# Transcript: “The Peer Program Makes a Big Difference…”

## Managing client care and treatment

*(Photo of Leo, a client at Kansas City Free Health Clinic, sitting at table with his dog next to him)*

**Leo:**

I was sitting in my chair with my dog Angel lying on the floor beside me, but not even Angel could calm my frustration. Once again, I had gone to a medical appointment and come home more questioning than ever. I know my provider has a huge caseload, and I got the distinct impression that he was pressed for time. And I hadn’t been comfortable asking him about pap screening for males, which I had heard about recently, so I still didn’t have the answer to that question either.

I’ve been dealing with HIV since 1997, but that is only one challenge I have to contend with. I really have three major problems, in this order: severe chronic depression, as yet uncontrolled diabetes type II, and HIV. I’m very conscientious about taking care of myself. I take the medication prescribed to me for depression and HIV religiously and attend regular medical appointments without fail. So why should I feel so frustrated? I decided to meet with Jerry.

*Text on screen:* Since 2000, HIV-positive peers at Kansas City Free Health Clinic have supported clients to manage their care and treatment.

*(Photo of Jerry, peer educator at Kansas City Free Health Clinic)*

**Jerry:**

I had the same problem dealing with doctors, so I gave Leo some examples of how I was able to get through to them. Things like emailing questions ahead of time so the medical staff would be ready for me when I showed up for my appointment. I went with Leo to a couple of his appointments to help talk with the doctor. We went through his lab values and picked out some that he can monitor. We set up a spreadsheet that he brings with him to his appointments now so the doctor can see exactly what information he’s looking for. And I referred him to a dietician in the clinic to talk about ways to control his diabetes.

**Leo:**

Jerry is very laid back and non-judgmental. He never gives any evidence that he’s short on time, and I can call him when I need to. It’s like sitting down with a friend and visiting--except the things we talk about, you can’t talk about with just anybody!

*(Photo of Jerry at a staff meeting)*

I’ll bring up my concerns with Jerry and we’ll discuss them. If I really don’t feel comfortable talking with the doctor directly,I know Jerry will bring them up with the treatment team, so they’ll be addressed.

**Jerry:**In the year or so we’ve been working together, I’ve seen Leo become very knowledgeable. He’s communicating more effectively with his providers. He has his lab values down pat for both his diabetes and his HIV lab tests. He attends the monthly support group that I run and all the quarterly wellness seminars here at the clinic. Watching his progress makes me feel really good, like I’m doing something of importance.

**Leo:**Jerry, my case manager, my therapist and Angel are the principal supports that keep me going. The peer program has been very empowering to me. It’s made a big difference in my self-advocacy, my self-awareness and knowledge, comfort about HIV, and the comfort level I have in my life.

I know that even Angel senses the positive difference it has made.

Story by Leo and Jerry, client and peer educator at Kansas City Free Health Clinic

For more about the Kansas City Free Health Clinic: [www.kcfree.org](http://www.kcfree.org/)

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