



PREGNANCY, PARENTING, & SUBSTANCE USE: NAVIGATING SYSTEMS

Module 2.2: Healthcare

Practical Tips to Help Participants Engage and Stay in Healthcare

“As a peer coach, sharing my experience, letting them know I understand what it is to be sitting on this side of the [exam] room and feel a stigma, the shame, and all that stuff. So I just like to make good suggestions to participants and come from a place of understanding. It's been great. I love it.”

– Peer Coach, Utah

Peers can employ the following tips to help participants engage and stay in prenatal care:

- ❑ If a participant has trouble reading or filling out complex forms for services, the peer can sit with her and do it together. If the participant lacks a phone, peers can help brainstorm ways for providers to reach her—maybe through a shelter’s phone, a messaging app, or a patient portal that she can access when online.³²
- ❑ Set up a calendar with the participant, breaking down her weekly schedule of treatment activities and sending friendly reminders (“Don’t forget tomorrow is your ultrasound and I’ll be there at 9 a.m. to pick you up!”).
- ❑ If a participant is feeling discouraged, the peer can share their own past doubts and how sticking with treatment paid off, offering hope during difficult moments.
- ❑ Watch for warning signs of return to use or disengagement (missed appointments, isolation, statements of hopelessness) and respond proactively—maybe arranging a quick meet-up for coffee to re-engage the participant or looping in a counselor for additional intervention. Provide a safety net of consistent follow-up.³³
- ❑ Celebrate successes: completing a program phase, having negative toxicology screens, or simply showing up every week. Peers can help implement low-cost versions of contingency management by organizing group celebrations or recognizing participants who achieve set goals. This positive reinforcement boosts retention in treatment.^{34,35}



**PREGNANCY, POSTPARTUM,
& EARLY PARENTING**

Peer Support for Families Impacted by Substance Use

