

Essential Care Partner Program Information: Supporting People-Centred Care at Southlake

An Essential Care Partner (ECP) is a support person identified by the patient or their Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) as essential to the patient's safety, wellbeing, and overall care experience. An ECP may be a family member, friend, neighbour, paid support personnel, or another trusted individual chosen by the patient.

The program is designed to:

- Enhance communication and trust between patients, caregivers, families, and staff.
- Improve patient comfort and emotional well-being through consistent, familiar support.
- Support safe, informed participation in care, empowering patients, caregivers and families throughout the care journey.

What is an Essential Care Partner (ECP)?

An Essential Care Partner is a trusted family member, close friend, or paid support person chosen by the patient or their Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) to actively support their care. ECPs are more than visitors – they are recognized partners in care who help strengthen communication between patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare teams.



How ECPs Support Care

Essential Care Partners play a meaningful role in a patient's hospital experience. Their support may include:

- **Emotional support:** Providing companionship, reassurance, and a calming presence during stressful times.
- **Cognitive support:** Assisting with memory, orientation, communication, or understanding care instructions.
- **Physical support:** Helping with meals, mobility, or gentle activities, as directed by the care team.

Roles and Responsibilities

Essential Care Partners are valued members of the care team and are expected to:

- Complete Southlake's ECP orientation and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) training before participating.
- Always wear their ECP identification badge while in the hospital.
- Follow all safety protocols, confidentiality requirements, and the Code of Conduct.
- Collaborate respectfully with staff and other healthcare providers.
- Share updates through the designated communication process to support clear, consistent information-sharing and protect privacy.
- Respect quiet times and privacy of others.

ECPs are encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification, and remain actively engaged throughout their patient's care.

Visiting and Access

ECPs receive extended access to support patients outside standard visiting hours.

Patients may designate up to two (2) Essential Care Partners. Only one ECP may visit at a time.

How to Become an Essential Care Partner

If you are interested in becoming an Essential Care Partner, please speak with the patient's care team. They will help determine eligibility and guide you through the process, which includes:

- Discussing the ECP role and responsibilities with the care team.
- Completing the ECP Commitment Form.
- Completing ECP orientation and safety training.
- Receiving the ECP Handbook and identification badge.
- Beginning participation in the patient's care with ongoing guidance from clinical staff.

This process ensures every ECP feels confident, informed, and prepared to safely support their loved one.

If you have questions or suggestions about the ECP program please email patientexperience@southlake.ca

