Use this tip sheet to introduce and build support for Peer Up! with your administrator, medical director, board of directors, or other leadership members.

# Key Points for Talking with Facility Leaders

## Need for a Peer Mentoring Program

Prepare to make the case for a peer mentoring program at your facility by looking at your patients’ and facility’s needs. Jot down two or three reasons. Be as specific as possible. These needs may include:

* We have a number of new patients with limited understanding of and information about end-stage renal disease (ESRD) and dialysis.
* Many of our patients have difficulty following their diet or fluid plans.
* Patients and/or staff have requested more patient-education sessions and/or opportunities for patients to interact with each other.
* Some patients are missing treatments and/or not adhering to their treatment plans and could use guidance from someone else experiencing ESRD and dialysis.
* Implementing a peer mentoring program might help our facility meet certain patient engagement requirements of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Incentive Programs (QIPs).

## Benefits of Peer Programs

Point out that peer mentoring programs have been used for decades to help patients with a chronic disease connect with and learn from one another. Research shows that such programs can have multiple benefits including:

* Increased patient engagement and empowerment
* More skills (e.g., following a specified diet, exercise, medication adherence)
* Improved quality of life
* Improved mental health
* Improved clinical measures
* Increased socialization

## Opportunity to Support the Facility’s Mission

Identify opportunities to discuss the program in the context of the facility’s own mission statement, strategies, and values (i.e., how it connects to the bigger picture).

## *Peer Up!* Proven Benefits

Share results. If you don’t yet have your own program findings, cite the results of the Peer Up! pilot study:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mentee increases in:   * Knowledge * Self-efficacy * Perceived social support * Dialysis social support * Treatment attendance | Mentor increases in:   * Knowledge * Dialysis social support * Dialysis self-management |

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: What does this program entail?

**A:** The program is an extension of the patient-centered approach to care. Program participants (i.e., patients) are paired together so that they can share their experiences and knowledge, discuss topics related to self-management and support, and develop problem-solving skills, all of which could help improve their outcomes.

### Q: How much will the program cost the facility?

**A:** Peer Up! is free and provides ready-to-go materials in a comprehensive toolkit. The facility will need to devote some staff time and resources at the onset of the program; however, those staff commitments decrease over time as the core of the program is peer interaction and patient engagement. Financial costs include printing and copying. Optional financial costs include refreshments and program incentives (e.g., T-shirts, water bottles, pens). The most important thing to know is that the resulting benefits to patients far outweigh the costs. A study of the Peer Up! pilot found that mentees missed fewer treatments, and mentors reported improved self-management, both of which can lead to cost savings. The program might also help the facility more closely comply with the CMS QIPs.

### Q: Who will lead the program?

**A:** The program template strongly suggests identifying one staff member, or a small group of staff (i.e., planning committee), to serve as dedicated program managers or coordinators, as this role is critical to the program’s success. With the Peer Up! toolkit’s ready-to-go materials, preparation time for launching the program is minimal, and implementation can be spread across several staff or a small team to prevent overburdening one staff member. Eventually, as more patients participate in the program, they can begin to take on some of the program leadership responsibilities, making the program less time-intensive for staff and even more peer-focused.

### Q: How much staff time will it take to run the program?

**A:** Once the initial mentor training is completed, a program manager can expect to commit approximately two hours per week to oversee the program. This includes monitoring mentors and mentees, addressing any issues that arise, keeping staff and management updated on Peer Up! program progress, and collecting assessment and evaluation instruments (if applicable). Keep in mind that this is an estimate—and this may vary depending on the number of participants in the program and the issues faced within the pairs.