

**Policy Type**

Sault Area Hospital

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SUBJECT: **ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER (PILOT**
POLICY)

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BACKGROUND:

Caregivers can face challenges and obstacles while trying to care for their loved ones, becoming a recognized member of the health care team as an Essential Caregiver can help make a difference by linking the hospital and the community resources available, engaging and learning to effectively communicate with health team members through the education and the training provided. Essential Caregivers can not only can improve the care the of patient but can help to reduce the risk of preventable harm.

PURPOSE:

An Essential Care Giver is an essential person who is selected by the patient and cares for them providing comfort, social and cultural interaction, emotional and physical support, as well as speaking on behalf of the patient when he/she cannot speak.

An Essential Care Giver is **not** a casual visitor, but rather someone who is chosen by the patient or their Substitute Decision Maker. The Essential Caregiver comes to the hospital to assist with the daily changing care of the patient. The Essential Caregiver may be allowed access to the hospital in periods of heightened restriction, when casual visitors may be prohibited.

Essential Care givers may be a parent, a spouse or a child (at least 16 years of age) or a significant other who can provide a meaningful connection. An appointed guardian, a cultural or community member or a translator may also become an essential Caregiver. Every situation is unique to the patient's current condition.

PROCEDURE

Essential Caregivers are chosen by patients when a need for additional care has been identified by and agreed upon by the clinical care team in conjunction with the patient/substitute decision maker/Power of Attorney.

An Essential Caregiver is essential but not necessarily the Power of Attorney for Personal Care nor the Power of Attorney for Property.

An Essential Caregiver can be a relative, a friend or a significant other not necessarily living with the patient.

An Essential Caregiver can be anyone 16 years and older.

An Essential Caregiver can provide support and care for short periods of time (e.g. days) or for extended periods of time.

Essential Caregivers can face challenges and obstacles, and yet experience very rewarding moments, while caring for their family and friends.

Expectations of the Essential Caregiver:

- Must be identified by the patient and/or substitute decision maker
- Must be willing participate in orientation and training activities
- Must be visually identifiable through the use of a Caregiver ID Badge
- Must be physically, cognitively, emotionally able to provide the care elements identified.

The care team will provide Essential Caregivers with appropriate training pertaining to the specific care needs of the patient which MAY include*:

- Nutritional Assist
- Emotional Support
- Cognitive Support
- Mobility Assist
- Bathing Assist
- Communication/Language Assist
- Pre-transition Home Assist
- Other (as agreed upon by the team)

(*note – The role and duties of the essential caregiver will change depending on the needs of the patient. The duties performed by the caregiver must be within the scope of their role as determined by the clinical team. Training will occur to support the caregiver. Any care provided outside of the scope of their role will result in action that might jeopardize the designation as an essential caregiver.)

Prior to participation as an essential caregiver, it will be mandatory to attend for the caregiver to review a caregiver guide outlining:

- Overview of your role
- Violence Flagging
- Hospital Codes
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Hand Hygiene
- Other as deemed appropriate.

Essential Caregivers will provide care to their loved one only and care shall be provided according to the care plan for the patient. If the Essential Caregiver is unable to adhere to appropriate precautions, they shall be excluded from participation as an essential caregiver and access to the building may be removed/limited.

Appeal process for Patients, families, and Essential Caregivers:

- In the event that a Patient, and/or SDM, and/or Essential Caregiver disagree with a determination of the Clinical Care Team decisions to remove or decline access to Essential Caregivers the following process will be followed:
 - Notice of the disagreement to a decision made by the clinical care team will be submitted to any member of the clinical care team.
 - An attempt to rectify the situation through additional coaching/training will occur with the Essential Caregiver and the clinical care team.
 - If there is no resolution the notice will go to the Patient Care Manager and/or Manager of Volunteer Resources to make an attempt to rectify the concern.
 - If no resolution can be made, then the decision to remove or decline access to Essential Caregivers will be implemented for a determined amount of time.
 - An alternate Essential Caregiver may be named

RELATED POLICY

- SAH Visitor Policy
- SAH Visitor Guide
- Essential Caregiver Guide