



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Peer-to-Peer Physician Support Program

**Purpose:** To provide our physicians and with confidential, independent, legally-protected, collegial support and resources for life's inevitable clinical, professional and personal challenges.

*Everyone can use a little help sometimes.*

### WHY PEER-TO-PEER PHYSICIAN SUPPORT?

Peer supporters are available to talk about whatever you want to talk about. Possible topics include:

- distress over difficult clinical events or litigation
- problems with career or workplace conflicts
- work-home-life issues
- burnout
- patient issues
- personal or family concerns

We know that at certain times doctors prefer to talk to colleagues over any other group. We value and are committed to your welfare.

### WHAT DO PEER SUPPORTERS DO?

While we don't have a magic wand, we can listen, provide perspective, provide resources and help you identify options. Doctors who have used similar programs have been positive; they have appreciated feeling heard in the context of not being judged, and receiving practical, helpful information.

### WHO ARE THE PEER SUPPORTERS?

For the pilot program, UNM SOM physicians from five specialties have been trained in peer support and are volunteering their time. You will be paired with someone who is not in your department and who does not know you but is similar to you in terms of seniority and practice. Talking to someone with a slightly different viewpoint can be very helpful. Also, peer supporters may understand circumstances in a way that even caring family members may not.

### WHAT IF I AM WORRIED ABOUT A COLLEAGUE?

Thank you for caring about your colleague! Please tell them that you are concerned and let them know about the Peer-to-Peer Physician Support program. We believe it is best if people self-refer.

### HOW DO I KNOW THIS WON'T GET BACK TO MY DEPARTMENT?

The fact that a conversation occurred is only known by the Peer Support Program Director and the peer supporter, and conversation details are only known by the peer supporter. We are an independent program and not associated with any evaluative part of the Medical Staff Office or SOM. The only outgoing information from Peer Support is quarterly usage stats and anonymous feedback to improve the program. We take confidentiality very seriously.

### ARE THESE CONVERSATIONS LEGALLY PROTECTED?

Peer Support is a resource provided by the Office of Professional Wellbeing and the UNM Peer Review Program, and as such, peer support conversations are protected from legal discovery by third parties with rare exceptions.\*

### ARE THERE ANY OTHER LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY?

As you can understand, we may need to breach confidentiality if there is danger to yourself or others, including substance use issues that put patients at risk; disclosure of child/elder/dependent adult abuse or neglect; and complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation. Depending on the circumstances, we may need to report these issues internally to appropriate UNM departments or externally to regulatory agencies.

### HOW DO I CONTACT PEER-TO-PEER PHYSICIAN SUPPORT?

Email the address below, which only goes to the Peer Support Program Director. A peer supporter will be assigned and contact you within a couple of days. A face-to-face meeting would be ideal but, from a practical standpoint, we can also talk by phone. Typically, peer support consists of one or two interactions, with resources sent to you as follow-up. We are all part of a medical community of shared experiences. We are here for you!

**OPW@ [salud.unm.edu](mailto:salud.unm.edu) • [hsc.unm.edu/school-of-medicine/education/wellness/](https://hsc.unm.edu/school-of-medicine/education/wellness/)**

\*Legal protection for the Peer Support program occurs through the UNM Peer Review Program, which provides this resource to enhance quality of care by supporting physicians with personal and professional challenges. Rarely, regulatory agencies including CMS, CDPH, the Medical Board of New Mexico, and the Joint Commission may ask for disclosure, but since no records of conversation content are kept, there would be nothing material to disclose except the fact that a conversation occurred. [Adapted from Stanford Medicine Wellness PRN Support.]