

NKF Peers referral guide: FAQs and talking points

Why refer someone for peer-to-peer support?

Studies suggest that peer support may help address some of the most prevalent psychosocial needs of patients. Having someone to talk to who can empathize as a person affected by kidney disease can help those struggling with understanding the disease and coping with their situation. Peer mentoring can also help potential donors and care partners of patients living with kidney disease to understand what they might expect going through the process. (Care partner support is only available in English.)

How does peer mentoring work?

When you refer someone to NKF Peers, the first thing they will do is register. Registration can be completed either online, or over the phone.

- Online, English: <https://www.kidney.org/peers>
- Online, Spanish: <https://www.kidney.org/es/peers>
- Phone or WhatsApp: 1-855-653-7337 (Mon-Fri, 9am – 5pm EST)

Internet access is not a requirement to participate as a mentee, but it is for mentors as they will need to complete training before they are assigned to a peer mentee.

Once someone is registered (as a mentor or mentee), NKF coordinates the training of mentors and pairing of mentees with an already trained mentor.

Finally, paired peers have the choice to connect via phone, messaging or video calls through the HIPAA compliant mentoring platform. NKF will select a mentor for the new mentee and the mentor will initiate contact. Together, pairs can decide if they'd like to meet on a regular basis or whenever it's mutually convenient for both mentor and mentee .

Mentors are trained to provide emotional support, share personal experiences and do not give medical advice.

Who are the mentors?

Mentors are fellow patients, living donors and care partners (English only) who have been trained to appropriately share their experiences with dialysis, transplant, or living kidney donation. We welcome both English and Spanish mentor referrals for NKF Peers.

Who are the mentees?

Mentees are kidney patients at any stage of kidney disease who are looking for support in their journey. They are patients in all stages of kidney disease, including those who are on dialysis, seeking a transplant, looking for a living donor and living well with a transplant. They're also potential donors looking to talk to someone who has donated and care partners of loved ones with kidney disease who need support.

Can I refer patients and potential donors who only speaks Spanish?

Yes. Those who are fluent Spanish-speaking will benefit greatly by being connected with a peer mentor who can relate to them in their preferred language and bring critical cultural understanding to the situation they may not be getting elsewhere.

Can I refer someone as a mentor?

Yes! A good mentor referral would be someone who is managing their health relatively well or who has made positive adjustments to living with kidney disease, living well after donating or being a care partner. Peer mentor training has a self-paced portion where potential mentors go through short, on-line modules during their own time, then a live Zoom session with program staff to go over exercises and role plays that put what they learned in the self-paced portion into practice, followed by a written portion to apply what they learned.

How do I refer?

The NKF has provided a few materials (like this FAQ) to make referring easy!

1. A provider identifies someone who may benefit from peer-to-peer mentoring and mentions that the program is free and is provided by the National Kidney Foundation. Providers may add a brief opinion about why the individual may benefit from the program.
2. Before they leave the office, talk with them and cover the suggested talking points provided by NKF (see below). You can also share the promotional flier found on this website. You can download two types of fliers -one for mentees and one for mentors.

Do you have materials we can share with patients?

Yes, you may use the printable PDFs from the NKF's Patient Solutions site. These are designed to be given to people being referred to the program. There are two different flyers – one to be given to individuals being referred as mentees, and a different one for individuals being referred as mentors.

Patient Solutions website to download free, promotional material:

kidney.org/professionals/patient-solutions-health-professionals

Another great idea is to print both flyers out and hang them in the clinic rooms!

Talking Points

Referring a patient as a mentee

- Help them understand they are being encouraged to participate in a peer-to-peer program, NKF Peers, through the National Kidney Foundation.
- Explain that NKF Peers helps them connect with another person who is going through a similar experience and it's meant to give them someone to chat and relate to in a way they may not be able to do with friends, family or clinical staff.
- If applicable, mention that their mentor will communicate to them in their preferred language (English or Spanish).
- Give the individual the applicable flier (for mentees) which will direct them to register for the free program through the National Kidney Foundation.

Referring a patient as a mentor

- Help them understand they are being encouraged to become a mentor with the National Kidney Foundation Peers program because of their experience with living well with kidney disease, dialysis, getting a transplant, finding a living donor, living well with a transplant, living donation or being a good care partner.
- Explain that this is an opportunity for them to volunteer to help others who are going through a similar experience.
- Mention that they will need to complete some training prior to being assigned as a mentor.
- As a mentor, the NKF will then help connect them to their assigned mentee(s) where they can serve as an important outlet and source of information to others.
- Give them the applicable flier (for mentors – has Spanish and English on the flier) and ensure they understand that they should use the flier to register for the program which is offered for free by the National Kidney Foundation. You can also let them know they can call the Peers program and one of the program social workers will answer any questions.

Contact NKF Peers

nkfpeers@kidney.org | 855-653-7337