

Keeping Families Strong

Supporting the community network that sustains every child

When Rachael was born with Pulmonary Heart Dysfunction, doctors performed open heart surgery that saved her life. She is now closely monitored by the cardiology team at Children's, which is close to home and close to her heart. Rachael and her mom, Lisa, are now helping improve care at Children's by sharing their family's experiences through the Family Advisory Council.

When a child is not well, the whole family hurts. When a child is living with a disability, the whole family helps. That's why Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre and Thames Valley Children's Centre (TVCC) care for and support the entire family, helping children, siblings, parents and extended family members cope in times of great stress. The specialized family support programs at Children's Hospital and TVCC count on donations to Children's Health Foundation to ensure these programs are always available.

Family-Centred Care Program

The Family-Centred Care Program at Children's Hospital supports a Family Advisor, creates many opportunities to involve patients and families



Rachael, age 7

"A mother's arms are made of tenderness and children sleep soundly in them."

Victor Hugo

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formally and informally, and provides education for staff about the importance of family-centred care. Children are the experts on what hurts and what works for them. Parents know their children at the deepest level. Siblings have a special, often wordless, understanding of one another. That's why it is so important to integrate patient and family voices in all aspects of care. Research shows that family-centred care improves patient and family experiences, quality, safety and satisfaction.

Parent Mentors

When it's time for a child with special needs to go to school, parents must work with the school to ensure that their needs are met and they can participate as fully as possible. Through the TVCC Parent Mentor program, parents have access to volunteers who have navigated this complex path – people who are willing to share their experiences, help explore options, and help parents build strong relationships.

Family Resources

Families often face tough diagnoses and must make complex decisions about care. They can feel adrift in a world of medical terminology. The Internet is an endless source of information, but it's difficult to know which information to trust. The Paediatric Family Resource Centre at Children's Hospital and Information Resources at TVCC offer patients, clients, family members and staff members easy and convenient access to reliable information about children's health and medical care. The extensive resources available

to families include: reference books, parent guides, computer programs, children's books on health issues, videos and audio recordings. Most importantly, these centres are staffed by information experts, ready and willing to help families find the information they need.

Legal Support

When children are seriously ill, families often encounter legal problems – anything from issues of access to care, to concerns about employment, immigration, social assistance or housing. Finding the right legal advice can be time-consuming and expensive, at a time when parents want to focus on their child's health. A new service at Children's Hospital ensures that a lawyer is on site several hours a week to meet with families about legal issues that may arise with no cost to the family.

Family Assistance Fund

When a child is critically ill or injured, life is put on hold. Parents are at the hospital when and for as long as they need to be – and that can create financial strains. Especially for families from outside London, a hospital stay can mean time off work and significant travel, parking and accommodation expenses. The Family Assistance Fund helps families by providing gift cards for expenses such as gas, food, long distance phone calls, and accommodation. When we help families cope with the extra costs of hospitalization, we're ensuring that they're fully present for their children, supporting them to heal and get strong.

When you contribute to Children's Health Foundation, you're helping children be children, whether they're undergoing treatment for cancer, living with a disability, or visiting the hospital for day surgery. By supporting any one of the many programs available at Children's, you're giving a warm hug and an encouraging smile to children facing adult-sized challenges.



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