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AKF Ambassador

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AKF in ACTION

Fighting kidney disease and helping people live healthier lives.

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New rules for AKF grant assistance in 2023

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) recently updated the eligibility rules for our financial assistance programs. If you are currently receiving help from AKF, there are some changes coming in 2023; we hope that this article provides helpful information so that you can prepare in advance of the changes taking effect. We have been sharing information about the upcoming changes over the past year so that you have time to prepare in advance.

The following details AKF's new program eligibility rules:

- *To qualify for AKF assistance, patients may not exceed a household pretax income of 500% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and liquid assets (excluding retirement accounts) may not exceed \$30,000. We selected 500% of FPL as this is the same or slightly higher threshold used by federal assistance programs. Proof of reported income is required.*
- *Patients already enrolled in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), HUD housing assistance or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) are automatically eligible once proof is submitted and approved by AKF.*

What's changing?

AKF's new eligibility rules require that you must "recertify" that you are still eligible for help from AKF by updating your financial information in your Grants Management System (GMS) profile every year. This must be done by your anniversary date, which can be found within your GMS account information or by asking your social worker.

For the past year, new patients who created profiles in AKF's GMS have been required to provide written proof of income.

Existing patients have not had to submit documents, but they will be required to next year. Beginning April 1, 2023, you will also need to provide proof of income using one of the following documents, along with a signed consent form:

- A copy of your current year's approval letter for SNP, HUD, TANF or LIHEAP
- Social Security award letter
- Paycheck stub no older than 90 days
- A copy of your most recent tax return
- An Income Exception Attestation Form may be submitted if you have a reason for being unable to provide one of the other types of documents. This is available for download in your GMS record.

Once your proof of income document and consent form have been submitted, AKF's Patient Support team will review it to make sure that it matches the financial information. After approval, new grant requests may be entered into GMS. Any grant requests that have already been approved will not be affected.

More information will be provided in future notifications.

Consider registering for your own GMS account

You may manage your grants on your own by registering for GMS and creating a patient profile. You may also work through your treatment center social worker or other renal professional or designate a caregiver (authorized family member with power of attorney or family caregiver listed in the consent form) to apply on your behalf. Register online at gms.kidneyfund.org.

Patient Support Contact Information

By Phone

Call us at
800-795-3226
Monday through
Thursday to speak
with a live
representative.

GMS Assist

Visit GMSassist.com
to schedule a phone
appointment. All
times available are
in EST.

GMSMessages

Message us through
your GMS account at
gms.KidneyFund.org
and check the
"Information" and "FAQ"
tabs for more updated
information.

Online

Visit
www.KidneyFund.org
to learn more about
AKF's Financial
Assistance Programs.

Please do not send messages, voicemails or emails to other departments to request a call back as they will not be answered.

GMS Enhancements for 2023

We are adding new features to make GMS easier to use!

#1

Alert Functionality Enhancements:

New alert filtering options, email alerts for mass messages and the ability to receive daily alert summary emails will be included in the next round of GMS enhancements.

#2

An Improved Message System:

The GMS message system will be enhanced to include new category and subcategory fields, category based helpful resources and a variety of other new message features.

#3

Upgraded Announcements:

The announcements functionality in GMS will include a new improved format for easy reading and allow for the use of hyperlinks within each announcement.

#4

New Process - Patient Inactivity:

The "inactive status" will no longer be available, instead, Renal professionals will have the ability to mark a patient as "not a patient at the facility" with an additional field to indicate why.

#5

Learning Center Transformation:

An improved design, additional features and functionality that will optimize the user experience. Adding tags to resources will help users find the resources they need quicker and easier.

#6

Impact Surveys:

From micro-surveys to full impact surveys, GMS in 2022 and beyond will allow for surveys to be created, sent, viewed, completed, and analyzed within GMS.

#7

Renal Professional Account Page:

Renal professionals will now be able to edit/update their name, phone number and their email address in their account information page.

AKF's Disaster Relief Program provides rapid relief grants for patients

AKF's Disaster Relief Program is the nation's only rapid-response system that provides emergency financial assistance to dialysis and recent transplant patients. The program has provided financial assistance to kidney patients throughout all the major disasters that have struck the United States and its territories for the past two decades.





When a disaster occurs, the Disaster Relief Program provides grants for dialysis patients for areas of need such as transportation, temporary lodging, home repair and food replacement. Following a natural disaster, AKF will reach out to the Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition, as well as the area ESRD Network, to gauge patient need. If the need is great enough and sufficient funding is available, AKF will open the program. The Disaster Relief Program has provided millions in assistance to help dialysis patients rebuild their lives following natural disasters.

So far in 2022, AKF has provided disaster relief grants of \$250 to people impacted by wildfires, flooding and hurricanes. Daniel O. of Ft. Myers, Florida is one of those people. "After the hurricane, my dialysis facility was the only one open in Fort Myers," he said. "They were running on generators and had water trucks outside. It was difficult to get in touch with them at first, but I was fortunate to not have any delays in my treatment. However, I know it was stressful for a lot of patients and our center was taking in people from across the city. The electricity in my house was out for nine days, and we had some damage to our roof and yard. My dialysis team told me about the disaster relief assistance from AKF, and I was very grateful. The assistance helped me purchase new insulin and kidney-friendly foods that I had to throw out during the power outage."

A new partnership with AdheaRx will enable AKF to more quickly help patients displaced by disasters find treatment, as well as connect providers to patients they may be unable to reach.

When a natural disaster strikes, AdheaRx will deploy its AI-powered communication technology to reach AKF-served patients in affected areas with a message from AKF offering disaster relief resources and encouraging patients to share information about their needs in the wake of the disaster.

2022 Disaster Relief Programs

	Number of Grants	Amount Provided
 New Mexico Wildfires	2 grants	\$500
 Kentucky Flooding	2 grants	\$500
 Hurricane Fiona	20 grants	\$5,000
 Hurricane Ian	456 grants	\$106,049

Provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act could help people with and at risk for kidney disease

On Aug. 16, President Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Here are some of its key health care provisions that could help people at risk for or living with kidney disease or other chronic conditions.

Out-of-pocket spending cap for Medicare Part D beneficiaries

The new law will cap annual out-of-pocket (OOP) spending on prescription drugs for Medicare Part D beneficiaries at \$2,000 starting in 2025. The IRA will also allow beneficiaries to spread out their OOP costs over the course of the year, which will be helpful for individuals with high drug costs and who might reach the \$2,000 OOP cap early in the year. Additionally, the new law limits how much the annual Part D premium can grow between 2024 to 2030.

Expansion of eligibility for full Medicare Part D low-income subsidies

The IRA expands eligibility for full Medicare Part D low-income subsidies (LIS) to individuals with lower incomes, starting in 2024. With this change, more low-income beneficiaries will have access to Part D LIS benefits that cover the full cost of their Part D premium and deductible as well as a portion of their cost sharing. Expanding access to Part D LIS will be beneficial for Medicare beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), many of whom have lower incomes. In 2019, nearly 60% of Medicare beneficiaries with ESRD qualified for LIS, compared to 30% of Medicare beneficiaries without ESRD.

Limiting monthly copayments for insulin in Medicare

Starting in 2023, Medicare beneficiaries will pay no more than \$35 per month for covered insulin products in Medicare Part D and for insulin furnished through durable medical equipment under Medicare Part B.

Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney disease and making insulin more affordable for Medicare beneficiaries is critical to ensuring people can access necessary insulin products.

Improving access to recommended vaccines for adults in Medicare and Medicaid

Starting in 2023, there will be no cost sharing for adult vaccines covered in Medicare Part D that are recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Adults enrolled in Medicaid will also have access to no cost sharing vaccines recommended by ACIP.

Extending enhanced subsidies for ACA Marketplace plans

The IRA extends the enhanced premium tax credits (subsidies) for people buying health coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplaces through 2025. The extension helps ensure they will not see a steep increase in their Marketplace premium payments for the upcoming year.

AKF staff spotlight



Name: Michael Ly

Hometown: South Portland, Maine

What do you do at AKF? I am the director of public policy. I work on AKF's regulatory and legislative policy priorities in the office of government affairs.

Why are you passionate about fighting kidney disease? Kidney disease affects so many people, and so many more are at risk for developing kidney disease. It is critical that we work toward changes that help improve awareness, prevention, research, treatments and access to quality care.

What is the best part of your job? It's hard to choose one thing, but overall I feel fortunate to work for an organization that does so much to directly help people living with kidney disease, and to work with such dedicated colleagues.

What are your favorite hobbies outside of work? I enjoy running, cooking, date nights with my wife and playing with my kids.

AKF and Home Dialyzors United provide support and education for patients interested in home dialysis with virtual one-day summit

AKF and Home Dialyzors United (HDU), a nonprofit advocating on behalf of the home dialyzer community, partnered to host the first *Dialysis at Home: Kidney Community Event* on Sept. 15. *Dialysis at Home* was a one-day virtual summit that brought late-stage chronic kidney disease, end-stage renal disease (ESRD or kidney failure) and dialysis communities together for a series of sessions about home dialysis.

Here are a few event highlights:

Understanding Your Home Dialysis Options

Home dialysis can offer patients more flexibility, but it is not a one-size-fits-all treatment option. Experts in this session recommended speaking to current dialysis patients to learn more about their experiences and noted that dialysis is a journey and a person's modality option may change over time to fit their lifestyle. In addition, they explained that home dialysis can allow people to be more independent and be an active participant in their health care. The experts urged patients to ask their clinician as many questions as possible about home dialysis and for clinicians to think from the patient perspective to make sure everyone is informed.

Peritoneal dialysis (PD) uses a fluid that is put into the belly and removed to clean the blood. Experts in this panel encouraged patients to consider PD as a treatment option because it allows patients to "get their life back." Other reasons mentioned for considering PD include having more

energy, opportunities to travel and additional time to spend with family and friends.

Advocating For the Care You/Your Loved Ones Deserve

A diagnosis of chronic kidney disease not only affects a patient, but also their family and friends. Kidney health advocates Lisa Burgess and Dawn Edwards joined licensed clinical social worker Renee E. Bova-Collis to discuss how to advocate for yourself or loved one after a diagnosis.

To advocate for you or your loved one's care, the speakers recommended asking your health care team specific questions. This includes asking how to prolong kidney function, treatment options and how to empower yourself. As a care partner, Lisa suggested finding resources and joining support groups. Renee shared insights about the ESRD Network and how patients and families can use it as a resource and advocacy tool. She stated the ESRD Network is available to assist patients and families if they are having difficulties with their dialysis facility or other concerns.

Dialysis at Home: Kidney Community Event was made possible by the generosity of Leadership Sponsors Satellite Healthcare and Outset Medical. AKF and HDU are also grateful for the sponsorship of Baxter, Diality, NxStage and U.S. Renal Care.

Missed *Dialysis at Home: Kidney Community Event*? Don't worry! All sessions were recorded and can be viewed at your leisure on AKF's YouTube page ([youtube.com/user/kidneyfund](https://www.youtube.com/user/kidneyfund)).

THANK YOU FOR
Strengthening
OUR KIDNEY COMMUNITY

Thank you to our corporate members
for making our work possible in 2022!



Kidney Kitchen®

These coconut balls are perfect when there is no time to bake, but you still want something homemade to serve at holiday gatherings. Check out many more kidney-friendly recipes at [Kitchen.KidneyFund.org](https://www.kidneyfund.org/kitchen). On Kidney Kitchen®, you will find guides for kidney-friendly eating at every stage. For specific questions you may have, talk with a dietitian (nutrition expert) to make a meal plan that is unique to you. *Please note: this recipe contains alcohol.*



Coconut Holiday Balls

Makes: 30 balls



Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: 0 min

Recipe contributed by
FamilyCook Productions

Ingredients:

2 cups confectioners' sugar
5 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 teaspoon allspice, ground

1 cup coconut milk
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
⅓ cup rum or brandy

5 cups vanilla wafers
(1½ boxes)
1 cup coconut, shredded

Directions:

1. Sift together 2 cups of confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder and allspice in a large mixing bowl.
2. Stir in the coconut milk, corn syrup and rum or brandy.
3. In a food processor, crush the vanilla wafers in batches until finely crushed. Add them in with the sugar mixture.
4. Mix well with your hands. The mixture should be crumbly and slightly moist.
5. Place shredded coconut in a shallow bowl or dish
6. Using a tablespoon, scoop out portions of the chocolate mixture. Roll them into 30 1-inch balls.
7. Roll each ball in the shredded coconut.
8. Serve as you would cookies and enjoy! Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container.



Cooking Tip: You can make the coconut balls right before serving, as this recipe requires very little advance prep time. Or you can make them a week in advance and store them in the refrigerator.

Nutrition facts

(1 serving = 2 balls)

Calories = 270
Carbohydrates = 41 g
Sugar = 29 g

Fiber = 2 g
Calcium = 24 mg
Fat = 11 g

Saturated Fat = 7 g
Protein = 2 g
Phosphorus = 57 mg

Cholesterol = 1 mg
Sodium = 93 mg
Potassium = 116 mg



Do you or your loved one have ADPKD?

(autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease)

Check out our expanded educational resources & patient guide on:

- Finding a nephrologist (kidney doctor)
- Working with your nephrologist to understand your risk of kidney failure
- Following your care plan
- Finding support
- Mental health impact of ADPKD & much more

Download
our next
steps guide
on

www.KidneyFund.org/adpkd



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[KidneyFund.org](https://www.kidneyfund.org)

Help us fight kidney disease.
Text **KIDNEY** to **52886** to join our mobile advocacy network.



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