



Essential Care Partner (ECP) Information Handbook

Because caregivers are essential to care.



At BCHS, we are committed to People-Centered Care and recognize that caregivers, family members, and other trusted support persons provide comfort and care that is essential and cannot be replaced. Many caregivers already play a vital role in supporting patients at home and in the community.

The **Essential Care Partner (ECP)** program ensures that patients can continue to include people that support them. As valued members of the Circle of Care, ECPs are included as partners in care to support a safe and successful hospital stay.

What is an Essential Care Partner?

Essential Care Partners (ECPs): a trusted support person in a patient's life who the patient wants included as part of the care team.

Who can be a recognized Essential Care Partner at BCHS?

An ECP can be anyone that a patient chooses:

- A family member
- A close friend

There is no single "right" person - what matters is the relationship to the patient and ability to provide consistent support.



"An Essential Care Partner isn't someone the patient picks as a helper. It's someone who is already a trusted part of their life and someone who naturally supports them. We're recognizing that relationship in their care." – **Anonymous ECP**

ECPs are different from **visitors**:

- A **visitor** is anyone who comes solely for social reasons, companionship, or comfort.
- A **support person** might provide support during a single visit or on occasion.
- An **ECP** provides consistent, essential support during hospitalization in partnership with the healthcare team.

Please speak with a member of our team if you have any questions.

We know how important ECPs are to our patients who have been admitted to the hospital. There are a number of infection prevention and control measures in place for everyone's safety, and these measures must be followed throughout your visit. Please speak with a member of our team if you have any questions.

Infection control guidelines to follow while inside the hospital:

- 1 Clean your hands when you enter the building, when entering and exiting the patient's room.
- 2 Put on the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if there is a PPE sign posted outside the patient's room.
- 3 Use public washroom(s) and not patient washrooms.

Who decides the ECP?

The patient decides who their ECP is.

If the patient cannot decide, the healthcare team follows existing consent and decision-making processes.



We encourage you to wear the designated **ECP badge** while providing support in the hospital to increase awareness amongst the care team. They are available at the nursing station and must be returned at the end of every visit.

Why Essential Care Partners Matter

ECPs help:

- Improve communication
- Reduce stress, fear, and confusion
- Support understanding and decision-making (with consent)
- Maintain routines and comfort
- Promotes safety and well-being

All activities must be agreed upon by the patient, or in the case of incapacity, the legally authorized decision maker. All care activities will be discussed in collaboration with the care team.

Research shows that involving caregivers leads to better patient experiences and outcomes.

Examples of ECP Roles

Depending on the patient's needs, an ECP may help with:

- **Communication and Advocacy**
- **Emotional, Cognitive and Psychological Support**
- **Care Continuity and Discharge Support** (with patient permission)
- **Rest & Sleep Support**
- **Meaningful Activities**
- **Decision-Making Support** (with patient permission)
- **Supporting Physical Care/Mobility** (with consultation and approval from team)
- **Assisting with Drinking** (with consultation and approval from team)

Please Note: An ECP can't make decisions for the patient. If you are also the SDM or hold POA, you may only make decisions once the patient has been formally assessed and found incapable.

Consistent Support Matters

An ECP commitment means:

- Being regularly involved
- Providing ongoing support
- Partnering with the care team
- Following safety and hospital guidelines

Your role is essential — and we are here to support you.

Want to learn more or be a recognized ECP at BCHS?

For more information and to apply to become a recognized Essential Care Partner at BCHS, please visit www.bchsys.org/ECP