



## Workshop 8:

# Building Resilient Healthcare Systems: The Role of Essential Care Partners

### Presenters:

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### Description:

The Essential Care Partner (ECP) Support Hub supports healthcare organizations to implement and adopt programs and practices that formally identify, support, and include caregivers as part of the care team. This presentation shares insights and strategies in implementing ECP programs and leading practices, offering a blueprint for caregiver-inclusive healthcare culture, and addressing barriers through facilitated discussion.

### Session objectives and learning outcomes:

- Understand the evidence that demonstrates the importance of including caregivers as essential care partners in primary care settings, including better care quality, patient outcomes, cultural safety, and improved working conditions for teams.
- Learn practical tips and strategies from the Essential Care Partner (ECP) Support Hub that can be applied to promote caregiver inclusion in primary care settings throughout Ontario.
- Learn about the barriers caregivers face when accessing services and ways primary care providers can support caregiver well-being through referral pathways alongside the Ontario Caregiver Organization.

## **Full description:**

### **Challenge:**

The Essential Care Partner (ECP) Support Hub, led by the Ontario Caregiver Organization and in partnership with Ontario Health, serves as a resource hub to support healthcare organizations in identifying, including, and supporting caregivers as essential care partners.

Including caregivers as part of the patient's care team allows for increased communication and trust between families and healthcare professionals, improved accuracy, and quality of information about medication and discharge instructions, and better recovery at home. The Support Hub aims to achieve greater consistency in how family caregivers are recognized and empowered as essential care partners across care settings in Ontario.

This interactive workshop will share what we have learned about the value of care partner inclusion across Ontario that have implemented an ECP program and adopted leading practices, and how these lessons learned can serve as a blueprint for cultivating a caregiver-inclusive culture in primary care settings.

This workshop will include the voice of a caregiver as they navigate the Ontario health system and their experiences with primary care. Additionally, through facilitated discussion with participants, we will explore the barriers, challenges, and concerns related to caregiver inclusion and support, and offer valuable insights and strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

### **Action:**

The Essential Care Partner Support Hub provides support to healthcare organizations planning to implement or enhance an essential care partner program. It connects organizations with peers who have implemented

Essential Care Partner programs and practices and offers access to various resources, tools, and templates.

Furthermore, the Support Hub hosts the Essential Care Partner Learning Collaborative, an interactive virtual forum where healthcare partners can engage in ongoing learning, exchange knowledge, and share experiences related to caregiver inclusion. This Learning Collaborative has evolved and continues to grow to support health system partners who are interested in building a culture that values and recognizes caregivers as partners on the care team.

**Impact:**

Evidence shows that when primary care providers include caregivers as part of the care team, it improves patient health outcomes, leads to a better experience for front-line providers and caregivers, and alleviates health system pressures.

Without the active participation of caregivers, patients may experience a lack of support and advocacy, potentially resulting in reduced health outcomes. Additionally, the emotional and psychological well-being of patients may be compromised without the presence of their caregivers, who often provide essential comfort and emotional support during medical visits or procedures.

**Trajectory:**

Moving forward, Essential Care Partner programs are prepared for scalability and adaptation to the evolving needs of healthcare settings. By leveraging learning from previous program implementations, this model can be refined and expanded to primary care settings.

Continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms will ensure its effectiveness and relevance in enhancing people-centred care across the province. Furthermore, ongoing collaboration with healthcare providers,

caregivers, and key system partners will drive the program's sustainability and resilience in navigating future challenges.