



**BALANCE**  
for Blind Adults

**One Step at a Time**

[www.balancefba.org](http://www.balancefba.org)

**BALANCE FOR BLIND ADULTS**

**Strategic Plan 2016-2020**

(plain text version)

**A recognized and connected rehabilitation provider for  
people living with vision loss in Toronto**

---

## Letter of Transmittal

### **Welcome to our BALANCE for Blind Adults 2016-2020 Strategic Plan:**

As a result of recent accountability changes, we are pleased to join as a health service provider reporting to Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC LHIN) as of April 1, 2016.

BALANCE is committed to ensure that our efforts are aligned with TCLHIN's strategic directions in the transformation of the community services sector as a key health service provider for people with vision loss in Toronto. Together with our partners, we are uniquely positioned to play an important role in creating an integrated system of care.

BALANCE for Blind Adults will continue to ensure our clients come first. We will continue to work within a quality improvement framework in all aspects of our organization. We know we play a valued role in our integrated health system.

We look forward to participating with other providers to ensure people living with vision loss in Toronto with multiple issues obtain the necessary support to function independently and live with dignity in the community.

In setting this strategic plan, the Board of Directors ensured that it consulted with both our internal and external stakeholders. Their perspectives have assisted in creating the directions and priorities set forth in this plan.

We look forward to implementing our strategic directions in order to ensure value-add contribution is made to enrich the lives of people living with vision loss in Toronto.

Meenakshi Venkatesan

Board Chair  
(On behalf of BALANCE for Blind Adults  
Board of Directors)

---

## Executive Summary

BALANCE for Blind Adults is a community based health service provider in Toronto that has been in existence for 30 years to assist people living with vision loss to live independently with dignity in their homes. Its role has evolved over the years and it is currently providing rehabilitation services to people with vision loss in Toronto. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care through the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC LHIN).

This Strategic Plan sets out the overall directions of BALANCE for Blind Adults as a community-based health care provider that is committed to provide relevant programs in partnership with other providers to enable people with visual impairments in Toronto to live independent and productive lives.

This Strategic Plan was developed through extensive engagement with the Board, staff, comments obtained from 78 past clients surveyed and interviews with the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC LHIN) and some external agencies. It takes into consideration the broader Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's strategic directions: ***"Patients First: A Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Health Care In Ontario, December 2015*** and the ***Toronto Central LHIN's Strategic Plan 2015-18.*** Through the implementation of this strategic plan, BALANCE will strive over the next four years to be recognized as a leader in the provision of needed supports to enable vision impaired people to maximize their independence to live safely in their homes and lead productive lives.

During our consultations and in assessment of the current environment we established some of the critical factors that have influenced the development of this Plan including:

- The priorities of the government and TC LHIN
- Emerging trends in the healthcare environment
- Delivering quality services within a limited funding envelope
- On-going transformation within the community services sector (CSS) locally

It is the intent of BALANCE to ensure that as this Strategic plan is implemented over the next four years it is considered as:

**An effective, grassroots nimble and connected provider for people living with vision loss to enable them to function independently in the community---a go-to place for people who are blind to seek support to live effectively in the community**

---

**Mission:** To generate opportunities for those living with vision loss through innovative, inclusive, community-orientated programming and partnerships.

**Vision:** All people are living a quality, enriching life and engaged with communities free of social barriers.

**Values:** BALANCE for Blind Adults core values include:

- Enhancing quality of life through skill development, support and encouragement
- Providing an open and flexible learning environment to meet the individual needs of all participants
- Inspiring participants to be active within the community
- Valuing each participants' unique circumstances and supporting active community engagement
- Partnering with community members to build an inclusive and supportive network of resources
- Supporting the use of new technology to improve accessibility and enhance everyday living
- Motivated, quality people are our primary resource and the foundation of our success.

### **Magnitude of Need for People who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Canada**

**(From "The Path to Change-CNIB 2014-18")**

- Half a million people in Canada are living with blindness or partial sight that impacts quality of life
- Social isolation is a major risk for persons with visual impairment
- Only one-third ( 1/3<sup>rd</sup> ) of working adults with vision loss are employed
- About 50% of Canadian working age adults with vision loss are struggling to make ends meet on \$20,000 or less
- Only 32% of working age adults who are blind have some level of employment (P/T or F/T)-*Statistics Canada 2011*

**Estimated Population with Visual Impairments in Ontario, 2014**  
**(source: CNIB)**

---

An estimated 189,000 people in Ontario are partially sighted or blind. Within Toronto Central LHIN boundaries there are an estimated 17,344 individuals or about (9.3%) of the total population. Given that 4 other LHINs boundaries also include a portion of the City of Toronto, the estimated population of persons who are blind or visually impaired in the entire City of Toronto is estimated at 35,585 individuals.

### **Current Profile of Balance Clients:**

The following represented a general profile of BALANCE's clients living with vision loss in 2015:

- Adult (19-65 years)
- 60% are female
- Come from diverse cultures and include many new immigrants
- Clients come from all over the City of Toronto.
- Many are from low socio-economic status-(fixed income or unemployed; many with high school level of education)
- Several co-morbid conditions (depression, ABI, addiction)
- Need more immediate support to enable them to live independently
- Many seek assistance in use of technology for daily living (use of internet to shop on line; do banking, fill in government assistance forms etc.) and some seek assistance in use of main stream software for pre-vocational employment.

### **Critical Factors to Guide Strategic Priorities**

**To guide its strategic priority setting BALANCE took into consideration the following Critical Factors:**

#### **1. Management of the Transition Period**

BALANCE is undergoing an exciting transition period with a revitalized "new" board and a new Executive Director and as of April 1, 2016 is reporting to the LHIN-Toronto Central LHIN. These welcome changes require a transition period as necessary progressive changes are made to further improve the impact of its services to people with vision loss in Toronto.

---

## **2. Align BALANCE's Strategy with TC LHIN's and government's agenda**

BALANCE recognizes that its strategic plan needs to be aligned with TC LHIN's transformation agenda and overtime grow as needs and opportunities present

## **3. Develop and leverage effective partnerships and adopt systems thinking**

In order to meet the multiple needs of its clients, building and leveraging effective partnerships and working together with other agencies to better serve the clients will be a key driver of BALANCE's modus operandi.

## **4. Manage Expectations**

BALANCE will need to consider what services it can realistically provide within its fiscal capacity and where it can advocate and partner with other providers to support the multiple needs of people with vision loss in Toronto to live and independent, safe and productive lives.

# **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2016-2020**

1. Enhance Internal Organizational Capacity
2. Create Robust External Stakeholder Relationships and Partnerships
3. Strengthen Balance's Core Service Capacity
4. Build Capacity in the Community
5. Build Brand Recognition

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:**

### **Enhance Internal Organizational Capacity**

---

With a revitalized Board, a new Executive Director and transfer of reporting relationship to the TC LHIN, BALANCE will improve its internal operations and create an enriched staff capacity to ensure it continues to deliver quality services and is a viable value-add service provider.

### **Goal 1: Strengthen overall management leadership and enhance governance capacity**

- BALANCE will contribute to a positive and inclusive culture, by ensuring stable and sustainable provision of needed services for people living with vision loss in Toronto.

### **Goal 2: Review and enhance the existing human resource capacity**

- BALANCE will foster an effective HR strategy to improve team work, professionalism and overall performance

### **Goal 3: To strengthen overall internal business processes, Balance will:**

- Streamline business processes in client service delivery to improve consistency and efficiency, freeing up front line staff to focus on quality service delivery
- Provide reliable and consistent data on clients seen by staff in all service areas
- Ensure all services meet quality assurance standards

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:**

### **Create Robust External Stakeholder Relationships and Partnerships**

#### **Goal 1: Engage in TC LHIN transformation agenda for the community sector**

Work with the TC LHIN, other health service providers and networks of CSS agencies to further BALANCE's role and its contribution to the overall agenda of the TC LHIN as it relates to people living with vision loss.

---

- ❑ Be an engaged agency with TC LHIN's transformation agenda deliberations with the Community Support Services sector

## **Goal 2: Explore partnerships with existing networks of providers and like agencies**

- ❑ Assess role of existing networks involved in partnership initiatives (e.g. care coordination & navigation)
- ❑ Link with like agencies to promote the needs of people living with vision loss including improving access under Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA)
- ❑ Seek appropriate funding partners to enhance services provided by BALANCE

## **Goal 3: Represent the organization to external stakeholders and community leaders**

# **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:**

## **Strengthen Balance's Core Service Capacity**

BALANCE will review and strengthen its core service capacity to support people living with vision loss to live safely and independently in the community as a result of numerous factors including:

- ❑ Consideration of demographic changes and evolving needs of people living with vision loss to live safely and independently in the community
- ❑ The transformation and integration agenda of Toronto Central LHIN as the funder,
- ❑ Technological changes
- ❑ Government policy implementation for the disabled community in Ontario through the(Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) which became law in June 2015

## **Goal 1: Strengthen BALANCE's core services**

Review current range of client services offered including Independent Living (IL), Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Access to other Community Services and Access to Technology (AT); with a view to continue to support clients (many of them have cultural barriers and co-morbidity challenges) who require more intensive service to live safely

---

and independently in the community as this is an area where there is a gap in service availability in Toronto.

## **Goal 2: Improve Capacity in the Assistive Technology discipline:**

- Explore further expansion of training in technology to enable independent living (e.g. keyboarding, use of adaptive technology and ability to use internet daily living
- Pre-vocational training in use of mainstream software
- Explore other approaches to maximize delivery of access to technology including:
  - Training of trainers (similar to what was done for SCI)
  - Web-based training
  - Group/Classroom based training
  - Other

## **Goal 3: Explore fee-for-service opportunities as “specialists” for example:**

- Employment sensitivity training
- Development of additional services through fee for service (e.g. employers needing information and consultation in order to properly support employees with vision loss, grants for special projects, and donations

## **Goal 4: Broaden access to key “wrap around” range of services available to adults living with vision loss by strengthening the integration of BALANCE’s services with other related community service providers.**

- Develop effective linkages with key providers to provide support to people living with vision loss to live independently in such areas as:
    - a) Mental health
    - b) Vocational rehabilitation
    - c) Assistive devices
    - d) Eye clinicians
    - e) Seniors care
    - f) Related service providers
-

## **Goal 5: Increase vocational rehabilitation capacity for people living with vision loss;**

- develop collaborative partnerships with government ministries involved in disability related programs.

## **Goal 6: Create a community advisory group of people living with vision loss and their caregivers to provide a forum for periodic feedback on services provided by BALANCE and in implementation of its strategic directions.**

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:**

### **Build Capacity in the Community**

The demographics of people living with vision loss are changing with significantly more culturally diverse and an aging population. These factors, along with their need for support from multiple providers in order to live independently in the community, requires BALANCE to collaborate with others to ensure that clients' ongoing needs are met. Because permanent vision loss remains a low incidence disability, many in the community are not familiar with how to accommodate such persons, and do not realize that with the right community supports, many of these people with vision loss can live independently at home.

## **Goal 1: Explore the role BALANCE can play as an expert resource to providers of services to seniors.**

- Given the current aging of the baby boom generation, and resulting increase in vision loss, explore opportunities to assist and orient frontline workers who provide care to seniors and have little background and training in vision loss issues and challenges---e.g. personal support workers

## **Goal 2: Enhance socialization capacity by connecting clients to existing forums in the community.**

## **Goal 3: Create an awareness with eye clinicians in the community of BALANCE's role and core services it provides to the community**

## **Goal 4: Increase awareness amongst ethnically diverse communities on issues facing people living with vision loss in the community and where to seek assistance to improve their quality of life.**

---

- ❑ Link with community agencies that work with culturally diverse communities
- ❑ Work with other community agencies to empower BALANCE staff to be trained in cultural sensitivity.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:**

### **Build Brand Recognition**

**Goal 1: To support all of the above Strategies BALANCE will focus on improving communications and marketing using various media including social media presence, website redesign and print brochures and other such means.**

#### **BALANCE for Blind Adults 2015-16 Board of Directors:**

Meenakshi Venkatesan (Chair)  
Robin Dafoe  
Sandra Derencinovic  
Amish Lakhani  
Michelle McQuigge  
Chelsea Mohler  
Stephen Ricci  
Bob Stark  
Gordon Walker

#### **Our Thanks to all those involved in developing the Plan including:**

Consumers and Family Members  
Employees  
Board Members  
TCLHIN  
Health Care Service Providers

---