

# OPTN Kidney Paired Donation Pilot Program

*A transplant option for patients with an incompatible living donor*



## **UNITED NETWORK FOR ORGAN SHARING**

United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that operates the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) under contract with the federal government. For more information about UNOS, living donation, and organ transplantation, please call 1-888-894-6361 or visit [www.transplantliving.org](http://www.transplantliving.org).

UNOS gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors for their generous support of the Kidney Paired Donation Pilot Program:

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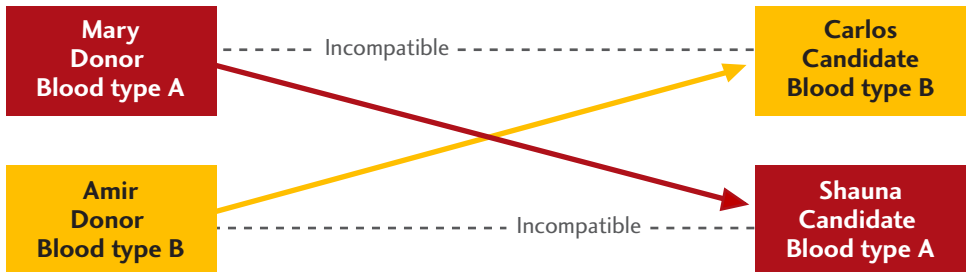
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UNOS gratefully acknowledges New England Program for Kidney Exchange for sharing the information and illustrations in this brochure.



## What is Kidney Paired Donation?

Imagine this situation: Someone wants to donate a kidney to you, but your blood type does not match, or there is some other incompatibility. Imagine a second pair in the same situation, but the kidney from the potential donor in that pair is able to donate to you (you are compatible). By swapping the donors and the recipients in these two pairs, two transplants are made possible. An exchange transplant can involve two recipient/donor pairs; however, often more than two compatible pairs can be matched to each other. This results in more than two life-saving transplants.



## What is the Kidney Paired Donation Pilot Program?

The Kidney Paired Donation (KPD) Pilot Program is part of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN). The OPTN is managed by United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) through a contract with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services. The OPTN registers and tracks everyone who chooses to participate in the Pilot Program throughout the country. If you would like to join the OPTN KPD Pilot Program, a member of your transplant team will enter your medical information into the OPTN KPD database. This database is part of a computerized system that allows transplant centers and organ recovery agencies throughout the United States to search for cases where the donor in each pair is compatible with the recipient in another pair (or multiple pairs). By exchanging the donors, a compatible match for multiple recipients can be found.

## Who can join this program?

**For recipients:** If you are eligible for a kidney transplant and are receiving care at a transplant center in the United States, you can join. You do not have to be on dialysis to join the OPTN KPD Pilot Program. You must have a living donor who is willing and medically able to donate his or her kidney, but cannot donate to you because you are incompatible.

**For donors:** You must also be willing to take part in an exchange. Like any living donation program, all potential donors are required to complete an extensive medical and psychological evaluation to decide if they may donate.

**Non-directed donors:** People who wish to donate a kidney to a person they do not know are referred to as “non-directed donors” (also known as altruistic or good Samaritan donors). A non-directed donor may help to match incompatible pairs that could not otherwise be matched. This way, the non-directed donor can allow multiple patients to receive a kidney transplant as a result of their one gift.

## What are the benefits of joining a kidney paired donation program?

**For recipients:**

- You could receive a living donor transplant.
  - Kidneys from live donors last longer, on average, than kidneys from deceased donors.
  - Transplant recipients who receive kidneys from living donors generally need fewer immunosuppressive drugs after their transplant.
- You may spend less time on dialysis.
- You may receive a transplant before starting dialysis.
- You may not have to wait as long for a transplant.

**For donors:**

- As a potential donor, you are given an Independent Donor Advocate, who will advocate for and promote your best interest.
- It can be a rewarding experience as more families are helped by your donation.

As with any surgical procedure, there is risk associated with kidney donation and kidney transplantation. Please discuss these risks with your transplant program.



### **Is there a fee to join the OPTN KPD Pilot Program?**

No, there is no cost to join. No recipients or donors will receive payments or compensation of any kind for participating. There are potential financial risks for participating donors; however, in most cases the matched recipient's health insurance will pay for the medical costs of donor evaluation and surgery.

There are national and some local resources available, such as the National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC), which may be able to help with various expenses for those who qualify for funding. Please note that not all donors will qualify for NLDAC. Local resources vary by area. Please ask your transplant center about the local resources that may be available to you. Potential donors need to discuss the financial risks of participating in the OPTN KPD Pilot Program and the resources that may be available with the transplant center.

### **What happens if a match is found?**

When a match is found, the transplant center will contact both the recipients and the potential donors, and the medical professionals will conduct compatibility tests on all individuals. If the tests show that the matched donors and candidates are compatible, the next step is for both recipient/donor pairs to agree to the exchange. Please note that even if the tests identify a possible recipient/donor match, there is no guarantee that a transplant will occur.

## Where would the transplant take place?

**For recipients:** You will generally have surgery at the transplant center where you currently receive care. However, you may choose to travel to another transplant center if the potential matched donor is unable or unwilling to travel.

**For donors:** In most cases, you can have your surgery at the center where you were first evaluated. Transplant professionals can send your kidney to the center where the recipient will be having surgery. In some instances you may be asked to consider traveling to the transplant center of the recipient you matched with to donate your kidney.

Before you are ever matched, your transplant coordinator will indicate in the computerized matching system whether or not you are willing to travel certain distances and if you are willing to accept a shipped kidney with your informed consent. Your transplant center will discuss the potential risks involved with shipping a kidney with you. Having the donor and recipient at the same hospital may lower the risk involved in moving the kidney.

In both two-pair and three-pair exchanges, the donor surgeries take place the same day. The recipient surgeries start after the donor surgeries.

In chains that begin with a non-directed donor, there are cases where all donor surgeries will not begin at the same time and may take place over several weeks or months. In these cases, the candidate will receive a kidney before his or her paired donor donates.

## What will happen to my status on the deceased donor waiting list?

If you are listed as a transplant candidate on the OPTN deceased donor waiting list, your placement will not change if you register with the OPTN KPD Pilot Program.

## Can donors and recipients meet?

Yes, but only if everyone involved in the kidney paired donation process agrees to the meeting. Your transplant center will explain the rules involved.

## Are there any factors that could determine whether my donor can participate in this program?

There are potential donor medical and psychosocial factors that may prevent participation. The transplant center will give you detailed information about these possible limitations.

## How do I get started?

Contact your transplant center to ask about the OPTN KPD Pilot Program.

## For more information on living donation and transplantation:

- Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network: <http://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov>
- Transplant Living: [www.transplantliving.org](http://www.transplantliving.org)
- UNOS Living Donor Brochure: [www.unos.org/docs/Living\\_Donation.pdf](http://www.unos.org/docs/Living_Donation.pdf)
- United Network for Organ Sharing: [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org)
- Organ Donation: [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov)
- National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC): [www.livingdonorassistance.org](http://www.livingdonorassistance.org)
- National Kidney Foundation: [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)
- Donate Life America: [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net)

*“Participating in a paired exchange  
allowed me to not only help  
my husband live a normal life  
but also help another person  
and his family live a normal life.”  
– Paired Exchange Donor*

*The UNOS mission is to advance organ availability and transplantation  
by uniting and supporting its communities for the benefit of patients  
through education, technology and policy development.*



*Working Together. Saving Lives.*

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