

A photograph of two elderly women, one with dark hair and one with white hair and glasses, both smiling warmly. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Caregiver Strategies in Action: How Great River OHT is Supporting Integrated Care through Caregiver Inclusion

Land Acknowledgement

The OCO carries out its work while acknowledging the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today. *This land is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.*

Overview for Today

1

Why are caregivers so critical to our healthcare system? What does this mean for your Ontario Health Team?

2

Caregiver Strategies in Action: Spotlight on Great River OHT

3

Tools & Take-aways for your OHT

Today's Presenters

Tracy Crowder

Project Manager
Great River OHT

Judy Dancause

Manager
Volunteer Resources
& Visitation
Cornwall Community
Hospital

Amelie Gove

Resident and Patient
Relations Advisor
St. Joseph's Continuing
Care Centre

Melissa Ngo

Implementation Lead,
Essential Care Partner
Support Hub

Alison Kilbourn

Manager
Essential Care Partner
Support Hub

Great
RIVER
ONTARIO
HEALTH TEAM



ÉQUIPE SANTÉ
ONTARIO DU
Grand
FLEUVE

Kaniatarowanénhne Kaniataríio Ata'karitéhshera Raotinénra



Cornwall Community Hos
Hôpital communautaire d



CENTRE DE SOINS PROLONGÉS
ST. JOSEPH'S
CONTINUING CARE CENTRE



THE ONTARIO

caregiver

ORGANIZATION



OUR PURPOSE

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) exists to improve the lives of Ontario caregivers; ordinary people who provide physical and emotional support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour



Improving the Caregiver and Patient Experience in OHTs



IDENTIFY
the caregiver



INCLUDE
the caregiver as part
of the care team



SUPPORT
the caregiver



Learning Events
and education



Tools and
resources

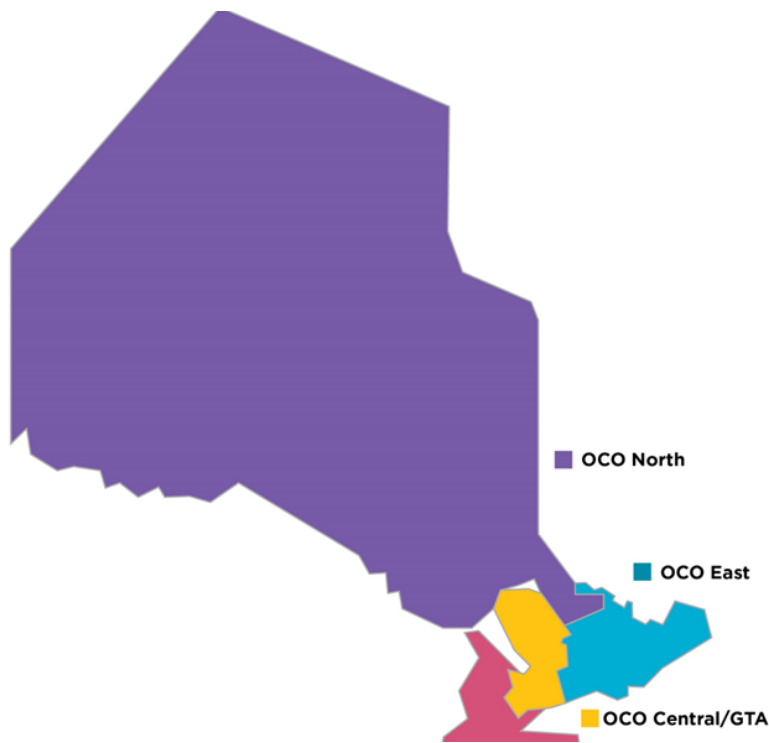


Collaboration,
Guidance and
Support



Connect
Caregivers to
Support

Caregiving at a glance in Ontario



4 million across Ontario, including young caregivers.



From every age group, with over half making up the sandwich generation



Almost half of care recipients are 75 years or older

Impacts of caregiving



Time

34% provide more than 10 hours of care per week



Work-Life Balance

43% have considered quitting their job to provide care



Finances

1 in 4 have taken out a loan or are using line of credit



Health & Wellness

32% say they're not coping well mentally or emotionally.
22% report not coping physically



Personal Relationships

72% feel so burnt out they are not sure how they will continue

Caregiver inclusion gap

Caregivers are
invaluable to care

But

Often **feel excluded from care**
(Burgdorf et al., 2019)

Caregivers can be outstanding
resources in **coordinating
complex care**

But

Often report **not being
fully incorporated** into the
healthcare team (Kim et al., 2021)

Caregivers are often
**responsible for managing
care**

But

Are **seldom asked what
they need** in order to provide
the best care (Kim et al., 2021)

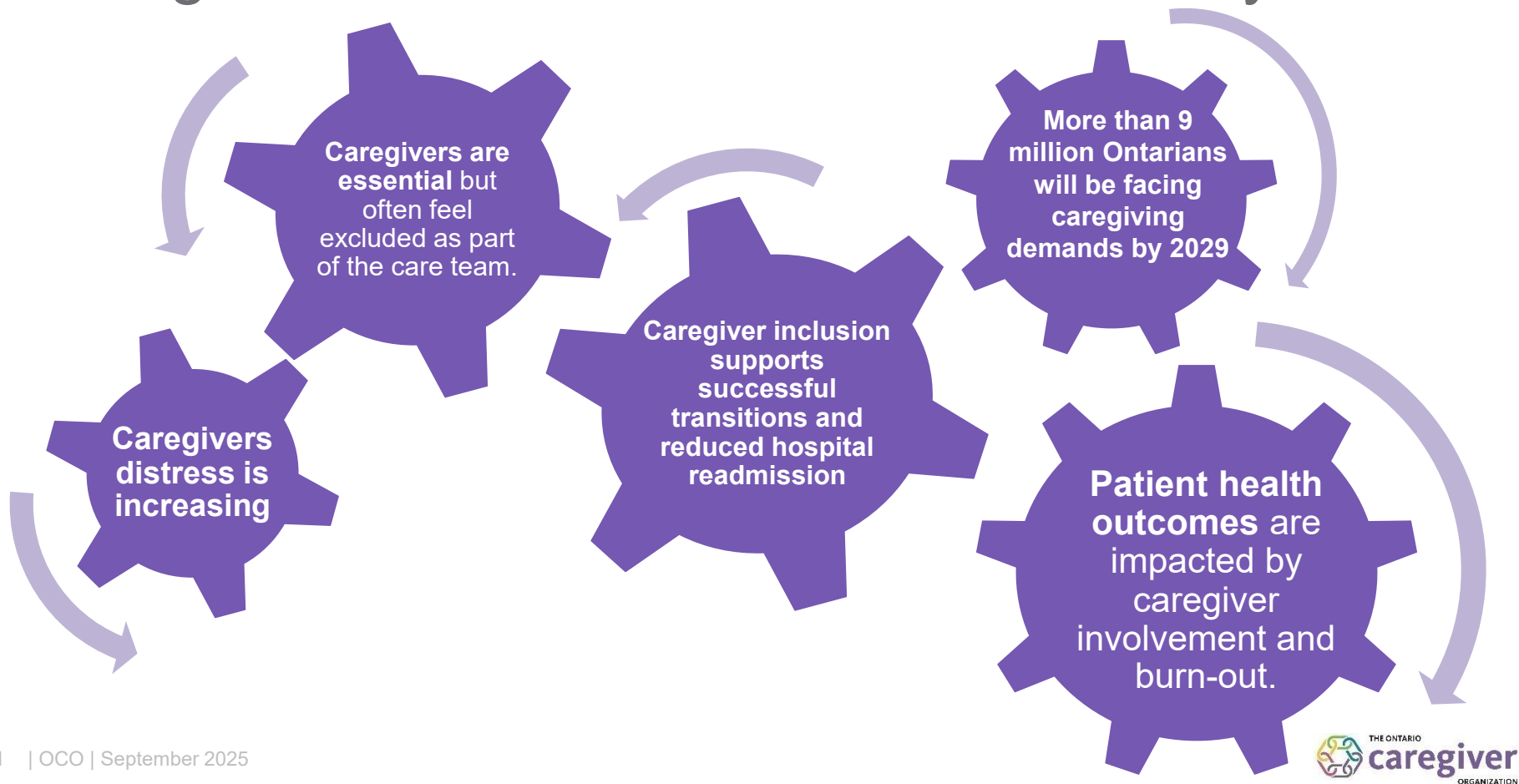
Caregivers & our Changing Healthcare System



By 2029 more than 9 Million Ontarians expect to be in a position of needing to provide care

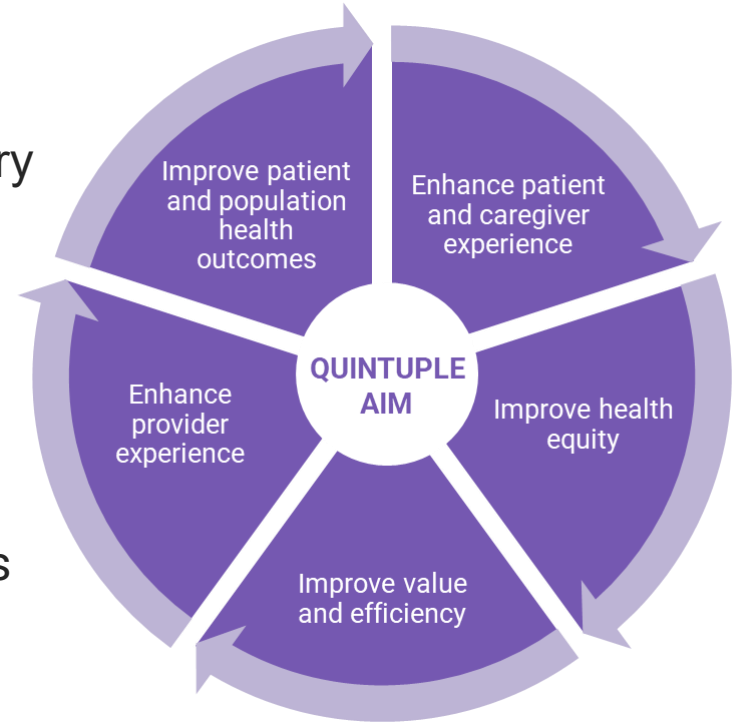
- Next 20 years, Ontario's Population will grow by 36%
- Millions more Ontarians are projected to be living with chronic illnesses
- Our province is poised to face an unprecedented demand for healthcare
- Increased pressure on family caregivers

Caregivers are critical to our healthcare system



Supporting Integrated Care through Caregiver Inclusion

- ➡ Readiness for Integrated Home Care Delivery
 - ✓ Caregivers support and manage patient care in the home
- ➡ Integrated Care with a Population Health Management and Equity Approach
 - ✓ Caregivers offer ongoing support and management of chronic health conditions
- ➡ System Navigation
 - ✓ Caregivers are often navigating services for patients



Caregiver Strategies in Action across OHTs

Caregiver oriented events

- Caregiver appreciation and recognition day
- Caregiver information day



Opportunities for caregiver identification

- Encouraging self-identification
- Enabling caregiver identification across settings



Enabling caregiver support



- Pointing to OCO on website
- Creating caregiver support resource page
- Providing caregivers with resources at key points in care

Meaningful engagement of caregivers



- Increasing role of caregivers in decision making
- Building caregivers into strategic plans



I am a
CAREGIVER

Working Together to Expand an Essential Caregiver Program Across the Great River OHT

**Great
RIVER**
ONTARIO
HEALTH TEAM



ÉQUIPE SANTÉ
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Great RIVER
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

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ONTARIO DU
Grand FLEUVE

Kanlatarowanénhne Kanlatario Ata'kanitèhtshera Raotinénra

IDENTIFY
the caregiver

INCLUDE
the caregiver as part
of the care team

SUPPORT
the caregiver

ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER PROGRAM





Great RIVER
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM



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ONTARIO DU
Grand FLEUVE

Kanlatarowanénhne Kanlatarlio Ata'karitéhsara Raotinénra

WHO ARE WE?

The Great River Ontario Health Team is a collective of regional health and social service providers working together as one coordinated team to develop a new healthcare delivery model that puts patients, families and caregivers at the centre of our healthcare system.



**Where everyone's health
and well-being matter!**

Key Components of An Essential Caregiver Program



IDENTIFY THE CAREGIVER

IDENTIFICATION

Essential care partner identification (Caregiver ID) is used to identify and formally recognize essential care partners.

CLIENT DESIGNATION

Clients/patients/residents are empowered and encouraged to designate their essential care partners(s).

DOCUMENTATION

Care partners are documented in patient files/records, including contact information and level of participation in care.



INCLUDE THE CAREGIVER AS PART OF THE CARE TEAM

STAFF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training is provided to all staff across the OHT, including partner organizations, on the important role of care partners and practical ways to include and support them.

INTEGRATION

Essential care partner role is integrated into OHT models of care, including ALC strategies, care pathways, point of care workflows, client assessment, care planning and transition planning.

COMMUNICATION

Essential care partner information and program is pro-actively communicated across OHT partners, communities, patients, families and essential care partners.



SUPPORT THE CAREGIVER

LINK TO SUPPORT

Connect essential care partners to caregiver and community supports and resources for their own well-being.

ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Essential care partners are provided education and support to validate their role and empower them to participate in care.

ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNER ORIENTATION

There is a process for onboarding and orienting essential care partners.

Who is an Essential Caregiver?



An Essential Caregiver (EC) is someone who:

- Is actively involved in the care of another person (such as a partner, family member, friend or neighbor)
- Is selected by the patient/client/resident or their Substitute Decision Maker
- Is unpaid
- Is an advocate for the person
- Provides ongoing personal, physical and/or emotional support and care

An EC **does not** have to be the Substitute Decision Maker or the Power of Attorney.

How Did We Get Started?

**2017 to
2024**

- In 2017, the Cornwall Community Hospital (CCH) launched the **Caregiver Inclusion Program**
- Led to the establishment of **CCH Family Caregiver Centre** in 2019
- Laid the groundwork for the **CCH Essential Caregiver Program**, which initially focused on the Inpatient Mental Health Unit and Emergency Department

**January
2024**

- **The Frailty Project Team** identified **caregiver support** as a key priority
- **Aligned** with OH Operational Direction Priorities Spring/Summer 2024

- Frailty Project Team developed a plan using the **SMART** framework that was then refined through the use of a **logic model**

SMART
S—specific
M—
measurable
A—achievable
R—realistic
T—time bound

**LOGIC
MODEL**
Impact
Outcomes
Activities
Resources
Outputs

Working group was formed

Working group developed workplan, project charter, and timeline

How We Engaged OHT Leadership

Initial and ongoing engagement with leadership and all members of the OHT has increased awareness and interest in the Essential Caregiver Program.

PROJECT TEAMS REPORT TO STEERING COMMITTEE Great River Ontario Health Team (GR OHT)

Section A – Background information

Date (DD-MM-YYYY):

Project Team Reporting: ☐ Primary Care

☐ Mental and Addictions

☐ Frailty

Other:

Contact Person:

Table/Team name: Frailty Project Team	Project Title: Essential Caregiver Program expansion Pilot
PRE PROJECT EVALUATION	
PROJECT EVALUATION COMPONENTS	Comments
Project Measurement	
What is the targeted population ? (ie. Healthy, high risk, high users, multiple comorbidities, age group, sex etc.)	Unpaid caregivers at SJCCC, Carefor, WDMH, HGMH, CCH
Which Quintuple Aim indicator will be influenced with this project? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Better Patient and Caregiver Experiences <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Better Patient and Population Health Outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Better Value and Efficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Better Provider Experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced health Equity	Caregivers are essential partners on the care team. They play a critical role in providing unpaid emotional, physical, or cognitive support to their family member, partner, or friend. (from the Ontario Caregiver Organization website https://ontariocaregiver.ca/essential-care-partner/overview/) Identifying and including caregivers in the care journey of patients enables better patient care, transitions in care, and decreases caregiver distress. By engaging caregivers as a partner in the patient/clients care, providers are more comfortable and aware of the role the caregiver has within the healthcare environment.
What is the baseline data for the project?	Current # of caregivers trained at CCH, caregiver experience survey responses
How will the change be measured?	Tracking number of referrals made from partners and number of staff trained at partner organizations, caregiver experience surveys, tracking number of caregivers enrolled in program and % of caregivers who do not pursue training post referral

PHASE 1 (2024)

JANUARY- FEBRUARY 2024	MARCH 2024	JULY 2024	AUGUST 2024	SEPTEMBER 2024	OCTOBER 2024
Frailty Project Team developed SMART Goals and Logic Model	1 st meeting of the Essential Caregiver Program Working Group	Staff training documents finalized	Essential Caregiver Training powerpoint finalized Communication plan finalized	Data indicators finalized Public education sessions started Referral pathways finalized	Launch of the Essential Caregiver Program Pilot

Goals of Pilot Phase (October 2024 to April 2025)



To **establish a referral pathway** from other sectors to Cornwall Community Hospital for caregiver education and picture ID badge distribution.



To **educate staff** at all partner sites to recognize and accept the Caregiver ID, and the importance of engaging caregivers as part of the care team.



To **empower caregivers** by providing training that includes IPAC, PPE, and the importance of their role as a member of the care team.

Enablers

OHT Leadership Endorsement: Provided credibility and momentum.

Partner Engagement: Strong buy-in and regular participation.

Collaborative Planning: Resulted in a clear and actionable plan.

Early Hospital Adoption: Two hospital partners had already implemented EC programs in different ways. Their experience supported **shared learning** across the working group.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Hospital partners' flexibility in aligning processes and materials with collective needs.

Access to resources:

- OCO Essential Care Partner resources
- Shared tools and lessons learned from other OHTs that had implemented similar programs
- Leveraged Cornwall Community Hospital resources to support expansion to other community organizations



Things That We Had to Think About

- Did the hospital Essential Caregiver education align with the needs of the partner organizations?
- What referral pathways would partners use to refer Caregivers to the ECP training?
- Would partners use the same staff training tools, and if so, what would they be?
- What data did we need / want to collect to inform evaluation and future planning?

Things That We REALLY Had to Think About

- **Consent**—would one consent work across all partner organizations?
- How can referring partners confirm caregiver training in order to document in EMR's?
- What if an Essential Caregiver consent was revoked? How would partners know?

Roles: Who Does What?



IDENTIFY
the caregiver

- Referral partners **identify and refer caregivers**, with signed consent, to the Essential Caregiver Program training.
- All partners document EC status in their **client/patient/resident medical record**. This process, along with the photo ID badge, are critical to ensure EC status is recognized and part of transfer of care between facilities



INCLUDE
the caregiver as part
of the care team

- All partners **recognize and accept** the Caregiver ID badge.
- All partners provide **standardized staff education** on the ECP program, including the importance of caregiver inclusion.



SUPPORT
the caregiver

- Hospitals lead the **education of the caregivers** and issues the photo ID badges.
- All partners provide any **additional organizational specific training** to support the Caregivers role within their organizations.

Phase 1 Accomplishments

(October 2024 to August 2025)

103 Essential Caregivers joined the program!

- New cross sectoral partnerships were established
- Built a culture of active problem-solving and open communication
- Standardized Essential Caregiver AND staff training programs
- Established clear, accessible referral pathways
- Developed common data collection and success metrics
- Created a comprehensive communication package



Essential Caregivers can now wear their ID badges at all 5 partner organizations, where the badge is fully recognized!



PHASE 2 (2025)

APRIL- JUNE 2025	APRIL- SEPTEMBER 2025	JULY 2025	SUMMER 2025	FALL 2025
Develop standard ECP training video	Onboard new referring partner Training sites planned implementation of ECP training	Caregiver post surveys distributed	Engagement of OHT partners for further spread Update communication plan	Launch of phase 2

Goals of Phase 2 (May 2025 to December 2025)

Establish Essential Caregiver training sites at WDMH and HGMH.

Standardize Essential Caregiver program components by developing a training video to ensure all sites provide consistent information on IPAC, PPE, privacy and the role of Essential Caregiver.

Identify and onboard additional referral partners to direct EC referrals to the 3 designated hospital training sites.

Expand Essential Caregiver training to incorporate caregiver resources from the Ontario Caregiver Organization.

Phase 2 Accomplishments (to date)

Expanded training sites: Winchester District Memorial Hospital and Hôpital Glengarry Memorial Hospital are planning to launch their first ECP training sessions in late September.

New Referral Partners Onboarding: J.W. MacIntosh Community Support Services and Dundas Manor Long Term Care Home are planning to become referral partners.

Standardized Training Videos: English and French EC training videos have been produced and are available for use across all training sites as a core component of the caregiver onboarding process.

Common Program Brochure: Created standardized brochure for public outlining how to access and connect with the Essential Caregiver Program.

Challenges

Navigating and aligning with **legal and organizational requirements.**

Ensuring sustainability in partner organizations.

Aligning Essential Caregiver Program expansion to **new OHT deliverables.**

Lessons Learned

We don't have all the answers – **and that's okay!**

Caregivers have expressed a **strong preference for local training.**

Building a cross-sectoral program takes **time and thoughtful** consideration of partners unique needs.

This project showcases **strong cross-sector collaboration** to achieve shared goals.



It's a **powerful example** of sectors uniting to support Caregivers across the healthcare system.

Perspective from a Training Partner: Cornwall Community Hospital
Perspective from a Referring Partner: St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre

Sustainability & Growth



Checklist developed to provide future **training sites** with a clear roadmap for implementation, including links to all required documents.

Essential Caregiver Training site checklist

✓	Task	Documents	Responsible person	Status
	PLANNING			
	Identify ECP lead who will ensure program is sustained			
	Identify individuals who will give ECP training			
	Arrange for individuals who will give ECP training to attend session CCH			
	Engage patients/clients/residents and caregivers in planning (e.g. PFAC)			
	Develop/Revise Visitor policies/Caregiver policies to be inclusive of Essential Caregivers			
	Determine how to document Essential Caregiver designation in patient/client/resident EMR system (where staff can easily see (e.g. Same page as POA/SDM designation)			
	STAFF TRAINING and COMMUNICATION			
	Brand and add org specific information to staff training powerpoint to use at staff huddles/meetings etc. Translate as needed.			
	Share ECP staff newsletter article in newsletters and other internal communication			
	Ensure staff know who is available to answer questions about the ECP program/ECP badge			
	Optional: Embed Ontario Caregiver Organization online learning module 'Caregivers as Partners' in organizational learning management system as an optional staff training	OCO Learning Library: All courses		
	**Provide training to volunteers as appropriate to your organization			
	REFERRALS SET UP			

Checklist developed to provide future **referral sites** with a clear roadmap for implementation, including links to all required documents.

Essential Caregiver Referring site checklist

✓	Task	Documents	Responsible person	Status
	PLANNING			
	Identify organizational lead for ECP implementation			
	Identify staff members who will identify and support clients/patients and their caregivers to access the program. This includes sending referrals.			
	Arrange for staff who will identify and support clients/patients to access the program to attend session at CCH (this is important so staff understand the training and can better support access) Alternately, staff can watch the ECP training video to understand the training provided.			
	Engage patients/clients/residents and caregivers in planning			
	Develop/Revise Visitor policies/Caregiver policies to be inclusive of Essential Caregivers			
	Determine how to document Essential Caregiver designation in patient/client/resident EMR system			
	STAFF TRAINING and COMMUNICATION			
	Add organizational letterhead/logo and organizational specific information to standard staff training powerpoint to use at staff huddles/meetings etc. Translate as needed.			
	Optional: Embed Ontario Caregiver Organization online learning module 'Caregivers as Partners' in organizational learning management system as an optional staff training	OCO Learning Library: All courses		
	Share ECP staff newsletter article in newsletters and other internal communication			

Future Steps, Strategic Direction and Big Dreams!



Collect and evaluate data – the working group continues to explore growth opportunities and identify ongoing program improvement.

Identify additional Referral Partners

Promote the EC Program across the OHT

Future Collaboration – ideally, share program development with other OHTs to align caregiver training and badge recognition; with the goal of ensuring Essential Caregivers experience consistent inclusion throughout the broader healthcare region.



Merci!
Thank you!
Niá:wen!

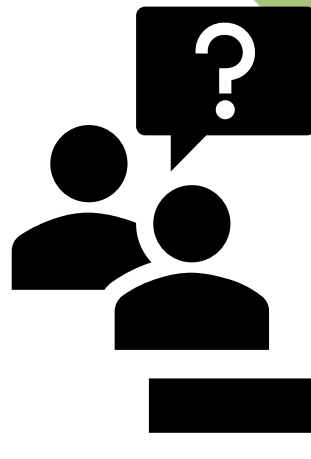
Questions?

Presenters:

Tracy Crowder, Project Manager
Great River Ontario Health Team | tracy.crowder@cornwallhospital.ca

Amelie Gove, Resident and Patient Relations Advisor
St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre | agove@sjccc.ca

Judy Dancause, Manager, Volunteer Resources & Visitation
Cornwall Community Hospital | judy.dancause@cornwallhospital.ca



We want to hear
from you. Type
your questions in
the chat box!



Chat

From Me to Everyone:

Please type your questions and
comments in the chat-box.

Resources for OHTs



Essential Care Partner Program

KEY PRACTICES FOR ONTARIO HEALTH TEAMS



An Essential Care Partner (ECP) program involves the implementation of practices across your Ontario Health Team (OHT) and community to ensure that caregivers are **identified**, **included** and **supported** to participate as part of the care team.

ECP programs for OHTs may include all or some of the following key practices:

IDENTIFY THE CAREGIVER	INCLUDE THE CAREGIVER AS PART OF THE CARE TEAM	SUPPORT THE CAREGIVER
IDENTIFICATION Essential care partner identification (Caregiver ID) is used to identify and formally recognize essential care partners. CLIENT DESIGNATION Clients/patients/residents are empowered and encouraged to designate their essential care partners(s). DOCUMENTATION Care partners are documented in patient files/records, including contact information and level of participation in care.	STAFF EDUCATION AND TRAINING Education and training is provided to all staff across the OHT, including partner organizations, on the important role of care partners and practical ways to include and support them. INTEGRATION Essential care partner role is integrated into OHT models of care, including ALC strategies, care pathways, point of care workflows, client assessment, care planning and transition planning. COMMUNICATION Essential care partner information and program is pro-actively communicated across OHT partners, communities, patients, families and essential care partners.	LINK TO SUPPORT Connect essential care partners to caregiver and community supports and resources for their own well-being. CARE PARTNER EDUCATION AND TRAINING Care partners are provided education and support to validate their role and empower them to participate in care. ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNER ORIENTATION There is a process for onboarding and orienting essential care partners.

To learn more about Essential Care Partner Programs in Ontario Health Teams visit <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/for-providers/caregivers-and-ontario-health-teams>.

[Visit Caregivers and Ontario Health Teams to Learn More](#)

Key Take-Aways

Build caregivers into strategic plans, quality improvement initiatives, working groups, and OHT priorities

Engage caregivers at your planning tables – listen to their unique voice and perspective

Look for opportunities to **identify caregivers across settings**, leveraging partnerships and existing referral pathways across organizations



Contact OCO to help you integrate caregivers in your OHT Plans



CONTACT US

Reach out to connect with us!
partners@ontariocaregiver.ca

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@CaregiverON



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