



Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias

Family Support Program

Peer Mentor Program

The NYU Langone Medical Center Family Support Program offers caregivers a free Peer Mentor Program where they can benefit from talking privately, one-on-one, with others who have had a similar experience. Volunteer mentors, who are former or current caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's and related dementias, offer support and practical information through empathic listening and sharing of their own experience. The Peer Mentor Program offers caregivers a "bridge" to support groups and other community and Family Support Program services that they may find helpful.

How are mentors and caregivers "matched"?

Peer mentors are matched with caregivers based on the stage of the dementia (peer mentor will have already dealt with that stage), diagnosis, language, relationship to person with dementia (spouse, adult child, etc.); gender and neighborhood. Initial interviews with both caregivers and mentors will inform the matches.

How will mentors and caregivers meet?

Mentors and caregivers will "meet" over the phone. Telephone meetings have the advantage of flexible availability, ease of access, privacy and confidentiality, as well as overcoming transportation and scheduling problems. The peer mentors can fit the mentoring time into their own busy schedules and those of the caregivers they are mentoring. Importantly, caregivers can access this service without having to find a person to take care of their family member with dementia.

Who initiates the telephone contacts?

Mentors make the initial call to the caregiver. Thereafter the mentor and caregiver work out together when and how to contact each other. Both mentors and caregivers can contact the Peer Mentor Program Coordinators at any time to discuss questions and/or issues in the mentoring relationship.

How often do mentors and caregivers talk with each other?

Peer mentoring will be offered to each caregiver for a 3 month period, through a minimum of six sessions. Mentors and caregivers can choose to contact each other more frequently if they wish.

How do I enroll myself or refer a mentor or caregiver to the program?

Call or e-mail the Peer Mentor Coordinators to make a referral:

Ann Burgunder – 646-754-2283

Thea Micoli – 646-754-2282

E-mail: cgpeermentor@gmail.com

Office Address: 145 E. 32nd St. (Lex./3rd Ave.) | 8th Fl. – Rm. 830

New York, NY 10016

Caregivers

What caregivers are eligible for the Peer Mentor Program?

The Peer Mentor program is open to caregivers caring for a family member with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias who live in the five boroughs of New York City. A caregiver may seek the support of the mentor program at any point in their care giving experience. For new caregivers, the mentoring experience may lead a caregiver to seek additional support in the future.

How does a caregiver get involved in the program?

Caregivers can refer themselves to the program or be referred by a staff member of the Family Support Program or other social service and community programs. The Peer Mentor Coordinators will interview every caregiver in person to gather information about their care giving responsibilities (including the diagnosis and current status of the person with Alzheimer's) and their reasons for requesting Peer Mentor services. Through this interview the Coordinators will assess:

- whether the program can be of assistance to the caregiver; and
- whether there is a mentor who can be helpful to the caregiver.

How does a caregiver qualify to participate in the program?

- Live in the five boroughs
- Be a family caregiver of a person living at home
- Have access to a telephone
- Express a need for support and an interest in connecting with a care giving peer.
- Make a commitment to meet with a Mentor for a minimum of six telephone conversations.
- Be willing to participate in an initial interview and a final interview to evaluate the mentoring experience.

What happens at the end of the three month mentoring time?

- At the final meeting with the Peer Mentor Coordinators the caregiver's interest in further services will be discussed. The Caregiver will be connected to the Family Support Program Social Workers and Community Health Workers who can assist them through ongoing consultations and referrals to a wide range of community services.
- If the caregiver would like to participate in a support group or seek respite care, they will be referred to CaringKind. The Family Support Program contracts with CaringKind for the provision of these services.

Mentors

What is the role of a mentor?

The mentor offers a non-judgmental "listening ear" to the caregiver, sharing his/her experience as a family caregiver and providing support as well as information and practical assistance. Above all, the mentor creates an empathic connection with the caregiver.

How does a person qualify to be a mentor?

- A current or former caregiver for a spouse/partner or parent;
- Have experience beyond the stage of dementia that the caregiver is dealing with;
- Accept mentor position on a volunteer basis;
- Agree to the commitment of time and engagement required of the program;
- Possess the qualities of a good mentor including: excellent listening skills, patience, understanding, warmth, enthusiasm, approachability, friendliness, open mindedness, and motivation.

What is expected of the mentor?

- Initial interview with the Peer Mentor Coordinator;
- Three hour training session;
- Minimum of six telephone contacts of 30-60 minute duration with a caregiver over a three month period;
- Documentation of the mentoring conversations, goals and outcomes;
- Monthly group meetings with mentors and the Coordinators for training and sharing of experiences;
- Final meeting and evaluation with Peer Mentor Coordinator;

How long is a mentor's commitment to the Peer Mentor Program?

Each mentor will be asked to make a one year commitment to the program. This commitment offers the mentor the greatest promise of meaningful mentoring and personal gratification and reward. We recognize that there may be circumstances that warrant a shorter commitment.

How many caregivers will a mentor work with in each three-month cycle?

During each three month "mentor cycle" a mentor is asked to mentor up to three caregivers, depending on their own time availability.