



2021 Annual Impact Report

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Reflections from our Chair and CEO

Anniversaries are often a time of reflection. 2021 marked 60 years of MedicAlert in Canada.

Wind the clock back to 1961, and you'll find a period of rapid social change. Traditional governmental roles were shifting, and Canadians enjoyed greater access to medical care with the introduction of public medical insurance. Longer life expectancies brought greater attention to the challenges of chronic disease. The decade also ushered in one of the most significant waves of immigration Canada has ever seen bringing with it the need to reflect on how chronic health conditions and social determinants of health impact populations differently. Overall, however, public health seemed to be taken for granted and there was resistance to official messages about vaccination, tobacco, water fluoridation and automobile safety.

Fast forward to 2021. Public health was again at the forefront of the Canadian psyche. All eyes were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and its ever-increasing impact on Canada's most vulnerable populations.

After having provided protection for nearly 1.5 million Canadians since our inception, MedicAlert spent 2021 listening to and learning from our stakeholders. *What was most important? How do we have a greater impact? Who needs our services most? Where will we focus our time, energy and efforts in the coming years?*

The results have been palpable. Research showed us that when it comes to their health and well-being, 30 per cent of people living in Canada consider themselves a vulnerable person. Three-quarters say they have one or more health conditions, with allergies and hypertension topping the list and that they feel more vulnerable because of their health condition, and 19 per cent agree their health condition hinders their confidence to ask for help.

Most important in all of this for MedicAlert and the work that we do is this:

Nine-in-ten say if they were ever in trouble, they want first responders to know if they have a health condition and 84% would feel safer in their day-to-day life knowing their health information is accessible to first responders in the event of a health emergency.

What did this tell us? *There's still work to be done.*

The pages of this Report reflect the approach MedicAlert began to take in 2021 and will continue to take going forward. It is our mission to provide high quality health information at a time when people are their most vulnerable. It is our daily work to ensure that people living in Canada remain safe and that their feelings of vulnerability can be mitigated with effective programs and services.

Our work requires a wide group of individuals to achieve success. From our dedicated team of professional staff to our first responder partners, and most certainly our donors whose generosity ensures we can continue to provide a critical set of services and programs Canadians want and deserve. For the past 60 years, our impact has been felt from coast-to-coast-to coast. Today, we are building for the next 60 years.

Sincerely,



Blair Bigham
Chair, Board of Directors



Leslie McGill
President & CEO

Our Programs

A six-year-old struggles to breathe during a class outing. An 84-year-old wanders away from his home on a bitterly cold winter night. A teenager with mental health challenges brandishes a knife in a public parking lot. While out shopping, a woman with fibromyalgia has a fainting spell. A 60-year-old man with atrial fibrillation is at home alone when he experiences symptoms of stroke.

Every day in every community across Canada people experience health emergencies when minutes, even seconds, count. Paramedics, emergency room doctors, police officers, firefighters and others are there to help, but they need accurate, up-to-date information to understand the issues their patients face and respond accordingly. MedicAlert is an essential part of the healthcare system -- a massive, well managed database designed to provide urgently needed information quickly and efficiently, across the health system.

MedicAlert has been keeping Canadians with health conditions safe for more than half a century. People across Canada wear MedicAlert bracelets, depending on us to speak for them when they can't speak for themselves. First responders count on our accurate, up-to-date information.

But as the health system becomes increasingly complex and fragmented, we know that our existing model must change, and our services must expand. As one board member has put it, "MedicAlert isn't a bracelet company anymore."

MedicAlert is taking bold steps to better prepare to meet the needs of people who are experiencing health crises, and the women and men who support and care for them. Why? Because we understand what is at stake when health information is unavailable or inaccurate: *human lives*.

IDEA: Ensuring that we're there for all people

It sounds simple enough: build a subsidy program to ensure that those who need MedicAlert but can't afford it are supported.

Today, MedicAlert does just that, distributing some \$500,000 in charitable assistance to enable people who have limited financial means to subscribe to our service.

But in reality, it's not simple at all. There are complex reasons why some groups – racialized communities, Indigenous people, people living in poverty, homeless, LGBTQ+, new immigrants and others – face barriers to accessing MedicAlert and other health services that go far beyond the financial. Research shows that the "social determinants of health" consistently result in inequitable access to care. This was especially stark during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people of color were significantly more likely to be infected than non-racialized groups.

In 2021, MedicAlert implemented a new Eligibility Assessment tool that brings together an income means test with other factors related to the social determinants of health. Dubbed Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (IDEA), the digital tool uses a weighted scale to assess the challenges that each individual may face in getting the care they need. Because MedicAlert is a trusted entity, people are willing to provide the personal information needed to make these assessments.

Now that IDEA has been piloted and shown to be effective, it's clear that our subsidy program must grow to keep pace with the needs we have identified.

We are currently supporting 500 people per year through IDEA. We estimate that 40% of the Canadian population needs MedicAlert, and 2% of those individuals fall below the access level. That means we must increase the program to support at least 250,000 people who might otherwise fall through the cracks at times of crisis.

Debbie's Story

Debbie gazes out the window. It's a hot, sunny afternoon in the "Hammer" – the infamous nick name for Hamilton, Ontario where Debbie has lived for 30 years.

While it may be warm now, Debbie knows it's not long until winter will come sweeping across the Niagara escarpment. For someone facing homelessness, it's a daunting thought.

"I'm no stranger to difficult times," the longtime MedicAlert subscriber says. "I've lived with asthma since I was a child, and type 2 diabetes for over 30 years. I'm allergic to latex and beta-blockers and have lived with depression for most of my life. More recently I've developed diabetic neuropathy which causes balance problems. I'm also living with hypertension and have thyroid medication because of my diabetes. And thanks to COVID and my auto-immune problems, I've been unable to work."



It's this latest set of circumstances that worries Debbie the most. It meant some hard choices and a lot of juggling.

"I'm facing an uphill challenge. I don't have enough money to pay for food, so I am a regular at my local food bank. I struggle with paying for my prescriptions, let alone my rent. I've applied for housing assistance, but the wait list is phenomenally long. I receive occasional support from my mom, but she has her own financial problems and some new health issues to manage."

Adding to Debbie's stress was the fear she'd have to cancel her MedicAlert subscription. "I felt like I was at the end of my rope. I was so worried about everything and I had such little control over what I could do. I couldn't bear thinking I was going to lose MedicAlert. It's been a lifeline for me."

Thankfully, because of MedicAlert's Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Action (IDEA) Program that helps individuals who may find it more challenging to access health care services for a host of reasons, Debbie was able to have her subscription subsidized.

"I was so relieved to learn MedicAlert has a program that can help me as I try to get over this hump in my life. Having the ID and the service makes me feel 100 per cent more protected. What am I going to do if something happens and I'm caught out during a medical emergency? I don't want to be a burden on my family, and I'm very independent, but my MedicAlert ID and the information about my medical conditions that are on my medical profile provide me with huge peace-of-mind."

Being able to be a part of MedicAlert's IDEA program is a big win for Debbie, who hasn't had many wins as of late.

"With my MedicAlert subscription assured, I can turn my mind to other things like housing. But I'm grateful that no matter where I end up, my MedicAlert protection comes with me."

No Child Without 2.0: Helping children thrive

When a parent says goodbye to their child at the school gate, there is always a small sense of concern. Will they be safe, understood, and supported during the day? Will they come bouncing out at the end of the day, full of health and confidence?

For parents with children who have special needs or live with medical conditions, these concerns loom much larger. Parents advocate to ensure that the people who care for their children understand their needs, support their resilience, and know how to act in a time of crisis.

For many years, most recently through the generosity of our donor community, MedicAlert has provided a subsidy program to ensure that children who need our traditional service receive it. More than 45,000 children in 6,000 schools across Canada have received this support, but the waiting list is three times as long.

More important, we have heard from parents that the service alone is not enough to ensure the safety, wellness, and inclusion of their children.

No Child Without 2.0 is an “encircled care” program designed to:

- Give children the tools they need to self-advocate and help peers understand and empathize
- Support teachers to adopt more inclusive approaches in the classroom
- Train first responders in school-specific skills
- Provide parents with additional tools to give them peace of mind when they are not there to be a voice for their children.

It is a comprehensive, holistic program that goes beyond simply intervening at a time of crisis to helping parents and children manage their physical and mental health proactively.

MedicAlert is re-imagining *No Child Without* evolving it into an age-appropriate self-advocacy program for children. The program will help them gain a sense of control over their lives and fight discrimination and bullying. Children will learn self-care and resilience, develop a sense of empowerment, and build their self-esteem.

At the same time, *No Child Without 2.0* will ensure that teachers know how to include the needs of all children in school activities, foster understanding and empathy, and overcome perceived barriers to physical education participation.

Programming will also include training for first responders, to help them learn about de-escalation strategies for children with mental health issues and those on the autism spectrum.

A unique aspect of the program is child-to-child mentorship. Our goal is to identify peer mentors in each school and involve them in curriculum development and delivery, and community programs with first responders.

For parents, we will develop a *Parent Portal* with up-to-the-minute resources, direct contact with leading experts, and live webinars, all focused on building knowledge about keeping their children safe in school and beyond.

Ultimately, *No Child Without 2.0* will help children with special needs and medical conditions feel safe, confident, and empowered at school. It will ensure that their classmates understand and accept them, and that teachers and first responders know how to respond in a crisis. It will reassure parents who daily entrust their children to others.

Cadence's Story

It's a busy day in Kyrie Herman's household. Emotions are high. Her husband, Adam, is working remotely while living with chronic pain. Their children Cadence, 14 and Holden, 11 are schooling remotely as they have recently tested positive for COVID-19.

These circumstances are especially hard for Kyrie and Cadence who both live with a connective tissue disorder known as Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. The disorder affects the skin, joints and the blood vessel walls in the body.

"I've lived with this syndrome for most of my life, and it was heartbreaking to learn that my daughter inherited this debilitating disease. This is something that no parent wants for their children. Cadence is battling with this syndrome at the same severity I am, and she's 25 years younger than I am."

Overwhelmed with grief and struggling to make sense of how to best manage and care for their family, Kyrie and Adam searched online to find resources to help them.

"I first learned about the No Child Without Program after signing up for MedicAlert four years ago. I've had too many close calls where I was unable to speak, and as severity of Cadence's health ailments progressed, I knew that it was only a matter of time before she could be at risk."

Cadence also lives with a variety of allergies and has an extreme reaction to the cold.

"Living in northern Alberta where the temperature can get to -30C, means we're on high-alert. She can't go outside most of the year, and it's become so bad that even popsicles can affect her body to the point she'll faint."

Fortunately, Kyrie had signed Cadence up to MedicAlert's No Child Without Program.

Still, there are more children who live with severe health conditions who also need this program which is funded by MedicAlert donors.

"It breaks my heart to think of a parent who is unable to afford a MedicAlert ID for their child. I'm grateful Cadence is a recipient of the program and as her MedicAlert ID gives me peace of mind whenever she's away from home. I just hope more families like mine can get access to have the same relief I have."



Connect Protect: Improving 911 and Supporting First Responders

Dr. Blair Bigham, MedicAlert's Chair of the Board, started his career as a paramedic and now works as an emergency physician, so he knows the frontlines of emergency response well. He understands that health information is incredibly fragmented. Information can be shared on five or six different platforms across the health spectrum, so it's likely there will be gaps. MedicAlert fills those gaps.

Through the Connect Protect program, MedicAlert ensures that its subscriber data is available to dispatchers in police services across Canada, helping to reduce the time it takes to find a wandering person.

Now we are taking the next step. Our new Health Exchange Linking Police 911 (HELP-911) project will ensure that when a MedicAlert subscriber makes a 911 call from a registered number, their critical health data will be automatically transferred to the computer of the first responder answering that call.

“Using the MedicAlert database makes a big difference as to whether we locate this person as quickly as possible, especially in inclement weather. And that can be a matter of life and death.”

~Kimberley Walker, Major Case Management & Missing Person Coordinator, Hamilton Police Service

In 2021, MedicAlert partnered with RapidSOS (an emergency response platform that securely links data from 350M+ connected devices directly to emergency services and first responders) to begin development of the technology. This complex project is expected to take five to seven years to complete. Steps include:

- Piloting the HELP-911 project with the Ottawa Police Service
- Evaluating the pilot and making adjustments as required
- Planning a national roll-out
- Promoting registration across Canada, to increase the number of people we can help
- Developing software required to run on other 911 systems across the country
- Implementing the national roll-out

Knowledge, it is often said, is power. The help and support of our donors and corporate partners will help to ensure information is in the hands of first responders more quickly.



Antony's Story

Anna woke up to a piercing scream. It was her mother. The front door was wide open, and she could not find her 11-year-old grandson, Antony.

“She was screaming ‘He’s gone! He’s gone!’ and my heart stopped. I had no idea where my son was, or how long he’d been out there.” It wasn’t the first time Antony had bolted from their Edmonton, Alberta home, but it was the first time Anna had not been awake to see it happen.

Antony was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) when he was a toddler. In Antony’s case he is non-verbal, impulsive and has trouble calming himself enough to fall asleep. Anna says, “He’s always been a runner,” and that the adult family members in her household will take turns staying awake at night, just to be sure Antony doesn’t find a way out of their home.



One night in 2021, after their usual routine of securing their house for the evening, Anna, her mother and Antony settled in for what they knew would be a long sleepless night. Eventually, Antony dozed off, but not in his bedroom where they would typically be able to secure his door. Exhausted, Anna and her mother also fell asleep.

Anna is not quite sure how it happened, but Antony woke up, took her keys from under her pillow without waking her, found and took the family’s passports, opened the front door and went out into the night. She thinks he was likely trying to find the Value Village thrift store they often visit to look for Antony’s favourite toys. It’s not where he ended up.

Not long before Anna and her mother woke up to the terrifying scene of Antony being missing, Edmonton police got a call. A young boy had broken into a home. He was panicked but could not communicate and the family was concerned for his welfare.

A few moments later, police arrived on scene. Just weeks before, one of the officers had been through MedicAlert’s Connect Protect first responder training. He recognized the special red and blue coloured MedicAlert ID that signals to officers that Antony lives with autism. He was able to get Antony to show him the ID, so he could relay the ID number to Edmonton 9-1-1 dispatch.

Through MedicAlert’s Connect Protect Program that links authorized, authenticated dispatch officers directly to the MedicAlert Subscriber Health Information Database, the central dispatch officer was able to log-in to Antony’s MedicAlert record and provide the officer on scene with Antony’s name, Anna’s name and the family’s address. In the meantime, Anna had called 9-1-1 to report her son missing. Dispatch was able to tell her that Antony had been found and what route the officers were taking to bring him home.

Anna was instantly relieved. Thousands of images had been flashing through her mind. What if he had run out onto the main road near their house and been hit by a car? What if he had found his way to the North Saskatchewan River that meanders through the north end of the city and had drowned? Or worse; what if someone had taken him?

Anna had trouble sleeping after the incident, fearing Antony may run again; however, she knows Edmonton police know what to do to help her son return home. “I can’t put a price on how important Antony’s MedicAlert subscription and the Connect Protect Program. MedicAlert saved my son’s life. Who knows what would have happened without it.”

Focusing on the Future: The MedicAlert 2022-2024 Strategic Plan



In 2021, the MedicAlert Board came together to focus on the future of the organization and where our work fits within the healthcare system.

MedicAlert is unique among health charities in Canada. While our colleagues in disease-oriented charities focus on disease eradication through research or disease management through education and programming, our primary focus is data and information exchange from the health system user to the first response triage – the very beginning of trauma or emergency health services. In short, we are the bridge that connects the community to the hospital, the doctor's office or the clinic.

Our work is ripe for disruption from the private sector. Yet the uniqueness of Canada's pride and joy – our healthcare system – means Canadians want something different than disruption from commercial enterprise, and they are willing to trust MedicAlert to deliver. In short, it is truly our long-term vision to be integrated into the healthcare system.

That vision will take time to achieve.

The 2022-2024 Strategic Plan identifies five core objectives that will enable MedicAlert to best serve our mission and our vision and facilitate our goal for what people living in Canada need and want us to be now -- a digital-first, service-based organization.

PEOPLE

Act in areas where MedicAlert can make an important contribution

ORGANIZATION

Become a digital-first organization

Stabilize and increase net revenue

PURPOSE

Strengthen and Scale Our Charitable mission

Enhance our capacity for advocacy

The 2021 MedicAlert Board of Directors

Officers of the Corporation

Dr. Blair Bigham – Chair

Leslie Quinton – Vice Chair

Alex MacBeath – Treasurer & Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Leslie McGill – Corporate Secretary, President & CEO (ex-officio)

Directors

Doug Craig – Past Chair of the Board

Dr. Catherine Boivie – Chair, Digital Transformation Committee

Dr. Lisa Chillingworth-Watson – Director

Jonathan Game – Director

Danny Lew – Director

Edward Odumodu – Director

Isabelle Oliva – Chair, Human Resources Committee

Ruth Ramsden-Wood – Chair, Fundraising Committee

Sara Jane Snook – Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee

Dr. Ahmad Zbib – Director

Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION

To put every Canadian in a position to benefit from high-quality health information at time of need.

VISION

A world where no one is alone in their time of need.

VALUES

A world where no one is alone in their time of need.

EXCELLENCE - We were founded to save lives and are responsible for excellence in everything we do. We believe in personal accountability and confidently taking bold actions to achieve our mission.

COLLABORATION - We multiply our social contribution through collaboration. We learn and innovate by listening to our members, health practitioners, first responders and other key partners. We pro-actively cooperate with all stakeholders because we know that together we can achieve more, faster.

KINDNESS - We are respectful, caring, considerate and friendly – striving to walk in the shoes of those we serve to make a difference every day.

DEDICATION - We are passionate about the important work we do. Integrity, initiative, professionalism and enthusiasm characterize the way we deliver our services. We take pride and satisfaction in the quality of what we do and offer.

TRUSTWORTHINESS - We are honest, reliable and dependable. Our clients can always count on us to follow through and to achieve positive outcomes.

Financial Management

MedicAlert is a registered Canadian charity dedicated to responsible fundraising and asset stewardship. As a team, we are committed to the responsible management and oversight of MedicAlert's financial resources. We are governed by a Board of Directors that works in the service of long-term preservation and enhancement of the organization while maintaining our aim to protect more Canadians.

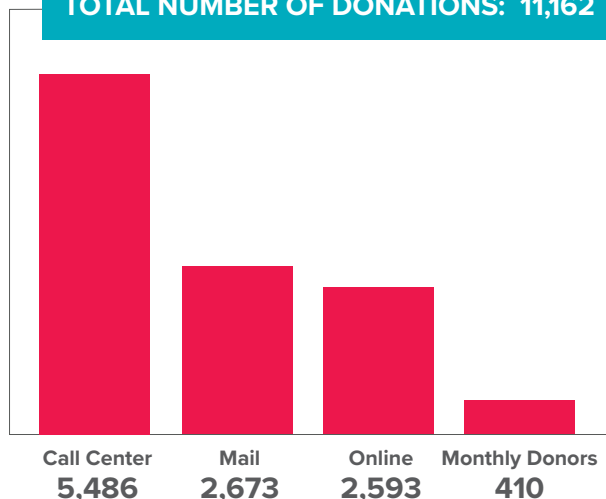
We appreciate that knowing how we use your contribution is important for you to understand. Our aim is to direct the maximum amount of your donation to our charitable mission of protecting those with health conditions in an emergency. It is also essential that we care for and treat our highly qualified staff fairly and provide them with the resources they need to continue doing their outstanding work.

In 2021, charitable donations and government grants comprised 9% of MedicAlert's total revenues, with 86% of revenue coming from subscription fees and product sales and 3% from government subsidies for COVID-19 relief. MedicAlert invested 76% of its total expenses on its charitable mission, 21% of its expenses on administration and 3% of its expenses on fundraising.

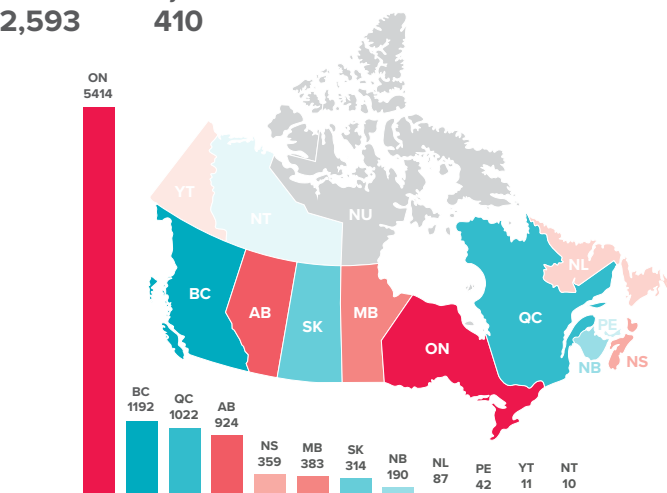
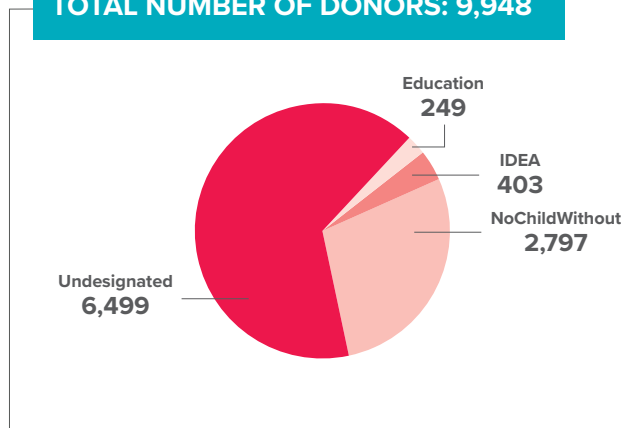


MedicAlert By the Numbers

TOTAL NUMBER OF DONATIONS: 11,162

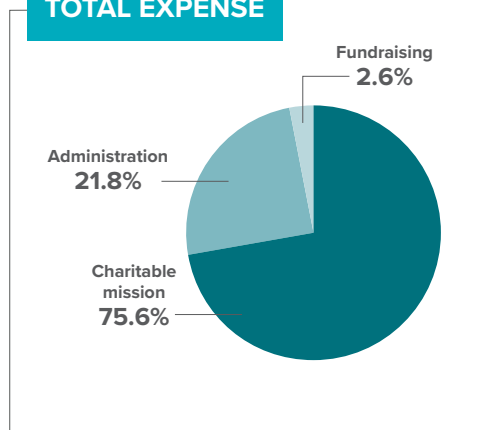


TOTAL NUMBER OF DONORS: 9,948

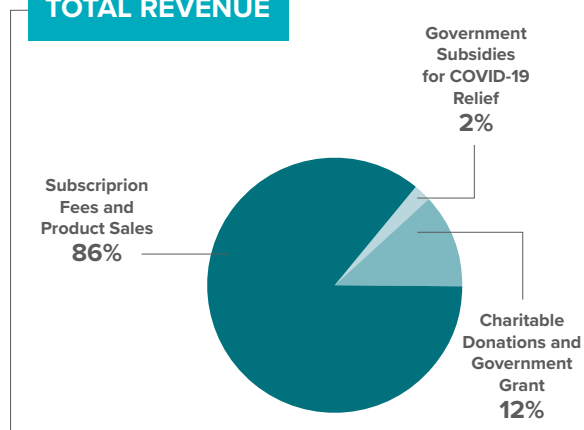


NUMBER OF DONORS BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY

TOTAL EXPENSE



TOTAL REVENUE





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