

Peer Mentoring Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a peer mentor?

**A:** A peer mentor is a patient who agrees to help empower other patients to make informed decisions and cope with their lives after being diagnosed with ESRD. Peer Mentors:

* Offer other patients their expertise as someone who has been through the same experiences and can fully understand their concerns.
* Provide support and listen.
* Help ensure that dialysis facility staff members understand the concerns, issues, and priorities of patients.

 Q: What should I do if a fellow patient asks me for medical advice?

**A:** Share your personal experiences, but NEVER provide technical or medical information.

It’s important to remember that a medical treatment or a diet that works for you may be dangerous to another patient with a different combination of medical conditions.

* For medical questions, refer the patient to a doctor.
* For questions about diet, refer the patient to a dietitian.
* For questions about dealing with the issues of dialysis, refer the patient to a social worker.

Q: What do I do if a fellow patient comes to me with a complaint about a staff member or another patient?

**A:** It is not uncommon for patients to complain or vent to peer mentors, as they can benefit from knowing that there is someone who truly understands what it means to be on dialysis. If a patient comes to you with a complaint:

* Encourage them to follow the facility’s grievance procedure if they have been unable to resolve the problem in an informal way
* Suggest to the patient that he or she bring the issue to the attention of the facility’s social worker.
  + This is usually the first stop in the grievance process.
  + If a patient feels uncomfortable with this suggestion, he or she may ask for your help in taking this first step.
  + With the patient’s permission only, you may approach the social worker on their behalf.

 Q: Who can I tell if a patient comes to me with a complaint?

**A:** Remember that all patient information is confidential. All healthcare personnel are required to observe that confidentiality. As a patient representative, you are expected to follow the same standards of confidentiality.

* ALWAYS get the patient’s permission before approaching a staff member with a patient concern.
* NEVER repeat personal information that you may learn in your role as a peer mentor.

Q: What resources are available to me as a Peer Mentor?

**A:** HSAG: ESRD Network 17 has provided several resources to your facility. Speak with your care team to learn more.