



## END STAGE RENAL DISEASE NETWORK 8, INC.

### Support Group Meetings

Support groups are helpful to patients, but at times can be challenging to implement for the entire clinic. Consider creative avenues of providing these meetings to your patients. Many facilities are starting smaller support groups with the involvement of the facility patient representative (FPR) or other peers. The meeting does not have to be after clinic hours, consider meetings in the lobby before or after treatment allowing for more patient participation. Due to the simplicity of smaller support groups, many of you may already have them occurring in your facility. The group can have a few patients or the entire shift.

#### Simple Steps to Starting a Support Group

##### **Patient Involvement**

All facilities should have an FPR or peer mentor. Ask this person to assist with leading the group. Patients are more likely to participate when there is patient ownership. As a staff member, work with the FPR to identify topics, secure speakers based on the topic (this could be your dietitian, nurse, etc.), and provide resources and materials. Patients should feel this is their group and you are their liaison.

##### **Plan Ahead**

In advance, inform patients of the meeting time and the topic for discussion. A support group can discuss any topic that is important to patients and their overall health. For example, if you have a lobby day scheduled to discuss modality options, schedule a support group meeting shortly thereafter so patients can openly discuss questions and concerns about the different modalities. Other topics can include: returning to work, renal diet, recipes, preventing infections, communicating with the treatment team and coping with ESRD.

##### **Plan for Follow-up**

At the conclusion of the meeting, discuss topics for the next support group meeting. The schedule for your meeting is up to you and your patients. Find the format that works best for your clinic, there is no right or wrong way to have the meeting. Don't make this a huge task, but a simple way for patients to communicate and ask questions.

Remember, whether you choose to have smaller meetings for each shift or larger meetings, you are providing a space for patients to openly ask questions and share experiences.