

## MedStar National Rehabilitation Network Volunteer Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Peer Mentorship Program

### What Is A Peer Mentor?

The word "peer" simply means someone who is similar to you be it in age, gender, race, education, or disability. "Mentoring" simply means serving as a trusted counselor or teacher. A peer mentor is someone who has a spinal cord injury (SCI), is living successfully with it, and wants to help others in similar situations. A peer mentor is not a replacement for health care professionals, but they can be a valuable resource.

Peer mentors assist individuals who are newly injured or diagnosed with a SCI in a variety of ways such as:

- Sharing thoughts and experiences about SCI;
- Coping with SCI;
- Discussing ways to prevent medical complications;
- Assisting others in living a healthy, active life.

### Levels of Mentorships

#### SCI Peer Mentors

A SCI Peer Mentor is a formal mentor relationship consisting of a newly diagnosed person and an individual who has been living with SCI for a longer period of time. The relationship involves one-on-one meetings, outings, as well as correspondence via phone and e-mail for a pre-determined length of time.

#### SCI Peer Visitors

A visitor consists of a one-time visit between an individual in acute rehabilitation and a volunteer living with SCI. These visits are facilitated and supervised by the Care Coordination and Therapeutic Recreation departments.

#### SCI Peer Pen/Phone Pals

The SCI Peer Pen Pal program was developed as a partner to the Peer Mentor Program. Recognizing that people have busy lives and many commitments, the pen/phone pal program gives individuals with SCI an option to have support by phone and e-mail as opposed to face-to-face meetings.

### How Do I Get Involved?

To become a volunteer mentor, please fill out the volunteer information sheet and return it to the therapeutic recreation department, or contact one of the individuals listed below. A representative from MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital will be in touch with you. Thank you again for your interest and feel free to contact us with any questions!

### For more information, please contact:

#### Harsh Thakkar

Peer Wellness Specialist  
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