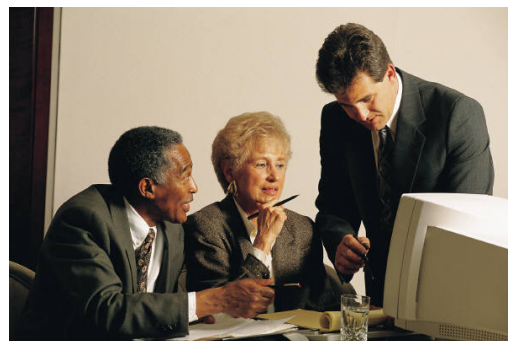


Vocational Rehabilitation

Employment is more than just a job. Working is a part of how we define ourselves in our family, among our friends, and within our community. Dialysis patients who work do a lot better physically, emotionally, financially, and socially. Working patients have fewer urgent care needs and are generally less stressed and depressed. Working patients are also better off financially. People on Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) receive a small fraction of their previous income. Those who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) only get enough cash to help meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

In-center hemodialysis is the least "work friendly" option for dialysis, yet 91% of dialysis patients are on this type of dialysis. Because of the difficulty scheduling work and dialysis, it's not surprising that people quit their jobs or take paid or unpaid leave. In fact, in 2009, only 26% of the 7,073 dialysis patients in the Network, ages 18 through 54, were working or going to school at all.



Tips

- Explore home dialysis options. It offers flexibility. Studies show that patients who do home dialysis have fewer complications, are healthier, enjoy fewer diet restrictions, and have a greater quality of life.
- When looking into work options, consider making your FIRST stop the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Organizations. They are able to explain how the income/budget formula works, how it affects your benefits, what work-related expenses might be excluded from your income, and how to maximize your benefits. They are also knowledgeable about other Social Security work incentive programs. To locate a WIPA organization near you, call 1-866-968-7842 (TTY 866-833-2967). You can also find a list with contact information at www.socialsecurity.gov/work/ServiceProviders/WIPADirectory.html.
- Visit the LifeOptions website at www.lifeoptions.org. This website is devoted to vocational rehabilitation for the kidney disease patient. It's an invaluable resource!

Check out the Vocational Rehabilitation page on our website at www.esrdnet5.org/vocrehab.asp. It is full of links to state rehabilitation programs and client assistance programs, as well as resources for additional vocational rehabilitation options, education, ideas for jobs or hobbies, and more. While you are there, browse through our Patient Services menu for information about patient education, representation, Medicare Prescription drug program, and much more.

Back to School

Now is as good a time as any to pursue a degree. Whether you want to finish high school, get a college degree, or retrain for employment, the time you spend on dialysis makes for a great time to study! Your first step to getting a great education is to explore your treatment options and consider home dialysis. Home dialysis is more flexible and offers better clearance to keep your blood clean and your mind sharp.

Do not let the cost of schooling stop you. Assistance is available. Many colleges have financial aid and grants for students with disabilities, and if there is a disabled students' advisor or office, they can help with access. This is true even for people who no longer meet SSA disability criteria. For those receiving SSI/SSDI, work incentive programs or the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation can potentially offset some tuition. If there is limited family income, Pell Grants are great (word on the street is that the Obama administration is working to expand this program). Below are some organizations that offer scholarships. Check their websites for qualifications and deadlines.

Grant & Scholarship Resources

- Kidney & Urology Foundation (national) offers scholarships to patients, family members, and donors- www.kidneyurology.org/Patient_Resources/scholarships.php
- Transplant Recipients International Organization- www.trioweb.org/resources/scholarships.html
- Shad Ireland Foundation offers fitness grants and also college scholarships- www.shadirelandfoundation.org/programs.html
- Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) offers scholarships to chronically ill individuals under the age of 25- www.patientadvocate.org/index/php?p=69

And More... Some dialysis companies offer scholarships to employees. Many also provide on-the-job training. Google your dialysis company name + "scholarship."

Career One Stop provides a scholarship search link and information about financial aid advisors. www.lifeoptions.org/links/links.php?sect=7

FinAid! offers information about scholarships and fellowships for students with disabilities. www.finaid.org/finaid/focus/disabled.html

Council for Exceptional Children provides financial aid resources for students with disabilities. www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Custom/miniSearch/searchResults.cfm?q=financial+aid

University/Education Disability Resources lists aid programs available and provides links. www.makoa.org/education.htm