



# Support Group Basics

## What is a support group?

Support groups encourage people with common experiences and concerns to come together and provide emotional and moral support to one another. Support groups can be formal, providing more guidance and structure, or informal. It is important to first decide what would work best for you and the patients in your facility.

## Where to begin?

- Determine the purpose and what you want to accomplish
- Determine what is the most feasible way to implement support in your facility
- Determine who will lead the group
- Evaluate patient interest, and determine which date/time is best
- Develop a flyer with relevant information on it
- Be consistent

## Consider these tips:

- Set a date and time, and be consistent
- Have small incentives, such as door prizes or food
- Be prepared
- Determine a topic of discussion for the group, or secure a speaker for the group
- Review the importance of confidentiality and rules for the group
- Do not let one or two people dominate conversations
- Do not allow gossip, and dissuade conversations on controversial issues, such as politics or religion
- Create small exercises as ice breakers
- Invite all patients and family members to the group
- End on a positive note

## Topics of discussion:

1. What is End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), and what can I expect from my dialysis facility?
2. Depression (invite someone from the local mental health center to come speak about depression)
3. Treatment modalities/options
4. Mental health
5. Renal diet (have the dietician speak, and collaborate on a kidney-friendly food demonstration)
6. Patient rights and responsibilities
7. What is the facility's grievance process?
8. Improving quality of life
9. Staying active and healthy
10. Grief
11. Caregiver stress/compassion fatigue