Tips for Facilitating a Successful SUPPORT GROUP

A support group is a group of people with a common concern who meet regularly to exchange information and encourage one another. Below are some tips that facilitators of successful support groups have shared with the Network. These elements can lead to a cohesive and sustaining group experience.

Getting Started

• Start small with a core group that is dependable (will show up). Don’t forget to include patient-care partners. This core group can:
  ▪ Develop a bond
  ▪ Help to create flyers to announce upcoming meetings
  ▪ Decide the best day and time to meet
  ▪ Decide where to meet
  ▪ Identify possible guest speakers and topics for occasional meetings
• Develop a name for your group
• Use feedback from patients on the purpose of the group, and develop a mission statement

Meetings

• Develop group meeting rules
• Always start and end your group on a positive note
• Incorporate inspirational testimonials or stories from patients into each meeting to help members connect and offer an element of hope
• Focus on a specific topic for a portion of each group meeting
• Let your patients drive the group—staff members should simply be present as a resource
• Don’t forget to have a renal-friendly snack at the meetings—food fosters fellowship

Growing Your Group

• Notify the ESRD network of your new group so they can post it on the network website and help in getting the word out with network blog posts
• Notify the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)—they will post information about your group on the community support group list website: https://aakp.org/support-groups/
• Open the group up to patients/care partners from other area facilities