



OHT Webinar: September 23rd, 2026

How to align caregiver support with your OHT priorities with Couchiching OHT

[View the webinar recording here.](#)

This OHT webinar featured a presentation from Couchiching Ontario Health Team and Couchiching Family Health Team focused on

- Integrating caregivers across OHT work including in the planning stages
- Embedding caregivers across OHT areas of focus
- Integrating caregiver support into their [Chronic Disease Hub](#) Pathway

About Caregivers in Ontario

- There are 4.2 million Caregivers in Ontario. This number is expected to increase to 6.5 million by 2030 ⁱ
- **Caregivers are critical to improved patient care**; their involvement reduces readmission ratesⁱⁱ and falls and injuries due to falls.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Caregiver involvement increases medication adherence ^{iv} and understanding of discharge instructions^v
- **Caregivers are experiencing distress**: 43% have considered quitting their job to provide care^{vi}, 32% say they're not coping well mentally or emotionally and 69% feel so burnt out they don't know if they can keep going.^{vii}
- **Caregiver burden negatively affects outcomes for care recipients**. It is associated with worse clinical and mental health outcomes^{viii} and increased Emergency Room visits and unnecessary hospital admissions^{ix} x

Critical Opportunity for Ontario Health Teams

- Caregiver support and inclusion helps to support caregivers and reduce distress, and contributes to the prevention of Emergency Room usage^{xi} and Alternate Level of Care Stays^{xii}
- **Caregiver support and inclusion is critical to include in care pathways and planning**

How Couchiching OHT Supports Caregivers

Through **co-design** and belief in a **shared purpose**, the Couchiching Ontario Health Team's (COHT) Patient Family Caregiver Network (PFCN) works with COHT on the following:

- Shaping and designing seamless healthcare services that meet the needs of patients, families, and caregivers
- Providing valuable recommendations on matters impacting the patient, family and caregivers of their region
- Giving voice to patients, families, and caregivers through equal voting membership on their Joint Executive Team (JET) and the PFCN co-chairs one vote at the Joint Executive Team table
- PFCN has initiated initiatives to recognize and support caregivers, such as the [Waiting Room Revolution](#), [SCALE Together](#)™ and annual caregiver appreciation days.

How Couchiching Family Health Team Supports Caregivers

- PFCN members co-designed a group program for new and existing patients and their caregivers as part of the Chronic Disease Hub for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), to ensure support along the chronic disease journey for both patients and caregivers the pathway includes the following key activities:
 - Introduction to team members, clinic function, who & when to call
 - Disease education and symptom monitoring to support patient

- Discussion of “action plan” to identify who to call when patient symptoms worsen
- Provide caregiver resource package, including OCO’s “I am a Caregiver” Toolkit and other local caregiver resources

For more, this [five-minute case study breaks](#) down how Couchiching OHT and FHT team made it all work.

ACTIONS FOR OHTS

Action Items	Resources Links and Tips
Consider Opportunities for Caregiver Integration	Create a welcoming environment for caregivers by identifying, including and supporting them at point of care
Connect Caregivers to Support	6 Easy Ways for Providers to Support Caregivers offers practical strategies for providers to recognize and include caregivers in care planning and helpful conversation prompts to check on caregivers. Connecting Caregivers to Support at Point of Care provides examples of common scenarios where caregivers could use help and the relevant programs and services to refer them to for support. Caregiving with Confidence – Couchiching Family Health Team and OCO co-designed this booklet for caregivers. Connect with us if you are interested in collaborating on a similar tool for caregivers in your region. Health Promotion in Action: Simple Strategies to Connect Caregivers to Support in Primary Care Settings Bring mental health support to caregivers on-site in collaboration with the Ontario Caregiver Organization’s SCALE Together™ program
Identify, include and support caregivers across your Ontario Health Team	Get hands-on, 1:1 organizational coaching, guidance, and proven tools with the Essential Care Partner Support Hub Team at no cost to your team Get the latest resources, news, and tools straight to your inbox when you join our Caregiver News for OHTs email list

Contact us at partners@ontariocaregiver.ca for more information or to meet with the OCO team about the resources and support we can offer your OHT.

ⁱ The Ontario Caregiver Organization.(2025) Spotlight on Ontario Caregivers. <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/OCO-Spotlight-Report-2025-Eng.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Healthcare Excellence Canada (2020). Evidence Brief: Essential Caregivers as Partners. https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/docs/default-source/itr/tools-and-resources/essential-together/evidence-brief-en.pdf?sfvrsn=103fe5b3_4

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute for Patient and Family Centred Care. Better Together Partnering with Families, Facts and Figures about Family Presence and Participation. <https://www.ipfcc.org/bestpractices/Better-Together-Facts-and-Figures.pdf>

^{iv} Healthcare Excellence Canada (2020). Evidence Brief: Essential Caregivers as Partners. https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/docs/default-source/itr/tools-and-resources/essential-together/evidence-brief-en.pdf?sfvrsn=103fe5b3_4

^v Munshi L, Odutayo A, Evans GA, et al. Impact of Hospital Visitor Restrictions during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table. 2021;2(31).

^{vi} The Ontario Caregiver Organization (2024) Spotlight Report. <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/OCO-SpotlightReport-2024-ENG-FINAL-121024.pdf>

^{vii} The Ontario Caregiver Organization.(2025) Spotlight on Ontario Caregivers. <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/OCO-Spotlight-Report-2025-Eng.pdf>

^{viii} Bidwell JT, Lyons KS, Lee CS. Caregiver well-being and patient outcomes in heart failure: a meta-analysis. The Journal of cardiovascular nursing. 2017;32(4):372

^{ix} Ankuda CK, Maust DT, Kabeto MU, McCammon RJ, Langa KM and Levine DA. Association Between Spousal Caregiver Well-Being and Care Recipient Healthcare Expenditures. J Am Geriatr Soc, 2017; 65: 2220-2226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.15039>

^x American Society on Aging(2020).<https://generations.asaging.org/caregivers-hospitalizations-readmissions>

^{xi} <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Evidence-Summary-Integrating-Caregivers-as-ECPs.pdf>

^{xii} <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/6.-Essential-Role-of-Cgs-in-Improving-Transitions-and-Addressing-Alternate-Level-of-Care-EN-2.pdf>

Contact us at partners@ontariocaregiver.ca for more information or to meet with the OCO team about the resources and support we can offer your OHT.