



Download NPA's free e-book
**STARTING and SUSTAINING a PEER
 SUPPORT PROGRAM for NICU PARENTS**
 at support4NICUparents.org



**SCHEDULE REGULAR
 CHECK-UPS**
 Survey staff & volunteers about
 how to improve your program.



**OFFER FREQUENT VOLUNTEER
 TRAININGS and EDUCATIONAL
 OPPORTUNITIES**

A good volunteer curriculum teaches active listening skills, how to effectively share your story, and when and where to set appropriate boundaries. But don't stop there. Look for conferences, webinars, and other opportunities to continue to build family support skills.



NICU Family Support Programs **BUILDING YOUR SUPPORT TEAM**

A NICU stay is traumatic, even under the best circumstances.

But when families are given timely, compassionate support they can emerge from the NICU experience as strong and capable advocates for themselves and their babies. In order to provide this support, you will need to bring together a group of like-minded parents and professionals. So it helps if you know where to look. Seek the support of established program leaders. Then find the people in your NICU and community who are ready to do the work and invite them to join you. Empower them with new tools and resources. Soon you will have a network of people who will serve as the core of your support team.



The UNIQUE ROLE of PEER-to-PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS

Peer-to-Peer Support provides something no other type of support can replace. When NICU parents are able to talk to other parents who have been through a similar experience, they can begin to replace fear with hope. Seeing another family who has not just survived, but thrived after the NICU, helps them to see themselves as more resilient. They are able to adapt more readily and begin to form new dreams for their baby, their family, and themselves.



GUARDING AGAINST BURN OUT

Because of their empathetic nature, support group leaders and volunteers are uniquely susceptible to "compassion fatigue." If you are going to effectively care for NICU families, you need to take care of yourself too. Encourage each other to take breaks from volunteering to rest and recharge.



The IMPORTANCE of ROUTINE DEBRIEFING

Working in the NICU brings the risk of "vicarious" or "secondary" trauma. It can also be a trigger for re-experiencing past trauma. Recognizing and talking about troubling events can mitigate negative effects.