# Evaluation Guidance

## Introduction

Thank you for participating in *Peer Up!* We hope that this document will help guide you and other program staff interested in evaluating the impact and success of *Peer Up!* in your dialysis facility. To ensure that your efforts are in line with best practices for program evaluation, this document will also provide an overview of guidelines related to working with human subjects and an institutional review board (IRB).

Peer-to-peer programs such as *Peer Up!* have the potential to assist end-stage renal   
disease (ESRD) patients in managing their complex chronic illnesses to improve health outcomes. Research has shown that patients who participate in peer mentoring programs aren’t the only ones who reap the benefits; the act of helping others also benefits the ones who serve.

Data collected and evaluated by *Peer Up!* facilities are key to helping improve program   
components, processes, and goals; guiding the creation of new materials and content to best   
meet patients’ needs regarding ESRD and self-management; and ultimately benefiting both   
patients and the facility.

Please know that program evaluation is *not* required and will not be a determining factor   
for your program’s success. An evaluation needs to be planned and implemented at the beginning of the program and throughout. Evaluators will tell you that the evaluation needs to be built into the program from the beginning; otherwise, you will not have identified all the questions you’re interested in answering and will not have collected the data you need   
to answer those questions. When the evaluation stage approaches, assess your overall capabilities and resources for those particular activities and proceed according to what is possible within those parameters at that point in time.

## What Is Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is a type of research to assess whether a program is:

1. Functioning as planned, and
2. Making a difference to patients.

An evaluation uses consistent questions to document how the program is being run   
and what is happening in the program. Evaluation compares information about patients before and after the program to quantify changes in knowledge about ESRD, self-care,   
and health outcomes.

## Why Should My Facility Evaluate Its *Peer Up!* Program?

There are many benefits to your facility from conducting a program evaluation, including the following:

* Your patients’ health and their treatment are surely of great value to your organization. Evaluation allows you to track their health through your findings—including hospitalization rates—and to see how the program is helping them.
* It’s a chance to review and improve management of program resources, which is valuable when working with limited means.
* The information you acquire will allow your facility to improve *Peer Up!* implementation and effectiveness for your patients and also will demonstrate the program’s achievements to date.
* The data and findings could be a great selling point to management on how the program benefits your facility.
* Your data may meet the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Incentive Program (QIP) requirements by demonstrating that your facility is delivering high-quality services and quality-of-care measures.

Everything you need to conduct a simple evaluation of your *Peer Up!* efforts can be found in the toolkit. See Suggested Tools (below) for details.

## Key Considerations

Though evaluation may require the time, resources, and technical expertise of you or your staff, conducting a simple evaluation of your facility’s *Peer Up!* program is worthwhile as your findings can help you continually improve the program, to everyone’s benefit.

If your facility does not have a staff person to dedicate to program evaluation, don’t be discouraged. Reach out to local partners (e.g., health departments, colleges, and technical organizations) who can help you identify evaluation consultants or services, which can sometimes even be free! For example, graduate students are often more than willing to take on an evaluation project to fulfill their program requirements. Collaboration is key!

## Suggested Tools

Should you decide to evaluate your *Peer Up!* program, this toolkit will provide you with ready-to-go tools you can tailor. You can use the following materials for data collection and as the foundation of your analysis and evaluation:

* ***Peer Up!* Contact Log.** This log allows mentors to track interactions with their mentees. For example, they can note where they met, what they talked about, what materials they used, and when they plan to meet again. You can collect this information as appropriate for your facility and evaluation plan. The log comes in both regular- and large-print versions.
* ***Peer Up!* Mentor/Mentee Surveys.** These survey for mentors and mentees can be used at the start and end of your program to show self-care changes that program participants have made. The specific measures in these surveys, as well as how to score them, are described on the last page of this guide.
* ***Peer Up!* Mentor Feedback Form.** This assessment tool gathers data on mentors’ perceptions of the program including what they liked, what they didn’t like, what they learned, and what they might improve.
* ***Peer Up!* Mentee Feedback Form.** This assessment tool gathers data on mentees’ perceptions of the program including what they liked, what they didn’t like, what they learned, and what they might improve.

You may need other evaluation tools or forms, depending on your facility and your organization’s policies. For example, you may need participants to sign a consent form agreeing to being part of the evaluation and allowing you to analyze their data.

## Institutional Review Board (IRB) Involvement

Before evaluating your facility’s *Peer Up!* program, we strongly encourage you to find out if your evaluation must be reviewed by a designated IRB. An IRB is a committee that reviews, modifies, monitors, and approves research processes that include human participants to ensure the safety and protection—the rights and welfare—of these participants. Just as critically, an IRB safeguards your facility and evaluator(s) throughout the research process by guaranteeing that your study meets ethical standards.

For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/.