



*The foundation
of kidney care.*

Kidney Foundation Establishes Peer Support Helpline for Canadians Affected by Kidney Disease

Montreal – The Kidney Foundation of Canada will launch a national peer support helpline on March 27 to provide people affected by kidney disease with access to personal support services from coast-to-coast.

Each day, an average of 14 Canadians learn that their kidneys have failed and that they will require dialysis or a transplant to survive. Many had no warning, since symptoms are often silent, or mistaken for other health conditions.

Adjusting to the practical and emotional realities of living with kidney disease can be difficult - talking to others who have confronted similar challenges can be a helpful part of the coping process. However, for those living in remote areas, access to peer support services was not a readily available option. Responding to this need, The Kidney Foundation established the toll-free helpline, which can be reached by calling **1-866-390-7337 (PEER)**.

“A national peer support helpline is about people helping people,” says Doug Parsons, Chair of The Kidney Foundation’s National Patient Services Committee. “As a renal social worker, I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact that sharing one’s story has in helping to lessen anxiety and alleviate fears.”

People who call into the helpline will have access to any one of 250 peer support volunteers from across the country. The caller is matched with a volunteer whose experience most closely resembles their own - by age, marital and family status, and by what stage they are at in their treatment.

“Peer support volunteers come from all walks of life,” says Beryl Ferguson, National Program Director, “but they have three very important things in common: they have completed the Kidney Foundation’s peer support training program, they have signed an Oath of Confidentiality, and they are living well with kidney disease.”

In addition to the benefits for those requesting the service, a recent survey showed that peer support volunteers also find the program beneficial for their own personal growth and wellbeing.

“Serving as a peer support volunteer has been very rewarding. Because of what I’ve gone through, I feel I can offer a unique kind of support. And it feels good to know that my own experience and the things I’ve learned can help someone else,” says Cyril Muise, a kidney transplant recipient and peer support volunteer who lives in Alberta.

The only national health charity addressing the needs of people affected by kidney disease, The Kidney Foundation of Canada funds research, provides education and support, promotes access to high quality healthcare and works to increase public awareness and commitment to kidney health and organ donation.

For more information, visit www.kidney.ca.