



THE ONTARIO

**caregiver**  
ORGANIZATION

ESSENTIAL CARE  
PARTNER SUPPORT  
HUB

Essential Care Partner

# Evidence Summary for **Long-Term Care Homes**



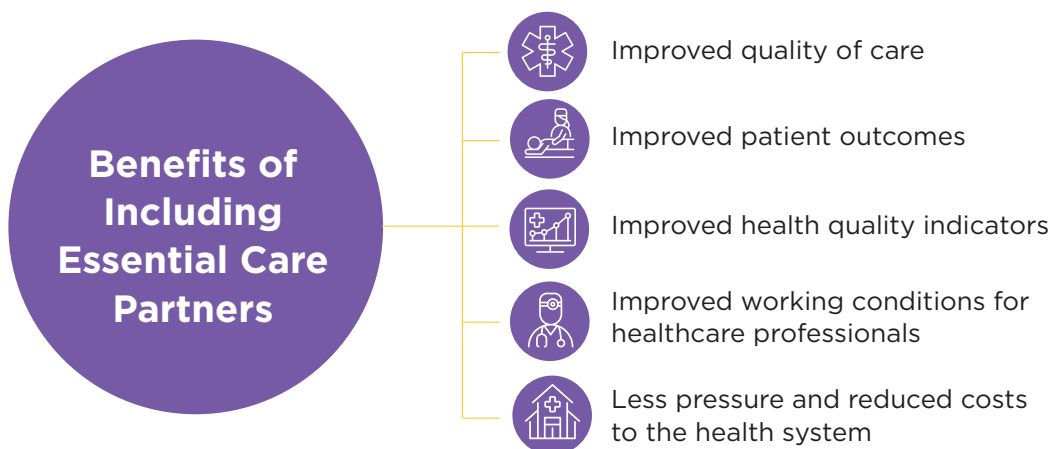
# BENEFITS OF INCLUDING ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNERS IN LONG-TERM CARE<sup>1</sup>

The inclusion of essential care partners in long-term care homes provides numerous benefits to residents, families, and staff. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have gained a much better understanding of how imperative care partners are for the health and well-being of residents. Evidence shows that without the involvement of essential care partners, there are negative consequences for residents, care partners, care providers and for long-term care homes. These benefits include improved quality of care and resident outcomes, improved working conditions for care providers, and reductions in overall costs.

**Essential Care Partners** provide physical, psychological and emotional support, as deemed important by the patient. This care can include support in decision making, care coordination and continuity of care. Essential care partners can include family members, close friends or other caregivers and are identified by the patient or substitute decision maker<sup>1</sup>

*“Family and caregiver presence have been associated with improving the physical and psychological wellbeing of residents; aiding in care management, reducing costs and protecting the physical and cultural safety of residents (among other outcomes)”<sup>1</sup>*

## Summary of the Benefits Associated with Including Essential Care Partners



## Summary of Benefits for Long-Term Care Homes, Care Providers, Residents and their Care Partners

### Benefits for Long-Term Care Homes and Care Providers

- **Improved well-being of care providers:** Reduced rates of depression among staff<sup>2</sup>
- **Improved relationships with families:** Fewer staff-family conflicts<sup>2</sup>
- **Overall cost reductions:** Family and caregiver presence have been associated with reduced costs<sup>1</sup>
- **Improved ability to provide culturally safe and appropriate care:** Especially for LGBTQ2S+ and Indigenous residents and/or those with language barriers<sup>3</sup>
- **Improved working environments:** Care partners are essential to meeting the needs of residents, especially in the face of chronic staffing shortages<sup>3</sup>

### Benefits for Residents and their Care Partners

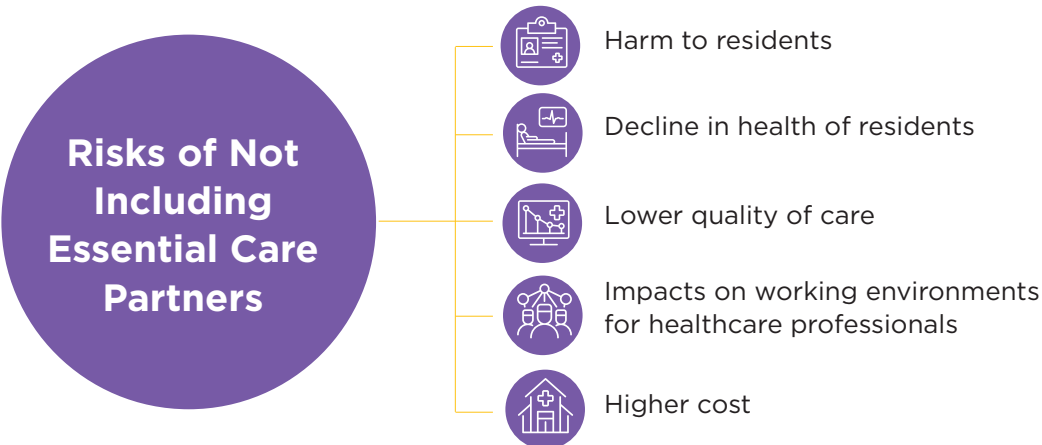
- **Improved overall well-being of residents:** This includes physical and psychological wellness<sup>1</sup>, including decreases in behavioural responses<sup>2</sup>
- **Improved relationships with care providers:** Fewer staff-family conflicts<sup>2</sup>
- **More psychosocial/emotional support and valued engagements:** Care partners are essential in helping residents maintain contact with their families, communities and friends, and in providing assistance and support when needed<sup>4</sup>
- **Benefits for specific resident groups:** Residents who receive linguistic and ethno-specific care are more likely to see improvements to their well-being (both physical and mental)<sup>1</sup>



# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNERS ARE NOT INCLUDED/PRESENT:

Not including essential care partners in a long-term care home can result in risks to both residents and their families, to homes, and to care teams. These risks include harm to residents, poor outcomes, impacts on working environments, and higher costs.

## Summary of the Risks Associated with **Not** Including Essential Care Partners



## Summary of Risks for Long-Term Care Homes, Care Providers, Residents and their Care Partners

### Risk for Long-Term Care Homes and Care Providers

- **Impacts on care provider well-being:** This includes burnout<sup>2</sup>, psychological harm and increased workload<sup>5</sup>
- **Impacts on workplace culture:** Lack of involvement of care partners can lead to work stress and environments with low morale and distress<sup>6</sup>
- **Impacts on cost:** Without the presence of care partners, costs will be higher because care providers would not benefit from the supportive role that care partners play in resident care<sup>1</sup>

### Risks for Families and their Care Partners

- **Impacts on overall well-being:** This includes unintended harm to essential caregivers<sup>5</sup>, reduced quality of life and strain as well as anxiety, grief and stress for both residents and their families<sup>8</sup>
- **Decline in health status of residents:** Visitor restrictions have caused residents to sustain severe and potentially irreversible physical, functional, cognitive and an increase in behavioural responses and disturbances<sup>5,2,7</sup>
- **Negative impacts of social isolation:** Residents experienced increased feelings of loneliness and social isolation, and increased risk for depression<sup>9</sup>
- **Culturally safe care:** Cultural and language needs may not be met when care partners are not involved<sup>3</sup>



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Healthcare Excellence Canada (2020). Evidence Brief: Essential Caregivers as Partners. [https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/docs/default-source/itr/tools-and-resources/essential-together/evidence-brief-en.pdf?sfvrsn=103fe5b3\\_4](https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/docs/default-source/itr/tools-and-resources/essential-together/evidence-brief-en.pdf?sfvrsn=103fe5b3_4)

<sup>2</sup>Julie Robison, PhD, Leslie Curry, PhD, Cynthia Gruman, PhD, Martha Porter, Charles R. Henderson, Jr., MA, Karl Pillemer, PhD, Partners in Caregiving in a Special Care Environment: Cooperative Communication Between Staff and Families on Dementia Units, *The Gerontologist*, Volume 47, Issue 4, August 2007, Pages 504–515, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/47.4.504>

<sup>3</sup>Stall, N. M., Johnstone, J., McGeer, A. J., Dhuper, M., Dunning, J., & Sinha, S. K. (2020). Finding the right balance: An evidence-informed guidance document to support the re-opening of Canadian nursing homes to family caregivers and visitors during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*, 21(10), 1365–1370.e7. doi:10.1016/j.jamda.2020.07.038

<sup>4</sup>Conklin, J. on behalf of the people, scientists and stakeholders. (2022, October 19). Essential Care Partners are Essential Infographic Resource. Ontario Centres for Learning, Research, and Innovation in Long-Term Care. Retrieved from <https://clri-ltc.ca/resource/essential-care-partner/>

<sup>5</sup>Lisa M. Palubiski, MD, Kurt L. Tulsieram, MSc, Douglas Archibald, PhD, James Conklin, PhD, Jacobi Elliott, PhD, Amy Hsu, PhD, Paul Stolee, PhD, Heidi Sveistrup, PhD, Anita Kothari, PhD. Guidance to (Re)integrate Caregivers as Essential Care Partners Into the LTC Setting: A Rapid Review. Published: February 17, 2022DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2022.01.054>

<sup>6</sup>Jennifer M. O'Brien, PhD, Faith A. Bae, MN, RN, Joann Kawchuk, MD FRCPC, Eileen Reimche, MEd, BEd, BA, Candace A. Abramyk, Caitlyn Kitts, BSc, Sana Mohamad, Christine Patterson, MD, Yolanda Palmer-Clarke, PhD, and Sabira Valiani MD FRCPC. "We were treading water." Experiences of healthcare providers in Canadian ICUs during COVID-19 visitor restrictions: A qualitative descriptive study. *CJCCN* Volume 33, Number 2, Fall 2022 <https://cjccn.ca/featured-article/we-were-treading-water-experiences-of-healthcare-providers-in-canadian-icuduring-covid-19-visitor-restrictions-a-qualitative-descriptive-study/>

<sup>7</sup>Hindmarch, W., McGhan, G., Flemons, K., & McCaughey, D. (2021). COVID-19 and Long-Term Care: The Essential Role of Family Caregivers. *Canadian Geriatrics Journal* : CGJ, 24(3), 195-199. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8390326/>

<sup>8</sup>Paananen J, Rannikko J, Harju M, Pirhonen J. The impact of Covid-19-related distancing on the well-being of nursing home residents and their family members: a qualitative study. *Int J Nurs Stud Adv*. 2021 Nov;3:100031. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnsa.2021.100031. Epub 2021 May 31. PMID: 34095858; PMCID: PMC8166157.

<sup>9</sup>Natasha L. Gallant et al. Improving Family Presence in Long-Term Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Healthcare Quarterly* Vol. 25 Special Issue (2022).

**Essential Care Partner Support Hub**

Email: [ecpsupporthub@ontariocaregiver.ca](mailto:ecpsupporthub@ontariocaregiver.ca)

**Ontario Caregiver Helpline**

1-833-416-2273

**The Ontario Caregiver Organization**

Email: [info@ontariocaregiver.ca](mailto:info@ontariocaregiver.ca)

Phone: 416-362-CARE (2273) or 1-888-877-1626

[www.ontariocaregiver.ca](http://www.ontariocaregiver.ca)

