

Peers/ Applicant Frequently Asked Questions

1:1 Peer Support Program

What is the 1:1 Peer Support Program?

The 1:1 Peer Support Program is a telephone and internet-based program for individuals living with MS and for loved ones of people with MS. You may have a specific question, or maybe you are dealing with issues related to MS. Sometimes the best person to talk to is someone who has had similar experiences. Volunteers from across Canada are provided with training to ensure they have the skills to best support you.

What types of questions/subjects can I connect with my Peer Support Volunteer on?

Your volunteer will be happy to connect with you to share their lived experience and/or connection to MS. You can connect on anything related to your journey with MS, and associated questions.

Our volunteers can provide general information about MS Canada. Please contact the Knowledge Network for more information and support. Our **MS Navigators** are available Monday to Friday to anyone in Canada from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm ET. You can reach out to them if you need any information about MS symptoms.

Phone: 1-844-859-6789 Email: msnavigators@mscanada.ca

Peer volunteers are not trained counsellors, they are people living with MS who are coping well and are willing to share their knowledge and experience. Volunteers cannot advise you on any medical decisions or support mental health crises.

I do not have an MS Diagnosis; can I still apply for 1:1 Peer Support?

Our 1:1 Peer Support Program currently supports people living with MS and those who are connected to them (caregiver/family member/spouse, etc.). If you're awaiting a diagnosis or have an allied condition (NMOSD, ADEM, & TM), you're still welcome to apply for peer support. However, please note that all our current volunteers are individuals living with MS, and or a caregiver to someone with MS. When it comes to matching you with a volunteer, we'll consider your symptoms and any specific requests to ensure you get the best possible support. While our volunteers share their personal experiences with MS, your journey is unique, and your experience may be different from theirs. If you are looking to connect with someone on your specific allied condition, we

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recommend connecting with one of our MS Navigators for more information and to learn about what supports may be available.

Are Peer Support Volunteers trained?

Yes, our volunteers receive training around active listening, privacy & confidentiality, referrals, boundary setting, communication skills, and the programs & services we offer.

Our volunteers are people in the MS community offering a listening ear and sharing their lived experience. They are not trained counsellors and cannot provide medical and/or mental health advice, nor address or support crisis issues.

Can my volunteer support with mental health concerns and or crises?

No, volunteers are not trained to support mental health concerns or crises. If you require immediate support, please contact your healthcare team, call 911, or connect with a [mental health/distress helpline](#).

If you require significant mental health support, this may not be the appropriate program for you. Please contact the program coordinator if you have questions.

How often should I connect with my volunteer, and how long should a volunteer match last?

This is up to you and your volunteer. We recommend connecting more frequently in the beginning of your match to get to know your volunteer. After you have connected a few times, you can decide how often you would like to connect moving forward. Some people connect weekly, and others monthly – it's up to you!

Our peer support connection terms are anywhere from 1 to 6 months.

What's the best way to communicate with my volunteer?

We recommend using email to arrange meeting times. Meetings can be done via phone call, skype and or Facetime.

We do not recommend texting/direct messaging your volunteer. Volunteers are not available 24/7 and communicating via email is best practice to allow your volunteer time to respond.

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Why is it recommended to set up a scheduled and consistent time to connect with my volunteer?

Scheduling a time to connect with your volunteer is best practice to respect each other's time and connect effectively. Each connection is unique, and it's up to you and your volunteer to manage this. Our volunteers live across Canada, and so while we do our best to match you with someone locally, it's not always possible based on which volunteers are available. Your volunteer may live in a different time zone than you, so please keep time zones in mind when scheduling connections or reaching out to your volunteer.

If the volunteer I am matched with does not contact me and/or respond to my messages, what do I do?

We ask that you allow your volunteer up to 5 business days to respond to any email/message. Also check in your *JUNK* mail inbox, sometimes messages get misplaced there.

Our volunteers also live with MS, or support someone living with MS, and have other responsibilities and priorities outside of their volunteer role. Please be patient and respectful when communicating with your volunteer. Under no circumstances should our volunteers be subjected to harassment or abuse. Volunteers have the right to stop or end a call or dismiss a match if they feel harassed or subjected to abuse.

If your volunteer misses a scheduled connection or is consistently unresponsive, please notify the program coordinator via email at peersupportprogram@mscanada.ca.

What do I do if my volunteer is not a good fit, and/or the match isn't working out?

Connect with the program coordinator for support peersupportprogram@mscanada.ca.

When should I reach out to the Peer Support program coordinator?

The program coordinator will check in with you in a follow up email during your match term to see how it is going. Reach out if you have any questions, issues, concerns, or would like to share feedback on how your match is going.

Reach out if you'd like to end your match early, if you're not able to continue the peer match, or if you need to take a break.

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My match is almost over and I'm not ready to end the match, can I extend my match with the volunteer?

Yes, once you confirm this with the volunteer, you can advise the coordinator for an extension of up to 3 months.

Can I continue to connect with my volunteer once the match term is over?

Some volunteers and program participants decide to continue to connect socially on their own once the match term has ended. This connection is no longer affiliated with the 1:1 Peer Support Program or MS Canada, and the connection would be on your own terms socially.

Still looking to connect after your matches? Contact our MS Navigators to learn more about our other programs and services like our We Talk MS Online Community, Peer Support Groups, Wellness Programs, and more!

Can I re apply to the Peer Support Program to be matched with another volunteer, once my match is over?

Yes, you can reapply to the program one more time. Two volunteer match terms are the maximum, as we need our volunteers available for new applicants who may be on our waiting list who also need support. Please note that priority will be given to those who have not yet been matched, but when we have a volunteer available for a second match term, we will be happy to connect you.

Where do I find more information on MS and our programs and services?

The best way to access up-to-date info is to contact our Knowledge Network. **MS Navigators** are available Monday to Friday to anyone in Canada from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm ET.

You can reach out to them if you need any information about MS symptoms. Phone: 1-844-859-6789 **Email:** msnavigators@mscanada.ca

Or visit us online at [MS Canada](https://www.mscanada.ca)