

# Life After High School: Resources for supported employment and continued learning

## Employment Programs and Services

The community based employment programs and services below have been grouped into categories. Programs will have different eligibility requirements and will offer different types and intensity of support with employment related goals. We recommend contacting more than one program or organization of interest to find out more.

## Individual Support for Job Search

**Ontario Disability Employment Program (ODSP) Employment Supports** – The ODSP Employment Supports program provides employment services to support individuals 16 years of age and older to find and keep a job. You can access a [full list of ODSP Employment support service providers in Ontario](#). Service providers offer similar types of supports, however there may be differences in the amount/duration of support, types of employer connections and experience level supporting individuals with learning needs and/or communication challenges. Examples of ODSP Employment Supports service providers in the GTA include.

- [Community Living Toronto](#)
- [Corbrook - Individual Service Employment Programs](#)
- [March of Dimes](#)

**Aptus - [Career Navigator Program](#)** – A free 1 year soft skills training and career exploration program for youth who identify with disability and/or communication challenges. Ongoing individual meetings with a Youth Supervisor can support you with job search and career exploration. Offers optional weekly work-skills workshops. Note: Program is open to youth with various volunteering and employment interests (not just an interest in being a home service professional as listed on program flyer).

**Dream Weavers** – [1:1 Life and Employment Skills Sessions](#) – Dream Weavers provides 1:1 employment and life skills sessions for young adults on the autism spectrum or with other developmental differences. Sessions are provided by an Occupational Therapist. They also offer various group programs throughout the year. Check their website for more details.

**Montage Support Services** – [Making Work Work \(fee for service options\)](#) – Montage offers fee-for-service supported employment service focused on helping adults with disabilities to reflect on their strengths and interests and explore different types of volunteer and/or paid work.

**Reena** – [Reena Supported Employment Service \(RSES\)](#) – For youth and young adults with developmental disabilities including autism who live in York Region. Individual and group-based support for job-search and start-up. Please note that services are currently on hold; check back to the website for updates.

## Structured Pre-Employment & Work Placement

**Corbrook** – [Striving for Success](#) – Pre-employment training program consisting of experiential learning and workplace life-skills curriculum.

**JVS** - [Path 2 Work](#) – Structured program consisting of employment and life skills workshops, one-on-one employment counselling and on-the-job coaching support.

**JobSkills** – [Right Fit for You](#) – A 20 week paid pre-employment training program for youth with disabilities and/or complex barriers to employment who live in Peel Region or York Region. Includes workshop based learning, individual job search support and work placement with on-the-job coaching.

**Kerry's Place Autism Services** – [Employment Works](#) – A pre-employment training program for adults with an autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities. Includes regular structured learning sessions and virtual experiential learning (e.g. workplace simulations).

**Project Work** – [Project Work Supported Employment Program](#) – A 29 week program consisting of pre-employment workshops, individual support for job search and on-the-job coaching once employment is obtained. Note: Project Work is partly funded by ODSP Employment Supports (described above).

**Toronto District School Board (TDSB)** – [Adult Learners Employment Services](#) – Offers job-specific training to adult learners looking to pursue particular career paths such as food services, hair styling and construction.

## Day Programs with a Vocational, Life-Skills or Learning Focus

A wide range of day programs exist for adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. While day programs will typically consist of social and recreational programming, some programs may have more of a focus on ongoing skill development (including pre-employment and life skills). Some of these programs are highlighted below, however this is not an exhaustive list. Please note, many programs may be on hold or operating virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some day programs may offer funded spots through Developmental Services Ontario and/or fee for service options (which Passport funding can often be applied to).

**Brighton Launch** – [Day Programs](#) – Offers several day program options for adults with disabilities with a focus on life skills and employment experience.

**Corbrook** – [Learning Opportunities](#) – Corbrook offers full-day and half-day programming as well and one-to-one support for various life skills.

**Kohai LIFE** – [Day Program](#) – A day program with a focus on life and social skills, functional academics and work placements with community partner organizations.

**March of Dimes** – [LIFE \(Learning Independence for Future Empowerment\)](#) – A 10-week long life-skills program for young adults with disabilities focused on developing life skills.

**Reena** – [Channels Day Program and Pathways Day Program](#) – Reena offers different day program options with a focus on life skills and employment.

## Continued Learning Options

This section highlights a variety of programs that are connected with educational institutions.

### Alternative High School and Adult Learning Programs

**Bright Start Academy** – [Foundations Program](#) – Bright Start Academy is a private school in Toronto. The Foundations Program is a transition-focused program for students in a non-credit stream in high school. The program focuses on life skills and work placements.

**Monsignor Fraser College (Alternative and Adult Secondary School)** – [Transition to Work Program](#) – A program within the TCDSB that offers hands-on co-ops and experiential learning opportunities for special education stream students transitioning from high school. Students aged 18-20 may stay for 1, 2 or 3 years depending on transition and learning goals.

[Project SEARCH Toronto](#) – A transition-to-work program for students with a primary diagnosis of an intellectual disability. During the final year of high school, students immerse at a host business for three connected experiential learning placements combined with classroom instruction in employment life skills and personalized employment planning. There are programs in Halton and Hamilton as well.

**Toronto District School Board (TDSB)** – [Essential Skills Upgrading](#) – A non-credit program for adults looking to improve their reading, writing, math, employability and workplace skills.

### Post-Secondary Programs

Many **Ontario Colleges** offer [Inclusive Education programs](#) (also known as **Community Integration through Co-Operative Education or CICE**). These programs are geared towards students with a developmental disability, intellectual disability or other learning challenges who want to continue their learning in a college environment. Most programs include a set of core courses, electives based on student interest and a general work placement (co-op). Students typically have access to additional learning supports. You can look at individual college websites for specific program details. The focus

of many of these programs is on having a general college experience rather than on employment as an outcome. Some students participate and then link to employment supports or programs afterwards. Many **Ontario Colleges** offer [foundational, transition to college programs](#) (click “Career & Preparation”) that aim to help students explore their potential area of interest, upgrade their academic skills, and enhance their college readiness. Students may then move on to register in college diploma programs.

**Christian Horizons and Humber College** – [Culinary Skills Development & Employment Program](#) – This partnership program provides hands on training and work experience for individuals with developmental disabilities looking to work in food services. Participants learn foundational culinary skills from professional chefs, practice other life and employment skills and participate in work placements.

**George Brown College** – [College Vocational Program](#) – This program provides vocational assessment, upgrading in communications, math, and computers; life skills, career planning and a work experience placement for students with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities.

## Other continuing education programs

**Frontier College** Free volunteer-based educational programs for individuals with a range of abilities and learning needs. This includes Independent Studies for adults with developmental disabilities, basic literacy programs, and academic upgrading. Individual and group options.

**The Learning Hub** Free, flexible, non-credit online courses on a variety of topics.

## Choosing a Program or Service

Having an idea of your personal goals can help you choose an employment program or continued learning option that’s a good fit for you. Your goals may relate to building specific work or life skills, gaining hands-on experience, having daily structure and routine, and/or obtaining paid employment or volunteer work in a particular field of interest. Knowing and reflecting on your goals can help you prepare to learn more and ask questions.

When initially learning more about a program or service of interest, it is helpful to seek information from a variety of sources. Reading information available online is a good place to start. You can also ask within your personal network to learn from individuals who might have first-hand experience with a particular program or service. Reaching out to a service provider directly to set up a meeting or attend an information session can provide you an opportunity to ask questions.

It can be helpful to brainstorm questions that will help you decide if a program or service is a good fit for your goals. The following are a few examples of questions you may want to ask:

- Are you providing in-person or virtual services currently?
- Can you describe your program/ service?

- Is there a waitlist for your program?
- How do you include families in your services?
- What are your outcomes or success rates for finding employment?
- Can you give me an example of someone you have supported recently?

We recommend contacting more than one program or service provider to ask questions as this can help you compare your options when making a choice.