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Organ Transplantation: New Milestone – Over 2000 Living Donors Donate an Organ Utilizing Government Funded Program Aimed at Removing Barriers

Arlington, VA – November 19, 2013, The National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC) announced that 2,039 living donors have completed their donor surgery using the NLDAC program. Sixty nine percent of those donors noted they would not have been able to donate an organ without NLDAC's support. The purpose of the NLDAC is to reduce financial disincentives to living organ donation. The NLDAC was officially launched in October 2007.

Living organ donors must travel to major cities, where transplant centers are located, for their evaluation, surgery, and medical follow-up. While the donor's medical expenses are usually covered by the recipient's insurance, the donor's transportation expenses may not be covered and for some potential donors, these travel costs can make living donation impossible. Currently, the Organ Procurement Transplant Network (OPTN), which operates the national computerized matching system, has 98,597 kidney candidates and 15,913 liver candidates on the waiting lists for transplants. Many of these patients have family members or friends who are willing to donate an organ, but need assistance with travel expenses. The NLDAC program provides an essential service to a unique population of generous individuals who are willing to donate a kidney or portion of their liver to save a life.

"The program not only provides essential support for living organ donors, but it also helps to increase access to transplantation for patients in end-stage organ failure. Many patients on the transplant waiting list are too sick to work and do not have the financial resources to pay for their donor's travel to the transplant center. The NLDAC eases this burden," stated Project Deputy Director, Robert Merion, MD, and Professor of Surgery at the University of Michigan.

In order for a prospective donor to qualify for travel and subsistence expenses through NLDAC, the transplant candidate's household income must be within 300 percent of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines. The transplant candidate may request a waiver for financial hardship if the household income is above 300 percent of the HHS Poverty Guidelines. Approved applicants receive a controlled value "debit" card to pay for their transportation and lodging expenses for travel to the transplant center.

For more information please visit the National Living Donor Assistance (NLDAC) website at www.livingdonorassistance.org.

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