

Caregiver Identification

A Tool to Welcome Family Caregivers to Long Term Care Homes

Since March 2020, long term care homes have been restricted from allowing family caregivers and visitors into their buildings and facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and directives from the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. For the majority of homes, this means family caregivers have not been allowed to be with their family member/resident to provide caregiving and emotional supports.

As restrictions are lifted, long term care homes are starting the process of welcoming family caregivers back to their facilities. Each home is doing considerable planning, coordination and communication to make the process as seamless as possible.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization is collaborating with The Change Foundation to make the **Caregiver ID** identification card/program available as a tool to support this process.

Why Identify the Caregiver?

Identifying the caregiver is an important step in establishing or strengthening a relationship that can yield better resident care, outcomes and provide the team with a better understanding of the resident, their condition and beyond. In the context of COVID-19, identifying caregivers will:

- Make the screening process at entry points smoother if the staff are expecting the caregiver
- Help with ensuring safe movement into and throughout the home, including limitations for where caregivers can go in each facility
- Support the Family Presence Policy



FAMILY CAREGIVER DEFINITION

A family caregiver is defined as family, friends, and neighbours who provide personal, social, psychological and physical support, assistance and care, without pay, for family members and friends in need.

How Can a Caregiver Identification Badge or Sticker Help During COVID-19?

Issuing a Caregiver ID to family caregivers who have been screened and are permitted to come into the home can be beneficial to both the organization and caregivers for a number of reasons.

Benefits to the home and its staff and physicians:

- Highly visual way to see that the caregiver in the facility has made arrangements to see their family member/resident
- Easier to recognize caregivers who would be wearing a mask and/or other personal protective equipment, especially through rotating staff, shift changes, and because different family caregivers may come at different times
- Reassures staff, physicians and residents that the caregiver has been screened, has received training on the proper use of personal protective equipment and is permitted in the building
- Helps distinguish family caregivers from other residents or visitors
- Facilitates the active partnership with family caregivers in healthcare situations and decision making
- Assists with managing physical distancing
- Can have added benefits, such as giving caregivers secure access after hours, if the organization's processes allow for caregivers to be issued passes for secured areas

Benefits to Caregivers:

Given that family caregivers have been restricted from coming into many homes across the province since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, they may feel uneasy about re-engaging and actively partnering in the care of their family member or friend. Providing caregivers with an ID badge at the door may help the caregiver feel more welcome and also:

- Re-assure caregivers that staff know they have permission to be in the building
- Provide formal recognition of the caregiver's role
- Clearly identify caregivers throughout the building (and facilitate redirecting of caregivers if they get lost)
- Give caregivers confidence to ask questions and be active partners in care
- Show to staff and other residents that the caregiver has received permission, and any appropriate training, to allow them to be in that location



Distinguishing Family Caregivers from General Visitors

It is important to distinguish the role of the family caregiver from a general and social visitor. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the voices of family caregivers have been loud on this distinction. A search of the hashtag #NotJustAVisitor on Twitter provides an overview of the discussion and frustration.

As family caregivers are welcomed back to certain settings, language is important. The use of a universally recognized Caregiver ID visual, and issuing a badge or sticker, is an easy and important, way to formally recognize family caregivers.

It is a concrete way to recognize caregivers and remove barriers to their participation as a health care team partner. Caregiver ID also supports the culture of partnering with caregivers and empowers caregivers to participate as a part of the care team.

The Caregiver ID can be the extension of an already-existing commitment to caregivers or it can be the beginning of a stronger commitment.

Caregiver ID: Already in Use in Ontario Hospitals

Caregiver ID has been successfully implemented in Ontario hospitals including Sinai Health (Bridgepoint Active Health and Mt Sinai Home) as part of their family presence policies. The tools and resources that have been developed for Caregiver ID (sticker or button) can be easily adapted for any care setting to support the safe easing or formalizing of family visitor and caregiver access protocols during COVID-19.

For more information on the use of Caregiver ID in Ontario, visit [The Change Foundation website](#).

Tools and Resources for Caregiver ID implementation during COVID-19

Printable Caregiver ID badge and sticker templates are available for customization and implementation in homes, in addition to further guidance and tips on implementation.

