



August 6, 2021 | A periodic e-bulletin to share results of organ donation and transplantation projects funded by the Division of Transplantation.

HRSA grant program helps remove barriers to living organ donation

The federal program pays for travel, lost wages, and dependent care expenses

Who is eligible for financial assistance through NLDAC grants?

Living donors of these organs can apply:

- Liver
- Kidney
- Lung
- Intestines
- Uterus

Donors qualify if their expenses cannot be reimbursed by:

- The organ recipient
- An insurance company
- A state program

Anonymous, non-directed donors who donate without choosing the person who will receive their organ can also be eligible for these grants.

When pursuing living organ donation, hospital costs are often at the forefront of a donor's mind. But, the costs of getting to an appointment and the loss of wages that many donors face during their recovery can come as a shock. Transportation, meals, lodging, and dependent care (child, disabled adult, or elder) are critical expenses that are not always covered by medical insurance. Many donors also have to find a way to cover their living expenses while they take time off work for donation and recovery.

The Health Resources & Services Administration's (HRSA) Living Organ Donor Reimbursement Program is operated through the National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC). The aim of the program is to increase access to life-saving organ transplants for patients who need one. It does so by removing financial barriers to living organ donation.

In 2004, Congress enacted the Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act with the goal of boosting the rate of organ donations in the country. The Act includes a provision that allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services, through HRSA, to provide reimbursement of travel, housing, and meals to eligible living organ donors.

In 2020, HRSA authorized NLDAC to reimburse living donors for lost wages, childcare and eldercare expenses. Since its inception in 2007, NLDAC has provided more than \$20 million in financial support to living organ donors.

The financial support by NLDAC is unique because it provides this assistance to donors in real-time, according to Marie-Claire Walters, NLDAC's assistant coordinator.

“Other programs tend to review travel receipts and issue a reimbursement afterwards, which works for people who have sufficient savings to pay for their trip,” Walters said. “But our program issues approved donors a card that they take with them and use to pay for their expenses on their trip. This makes travel possible for donors who don't have the resources to pay for a trip upfront.”

Most donors learn about NLDAC through hospitals and transplant centers, Walters said. NLDAC provides hospitals and transplant centers free English and Spanish-language brochures, as well as monthly training webinars to teach them more about NLDAC and how to direct people to the program.

“People who come to transplant centers to be a donor or recipient can get overwhelmed with lots of information like flyers and fact sheets, so they might not know where to start or realize when they need to apply to this program,” Walters said. “We found that it helps when the transplant centers not only provide our free brochures to people, but also mention the program when they're talking to patients to highlight this support available to them.”

Strategies that work:

- **Talk to your patients about the program.** Provide patients and their families with NLDAC's free brochures and web resources. Walk patients through their financial options.
- **Educate your staff about NLDAC.** Ensure your staff knows about NLDAC's resources and encourage them to educate patients and their families.



Sidni Brown has seen the benefit of the program, working in a transplant center herself before becoming NLDAC's senior program coordinator.

“I worked as a transplant social worker for about four and a half years, so I saw firsthand the struggle that folks faced,” Brown said. “You know people have an emotional pull to donate, but then as the bills start piling up for their airfare and their childcare expenses, they may not be able to donate because they just can't afford it. I really feel passionate about the program being able to help people as they move through this process.”

NLDAC's website makes the application simple with detailed web resources. Also, representatives are available over the phone Monday through Friday to guide donors through the process. Hospitals, transplant centers, and even organ procurement organizations are encouraged to tell potential living organ donors about NLDAC. More than 6,000 people donated

a life-saving organ to a family member, friend, acquaintance, or stranger due to assistance they received from NLDAC.

NLDAC surveys its recipients for how they felt about the program. This includes user-friendliness of NLDAC, and the impact it made on their ability to donate.

“Consistently over the years, 75% of living donors who use this program tell us they could not have afforded to donate without it [NLDAC],” Walters said. “The availability of this support makes more people able to get the best kind of transplant for most patients: a living donor transplant.”

Visit NLDAC’s website for more information about the program such as who is eligible, and how donors can apply.

Want to know more?

National Living Donor Assistance Center
www.livingdonorassistance.org

Free Brochure - How to Apply for NLDAC

English - https://www.livingdonorassistance.org/portals/0/NLDAC/Documents/NLDAC_How_to_Apply.pdf

Spanish - <https://www.livingdonorassistance.org/Portals/0/Spanish%20Brochure%202021.pdf>

Best Practices: How to Bring NLDAC to Your Hospital
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajt.15684>

This publication was produced for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, under contract number GS00F162CA.

This publication lists non-federal resources in order to provide additional information to consumers. The views and content in these resources have not been formally approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Listing these resources is not an endorsement by HHS or HRSA."

Grant News is not copyrighted. Readers are free to duplicate and use all or part of the information contained in this publication; however the photographs and/or images are copyrighted and may not be used without permission. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1320b-10, this publication may not be reproduced, reprinted, or redistributed for a fee without specific written authorization from HHS.

Suggested Citation: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Grant News. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, August 2021.

This communication was printed, published, or produced and disseminated at U.S. taxpayer expense.

For more information about organ, eye, and tissue donation and HRSA’s
Division of Transplantation, visit www.organdonor.gov.