

## Grievance Process

You have a voice and we want to hear it. Don't stay silent if you have concerns with the care you receive at your facility. Here are steps you can take to use your voice.

1. Speak with a nurse, social worker, doctor, or anyone you feel comfortable with at your facility about your issue. Ask to have a meeting to talk about your concerns. Make suggestions about how your care and the care of others can be improved.
2. If you are unhappy after speaking with the support staff at your facility (ex: doctor or facility manager), follow your facility's grievance procedure. The information should be posted in the waiting area of your clinic.
3. Were your concerns not resolved? Do you not feel comfortable talking with your facility staff? Contact the ESRD Network or your State Survey Agency. We are here to help.

For patients in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, contact Network 8 patient's hotline at 1-877-936-9260. For patients in Texas, Network 14's patient hotline is 877-886-4435.

Find your state's State Survey Agency contact information below.

Alabama: 1-800-356-9596

Mississippi: 1-800-227-7308

Tennessee: 1-877-287-0010

Texas: 1-888-973-0022

## Opioids—Know the Dangers

Opioids are prescription medicines used for severe pain. Pain is often a problem for people on dialysis and is sometimes treated with opioids. You may have been prescribed an opioid such as, **hydrocodone (Lorcet, Lortab, Norco, Vicodin) or oxycodone (Percocet, Percodan, Tylox)** to help with your pain. These medicines are high risk for side effects because you are a kidney patient. Here are some side effects:

- Sleepiness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Constipation
- Dry mouth
- Increased tolerance

Some serious risks are trouble breathing, addiction, and even **death**.

What can you do to prevent these side effects?

1. Communicate with your doctor and nurses about the medicines you're taking.
2. Never take more than what your doctor prescribes.

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## Opioids *continued from page 1*

3. Avoid drinking alcohol while taking opioid medications.
4. Tell your doctor immediately if you experience any side effects.

For more information about opioids, speak with your doctor or pharmacist. Also, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for general information.

# Vocational Rehabilitation

## What is the Ticket to Work Program?

- The Ticket to Work (Ticket) program is a good fit for people who want to improve their earnings, and are committed to preparing for long-term success in the workforce. It is a free and voluntary program that can help social security beneficiaries go to work, get a good job that may lead to a career, and become financially independent; all while keeping Medicare or Medicaid benefits. Individuals who receive social security benefits because of a disability and of age 18 through 64 probably already qualify for this program.

- The Ticket program and other work incentives allow you to keep your benefits while you explore employment, receive vocational rehabilitation services, and gain work experience. Your cash benefits and Medicaid or Medicare benefits often continue throughout your transition to work, and there are protections in place to help you return to benefits if you are unable to continue working due to your disability.

## Interested?

Call the Ticket to Work Help Line at **1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY)** to verify your eligibility. A customer service representative will explain the program and address any questions or concerns you have. They can also mail you a list of service providers. If you prefer, visit <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>

## Test Your Knowledge!

**Vocational rehabilitation (VR) is a set of services offered to individuals with mental or physical disabilities.**

1. You will not lose your M \_\_\_\_\_ benefits.
2. You can go to work, school, or \_\_\_\_\_ R.
3. You can not be legally D \_\_\_\_\_ against as a dialysis patient.
4. Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas all have a Department of \_\_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_\_ hotline. Do you know yours? (Find yours on page 3).

Find the answers to the questions on page 2 in the puzzle below.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| V | V | D | I | S | C | R | I | M | I | N | A | T | E | D |
| Z | O | X | Y | V | W | S | T | U | M | N | O | P | R | K |
| F | L | D | L | E | Q | E | F | S | E | G | O | L | P | W |
| E | U | C | N | S | U | P | D | T | D | Q | K | F | T | R |
| O | N | A | K | B | C | O | R | X | I | G | I | B | H | J |
| S | T | D | P | T | B | H | Z | B | C | N | J | X | H | I |
| R | E | H | A | B | I | L | I | T | A | T | I | O | N | L |
| Y | E | Z | Q | I | D | V | U | C | R | J | A | E | I | N |
| T | R | U | J | R | C | M | Y | H | E | W | D | K | Y | Z |

**Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
1-800-441-7607

**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
1-800-443-1000

**Tennessee Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
1-800-270-1349

**Texas Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
1-800-628-5115

**Answers**

- 1. Medicare
- 2. Volunteer
- 3. Discriminated
- 4. Rehabilitation

## Access to Care: Choosing a New Physician

The ESRD Networks are often contacted by patients, caregivers, and providers with concerns related to patients wanting to “fire” their physicians.

Some common reasons patients may choose to separate from their physician range from simple disagreements between the patient and physician or patients feeling their medical needs are not being met. Patients have the right to terminate their relationship with their provider, however, changing physicians can be both time consuming and challenging.

Are you considering choosing another physician? Here are some points to consider before you decide to separate from your doctor.

1. **Try to repair the relationship with your physician.** Speak with your care team at your dialysis facility about the concerns you are having with your physician. Schedule a meeting with your doctor to discuss your concerns.
2. **Communicate with your care team.** Your care team may be able to offer assistance with locating another physician. Your care team can also help with the referral process.
3. **Find a new physician before separating from your current physician.** If you find that you are unable to resolve the concerns you have with your physician, speak with

**Access to Care** *continued from page 3*

your care team about finding another physician before you “fire” your current physician.

If you’re considering separating from your physician, please try to follow the steps listed previously first in order to prevent disruption in your care and treatment. Please contact the ESRD Networks if you have any questions or need further assistance with this process.

**How can the ESRD Networks help?**

We want you to be able to receive treatment in a facility, not just an

emergency room. Reach out to the Network if you are having the following issues:

- Difficulty communicating with your care team about choosing another doctor.
- Involuntarily discharged from your facility or physician, and unable to locate a new facility or doctor.

The Networks can help advocate on your behalf to help you find a facility and/or doctor.

**A Caregiver’s Supportive Role**

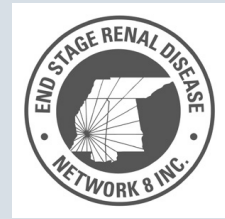


**Ann Dunkin, Arlington, TX**

When my husband and I learned that he would need to begin dialysis, we were fortunate to have enough time to get used to the idea and prepare ourselves for upcoming changes in our lives. Oftentimes, however, patients don’t have that luxury of time to prepare, and the idea of dialysis feels like something to be resisted.

Help your loved one or friend to recognize that the world of dialysis is a community. Ask plenty of questions or encourage the patient to do so. Your listening ear and caring heart are all you need to bring to those conversations. If you should realize at some point that the patient needs help from a mental health professional in order to make the adjustment, ask for a referral from the clinic social worker.

Due to medical conditions which predated my husband becoming a dialysis patient, he passed away in January of this year. Through our experiences with hospitalizations over the past ten years, it became obvious that the importance of the caregiver role is more heightened when the patient is in the hospital. Staying in constant contact with doctors and hospital staff serving the patient on a daily basis is crucial and will benefit both you and the patient over time.



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