#) is a 3-week program for clients up to 21 years old. Participants live at a college or university residence, with access to 24 hour attendant care, and learn a variety of life and independent living skills through workshops and real world practice.
- **McMaster Children's Hospital** offers the [Moving on Teen Independence Program](#). Program participants practice living away from home and learn a variety of life skills.

## Transitional Living Programs

Transitional Living Programs include life skills training for 6-12 months for individuals with physical disabilities, with the goal of transitioning to independent living in the community. Individuals live in an accessible apartment with attendant services for personal care supports. Individuals must be able to direct their own personal care.

- [Bellwoods](#) in Toronto offers [Transitions Programs](#) for residents with physical disabilities.
- [Gage Transition to Independent Living](#) program through West Park Healthcare Centre is a 6-12 month program in Toronto. Individuals with physical disabilities live in an accessible apartment, with access to 24-hour attendant services. Participants receive professional assistance and training to learn health and independent living skills.
- [Personal Choice Independent Living](#) in Ottawa offers a transitional living program for adults with physical disabilities in an accessible apartment. Participants have access to attendant services and supports for daily living and life skill activities.
- [Trying-It-On-For Size](#) is a program for adults with intellectual disabilities that helps with skills for independent living. Participants complete several short-term stays in an apartment (fee for service).

## Self-Directed Resources

- [Accessiblechef.com](#) has a variety of [free visual recipes](#) for individuals learning how to cook.
- [Connectability.ca](#) has a variety of daily living and life skills resources for [youth](#) and [adults](#).
- [The Learning Hub](#) offers online self-paced and live programs for adults living in Ontario. Courses under the [personal management category](#) include individual goal setting, conflict resolution, healthy eating, managing money and other life skills topics.
- [Magnus Cards](#) is a free app to help individuals learn daily living and life skills through visual support and step-by-step instructions for realistic situations.
- [Steps to Independence](#) is a guide to help prepare people for semi-independent living. If interested in the resource, we recommend browsing for ideas of skills a person may wish to develop based on their strengths and interests, rather than as a prescriptive guide.

- **Tasks Galore: For the Real World** is a book with practical ideas and visual supports for teaching youth and adults with disabilities daily living and life skills. Some pages are available for free preview online. Your local library, school, day program, or therapist might also have a copy.
- The **WRAP App** is a virtual tool to help with setting personal life and wellness goals, creating an action plan, and getting back on track as needed.
- Speak with your school team, local independent living agency, day program staff, occupational therapist, life skills coach or other provider about other self-directed resource options.

The information provided in this handout is for reference only. It is not intended as a recommendation or endorsement of specific programs, or as a comprehensive resource list.

1. Ontario Independence Program Research Team. (2022). Designing and Implementing Immersive Residential Life Skills (RILS) Programs for Youth With Disabilities: An Evidence Based Guide for Service Providers. Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. [Available online.](#)

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