

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Pilot of Northumberland County's first Essential Care Partner Program now available at NHH

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, November 7, 2025—Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland are pleased to announce the launch of Northumberland County's first **Essential Care Partner (ECP) Pilot Program**.

Created with guidance from the [Ontario Caregiver Organization \(OCO\)](#), the pilot program formally acknowledges the critical role of caregivers in the hospital setting.

The ECP Program, which recognizes one or two individuals, chosen by the patient, has three key pillars: identify the caregiver (or caregivers); include the caregiver as part of the care team; and, support the caregiver. Building on lessons learned from the pandemic, in the event of an outbreak, ECPs will receive training and personal protective equipment to enable them to continue to have access to the patient they support in alignment with infection prevention and hospital policies.

Launched at NHH on November 3, the ECP Program is now available to all admitted patients on the hospital's first floor (1A/1B) units, inclusive of Restorative Care, Inpatient Rehabilitation, Integrated Stroke and Palliative Care.

Participation is optional, and ECPs—chosen by the patient, with the consent of the caregiver identified—do not replace professional staff roles.

"Guided by NHH's [Experience Framework](#) and shared purpose of *People First*, the ECP pilot aims to build on informal practices that are already in place at NHH to formally acknowledge the critical role caregivers play in supporting patients. Credit goes to the inter-disciplinary ECP Working Group, which includes primary care, nursing, allied health, social work, home care, clinical information, ward clerks, leadership, volunteers and people with lived experience, which co-designed this pilot. There is much wisdom in this group and our pilot will be stronger because of the input that was so generously shared," says Jennifer Gillard, Vice President, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships and executive sponsor.

"As a full-time caregiver myself, I think the ECP program will be vital to strengthening trust between families and the care team, reducing caregiver stress,

and connecting caregivers with resources to assist them in navigating their caregiver journey,” says Howard Goodfellow, volunteer with the OHT-N Experience Partner Council and a member of the ECP Working Group. “I am really pleased to see this program come to Northumberland and hope to see it expand beyond the pilot and throughout the County. It has been a pleasure to be part of the working group at NHH.”

“This project was identified as a priority of our patient and caregiver partners in the early days of our OHT,” says Andrea Groff, Executive Lead of the OHT-N. “It is a beautiful example of what we can achieve when we work together with patients and caregivers. We look forward to seeing the impact on patients, caregivers and providers and, as appropriate, supporting expansion in our County.”

Upon admission to one of the 1A/1B units at NHH, patients are now invited to identify the caregiver or caregivers important to them. ECPs may be family members, friends, or paid caregivers, including but not limited to a Substitute Decision Makers or Powers of Attorney.

Once identified as a participating ECP, caregivers will receive a badge identifying them as part of the care team, and support will be provided in the form of resources, training, and materials to assist in their caregiving. For details please see the new ECP section under the Patients tab on the hospital website here: [Essential Care Partner Pilot Program](#)

About Northumberland Hills Hospital

Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, cancer and supportive care, dialysis and other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 67,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope, Alderville First Nation and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs more than 850 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians, midwives and volunteers. NHH is an active member of Ontario Health (East)—formerly the Central East Local Health Integration Network—and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland. For more information, please visit nhh.ca or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](#), and LinkedIn [Northumberland Hills Hospital](#).

About Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N)

The [Ontario Health Team of Northumberland \(OHT-N\)](#) is one of 58 Ontario Health Teams operating in the Province of Ontario. Introduced in 2019, the goal of OHTs across the province is to build a connected and sustainable health care system centred around the needs of patients and caregivers through an integrated care delivery model. OHTs aim to reduce the complexities of our current health care system in Ontario to deliver a more coordinated continuum of care for patients across multiple care settings, including, but not limited to, primary care, acute care, home care, mental health and addiction services, palliative care, and emergency services. In bringing together patients, communities, providers and system leaders as one team, regardless of organizational affiliation and/or physical location, OHTs aim to deliver health care across a specific geographical area, minimizing duplication and maximizing access. To learn more about Ontario Health and Ontario Health Teams, visit: [Ontario Health Teams | ontario.ca](#)

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