



**Brockville
General Hospital**

Right here, with you.



**Lanark, Leeds & Grenville
Ontario Health Team**

Working together to improve care in our communities

Essential Care Partner Orientation Guide





Welcome

Thank you for stepping into the role of an Essential Care Partner (ECP). Your support makes a real difference in someone's care experience.

This guide is here to help you feel more confident in your role—whether you're involved in care at home, in a hospital, at a clinic, or in a long-term care setting.





What Is an ECP?

- An ECP is someone chosen by a patient to be involved in their care and support.
- You could be a family member, friend, neighbour, or any trusted person.
- Your role is unpaid.
- You're not just visiting, you're part of the care team.
- Your role may include emotional support, helping with routines, attending appointments, or assisting with communication.



As part of the care team, ECPs play an important role in keeping patients safe, improving care, and supporting health and well-being.



Who Can Be an ECP and How They're Chosen?

- Patients have the right to choose their ECP.
- Their choice is based on trust and support, not necessarily legal or family status.
- In hospital or clinic settings, consent is needed for someone to be named and involved.
- If a patient cannot speak for themselves, their Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) may identify an ECP, and the SDM may also serve as the ECP when appropriate.
- Being an ECP does not provide legal authority, it's about meaningful support and presence.



Why Essential Care Partners Matter

- You bring comfort, familiarity, and trust to someone's care experience.
- Your involvement improves communication, reduces stress, and strengthens relationships with care teams.
- Studies show that care outcomes are better when patients feel supported by someone they trust.

As an ECP, you help make care more personal, respectful, and informed.





How You Can Help

Your involvement will depend on your loved one's needs and the setting.

You may be asked to:

- Provide emotional/cognitive support and companionship
- Assist with personal care, help with meals, repositioning as needed.
- Attend primary care appointments and help track questions or concerns.
- Participate in discharge planning or care conversations.
- Support transitions from hospital to home or other care settings.
- Participate as an active member of the patient's care team.
- Alert the care team when they see a change in the patient.
- Advocate and support patients in their decision making.





What's Not Expected of You

There are boundaries to the ECP role. You are not expected to:

- Restricted clinical tasks unless trained.
- ECPs provide meaningful emotional and practical support, but they do not replace health professionals and must stay within clearly defined care plan boundaries.
- Lift or physically transfer someone without proper training.
- Make legal or financial decisions unless you have formal authority.
- Replace healthcare staff or act on behalf of others.





Being Safe and Respectful in Care Settings

Wherever you're involved, safety matters, for you, your loved one, and others.

FOLLOW
RULES

- Complete any required self-screening before entering care facilities.
- Follow PPE requirements (masks, gloves, etc.) if applicable.
- Use designated restrooms and respect physical boundaries in shared spaces.
- Know what to do in emergencies and follow staff instructions.



Protecting Privacy and Consent



- As an ECP, you may learn private health information. It's important to respect that trust.
- Don't share details with anyone who isn't part of the care team.
- Avoid talking about health information in public spaces like hallways or waiting rooms.
- Don't post about your loved one's care on social media without clear permission.



Ask if you're unsure what can be shared, there's no harm in double-checking.



Patient Privacy and the Law in Ontario



- Ontario's Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) protects the confidentiality of health information.
- Information can only be shared with consent, or in specific legal circumstances.
- Patients have the right to see and correct their health records.
- Health organizations must notify patients if a breach occurs and report serious incidents to the Privacy Commissioner.
- You are part of protecting that right to privacy by being careful and respectful in how you handle information.



Support for You as an Essential Care Partner

You're not alone.

There are resources to help you feel supported and stay well.



Ontario Caregiver Organization

- 24/7 helpline: 1-833-416-2273
- Peer support and group programs
- Tips for managing burnout and setting boundaries
- <https://ontariocaregiver.ca>

Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence

- Builds skills and share practical resources.
- <https://canadiancaregiving.org/>



More Tools & Resources

As an Essential Care Partner, your role can shift and grow over time. Whether you're supporting someone at home, in hospital, or through transitions, having access to clear, practical tools can make things easier.

211

Website: <https://www.211.ca>

Best for: Finding local caregiver support anywhere in Canada.

- Search by postal code
- Free, confidential support to connect with community resources

CanAge

Website: <https://www.canage.ca>

Best for: Advocacy and practical advice for older adults and those who care for them.

- National policy voice for older Canadians
- Resources on caregiving, elder abuse prevention, and long-term care

Carers Canada

Website: <https://www.carerscanada.ca>

Best for: National advocacy and public awareness around caregiver rights.

- Resources in both English and French
- Promotes caregiver recognition and systemic change
- Links to regional support organizations



More Tools & Resources

Alzheimer Society of Canada

Website: <https://www.alzheimer.ca>

Best for: Caregivers supporting someone with dementia or memory loss.

- First Link® program for early-stage support
- Practical caregiving tips and behavior response strategies
- Online education, support groups, and research updates

Canadian Virtual Hospice – MyGrief.ca

Website: <https://www.virtualhospice.ca>

Best for: Caregivers dealing with serious illness, palliative care, or grief.

- Caregiver Series videos and guides
- MyGrief.ca and KidsGrief.ca for families
- End-of-life conversation tools

Canadian Cancer Society

Website: <https://www.cancer.ca>

Best for: People caring for someone with cancer.

- Caregiver-specific sections
- Help managing appointments, symptoms, and stress
- Online support community and peer connection

Carers Canada

Website: <https://www.carerscanada.ca>

Best for: National advocacy and public awareness around caregiver rights.

- Resources in both English and French
- Promotes caregiver recognition and systemic change
- Links to regional support organizations



More Tools & Resources

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

Website: <https://www.alzheimer.ca>

Best for: Trusted starting point and ongoing reference for caregivers supporting someone with heart disease or stroke—combining education, emotional support, and connections to real-world services.

- Practical, evidence-based caregiving support
- Connections to emotional and peer support
- Links to broader services and programs

Ontario Health atHome

Website: <https://ontariohealthathome.ca/>

Best for: Great resource for caregivers — especially if you're caring for someone who needs health or support services at home in Ontario

- Connects caregivers to home and community care
- Helps with care transitions
- Recognizes and Supports Caregivers

Senior Support Services - LLG

Website: <https://seniorsupportllg.ca/>

Best for: Helping caregivers manage day-to-day responsibilities while supporting their loved one's safety, independence, and wellbeing.

- Provides respite care and adult day programs, giving caregivers much-needed breaks
- Offers practical supports (meals, transportation, housekeeping, home help) that reduce daily burden
- Enhances safety and peace of mind through wellness calls and medical alert services
- Connects caregivers to local, trusted community services across Lanark, Leeds & Grenville



Thank you!

Your role as an Essential Care Partner is vital in making care safer, more responsive, and compassionate.

You bring unique knowledge, continuity, and emotional support that enrich the patient experience in meaningful ways.

We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and heart you dedicate to this role. Your commitment strengthens the partnership between patients, families, and care teams, helping ensure care is truly patient-centred.

If you have questions, need guidance, or wish to share feedback, please connect with your care team—we are here to support you.