

# Emergency card can keep vulnerable kids safer

## Port Colborne woman creates system to relay vital emergency information

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Logan Cooper and his sister Avery know where to find their emergency medical card: attached to their backpack. The cards can be used to convey important medical information to first responders. - James Culic/Torstar



Since kids tend to have their backpacks with them when they are away from the house, it's a great place to keep a record of their specific medical needs, in case of an emergency. Logan Cooper and his sister Avery know to keep theirs with them. - James Culic/Torstar

Peace of mind is a wonderful thing, but for parents of a child with special needs, it can be tough to come by.

Morgan Cooper's son, Logan, has Down syndrome and a complex set of medical needs. Back in 2015, she was in a tight spot when her husband was heading out of town for three months of travel with work. Meanwhile, she also had Logan's 10-month-old baby sister to care for at the same time.

"With adequate medical services thinning throughout the region I was in a panic," recalled Cooper, who also organizes the local Special Olympics youth program. "What do I do if Logan has an emergency and he is at school, or I can't take the baby in the ambulance? I needed a plan."

Looking for an answer, Cooper reached out to the emergency medical services office in Port Colborne, where she says she received great advice from Kim, a local dispatcher.

“She also gave me the key to peace,” said Cooper. The dispatcher told her to write down everything she knew about Logan’s medical history, and how best to communicate his specific health-care needs to first responders.

“As the primary parent in our house I took him to every doctor appointment, every specialist, every therapy session and every ER visit,” said Cooper. Years of parenting had burned that information into her memory banks, but what if she was forced to recall that information in the heat of the moment during an emergency situation. “What if I was not present during an emergency? What if I was present but incapacitated? How would they know his allergies, surgical history, medications or even his name?”

Cooper eventually solved this problem by creating the Emergency Medical Card (EMC) system. The card, which is linked to an online account and is accessible via smartphone or computer, contains an itemized list of everything a first responder or doctor would need to know during a health emergency. The card also contains potentially life saving details, like the fact that Logan will reliably answer yes/no questions, but, that he is unlikely to disclose when or where he is experiencing pain.

Cooper keeps one of the EMC cards near the front door of the house, and a second copy pinned to his backpack.

“In that moment I experienced peace,” said Cooper. “I was no longer the only source of this vital information. And as Logan is getting older his EMC allows him to enjoy a more natural level of independence. He goes to camp, participates in community sports and sleeps over at his grandparents. I just make sure I send him with his EMC.”

For more information about an EMC, including how to register and maintain one for your own child, visit [www.livingoutloud.education](http://www.livingoutloud.education).