



# **Peer Mentorship Program**

## **Caregiver Peer Mentee Manual**



## Stronger Together

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# Welcome

Welcome to the **Brain Injury Association of Nebraska (BIA-NE) Peer Mentorship Program.**

Being part of this program means you will be **connected with someone who understands being a caregiver** of someone with a brain injury because they have lived with it too. They are a peer who listens, shares, and walks alongside you.

This program is about walking the journey together, at your pace.

## Before You Begin: Caregiver Mentee Readiness Checklist

Before starting peer mentorship, we encourage you to review the **Caregiver Mentee Readiness Checklist**. This optional, short checklist can help you think about whether this program feels like a good fit for you right now and what kind of support may be most helpful.

The checklist is a reflection tool, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

**Readiness Checklist available here:** [biane.org/fcgmentee\\_readiness\\_checklist/](https://biane.org/fcgmentee_readiness_checklist/)

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## What It Means To Be A Caregiver Peer Mentee

Being a caregiver peer mentee means you are open to connecting with someone who understands being a caregiver of someone with a brain injury.

You get to talk about what life has been like for you and what feels important right now. Some mentees talk a lot. Some mentees take time to open up. All of that is okay.

You are the expert on your own life. You decide what you share and when.



# What Peer Mentorship Is (And Is Not)

Peer mentorship is a **peer-centered relationship** between two people with lived experience of caring for an individual with a brain injury. It is a space for listening, understanding, and support.

- Peer mentorship is **not**:
- Therapy
  - Case Management
  - Resource Facilitation
  - Crisis support
  - Medical care

Your mentor is not there to fix problems or tell you what to do.



## Communication That Builds Trust

You decide what you want to talk about. Some days you may talk about daily routines or relationships. Other days you may talk about bigger changes or feelings.

It is okay to take your time.

**Example – Getting Started:**

*“Something that’s been hard for me lately is...”*

**What NOT to Say (Gently):**

- *“I don’t want to bother you with this.”*
- *“Other people have it worse than me.”*

Your experiences matter, and this space is for you.



# Learning From Shared Experience

Your mentor may share parts of their own journey and what helped them along the way.

What worked for your mentor may not work for you—and that’s okay. You get to decide what fits your life.

**Example – Taking What Fits:**

**Mentor:** “What helped me was taking breaks mid day .”  
**Mentor:** “That might not work for me, but it helps to hear what you tried.”

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# Boundaries and Privacy

Healthy boundaries help everyone feel safe and respected.

You never have to share anything you are not ready to talk about. You can ask to change the topic, take a break, or end a conversation early.

**Example – Setting A Boundary:**

*“I’m not ready to talk about that yet.”  
 “Can we switch topics?”*

What you share is kept private within the program.

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# Knowing When to Ask for Help

If something feels uncomfortable, confusing, or unsafe, you can reach out to the Program Coordinator.

**Reach out to the Peer Mentor Coordinator if:**

- A conversation feels overwhelming
- The match does not feel like a good fit
- You are worried about safety

**Example:**

“I like my mentor, but I’m not sure the match is working for me. Can I talk with someone about it?”

**Asking for help is okay and encouraged.**



# Program Basics & Housekeeping

Mentors are expected to meet regularly with their mentee, be on time, and communicate if plans need to change. When possible, give at least 24-hour notice.

Meetings that are in person should take place in public spaces. Mentors should not drive mentees or accept rides. Each person pays their own way during outings.

Peer mentoring meetings are safe spaces free from alcohol, drugs, and firearms.

**In an emergency, call 911 first, then contact the Peer Mentor Coordinator.**

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## How Long Mentorship Lasts

Mentorship matches may last a few months or up to one year. A match may end when you feel ready to move on, needs are met, or the match has run its course.

Once a match officially closes, staying in touch is only allowed if both people agree.

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## Your Journey as a Caregiver Peer Mentee

*What to expect, step by step*

This section explains how the peer mentorship process works, from getting started to being supported during your match.

**Step  
1:**

### Deciding If Peer Mentorship Is Right for You

If helpful, you can complete the optional **Caregiver Mentee Readiness Checklist** to help you think about what you need right now and whether peer mentorship feels helpful. The form is available here: [biane.org/fcgmentee\\_readiness\\_checklist/](http://biane.org/fcgmentee_readiness_checklist/)

**This checklist is not a test.** There are no right or wrong answers. It is simply a tool to help you reflect on your time, energy, and readiness.

Readiness can change over time. It is okay if now is not the right time. BIA-NE staff are always available to talk things through with you.

Step  
2:

## Sharing Your Interest

If you would like to be a peer mentee:

- You will complete a **Caregiver Mentee Interest and Matching Form** available here: [biane.org/fcgmentee\\_interest\\_form/](https://biane.org/fcgmentee_interest_form/)
- A BIA-NE staff member will reach out to connect with you
- Help is available if forms or technology feel challenging by contacting the program coordinator at: [402-423-2463](tel:402-423-2463) or [peer@biane.org](mailto:peer@biane.org).

**Need Support?**

You do not have to figure this out on your own. Staff are happy to walk through the process with you.

Step  
3:

## Conversation and Orientation

Before being matched, you will have:

- A one-on-one conversation with the Peer Mentor Coordinator
- A short orientation (about 30 minutes)

During orientation, you will talk about:

- Program expectations
- Boundaries and confidentiality
- Safety and support
- What mentoring relationships usually look like

This is also your time to ask questions and share what you are hoping for as a mentor. This helps the Peer Mentor Coordinator learn more about you and find the right match.

Step  
4:

## Paperwork and Background Check

To keep everyone safe and supported, you will complete a few required forms. The Program Mentor Coordinator will send you the following forms:

- Abuse and Molestation Policy
- Mentor Agreement & Consent
- Release of Information

A background check is required for all mentees. This is done through the DHHS central registry website. Mentees will receive an email once the request has been submitted by the BIA-NE.

**Note:** *Having something show up on the background check would not necessarily prevent someone from being able to be a mentee. It may just impact how you are matched.*

**Important To Know:**

You will not be matched with a mentor until this step is complete.

Step 5:

## Being Matched With a Mentor

When you are approved as a mentee:

- BIA-NE staff will thoughtfully match you with a peer mentor
- Matches are based on comfort, readiness, availability, and communication style
- You will receive information about your match and next steps from the Peer Mentor Coordinator to connect you to your mentee

### You Always Have A Choice

If a match does not feel right, you can say no. Your comfort and wellbeing matter.

Step 6:

## Check-Ins and Ongoing Support

BIA-NE stays connected with mentees and mentors throughout the match to make sure you both feel supported.

*You can expect the following check-ins:*

### About 3 Weeks After the Match Begins

- The Peer Mentor Coordinator checks in to see how things are going
- A chance to ask questions or talk through early concerns
- You will receive an initial survey to complete online to provide feedback on the orientation process

### About 4 Months Into the Match

- A check-in for you to discuss with the Peer Mentor Coordinator what is working well and any challenges that may have come up.
- You will receive a short survey to complete online

### Around 10 Months (If the Match Continues)

- A conversation about whether the match feels ready to end
- You will receive another survey to complete online
- Support with planning a healthy and respectful closure

### Between Check-Ins

You can reach out at any time. You do not need to wait for a scheduled check-in to ask for help.

**Step  
7:**

## During the Mentoring Relationship

As a peer mentee, you can expect:

- Regular contact with your mentor at a pace that works for you. While initially the mentor will initiate most engagement, eventually the outreach may be more two-way, as appropriate.
- Support from the Peer Mentor Coordinator if questions or concerns come up
- A relationship that is based on respect, choice, and support

**Step  
8:**

## Ending a Match

Mentoring relationships may last a few months or up to about one year.

- Matches may end when needs are met or readiness changes with input from the mentee
- Endings are a normal and healthy part of mentoring
- BIA-NE staff will help support a respectful and thoughtful close

You may choose to mentor again in the future if and when it feels right. A full application may not be required unless there are substantive changes, but updated signatures on forms may be required.

## Your Choice Matters

At every stage of the process:

- Participation is always voluntary
- You can pause, step back, or ask for changes
- Your well-being matters

## Questions or Support?

If you ever have questions or concerns, contact the Peer Mentor Coordinator.

### **Brain Injury Association of Nebraska (BIA-NE)**

Website: [www.biane.org](http://www.biane.org)

Email: [peer@biane.org](mailto:peer@biane.org)

Phone: [402-423-2463](tel:402-423-2463)

*Thank you for being part of the BIA-NE Caregiver Peer Mentorship Program.*