



# Identifying Essential Care Partners in Provincial and Territorial Visiting Policies

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## About Healthcare Excellence Canada

Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC) works with partners to spread innovation, build capability, and catalyze policy change so that everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. Through collaboration with patients, caregivers and people working in healthcare, we turn proven innovations into lasting improvements in all dimensions of healthcare excellence. Launched in 2021, HEC brings together the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement. HEC is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

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## Terms used by Provinces for Essential Care Partners

Differentiating and defining the essential care partner role helps develop mutual understanding and improves quality and safety across the health system. Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC) uses the term Essential Care Partner, but many provinces or territories use other terms to differentiate the role from that of a general visitor. The terms used to refer to essential care partners are provided in the table below.

| Term   | Province(s)/Territory Used   |
|--|--|
| Essential Visit  | British Columbia   |
| Essential Visitor  | Ontario, Nova Scotia, Yukon  |
| Essential Family/Support Person/Care Partner               | Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia  |
| Designated Visitor   | British Columbia (long-term care), Prince Edward Island              |
| Designated Family/Support Person/Caregiver/Partner in Care | Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories |
| Informal Caregiver   | Quebec   |
| Caregiver  | Ontario  |
| Partner in Care  | Prince Edward Island   |
| Support Person   | Yukon  |

Most provinces/territories (71 percent) specify that essential care partners are different from visitors. Approximately 67 percent of policies specify that patients are allowed to select their essential care partners, and 62 percent state that essential care partners are part of the care team. However, few examples are given as to how essential care partners and the care team can work together and support each other. Rather, the definitions provided focus on how essential care partners can support their loved ones, ranging from important emotional support through completing specific care tasks and assistance with decision making. In some cases, only certain patients are eligible to designate essential care partners, such as those at end of life, children, or labor and delivery, among others. Many descriptions note that essential care partners can be anyone chosen by the patient, including family, friends, or hired caregivers. Below is a summary of the descriptions found in the provincial policies.

## Alberta

| Term  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Designated Family/Support Person (DSP)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One or more individuals identified by the resident/patient as an essential support, and who the resident/patient wishes to be included in any encounters with the healthcare system, including but not limited to family, relatives, friends, and informal or hired caregivers.</li> <li>• Must be independent and partner with the healthcare team to support the patient when appropriate.</li> <li>• Visits to support the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the patient, provide the health team with vital information about their loved one, participate in care planning and assist with mobility, feeding and hygiene, deliver needed belongings to the patient, and assist with transitions and discharge.</li> </ul> |

## British Columbia

| Term                             | Description   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Essential Visits</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits for compassionate care, critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life, and medical assistance in dying.</li> <li>• A visit paramount to the patient/client’s physical care or mental well-being such as: assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care, communication, assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities, and visits to support decision making.</li> <li>• Visits required to move belongings in/out of a resident’s room (also includes volunteers and police/correctional/peace officers).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Single Designated Visitor</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual who will be allowed to continue visiting that resident during an active COVID-19 outbreak.</li> </ul>  |

## Manitoba

| Term                              | Description   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Designated Caregivers (DC)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide key support and are the voice of the vulnerable resident who cannot always speak for themselves. They may help with physical tasks like eating, social and emotional support, as well as connection to the larger family.</li> <li>• Provide physical, psychological, and emotional support, as deemed important by the patient/resident. This care can include support in decision making, care coordination and continuity of care.</li> <li>• Can include family members, close friends or other caregivers and are identified by the patient/resident or substitute decision maker.</li> </ul> |

## New Brunswick

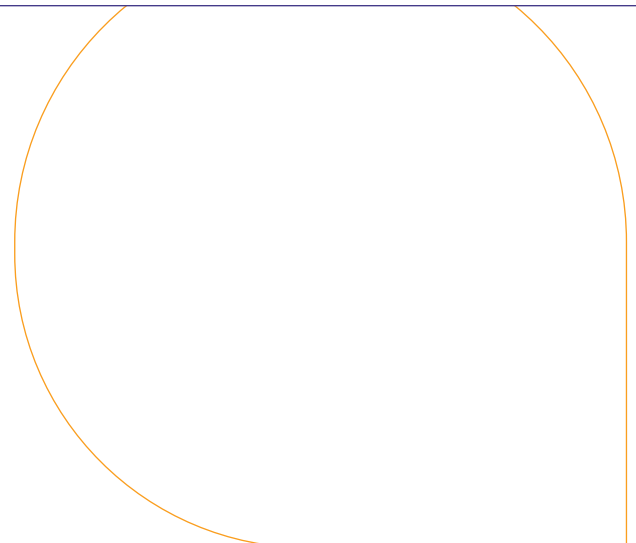
| Term   | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Designated Support Person (Acute Care: Vitalité Health Network)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their presence is essential to the patient’s safety and well-being.</li> <li>• Designated by the patient or substitute decision-maker and is a family member, friend or loved one.</li> <li>• Provides support to the patient as the patient deems appropriate. For example, the designated support person may help the patient with understanding treatment options and making decisions, communicating, eating, moving, or washing. The following patients can designate a DSP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients in palliative care, at the end of life or receiving medical assistance in dying;</li> <li>• Patients in intensive/critical care;</li> <li>• Patients in obstetrics, pediatrics, pediatric psychiatry or neonatology;</li> <li>• Patients who have been in hospital for 14 days or longer; and</li> <li>• Patients with intellectual or communication impairments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Designated Support Person (Horizon Health Network)</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An active partner in care and an essential member of the health care team who can provide personalized physical and emotional support, as deemed important by the eligible patient.</li> <li>• Hospitalized patients who require physical or emotional support, assistance with decision making and care are eligible.</li> <li>• An individual the patient wants involved in their care and can include family members, close friends or other caregivers and are identified/designated by the patient or substitute decision maker.</li> <li>• Provide emotional support for the patient and to assist them in understanding the treatment options and instructions of the medical team</li> </ul>   |

## Northwest Territories

| Term                             | Description  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Designated Support Person</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals identified by the patient as needed support.</li> </ul> |

## Nova Scotia

| Term   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Essential Visitors</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare workers not employed by the service provider including designated caregivers.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Designated Caregiver (long-term care)</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated family member(s) or support person(s) with established pattern(s) of providing care for a resident.</li> <li>Provides essential support for a resident's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.</li> <li>Provide specific caregiving tasks like personal hygiene, mobility, and help with eating.</li> <li>An important member of the resident's health care team.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Essential Care Partner, Designated Partner in Care (acute care)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A support person whose presence is considered essential to the safety and well-being of a patient while they are in the hospital.</li> <li>Most often, they are family or close friends of the patient who typically know the patient's health history and lifestyle.</li> </ul>  |



## Ontario

| Term                      | Description   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Caregivers</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An individual who is a family member or friend of a resident or a person of importance to a resident and is designated by the resident or the resident's substitute decision-maker.</li><li>• Is able to comply with all applicable laws including any applicable directives.</li><li>• Provides one or more forms of support or assistance to meet the needs of the resident, including providing direct physical support such as activities of daily living or providing social, spiritual or emotional support, whether on a paid or unpaid basis.</li></ul> |
| <b>Essential Visitors</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are four types of essential visitors including a caregiver, as defined above. Additional types are support workers, someone visiting at end of life, and government inspectors of long-term care homes.</li></ul>   |

## Prince Edward Island

| Term                      | Description  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Partner in Care</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individuals designated by the resident or resident's guardian to support feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connections, relational continuity, and assistance in decision-making for the resident.</li></ul> |
| <b>Designated Visitor</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individuals designated by the resident or the resident's guardian to visit the resident primarily for social or other supportive reasons, including family and friends.</li></ul>  |

## Quebec

| Term                      | Description   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Informal Caregiver</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anyone who, continuously or occasionally, provides support to a member of their entourage who has a temporary or permanent disability and with whom they share an emotional bond, whether they are family or not.</li><li>• Provide non-professional support whether it be physical, psychological, psychosocial, or other.</li><li>• Informal caregiving can take various forms, such as assistance with personal care, emotional support, or coordination of care and services.</li></ul> |

## Saskatchewan

| Term                                   | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Essential Family/Support Person</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance the care and well-being of their loved ones as they participate in decision-making with the resident/patient; serve as an essential part of the care team; and assist with quality of life or care needs.</li><li>• Care needs include self-care, mobility, nutrition, and behavioural care.</li><li>• Quality-of-life need include belonging and love, community, autonomy, purpose, and psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being.</li></ul> |

## Yukon

| Term                           | Description   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Support Person</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Necessary to facilitate safe patient care including a substitute decision maker, guardian of a child, providing assistance to patients with cognitive or physical disabilities, supporting a patient post-anesthesia or who needs assistance with decision making or with a trauma informed response.</li></ul> |
| <b>Essential Visitor (LTC)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Someone who visits someone at end of life or provides support at times when staff cannot meet a resident's quality of life or care needs.</li></ul>   |