
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance

\$500,000 GIVES A VOICE TO MORE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

VICTORIA – The provincial government is providing a one-time grant of \$500,000 to the Communication Assistance for Young Adults (CAYA) program to expand their services to adults up to 35 years of age, announced Employment and Income Assistance Minister Claude Richmond.

“With this grant, more people with severe communication disabilities will receive the supports needed to communicate with their friends and family – something that most of us take for granted,” said Richmond. “This investment supports the government’s Disability Strategy to make British Columbia a leader in Canada as a place where people with disabilities live the life they choose.”

“Our government wants every British Columbian to achieve their very best, both in school and in life,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond, whose ministry created CAYA in 2005 in partnership with Special Education Technology BC. “This grant will help adults with communication disabilities to participate fully in their families, workplaces and communities.”

Through the services provided at CAYA, clients and their families can receive an assessment of their high-tech 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 cost an average of \$6,000 and as much as \$12,000, providing many options, including text-to-speech synthesis, dynamic visual displays and access through switch scanning and Morse code.

“By choosing symbols or text on a portable device, British Columbians who otherwise cannot speak can voice their thoughts,” said Jeff Riley, manager of CAYA. “The device speaks with a synthesized voice that the person can adjust to suit their personality, whether they are young or old, woman or man.”

Previously, CAYA provided specialized equipment and supports to individuals between the ages of 19 and 27. By extending the age limit up to 35, the \$500,000 grant will allow more adults to receive supports and services. The new grant builds on the one-time \$4.2-million provincial grant provided to CAYA in 2007.

“CAYA fills a unique need in this province by providing specialized communication supports to adults after they leave the public school system,” said Simon Cox, executive director of the BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports. “CAYA enables adults to become more independent and contribute to their community through employment, volunteering and recreational activities.”

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The government is providing the grant to CAYA through the BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports, which has worked with CAYA since the program began in 2005. They have provided communication devices and support services to approximately 195 people.

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