

Funding scheme to help those with disabilities to be extended to all ages, for all uses



Isabel Morris, who suffers from low visibility, is learning to read using assistive technology at iC2 PrepHouse, a centre which helps and supports people with poor vision. A funding scheme to help people with disabilities pay less for assistive technology devices will be enhanced in August, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam announced on Tuesday, March 17, 2015. - PHOTO: NEW PAPER FILE

By Priscilla Goy (goyshiyi@sph.com.sg)

SINGAPORE - A funding scheme to help people with disabilities pay less for assistive technology devices will be enhanced in August, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam announced on Tuesday.

The Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) is currently only for disabled students and workers to buy assistive technology devices, such as Braille typewriters, for use at school or in the workplace.

The fund will be extended to help people with disabilities of all ages and for all uses, including those buying devices for daily living, and those who may be in therapy and not working.

To help more middle-income families benefit, the monthly per capita income cap for eligibility will also be raised from \$1,500 to \$1,800.

In addition, each beneficiary can benefit from more subsidies under the fund. An ATF beneficiary will be able to receive up to \$40,000 of subsidies in his lifetime, double the current \$20,000 cap.

Mr Tharman, who is also Finance Minister, said the lifetime cap would be increased as people may need more money to replace their assistive devices. Their needs for assistive technology devices may also change as they move across different life stages, from education to employment and retirement.

He announced these changes at a charity dinner to mark the 63rd anniversary of the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped (SAVH). All the enhancements will take effect from August.

With these enhancements, the number of ATF beneficiaries is expected to double to 400 each year.

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