

Network 15 PAC Insights

Peer Mentoring: A Valuable Resource for New Dialysis Patients

Members of Network 15's Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) were unanimous in their feedback about their experiences of starting dialysis. They felt alone and wished there had been a patient they could talk to who could let them know, from their own experience, that with time, dialysis wouldn't be so scary. This is one of the main reasons patients volunteer for the Network—to *help other patients and share what they've learned with others*.

Common experiences for new patients include anxiety, fear, and lack of knowledge about dialysis treatments and who their dialysis care givers are. Linking a new patient with a more experienced patient can have a positive impact on the new patient's orientation and adjustment to treatment and his or her care team.

Our PAC members define a mentor as **a patient, who doesn't take away the burden of end stage renal disease (ESRD) but can relate to other patients with ESRD** and provide them with hope and encouragement that they can live well with kidney disease.

What are the Essential Values a Peer Mentor Must Have?

Essential peer mentor values include:

- Honesty.
- Reliability.
- The desire to ask a patient what's important and really hear what the patient has to say.
- Confidentiality.
- Integrity.

What Makes a Peer Mentor Valuable?

A peer mentor:

- Is knowledgeable about his/her health issues and actively participates in his/her care.
- Has a positive attitude.
- Has a positive working relationship with staff.
- Is a good listener.
- Wants to help other patients.

What are the Responsibilities of a Peer Mentor?

Responsibilities of a peer mentor may include:

- Sharing knowledge and personal experiences of dialysis and ESRD with others.
- Encouraging others to learn about and manage their health.
- Assisting staff to orient new dialysis patients to the facility.
- Providing encouragement and support to new dialysis patients.
- Sharing the benefits of actively participating in your care with other patients.
- Sharing the benefits of following your treatment plan with other patients.
- Directing patient questions or concerns to the appropriate staff person.
- Talking with patients about different treatment modalities (provided the mentor has experience with other modalities).
- Supporting patients going through the transplant work-up process (provided the mentor has experience going through the process).
- Organizing or leading a patient support group.
- Assisting with patient education days and social events for patients.

What a Peer Mentor is Not!

A peer mentor is not:

- Someone who gives medical advice.
- A contact person for complaints or grievances for care being provided by the facility.
- The person responsible for providing answers to patient questions that are best answered directly by the doctor or staff.
- A substitute staff member for required care team patient education, assessment, and evaluation.
- Allowed -to assist patients in completing surveys and questionnaires.

If you have questions about how to voice a concern or grievance,
check out this helpful tool created BY patients FOR patients:

[www.hsag.com/NW15 Grievance Toolkit](http://www.hsag.com/NW15GrievanceToolkit)

To file a grievance, please contact Network 15 at 1.800.783.8818

info@nw15.esrd.net,

3025 S. Parker Road, Suite 820, Aurora, CO 80014

www.HSAG.com/ESRDNetwork15.