

IMPACT REPORT

DEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION



CHEO's Development and Rehabilitation supports over 5,000 children annually, offering tailored services for those with physical, developmental, and behavioural challenges. CHEO's team of experts addresses a variety of issues related to mobility, communication, eating, and self-care. Children and adolescents may need development and rehabilitation assistance due to an accident, injury, illness, or lifelong condition. Thanks to donor contributions, these young individuals can continue to enhance their abilities, confidence, and self-esteem.

This report highlights the ways in which your contributions have enabled children and youth to live their best lives. Please continue reading to discover several examples of how your support is significantly enhancing Development and Rehabilitation services at CHEO.

Helping families purchase quality items essential to their child's development

The CHEO Family Assistance Fund helps families with the extra costs associated with having a child with a disability. Often government funding sources and private insurance plans do not fully cover the cost of equipment that is needed to support children with special needs. This past year, thanks to donor support, The Family Assistance Fund has supported over 75 children and families with a wide variety of specialized equipment and gift cards. Some equipment and supplies that have been purchased include custom swings, protective helmets, adaptive seats, wheelchair parts, adapted strollers, bathing equipment, grocery expenses, and travel costs to medical appointments.

For example, you helped a family pay the extra cost for a specialized Roll'er Chill-Out Chair for their 15-year-old daughter. This chair helped to improve her daily living by reducing the amount of chair transfers at home, school or in therapy sessions. The chair's built-in accessories such as the feeding and activity tray, and ottoman support offer comfort and seating. This is just one example of many, showcasing how families benefit from real improvements to their daily life thanks to you.

Empowering parents to take a key role in their child's language progression

CHEO's Speech-Language Pathology team offers a variety of tools to foster language in a child. Recognizing the power of early intervention in the home environment, the Hanen programs are designed to provide parents with the tools to promote their child's language development during everyday activities. Led by a certified Hanen Speech-Language Pathologist, parents follow resource guides and workbooks, attend group classes and one-on-one sessions with their child. From children who are late talkers to children on the autism spectrum with a wide range of verbal abilities, these programs play a role in helping families communicate.

Empowering parents to take a key role in their child's language development in the home environment has shown to produce incredibly positive outcomes. Each Hanen program requires an illustrated training manual that can be expensive for some families. It would be difficult to follow the program and implement the strategies taught without this book. With your support in 2023, approximately 130 training manuals were provided to families in need.

Families have provided feedback that they are very appreciative of this generosity, and Speech-Language Pathologists have also shared that parents have commented that they use their Hanen manual as a resource beyond the actual Hanen training.

Providing leisure opportunities to children and youth who cannot access recreation in the community

The Recreation Therapy team at CHEO uses recreation and leisure activities to support children and youth aged six to 18, with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, and autism. This specialized team focuses on a child's strengths, enhancing the skills they already have while helping develop new skills. Additionally, they provide a safe and supportive environment where children and youth can build their confidence in sports and physical activity, social integration, life skills, and arts.

Most of the programming takes place in the community, giving children and youth real-world community recreation experience. With generous donor support, the Recreation Therapy team delivered seven weeks of summer camp programming in 2023. Approximately 42 children and youth accessed a wide variety of adapted recreation activities including, but not limited to, science, whitewater rafting, musical theater, learning about and caring for animals, cooking, and learning to take the city bus.

This specialized programming would not be possible without the support of donors who provide financial assistance to staff positions and program support.

Meet Nadine

Five-year-old Nadine has had a unique medical journey. After prenatal tests revealed a rare congenital heart defect, a surgical intervention was performed while she was still in the womb. The operation was a success and Nadine's heart was able to function at about 80 percent. However, this did not spell the end of Nadine's hardship, as she required open heart surgery at birth and was later diagnosed with craniosynostosis, a condition that causes the bones in a baby's skull to join together too early. A proud CHEO School student with a confident and friendly attitude, Nadine is a shining example of resilience. [Watch this young warrior thrive in the face of health challenges.](#)





Empowering children to conquer challenges, build confidence, and embrace new opportunities

The CHEO Preschool Summer Program aims to help children and youth foster self-esteem, promote physical development, cognitive development, build social skills and friendships, and become active participants in the community.

Thanks to donor generosity this past year, a total of five weeks of programming was offered, helping six children each week. No child received more than one week of service as the demand was so high and a waitlist for service was established. In total, 30 individual children attended the program throughout the summer.

Educators and program staff created an exciting environment where children and youth could participate in many different activities. Many of the social outings included trips to museums, libraries, community parks, wading pools, and outdoor walks. These exciting activities were successful in helping children overcome obstacles, grow self-esteem, and participate in new experiences.

“We love this program. The staff are so enthusiastic and engaged with our child. They were just as excited as us to share in our child’s accomplishments and special moments of the day.” – Parent of child who attends the CHEO Preschool Summer Program

Research in Development and Rehabilitation

Development and Rehabilitation physicians involved in research are grateful for the support of a donor-funded research coordinator. These specialists would not be able to pursue their important research work without the research coordinator’s assistance.

In 2023, the research coordinator facilitated the successful start-up of a new research project called Parents’ Perspectives on a Virtual Feeding Program, which provides valuable information on the usefulness of CHEO’s feeding program after transitioning from an in-person to virtual group format. The research coordinator worked closely with the principal research investigator to draft the proposal and other study documents including consent forms and the study questionnaire.

The research coordinator also continues to assist with other new and ongoing research projects within the department of Development and Rehabilitation, including data analysis, poster presentations, publications, and assisting with funding opportunities and applications.