VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Enhancing Support for Caregivers of Veterans
VA Caregiver Support Program

Advisory Council on Alzheimer’s Research, Care & Services Meeting

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Caregiver Support Program Mission Statement:
To promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our nation’s Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.
Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

MISSION Act Phased Expansion

- Prior to October 1, 2020: the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) was only available to eligible Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.

- Phase One, October 1, 2020: PCAFC expanded to eligible Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975.

- Phase Two, October 1, 2022: PCAFC will expand to eligible Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty of all eras.

PCAFC Eligibility Requirements

There are a total of 7 Veteran eligibility requirements, including:

- Serious injury means any service-connected disability that (1) is rated at 70 percent or more by VA, or (2) combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, is rated at 70 percent or more by VA.

The Veteran must need in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on either:

- An inability to perform an activity of daily living, or
- Need for supervision, protection, or instruction.

http://www.caregiver.va.gov
PCAFC Services

- Education and Training
- Enhanced Respite Care
- Counseling
- Beneficiary Travel
- Monthly Stipend
- Access to healthcare through Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA), if eligible
- Financial planning and legal resources for Primary Family Caregivers (VA is actively working to establish a viable contract vehicle for these services)

How to Apply to PCAFC

Apply Online:
https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/apply-for-caregiver-assistance-form-10-10CG/introduction

VA Form 10-10 CG:
https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10CG.pdf
Program of General Caregiver Support Services

- The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) provides coaching, skills training, resources, and various types of support to caregivers of all era Veterans.

- The Veteran must be enrolled in VA healthcare but does not need to have a service-connected condition.

- The caregiver does not need to live with the Veteran.

- No formal application is required.

PGCSS Benefits

- Training and support through in-person, online and telehealth sessions.

- Skills training focused on caregiving for a Veteran’s unique needs.

- Individual counseling related to the care of the Veteran.

- Respite care, which offers medically and age-appropriate short-term services to eligible Veterans, allows caregivers to take time for themselves while the Veteran is cared for in a safe and caring environment.
Individual & Group Interventions

Individual Interventions

• One-on-one clinical/psychosocial support, as needed, based on the needs of the individual caregiver
• Caregiver Health & Well-Being Coaching*

*available at some sites

Group Interventions

• Support groups (diagnostic specific or topic specific)
• Caregivers FIRST

Skills Training

VA S.A.V.E.
Suicide Prevention Skills Training

S.A.V.E. stands for:
Signs
Ask
Validate
Encourage & Expedite

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers
REACH VA Caregiver Program: Dementia

Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH VA) Caregiver Program

- Delivered individually or via telephone support groups
- Coaching/intervention to assist caregiver in their role
- Strategies for addressing target problem behaviors or challenges
- Support for the caregiver

- Includes specialty population of dementia

![Reach VA Caregiver Notebook]

Caring for a Veteran with Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementias Fact Sheet

What Do I Need to Know?

Physical and Mental Changes to Expect

- Decreased ability to perform routine tasks
- Increased confusion
- Changes in mood and behavior
- Increased sensitivity to changes in environment

Caregiving Tips

1. Educate yourself about Alzheimer's disease and its progression.
2. Provide a safe environment.
3. Establish a routine.
4. Use everyday items to stimulate memories.
5. Offer choices and participate in decision-making.
6. Encourage social interaction.
7. Avoid arguments.
8. Manage behavior problems.

Some Facts

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a brain disease that changes the way a person thinks, reasons, and relates to others. It can affect memory, learning, thinking, and the ability to perform daily tasks. Dementia is not a normal part of aging, but each person will have different experiences and can have different strengths and weaknesses. It's important to stay as active as possible, but remember to take care of yourself.

What Does This Mean for Me?

As a caregiver, you can have a huge impact on how the patient you care for feels with you and others. You can encourage your patient to keep their routine and their daily activities.

www.va.gov/caregiver

I have more questions. Where can I go for help?

You can also call the VA Caregiver Support Line at 1-800-487-1559, or the toll-free Support Line at 1-800-742-3833 (Spanish speaking at 1-800-742-3833). You can also visit the website at www.caregiver.va.gov.

www.caregiver.va.gov
Caregivers Video Series 1 & 2

Series 1:
Information and Support for In-Home Dementia Caregivers

Series 2:
Managing Dementia Behaviors: ABC’s for Caregivers

Tips for Dementia Video Topics:
- Improving Communication in Dementia
- Intimacy in Dementia
- How Much to Help in Dementia
- Addressing Major Safety Risks in Dementia
- Preventing Financial Mismanagement in Dementia
- Minimizing Inappropriate Behavior in Dementia
- Medication Issues for People with Dementia
- Recognizing and Managing Pain in People with Dementia
- Engaging People with Dementia in Meaningful Activities
National CSP Resources

- Building Better Caregivers
- Self-Care Courses for Caregivers
- Caregiver Support Line (CSL)
  Education Calls
- Peer Support Mentoring
- Annie Caregiver Text Program

Caregiver Support Line (CSL)

The VA CSL responds to calls from caregivers, Veterans and community agencies seeking information about VA caregiver services

- Monday - Friday 8:00AM - 10:00PM (EST),
  Saturday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM (EST)
- Staffed by VA clinical social workers
- Links callers to their local Caregiver Support Program Team
- Provides information about assistance through the VA
- Offers supportive counseling when needed
Caregiver Summit & Resource Fair

Caregiver Summit

The CSP hosts an annual summit to include caregiver-specific topics

- Includes VA and external organizations/agencies that regularly support caregivers and families
- Goal: to increase awareness of the needs of caregivers in the local community and the available resources

Caregiver & Family Resource Fair

Offered at every VA facility annually with a focus on resources for caregivers and families to include:

- VHA resources
- VBA resources
- Local non-profits
- County agencies

Campaign for Inclusive Care

Mission Statement: Campaign for Inclusive Care

To empower healthcare providers and professionals to engage Veteran caregivers as part of the Veteran care team through policy, practice and culture change.
REMEMBER, CARE

CONSIDER
Consider who else needs to be present. Ask the Veteran “Is there someone you would like in the room during your visit?” “Is there someone who you rely on for support that you would like to have here as part of this conversation about planning your care?” or “Is there someone who helps you with your everyday medical needs?” Do not assume the Veteran can handle their medical care by themselves. Ask them directly to ensure clarity.

ACKNOWLEDGE
Recognize that the Veteran’s caregiver has taken on extra work, and that it will impact their wellness. Empathetic remarks such as “I imagine it’s a big responsibility to care for your loved one” and “I appreciate your dedication to their health” can go a long way to establish rapport.

REVIEW ROLE
Determine the responsibilities that the caregiver is comfortable with. Questions for the caregiver can include “what tasks are easy for you to perform?” and “are there any duties that cause you to feel uneasy while you are performing them?” Early identification of what the caregiver can and can’t do will help ensure that the Veteran achieves their highest possible level of health and well-being.

ENCOURAGE
Find out any barriers that exist and how you can help overcome them to make the caregiver’s responsibilities easier. Simple questions such as “how can I help with your at-home responsibilities for the Veteran?” and “what would make taking care of your Veteran simpler?” If you believe the caregiver could benefit from additional supports, refer to the Caregiver Support Program at your facility and encourage the caregiver to use the free Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274.

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Academy for Inclusive Care

Academy Modules

1. Introduction to the Practice of Inclusive Care
2. Who are Military and Veteran Caregivers
3. Communicating with the Caregiver
4. Understanding the Caregiver Journey and Caregiver Journey Map
How Do You Contact the Caregiver Support Program?

VA Caregiver Support Line
1-855-260-3274

To find your local Caregiver Support Program, or for more information: [http://www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)