
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007EIA0021-001237
Oct. 4, 2007

Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance

PROVINCE FUNDS HIGH-TECH SPEECH AIDS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

VANCOUVER – The Province is funding a one-time \$4.2-million grant to the BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for communication devices and services that help young adults with disabilities, announced Employment and Income Assistance Minister Claude Richmond.

“There are many young adults in this province who cannot voice their thoughts and bright ideas due to severe communication disabilities,” said Richmond. “Government is pleased to team up with dedicated community organizations to make sure these young adults have access to highly advanced technology to more fully participate in their communities and make themselves heard.”

The BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports is partnering with Communication Assistance for Young Adults (CAYA) to provide alternative and augmentative communication devices and related supports. The grant ensures adults between the ages of 19 and 27 will have continued access to the technology after they complete school. Currently, all students in the British Columbia public school system have access to specialized communication equipment.

“CAYA addresses the crucial transition period to adulthood when students begin building the foundation for the rest of their lives,” said Carole Taylor, Finance Minister and MLA for Vancouver-Langara. “Communication devices can help enable them to reach their fullest potential, whether they’re at home, school or work.”

Through the services provided at CAYA, clients and their families can receive an assessment of their communication needs, equipment through a loan bank, training on how to use the equipment and follow-up services including technical support and maintenance. High-tech communication devices, which cost an average of \$6,000 and as much as \$12,000, provide many options including text-to-speech synthesis, dynamic visual displays and access through switch scanning and Morse code.

“At CAYA, we see many young adults and their families across the province who cannot afford specialized equipment,” said Simon Cox, executive director of the BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports. “Through partnerships with the government and community, we’re able to give these people a voice, whether it’s through a speaking aid or alternative communication methods.”

Since CAYA began in 2005, it has provided services to approximately 150 people, of whom 90 have received communication devices and 60 are beginning or currently in the assessment process. The clients are predominantly in their late teens or early twenties and have a long-term disability.

“Our program is filling a distinct need in this province that requires specialized equipment, something you can’t simply find in an electronics store,” said Jeff Riley, manager of CAYA. “Over time, we plan to continue raising awareness about this need and create a sustainable loan bank for more British Columbians with severe communication disabilities.”

The provincial government has proclaimed Oct. 4, 2007 as International Awareness Day for Alternative and Augmentative Communication in British Columbia. Canada, along with a dozen other countries across five continents, will participate in events and activities to spread awareness of Alternative and Augmentative Communication during October 2007.

To enhance access to the many programs, supports and devices available to British Columbians with disabilities, the B.C. government recently launched the toll-free Personal Supports Information Line. Callers can talk to call agents and have their specific questions answered by calling 1 888 818-1211. For people who use TTYs, the number is 1 800 661-8773.

Media Richard Chambers
contact: Communications Director
 250 387-6489

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.