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**INDEPENDENCE FOR WORKERS WITH CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE
MEANS KEEPING JOB AND AVOIDING DISABILITY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - WASHINGTON, July 3, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A new national report recommends that working-age Americans who have been diagnosed with non-dialysis Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) learn more about the symptoms and ways to manage and slow progression of CKD, keep their jobs and avoid transferring to disability programs whenever possible. According to the report, continued employment among these workers helps protect their income and health benefits and offers as normal a lifestyle as possible. The report also indicated that employed CKD patients reduce costs to Medicare, Medicaid, and Federal and state support and disability programs.

The report was formally unveiled by the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP) and the Medical Education Institute (MEI) and reflects the consensus views of over thirty major stakeholders including patient advocates, labor force and disability experts, health data experts, medical professionals and key Federal government agency experts. The report concludes the first phase of a multiphase national job retention and labor force effort called KidneyWorks™ and reflects a nearly year-long collaborative research effort to thoroughly identify and address barriers to continued employment for individuals with CKD. Details on the first stakeholder meeting can be found here <https://aakp.org/working/>.

Paul T. Conway, President of the American Association of Kidney Patients stated, "Americans with kidney disease have the same dreams, aspirations and desire to contribute to society as any other American and helping kidney patients who work keep their jobs and avoid disability is a noble effort that positively impacts employees and their families, employers and the American taxpayer. Knowledgeable CKD patients are better prepared to improve their health and nutrition, slow their disease progression, make wise decisions about continued employment and plan, if necessary, future treatments that support their ambitions including pre-emptive kidney transplant, home dialysis or in-center dialysis at a facility that best accommodates their schedule." Conway has managed kidney disease for over thirty-six years, including over two years of dialysis and, for the past twenty years, as a kidney transplant recipient. He is a former Chief of Staff of both the United States Department of Labor (DOL) as well as the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and a former Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Dori Schatell, Executive Director of the Wisconsin-based MEI stated, "The historic KidneyWorks collaboration between AAKP and MEI has the potential to improve the lives of working-age people with chronic kidney disease by helping them to identify symptoms, take steps to protect their remaining kidney function, and continue to work—keeping their income and dignity. We are excited about seeking support to move the initiative forward and start implementing the strategies."



Five key strategies outlined by the KidneyWorks participants, each of which is expanded upon in the White Paper, are below - the full report and executive summary can be downloaded from <http://www.kidneyworks.org/kidneyworks-white-paper>

1. Raise awareness of CKD among the general public and those most at risk.
2. Identify CKD early and provide patients with optimal medical and psychosocial management.
3. As soon as CKD is diagnosed, provide patients and family members with employment-supportive education designed keep patients in the workforce.
4. Take active steps to slow CKD progression through nutrition, diet and medical coordination.
5. Fully support kidney transplant recipients returning to and already in the workforce.

An estimated 10% - 15% of U.S. adults (more than 20 – 30 million Americans, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported the high range of disease in a recent announcement - <http://www.nephrologynews.com/cdc-estimates-1-7-american-adults-chronic-kidney-disease/>) have some degree of CKD, which has five stages. Renal replacement therapy (dialysis or a kidney transplant) begins during Stage 5. Common CKD symptoms that can impact a person's ability to work can include fatigue, headaches, nausea, muscle cramps, shortness of breath, and problems sleeping, but these are often manageable by patients in consultation with their doctors and through nutrition, lifestyle changes and medications. Having a job that provides healthcare coverage or income to purchase it can help ensure that patients who need preventive care will receive it and remain productive.

The second and third phases of KidneyWorks will include strategies and supporting practical and mobile-friendly tools designed to help workers to stay healthy and in their jobs, communicate with their employers about their needs, educate employers on how to retain talented and loyal workers with CKD, and offer specific information on the benefits of staying employed versus disability. Support for the initial KidneyWorks stakeholder conference came from sponsors including the Renal Medicine Foundation, the National Renal Administrators Association; Baxter International Inc.; DaVita, Inc.; Dialysis Clinic, Inc.; Fresenius Medical Care-NA; Northwest Kidney Centers; and the former ESRD New York Network.

For more information on KidneyWorks or to join as a program supporter, please contact Diana Clynes, AAKP Director of Programs and Services at dclynes@aakp.org or (813) 400-2391.

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Founded in 1969, AAKP is the largest and oldest independent kidney patient organization in America. Governed by a patient-majority Board of Directors, AAKP conducts national education programs designed to better inform kidney patients and policy-makers about the true impacts of kidney disease. AAKP executes a national advocacy strategy to raise the patient voice before the Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress. Tax-deductible contributions can be made through AAKP's website, www.aakp.org.

Founded in 1993, MEI is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping people with chronic diseases learn to manage and improve their health, and a focus on chronic kidney disease. MEI fulfills its mission by conducting research, developing evidence-based educational materials for consumers and health professionals, and advocating for patient-centered policies. Tax-deductible contributions can be made through MEI's website, www.meiresearch.org.