



Easterseals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut

Subject: A Brief History

In **July 1939**, under the joint auspices of The Hartford Tuberculosis and Public Health Association and The Connecticut Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Inc., the Hartford Community Workshop opened its doors on Main Street in Hartford. The caseload then was comprised mainly of people with tuberculosis. These patients required a limited work program for increasing physical endurance before they could resume regular employment. In March 1940, The Community Workshop moved into the Charter Oak Hospital building on Wethersfield Avenue. After World War II, the caseload at the Workshop changed gradually to physical disabilities and the Connecticut Easter Seal Society assumed sponsorship of the program in 1946. It is from this beginning that Easterseals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut, Inc. was created.

In **1948**, the Hartford Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center was incorporated and a local Board of Trustees assumed the governing function. The Company became a chapter of the Connecticut Easter Seal Society and Ms. June Sokolov was selected to serve as the Company's Director. The City of Hartford leased space on Franklin Avenue to the Company for a minimal yearly rental and The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving and various service clubs and organizations contributed essential equipment.

In **1954**, growth dictated larger facilities and a move was made to the H.I. Jones Home, the former McCook Hospital premises on Holcomb Street. The Company was subsequently forced to divide its programs and to rent sheltered workshop space on Pliny Street.

In July **1970**, the Company joined the Visiting Nurse Association, the University of Connecticut Health Center Outpatient Clinics, and the Hartford Health Department as occupants of the Burgdorf Health Center, located at 80 Coventry Street. This facility doubled the amount of space that the Company had available, enabling expansion of service program offerings.

In ensuing years, the Company grew steadily. Its staff increased to approximately 80 people. Its caseload grew from 150 to over 1,000 clients, who annually receive treatment or training services. It was during this period (specifically 1976) that, with the assistance of Mr. Vernon Roosa, that the HeadLite was designed and put into production in the Company's sheltered workshop program.

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In **1978**, Ms. Sokolov retired from her position of Company Director, closing a distinguished career of service to the Company and individuals with disabilities. At that time, Mr. David Daugherty assumed the role of President of the Hartford Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center.

In March 1980, the Hearing Improvement Center merged with the Company, expanding the Company's capacity to provide comprehensive audiological services. The Hearing Improvement Center maintained a separate facility in West Hartford until July 1, 1985, when it was returned to private ownership.

In April **1983**, the Company received Medicare certification as a Comprehensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Facility (CORF), thus allowing the Company to receive greater benefit from Medicare reimbursement for services rendered.

The Company entered a new phase of treatment service in October 1983 with the establishment of "To Better Independence," a day treatment program providing physical and cognitive rehabilitation for individuals with a brain injury.

A satellite facility on Sheldon Road in Manchester was opened in October **1987** to serve a population of clients East of the River. The Manchester facility initially housed the manufacturing of HeadLite under a grant from the General Services Administration. A new HeadLite, developed in 1991 for the U.S. Navy, also went into production at this facility. The HeadLite production activities were consolidated back into the Hartford facility in December 1994.

A building maintenance service was established in **1991**. Under a grant from the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) program, the Company employed individuals with significant disabilities to provide building maintenance services at the Cotter and Ribicoff Federal Buildings in downtown Hartford. In September 1991, the Company purchased a building at 100 Deerfield Road in Windsor. To accommodate the changing focus of rehabilitation, the Company moved its medical programs and administration to this 21,300 square foot facility. Vocational rehabilitation services remained located at the Burgdorf Health Center location. It was at this time that the Company's official name was changed to Greater Hartford Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

In August **1995**, the Company executed an affiliation agreement with Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and The Rehabilitation Hospital of Connecticut. With this historic agreement, Greater Hartford Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center positioned itself to join within a continuum of care for rehabilitation services that would span from Saint Francis' trauma center to the newly opened Rehabilitation Hospital of Connecticut to Saint Francis' home health care to Greater Hartford Easter

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Seal Rehabilitation Center's outpatient day treatment programs and vocational rehabilitation. Under the terms of the agreement, the Company's Board of Trustees was reorganized to build representation from both the Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and The Rehabilitation Hospital of Connecticut. Dr. David D'Eramo, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saint Francis, became the Company's President and Chief Executive Officer and Dr. Allen Gouse, President of the Company just prior to the affiliation agreement, became the Executive Director.

With the 1997 closing of the Burgdorf Health Center, the Company's vocational programs moved to the DeSales Hall Building, located at 338 Asylum Street in Hartford. Both the vocational rehabilitation program and HeadLite™ manufacturing operation moved to this Saint Francis Care property in October of 1997.

Also in **1997**, Greater Hartford Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center became a direct affiliate of The National Easter Seal Society. The Company had previously functioned as a "local" affiliate of the Connecticut Easter Seal Society. With a goal of broadening its rehabilitation services to all of Hartford County, the Company had made application for direct affiliation and that application was approved by the National Board. At that time, the fundraising territory of the Company was established as Hartford, West Hartford, East Hartford, Windsor, Bloomfield, Farmington, Wethersfield, Newington, South Windsor, East Windsor, Windsor Locks, and East Granby. In 1998, the National Board approved the Company's request to permit the delivery of medical, vocational, and pediatric rehabilitation services and fundraising activities in all towns within Hartford County, except Southington. Fundraising events occurring in Hartford County towns within the fundraising territory of Camp Hemlocks were approved subject to payment of 10% of the net profit of an event to Camp Hemlocks.

In **1998**, the Company changed its name to Easter Seals Greater Hartford Rehabilitation Center, in order to conform, pursuant to its Easter Seals affiliation, with the brand identity requirements of the newly renamed Easter Seals, Inc.

In 1999, the organizational employment services and school-to-work programs were relocated to Veeder Place, a totally renovated facility located in Asylum Hill. All other vocational rehabilitation staff relocated to the Windsor facility, once again integrating the vocational and medical aspects of the Company's comprehensive approach to rehabilitation.

In 2003, the Board of Trustees modified its bylaws to more clearly establish the Company's legal and programmatic autonomy from Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and The Rehabilitation Hospital of Connecticut. An agreement for clinical and operational collaboration was executed to maintain valued ties between the two organizations. The Board, however, was restructured to eliminate the classes of trustees through which Saint Francis Care organizations served on the Board. Dr. Allen Gouse retained his position as the Executive Director and assumed the role of Chief

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In November **2009**, in an effort to consolidate all of our Vocational Programs in one location, the Vocational Rehabilitation, Organizational Employment, and School-To-Work programs were relocated to Prestige Park Circle in East Hartford.

In December **2009**, as a result of the reorganization of Easter Seals affiliates in Connecticut, some programs and territories in Norwich and Chaplin that were previously served by Easter Seals Connecticut were reassigned to Easter Seals Greater Hartford Rehabilitation Center, Inc. To better reflect the newly expanded territory, our name was changed to Easter Seals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut, Inc. Shortly after the reorganization, the Chaplin operations were consolidated into the more programmatically suitable facility in Norwich.

In **2017**, in accordance with our affiliation agreement with the National Office our name was changed to Easterseals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut, Inc., in conjunction with the implementation of a new name, logo, and tag line of Easterseals Inc.

In **2020**, Dr Allen Gouse retired after 26 years of service and was succeeded by Robin Sharp.

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