

NKF Peers referral guide: FAQs and talking points

Frequently Asked Questions

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 sympathize as a person affected by kidney disease can help those struggling with understanding the disease, coping with their situation, or making decisions related to treatment of chronic kidney disease.

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 Eastern)

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

Finally, paired peers connect via telephone. NKF will select a mentor for the new mentee and the mentor will initiate contact. Together, peers will align on a regular schedule for phone calls. Support focuses on emotional support and personal experiences and does not give medical advice.

Who are the mentors?

Mentors are fellow patients who have been trained to appropriately share their experiences with dialysis, transplant, or living kidney donation, as applicable. We welcome referrals of mentors for both our English and Spanish NKF Peers programs.

Which patients might be a good candidate to participate?

The program is actively seeking both mentors and mentees. Mentors are people who have experienced treatment for end-stage kidney disease. Mentees are patients with late-stage CKD, who are facing dialysis or transplant and looking for emotional support from someone who has been there.

Can I refer a patient who only speaks Spanish?

Yes. Those who are predominantly Spanish-speaking patients who are still adjusting to living with kidney disease might 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 a patient who is managing their condition relatively well, or who has made positive adjustments to living with kidney disease. We are currently accepting peer mentors who have the time and interest to be trained and matched with one or more patients. Those who are bilingual in English and Spanish and can bring cultural relevance are particularly valuable mentors. Peer mentor training has a self-paced portion where potential mentors go through short, online modules during their own time, and 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.

How do I refer?

The NKF has provided a few materials (like this FAQ) with the intent that referring will be easy!

1. A provider – doctor or nurse – identifies someone who may benefit from peer-to-peer mentoring and mentions to the patient that the program is provided by the National Kidney Foundation. Providers may add a brief opinion about why the specific patient may benefit from the program.
2. The provider lets office staff know the patient is being referred to NKF PEERS and for which role (mentor or mentee).
3. Before the patient leaves the office, office staff talks with the patient and covers the suggested talking points provided by NKF. After covering appropriate talking points with the patient, give the patient the appropriate flier. Your office has 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 NKF's Patient Solutions site. These are designed to be given to patients being referred to the program. There are two different fliers – one to be given to patients being referred as mentees, and a different one for patients being referred as mentors.

Talking Points

Referring a patient as a mentee

- Help the patient understand they are being encouraged to participate in a peer-to-peer program, NKF Peers, administered by the National Kidney Foundation.
- Explain that NKF Peers helps them connect with another person who is managing kidney disease 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 patient the applicable flier (for mentees) which will direct them to register for the free program offered by the National Kidney Foundation.

Referring a patient as a mentor

- Help the patient understand they are being encouraged to participate as a mentor with the National Kidney Foundation Peers program because of their experience with kidney disease.
- Explain that this is an opportunity for them to volunteer to help others who are perhaps earlier in their kidney health journey.
- 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 the patient 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.

Contact NKF Peers

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