

# NLDAC Celebrates First Year

*Living donors, recipients nationwide are grateful for the assistance*

BY HOLLY WARREN

**W**hen the National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC) opened last year on Oct. 17, project director Akinlolu Ojo M.D., Ph.D., hoped that the new program would be embraced by transplant centers.

His hopes were realized as transplant centers soon began registering their living donor programs, and applications came streaming in.

In fact, by Sept. 8, nearly 300 transplant programs had registered for the program, with more than 96 different programs submitting donor applications regularly. All told, 263 applications have been received, 213 have been funded—and more than 96 donors have completed their donor surgery.

“With this new program,” Dr. Ojo said, “eligible donors will not have to pay for travel expenses to the transplant center to donate an organ.” Travel expenses are a very real barrier for some potential living donors.

NLDAC was established through a grant awarded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Department of Transplantation (DoT) to the University of Michigan (U-M) and the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS). The \$8 million grant is to be allocated over four years.

The national Organ Donation Recovery and Improvement Act, signed into law in 2004, established the authority and legislative parameters to provide reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenses incurred toward living organ donation. No money was appropriated, though, when the act was passed.

## ASSISTING LIVING DONORS WITH COSTS

The DoT, under the direction of James Burdick, M.D., then reorganized the existing budget to fund the new program.

The program is designed to provide financial assistance to those who want to donate an organ but who can't afford the travel and other expenses they may incur. Potential donors seeking assistance must file their application before the donor surgery.

After an application is approved, donors receive a controlled value card (like a credit card) with approved funds to pay for their travel, lodging and meals.

NLDAC also is allowed to pay for the travel expenses of up to two persons accompanying the donor for a total of five trips—three trips for the donor and two for an accompanying person(s). Those expenses are calculated by NLDAC staff after the application is submitted, and spending is monitored daily.

“The average amount approved per donor is \$2,900,” explained Katrina Crist, M.B.A., program manager at the NLDAC. “Some applicants need a few hundred dollars to pay for their travel expenses, and some applicants, who fly across the country, require the maximum amount allowed, \$6,000.” The amount includes the cost of “accompanying persons.”

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Both donor and recipient must be U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted residents and have primary residences in the United States or its territories. Both also must sign “attestation forms” to certify that they understand and are in compliance with Section 301 of NOTA\* (42 U.S.C. 274e), which states that it is unlawful for



NLDAC provided financial assistance to living donor Krystal McLear, enabling her to donate one of her kidneys to her cousin, Taneisha Campbell (on T-shirt in pink hat), who lives in Detroit. McLear lives in Indian Head, Md. (near Baltimore), so McLear was able to travel to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where Campbell's transplant was performed.

\*National Organ Transplantation Act

## NATIONAL LIVING DONOR ASSISTANCE CENTER GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING PREFERENCE CATEGORY

any person to knowingly acquire, receive or otherwise transfer any human organ for valuable consideration for use in human transplantation.


Because funds are limited, preference is given to those with the greatest need. Four categories were developed to prioritize applications (see table). NLDAC is the payer of last resort and under federal law cannot provide reimbursement if the donor can receive reimbursement elsewhere, including from the recipient of the organ, which is permitted by NOTA.

### QUALIFYING EXPENSES


NLDAC will pay for travel, lodging, meals and subsistence expenses for the living donor and his or her “accompanying person.” Travel to the transplant center must be for the evaluation (clinic or hospitalization), surgical procedure and medical or surgical follow-up visit or hospitalization within 90 days following the living donation procedure.

Meals are provided at the federal per diem rate, and hotel accommodations are provided up to 150 percent of the federal per diem rate.

On June 20, HRSA amended the qualifying expenses. If a transplant center requests, NLDAC may pay for additional trips for the donor and accompanying person to the transplant center if there are donor complications or other health-related issues.

“The success of NLDAC,” concluded program director Dr. Ojo, “demonstrates that the need for financial assistance for living donors is real.” 

Holly Warren, RN, B.A., CPTC, is project coordinator at the National Living Donor Assistance Center.

 For more information, including how to apply for NLDAC assistance, visit [livingdonorassistance.org](http://livingdonorassistance.org) or call (703) 414-1600, Mon.–Fri., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.

	Recipient household income ≤ 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines	Recipient household income > 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines with hardship	Recipient household income > 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines without hardship
Donor household income ≤ 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines	Preference Category 1	Preference Category 4	Not Eligible
Donor household income > 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines with hardship	Preference Category 2		
Donor household income > 300% HHS Poverty Guidelines without hardship	Preference Category 3		



Living kidney donor Krystal McLear with her husband, Christopher, at a National Kidney Foundation walk/fund-raiser.