

Frequently asked questions for candidates and caregivers

National Liver Review Board (NLRB)

The National Liver Review Board (NLRB) was implemented on May 14, 2019. The NLRB evaluates and decides on requests for exception scores for liver transplant candidates. A candidate can apply for an exception score if their MELD or PELD score does not fully address their current need for a liver transplant.

How does the NLRB work?

- The NLRB reviews and assigns non-standard exception scores. Depending on your age and medical condition(s), the request goes to one of three boards that review specific criteria:
 - o One national board is for pediatric patients – those who are younger than age 18 when they are listed for a transplant.
 - o A second board is for adult candidates with any condition other than hepatocellular carcinoma, also called HCC.
 - o A third board is for candidates who have HCC.
- Liver candidates with certain, standard medical conditions receive a set exception score relative to the median MELD or PELD at transplant. Other candidates, who do not have one of the standard conditions, could get a specific exception score requested by their liver transplant team. The NLRB will review these requests and choose to either approve or deny the request. However, if a candidate with one of the standard conditions needs more points than the set score, they can also request a specific score.
- Most of the time, exception scores are compared to the median MELD or PELD score at transplant. A median is the statistically calculated “midpoint” score over a range of all recently performed transplants in an area surrounding the transplant hospital. If the median score is 28, it means half of the recipients were transplanted at a 28 or lower, while half were transplanted at a score of at least 28. Most adult candidates will have a standard exception score three points lower than the median MELD.
- The national review board will consider, on an individual medical basis, whether the exception score may be lower than, the same as, or higher than, the median MELD or PELD score.

How do I apply for an exception score through the NLRB?

To apply for a standard exception, your transplant team sends information to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) confirming that you meet medical criteria for a standard exception. If so, you will receive the assigned score. These exceptions must be renewed periodically to ensure you still qualify.

For non-standard exceptions, your transplant team will also need to send information to the OPTN. However, the NLRB members will need to review your application to ensure that the score you are requesting meets your clinical situation. The reviewers consider only medical information about your condition. They do not get information identifying you, the hospital at which you are listed, or even the part of the country where you live.

The review board will approve or decline the exception score requested. For a request that is denied, your team may appeal the decision for further consideration.

If I list at a different transplant hospital, would my exception score be different?

It could be different from one hospital to another, based on the median score in the area around that hospital. A key goal of the system is to reduce variation in median transplant scores across the country. The OPTN will continue to study the effects of the policy and seek to improve it for the benefit of all candidates.

How can I learn more?

Your transplant team is the first and most complete source of information relating to your care and treatment. They can discuss how the new system may apply to you specifically.

For more detail about the new boards, and the guidelines and criteria they will use, visit the OPTN [website](#).

You may also contact UNOS Patient Services by e-mail (patientservices@unos.org) or phone (888- 894-6361).