What is an acquired brain injury (ABI)?
ABIs are typically brain injuries occurring after birth, but not related to degenerative diseases, congenital or hereditary factors. They may cause temporary or permanent impairment(s). Impairments can include physical functions, cognition and psychosocial behaviors. Causes of acquired brain injury can include, but are not limited to the following:

- stroke
- hypoxia (oxygen deprivation to brain)
- tumor
- traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- substance abuse
- seizure
- infection

Why would I request a Peer Mentor?
The Peer Mentor program is geared to supplement patient care, increase patients’ and families’ social support and education of their disease or changed abilities due to an accident or medical condition.

Can a Peer Mentor visit the family without seeing the patient?
Yes. Patients may not be ready at a certain point in time, while the family could greatly benefit from the meeting with the mentor.

When are services available?
Visits take place around the patient’s current medical and therapy schedule, on the Wallingford campus Monday through Friday, with limited availability on Saturdays.

Is there a charge for this program?
No. There are no charges as this is a volunteer based program meant to enhance the patient’s quality of care during the patients stay.

What else does Gaylord Specialty Healthcare offer?
Gaylord Outpatient Services provide physiatry (physical medicine and rehabilitation physicians), aquatic therapy, physical, occupational and speech therapies, as well as audiology, psychology and wheelchair assessment services.

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Referrals and Volunteer Requests
To request a Peer Mentor for yourself or a loved one, ask any member of the care team to have a visit arranged, or call the Peer Mentor Social Work contact at (203) 679-3506.

To become a Peer Mentor, contact the Volunteer Services Manager at (203) 741-3328.

Location
Gaylord Hospital and Gaylord Outpatient Services
50 Gaylord Farm Road
Wallingford, CT 06492
(203) 284-2800
www.gaylord.org
What is an Acquired Brain Injury Peer Mentor?
An Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Peer Mentor is an ABI patient who has recovered and can share his/her experience of recovery with you or your loved ones. Peer Mentors have completed the requirements to be a Gaylord volunteer, and completed additional training to become a Peer Mentor. The goal of this program is to provide additional support to patients and families by providing a team of trained individuals who can relate to your current situation and act as role models and/or resources for your time at Gaylord.

Why was the program created?
The Peer Mentor Committee was created to formalize the process of general volunteers or former patients “popping in” to offer support to current inpatients. Patients and family members found these visits beneficial, as it allowed for another point of view on the recovery process. The program was designed to provide formal guidance and accountability for all mentors, so a positive and quality experience could be created for everyone.

Who are the Peer Mentors?
Peer Mentors are ABI survivors, who have completed their inpatient program at least one year ago. They are selected through a screening process by the Peer Mentor Committee, are formally trained, and receive ongoing supervision and continuing education. Patients can be referred by staff or a family member, and are screened by a member of Gaylord’s social work team to assess appropriateness based on the patient’s current status.

Who benefits from a Peer Mentor?
Both patients and family members can benefit from meeting with a Peer Mentor. Often a Gaylord staff member will identify a patient who might benefit and makes the initial request. Current inpatients can request a Peer Mentor and requests from family or friends will also be considered. The goal is to enhance the patient’s ability to adjust to their medical condition, hospitalization and recovery by sharing common concerns and quality of life issues. By having successfully begun the journey towards a new life themselves, the mentors are able to reinforce the importance of recovery. Encouragement from peers has proven to enhance the path to recovery for patients.

In addition, family members can participate along with the patient. In early stages, a patient may be unable to interact, but family members may benefit from extra support through a Peer Mentor visit.

Will my Peer Mentor be wearing a name badge?
Yes. Peer Mentors are identified by their hospital issued photo identification badge and Volunteer Lanyard.

When and where do visits take place?
Visits are weekly for no more than 15 minutes at a time and may take place in a patient’s room, in the unit’s solarium or outdoors with special permission from the nursing staff. Patients have the right to refuse mentoring or discontinue a session at any time.

What other methods of support will help me and my family?
Gaylord staff are committed to providing ongoing support. Additional support groups provide avenues to obtain the care needed by both patient and family.

Two such groups which may be appropriate are the Community Stroke Support Group and the Family & Caregiver Support Group of Acquired Brain Injury Patients. For more information visit www.gaylord.org.