

Easter Seals Ontario Factsheet



GENERAL FACTS

- Founded in 1922, Easter Seals Ontario has been one of the most influential organizations in driving the needs of children and youth with physical disabilities to the forefront.
- Over the past 100 years, the organization has been a leader in developing and initiating several ground-breaking programs and services to improve the lives of kids with physical disabilities.
- The children Easter Seals Ontario serves have lifelong physical disabilities and require the use of expensive mobility and accessibility equipment. Many of their families face tremendous emotional and financial strain and need somewhere to turn for help.
 - Of the families who requested equipment funding from Easter Seals and self-reported their annual income in 2020, 62% reported a total family income under \$60,000. In addition, 45% of families had a total annual household income under \$40,000; and 24% had a total family income under \$20,000.
- Easter Seals serves nearly 500 Ontario regions and communities, from Windsor to Ottawa and remote communities in Northern Ontario.
- Easter Seals provides funding to help families purchase costly accessibility and mobility equipment for their child.
- Easter Seals is a leader in providing inclusive, specialized recreational programming through its two fully accessible camp properties near Perth (Camp Merrywood) and London (Camp Woodeden) and remote camp platforms.
 - Camp Woodeden is located on 107 acres of scenic woods overlooking the Thames River in London, Ontario. Originally known as “Woodholm,” Easter Seals acquired the property in 1946 to create a camp in southwestern Ontario for Easter Seals kids. A truly unique feature to Woodeden is its fully accessible tree house. Overlooking the Thames River, the house provides a safe place for campers to participate in a variety of activities.
 - Easter Seals Camp Merrywood sits on 30 acres between Smiths Falls and Perth in eastern Ontario and is located on a breathtaking peninsula stretching out into Rideau Lake. Built in 1948, the camp began as a camp for kids with polio with only six campers attending in its first year. Campers get to experience a variety of trips off of the camp property. There are three to six-day canoeing trips and white-water rafting expeditions with Owl Rafting.
- Easter Seals offers scholarships to help youth with physical disabilities achieve their dreams of post-secondary schooling. Through the generous support of our donors, \$14,450 was awarded in post-secondary scholarships in 2020.
- Easter Seals champions issues facing children with disabilities through public education and awareness initiatives, participating in government consultations and on provincial advisory committees, and sharing information and resources.

SERVICE & PROGRAM FACTS

- In the first nine months of 2021, Easter Seals Ontario received over 683 requests for equipment funding totalling over \$1.26 million.
- In 2020 Easter Seals filled 611 requests for equipment funding totalling \$1,085,300. On average Easter Seals funded \$1,791 per family for equipment.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Easter Seals fully accessible summer camp program did not operate for the first time since it began in 1937.
- Over the years, Easter Seals camps have provided overnight summer experiences for an estimated 45,500 children, youth and young adults with physical disabilities from across Ontario.
- In 2020, as an alternate to in-person camp, Easter Seals developed its first remote online camp program, Camp E-aster Seals, which ran during July and August. Any child age 6 or over registered with Easter Seals Ontario was eligible to participate in the remote camp program for free.
- As a result of the success of Camp E-aster Seals over the summer, the program continued with regular sessions throughout the fall and a five-day Winter Camp program in December.
- Overall, Easter Seals offered 11 remote camp sessions and 1,639 remote camper experiences in 2020.
- It is estimated that over 174,000 parents, siblings and extended family members of children with physical disabilities have also benefited from the break in normal routine that Easter Seals camps provide.

HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS & SIGNIFICANT DATES

- On November 28, 1922, representatives from seven Rotary Clubs came together to form the “Ontario Society for Crippled Children,” later to be renamed “Easter Seals Ontario.”
- 1931 - Easter Seals launched a public campaign for the universal pasteurization of milk to help stop the spread of tuberculosis
- 1935 – Easter Seals was the first organization to employ nurses to carry service into the home
- 1937 – Through the generous support of Rotary Clubs, Easter Seals opened Blue Mountain Camp in Collingwood, the first Canadian camp for children with physical disabilities
- 1947 – The first Ontario mail fundraising campaign was sent out at Easter time. Included in the package were the decorative “seals” that would become our namesake
- 1952 – Star athletes, including champion wrestler “Whipper” Billy Watson and Conn Smythe, started to get involved with Easter Seals, contributing innovative fundraising event ideas that live on to this day
- 1962 – Easter Seals opened the Ontario Crippled Children’s Centre, now known as Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. It was considered the most outstanding treatment centre for children with physical disabilities in the world
- 1973 – Easter Seals partners with Hospital for Sick Children to launch “Track Three Skiing,” the first downhill skiing classes for kids with physical disabilities.



- 1975 – “Whipper” Billy Watson initiates the first Snowarama fundraiser
- 1978 – Easter Seals is instrumental in establishing a network of children’s treatment centres throughout the province and creating a formal alliance, now known as Empowered Kids Ontario
- 1981 – The Ontario Society for Crippled Children officially changes its name to The Easter Seal Society, Ontario
- 1982 – Easter Seals is the first to create a public awareness and prevention campaign focused on bike safety and helmet use in Ontario
- The first Easter Seals post-secondary scholarships were established. Through the generous support of donors, we continue to award scholarships to assist youth with physical disabilities in achieving their dreams of post-secondary education
- 2002 – Easter Seals sponsors a public awareness campaign to promote the importance of folic acid during pregnancy
- 2020 – Easter Seals’ launches its first remote camp program, Camp E-aster Seals, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, offering campers accessible, camp-style activities and a way to connect and interact with other kids during a time when they needed it the most