



# Caregiver Guide

## Continuing Care Centre and Rehabilitation

A partnership between the Ontario Caregiver Organization and the Patient and Family Advisory Council at St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital

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As a caregiver, this resource will help you advocate and be a strong support for your loved one.



Developed in collaboration with  
patient and family partners.



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## Who is a caregiver?

A caregiver is chosen by the patient or Substitute Decision Maker (SDM). (ref: <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/for-caregivers/>) The caregiver could be a family member, partner, neighbour, or close friend.

## What are the benefits of being a caregiver?

According to the Ontario Caregiver Organization, people have said that being a caregiver/partner has given them the opportunity to:

- Strengthen their relationship with their family member
- Contribute to positive outcomes such as improved health and well-being, decreased hospitalization and possibly a better ability to stay at home
- Learn new skills and gain a sense of accomplishment
- Experience the reward of giving back, providing emotional and social support
- Have a positive impact on the life of another person

## Is there an “orientation session” to the Continuing Care Centre (CCC)/Rehab Unit for caregivers and patients?

Upon admission to CCC/Rehab:

- You will receive a brief introduction to the unit.
- Staff will demonstrate how to use the bedside television
- Staff will show you how to sign in at the nurse’s station upon visiting
- You will be notified if personal protective equipment (PPE) is necessary.



## What will happen upon admission?

Upon admission, an assessment of the patient will take place. The time it takes to settle in varies from patient to patient. The Care Plan will evolve as the patient's medical condition is reviewed and goals are established.

## Do patients ever get moved?

Sometimes the hospital may move the patient from one room to another. This can be difficult for older adults as it can be disorienting for them and contribute to confusion or responsive behaviours. The hospital tries not to move patients because of these factors; however, at times it may be necessary due to operational issues. If you are concerned, please speak to the Clinical Resource Nurse or the Manager.

## Be clear on expectations - It's a two-way street.

Everyone has different expectations. Being unclear about those expectations can impact the patient and family experience. Ask the team what they expect of you as a caregiver and what will be involved during the patient's stay and following discharge from hospital. If the team needs you to learn a specific skill, they will provide the necessary education and support while the patient is in hospital. To maximize the patient's progress, it is very important that visits do not interfere with scheduled treatments. It is always helpful for you to review the Communication Board (white board) at the bedside for specific instructions about the "do's and don'ts" when visiting the patient.



## How can I support the patient?

Being a caregiver and advocate means:

- Being present (in-person, on the phone, e-mail) and available to them
- Providing emotional and social support, and companionship
- Connecting personally; a familiar face; someone that knows them as a person
- Providing assistance at mealtime and when moving around
- Assisting with scheduling and attending appointments
- Supporting personal care and financial decisions
- Supporting discharge planning and reviewing options
- Supporting the patient in all decisions regarding their care, life, and treatment
- Understanding that the health care team has knowledge, expertise, and experience in providing care to the patient

## Why do we designate one person to receive information from the health care team?

The health care team asks that you “designate” one person to receive updates. That person can share the information with other family members as required or needed. Designating a single point of contact with the family is more efficient for both the family and the hospital to communicate information and decisions. Many families find it helpful if the designated family member takes notes when information is being shared by the hospital staff.



## What is my role as a caregiver and partner in care?

As a caregiver, you have valuable information about the patient that is beneficial for the team to know, such as:

- Barriers to discharge
- If there are plans for the patient to move from their current living environment
- If there is health information that the team may not be aware of (i.e., chronic conditions, sleeping patterns, diet, etc.)

The more detailed information the health care team has, the easier it is to develop an individualized Care Plan.

## What information does the team need about the patient?

When a patient transitions to a new unit there can be a period of adjustment. During this time and throughout the care journey, it is helpful to know:

- The patient's likes and dislikes
- Their routines and preferences
- How they like to be involved in their care and treatment

This information allows the health care team to develop rapport with the patient. You will hear the team refer to this approach as “patient-centered care.”



## Ask what the team can and can't do.

CCC/Rehab has several different types of beds available, and each bed has a range of services, supports, and therapies. The services the patient will receive are based on their health care needs, which will determine the type of bed they are admitted to.

- If the patient is admitted to a rehabilitation bed, they will have active rehab with higher intensity and goals to attain within 30 days. They will probably go to the gym daily for an active treatment regimen.
- If the patient is admitted to an activation/restoration bed, they will not receive active rehab; instead, their goal is low intensity over a long duration.

If you aren't sure of the type of bed that your family member has been admitted to, you may ask the health care team to clarify for you. There is also information posted on the bedside televisions that provides a detailed description and a definition of each type of bed.

Being clear about what the team can and can't provide is key to understanding the Care Plan and how the team will work with the patient.

## Difference of opinion regarding the Care Plan

If you have a difference of opinion regarding the Care Plan, please speak with the doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) assigned to the patient. If the care team thinks there will be a benefit to having the entire interdisciplinary team meet with you, a family meeting will be arranged. A meeting with the team may also be arranged if you believe it would be beneficial to assist with identifying barriers to discharge or other concerns.



## How do I ask for clarification if I'm unsure?

If something is unclear or you don't understand, please ask.

- Use language that looks for answers. Clearly state your concerns by asking questions such as:
  - Can you please help me understand...?
  - I was wondering about...?
  - Can you please explain or clarify....?
- Be factual, realistic, and willing to work together
- Acknowledge different points of view and perspectives
- Try to ask yourself, "Is this fact or emotion?"
- Be clear about the resolution you are seeking
- Listen, communicate, and work collaboratively with the health care team



Remaining silent will not change or lead to improvements in processes and communication.

People may be hesitant to speak up out of fear of retaliation. This will not negatively impact the care the patient receives. All feedback and questions are welcomed.




Seeking clarification will allow you to be on the same page as everyone else and have the correct information that will help you to make informed decisions and support the patient.

## Bedside patient Communication Board

When visiting the patient, you will notice a Communication Board at each bedside.

The communication board contains the following information:

- Names of the health care team involved in the patient's care
- "Family communication" section where information can be exchanged
- Mobility status of the patient
- Care needs
- Other instructions specific to the patient
- QR code linking to the Patient Experience Survey

Date: _____		Room Number: _____	Phone Extension: _____	Hourly Rounding					
M	T	W	Th	W	F	S	S	0700	1900
Nurse: _____		Physician: _____		0800	2000				
PSW: _____		Consult: _____		0900	2100				
NAME		ROLE		Mobility:		Falls Risk: L M H			
				  					
				Care Needs:					
Family Communication:				1000	2200				
				1100	2300				
				1200	0000				
				1300	0100				
				1400	0200				
				1500	0300				
				1600	0400				

## How can I get telephone updates?

There are times in the day when the unit is very busy. These include:

- Shift change at 7am and 7pm;
- Patient care rounds between 8:30am and 9:00am

If you call the unit for updates on the patient, it is best to avoid these times as nursing and Personal Support Worker (PSW) staff are occupied. You can contact the patient at their bedside at any time (extension located on patient's Communication Board).

## Will the health care team ask for any legal documents?

Yes. The health care team will require a copy of the Power of Attorney forms. Should the patient become incapable of making their own decisions, the appropriate Power of Attorney (POA) or Substitute Decision-Maker (SDM) will be making decisions on behalf of the patient.

## How do I get help if I still have concerns?

- **Quality of Care Concerns**
  - Speak to the Clinical Resource Nurse (Ext. 2161) or the Manager (Ext. 2308)
- **Care Plan Concerns**
  - Speak to the Clinical Resource Nurse
- **Medical Issues or Concerns**
  - Speak to the doctor or nurse practitioner assigned to your family member's care
- **Discharge Planning Concerns**
  - Speak to the Home and Community Care Support Services staff assigned to your family member's care
- **Emotional Support**
  - Speak to the health care team about a social work referral
- **Patient Experience Office**
  - 519-631-2030, Ext. 2704

**Contact Us: 519-631-2030**

C Unit Nurses Station: Ext. 2330

D Unit Nurses Station: Ext. 2950



## How can I contribute to improving the patient experience?

If you are interested in making a positive impact on the patient experience at St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital:

- Consider becoming a Patient and Family Advisor
- Join an ad hoc committee

For more information, please contact our Patient Experience Office: 519-631-2030, Ext. 2704.

## Caregiver Supports and Resources

Caregivers can visit [www.ontariocaregiver.ca](http://www.ontariocaregiver.ca) for free programs and services from the Ontario Caregiver Organization.



### The Ontario Caregiver Helpline

Free of charge phone support  
24/7 at 1-833-416-2273  
Live chat online  
Mon-Fri 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.



### 1:1 Peer Support

Connect with another caregiver, share your experiences, and receive direct support online or by phone



### Online Support Groups

Connect with other caregivers in a supportive environment to share your challenges, successes, and concerns



### Monthly Webinars

(live and recorded)  
Webinars presented by subject matter experts - visit our library to view them anytime



### Online Learning Library

Free or charge, self-directed e-learning courses