

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Overview

What is peer mentoring?

How does it work in ESRD?

Peer mentoring is a form of advising that generally takes place between a person who has lived through a specific experience and a person who is new to that experience. In the world of end stage renal disease (ESRD), peer mentoring empowers patients to help other patients move forward and cope with life after being diagnosed with kidney disease. Peer mentoring:

* Provides a forum for patients to learn from one another to understand the benefits of controlling their health and being involved in their own care
* Helps close the gap in communication between dialysis staff and patients; peer mentors act as intermediaries to ensure that staff understand patients’ concerns, issues, and priorities
* Provides an essential support system that helps to increase the confidence of new kidney patients

What are the benefits of peer mentoring?

Peer-mentoring provides an environment of learning and support from someone who has been through the same experience and has a good understanding of all that dialysis involves. It can:

* Provide additional support beyond that of family and friends
* Provide essential support for those who do not have friends or family to assist them
* Increase resistance to stress-related anxiety and depression
* Aid patients in making needed lifestyle changes by helping them realize helpful ways of coping and taking personal responsibility
* Which could result in patients living longer and healthier lives

What is the role of a peer mentor?

Peer mentors can serve several roles, including:

• Providing information

• Listening to concerns

• Sharing experiences

• Promoting positive behavior

• Offering encouragement

• Relieving anxiety

Who should be a peer mentor?

Peer mentors can come from all backgrounds. They should be individuals with positive outlooks on managing kidney disease who:

* Are succeeding at achieving their own treatment goals
* Can provide insight to help others successfully manage kidney disease
* Are willing to listen and provide support

What other guidelines are there for peer mentors?

Peer mentors should:

* Wait for a patient’s consent before approaching them as a mentor
* Not provide medical advice. If a peer mentor is asked for medical advice, he/she should refer the patient to the dialysis staff or nephrologist
* Encourage mentees to use the facility’s grievance procedure if a patient shares a complaint with them. (The social worker serves as a patient advocate and can help with patient complaints.)
* Always get permission from a mentee before approaching a staff member about that patient’s concerns and/or sharing any information obtained in the role of a peer mentor