

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Enhancing Support for Caregivers of Veterans

VA Caregiver Support Program

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

Leah Christensen, LCSW
Clinical Program Coordinator
Caregiver Support Program
Veterans Health Administration



Informational Purposes Only



1



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.



Informational Purposes Only



2

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.



Informational Purposes Only



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

PCAFC Eligibility Requirements

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

The Veteran must have a serious injury incurred or aggravated within the specified phased expansion date.

- *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>

Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Eligibility Criteria Fact Sheet



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans who are seriously injured. Changes to the program result from the new "Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Improvements and Amendments Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018" Final Rule, RIN 2900-AG48, effective October 1, 2020. These changes include:

- ✓ Expanding eligibility for PCAFC
- ✓ Offering legal and financial services for designated Primary Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans in 2021
- ➔ Making other changes affecting program eligibility and VA's evaluation of PCAFC applications

Who qualifies: Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including serious illness) in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or after September 11, 2001, or on or before May 7, 1975.

Veteran Eligibility Requirements:

The Veteran must have a serious injury, which is a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more, and meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers:

1. The individual is either:
 - A Veteran; or
 - A member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
5. Personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver will not be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity.



Informational Purposes Only



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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)*



Choose **VA**

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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>

Department of Veterans Affairs		INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING APPLICATION FOR THE PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS	
Please Read Before You Start...			
What is VA Form 10-10CG used for?			
This form is used to apply for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). VA will use the information on this form to assist in determining your eligibility. A Veteran, as defined herein, may appoint one (1) Primary Family Caregiver applicant and up to two (2) Secondary Family Caregiver applicants. On average, it will take 15 minutes to complete the application, including the time it will take you to read the instructions, gather the necessary facts and fill out the form. Each time a new Primary or Secondary Family Caregiver is requested, a new Form 10-10CG is required.			
Where can I get help filling out the form and answers to questions?			
You may use ANY of the following to request assistance:			
• Ask VA to help you fill out the form by calling us at 1-855-488-8440.			
• Access VA's website at http://www.va.gov and select "Contact Us".			
• Locate and contact the Caregiver Support Coordinator at your nearest VA health care facility. A Caregiver Support Coordinator locator is available at http://www.caregiver.va.gov .			
• Contact the National Caregiver Support Line by calling 1-855-260-3274.			
• Contact a Veterans Service Organization.			
Definitions - For purposes of this form, the following apply:			
Caregiver Support Coordinator (CSC):			
A VA clinical professional who connects caregivers of Veterans with VA and community resources offering supportive programs and services. Caregiver Support Coordinators are located at every VA medical center and are designated specialists in caregiving issues.			
Eligible Veteran:			
Means a Veteran, as defined herein, who is found eligible under 38 CFR 71.20.			
Family Caregiver:			
An individual who is approved and designated by VA as a Primary Family Caregiver or Secondary Family Caregiver.			
Personal Care Services:			
Care or assistance of another person necessary in order to support the eligible Veteran's health and well-being, and perform personal functions required in everyday living ensuring the eligible Veteran remains safe from hazards or dangers incident to his or her daily environment.			
Representative:			
A person who, under applicable law, has authority to act on behalf of the Veteran or who is legally vested with the responsibility or care of the Veteran. Evidence must be submitted with this form to establish a person's legal status as Representative. Such evidence may be a valid power of attorney, legal guardianship order, or similar legal documentation or certification issued by an appropriate authority, including a Federal, State, local, or tribal law that establishes such authority. (Next-of-kin is therefore not automatically the Representative of the Veteran as this must be established under applicable law.)			
Veteran:			
An individual who meets the definition of Veteran in 38 U.S.C. 101(2), or a qualifying service member undergoing medical discharge from the Armed Forces for whom a date of medical discharge has been issued, who applies for or participates in PCAFC.			
Who should apply for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers?			
IF THE INDIVIDUAL IS A:	AND	AND	THEN
Veteran	Has a disability rating from VA of 70% or more (single or combined) for a service-connected disability (or disabilities), incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, on, before, or after a qualifying date, as set forth in 38 U.S.C. 1720C(a)(2)(B) and 38 C.F.R. 71.20(a)(2).	Requires at least 6 continuous months of personal care services that are provided by a family member of the Veteran or by a person who lives with the Veteran (or will do so if designated as a Family	The Veteran may meet the criteria for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. Complete this form to apply.



Choose **VA**

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

6

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*



Choose VA

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

7

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.

An infographic titled "VA Caregiver Support Program of General Caregiver Support Services". It includes a "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)" section with the following content:

What is the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)?
The Caregiver Support Program (CSP) PGCSS provides services to caregivers of Veterans of all eras enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare.

PGCSS offers a wide array of services to family and friends who care for Veterans, including peer support mentoring, skills training, coaching, telephone support and online programs.

Who is a General Caregiver?

- A General Caregiver is a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran enrolled in VA healthcare who:
 - Needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living or
 - Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological care or other impairment or injury.
- General Caregivers do not need to be a relative or live with the Veteran.

What services does PGCSS provide for a caregiver?

- 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.

Every VA Facility has a CSP team who assists with information and referrals. To learn more about PGCSS and caregiver services offered, visit us online: www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support Line
1-855-260-3274 toll-free

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

"I have very much enjoyed the VA Caregiver Support Program. I have learned a great deal...if I have any questions or concerns, I feel like I can contact our Caregiver Support Team without hesitation"
— Caregiver in PGCSS



Choose VA

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

8

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



Informational Purposes Only



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Skills Training

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

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



[Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers](#)



Informational Purposes Only

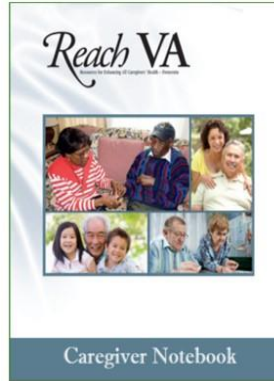


U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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



Informational Purposes Only



11

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

I'm Caring for a Veteran with Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementias

What Do I Need to Know?



Physical and Mental Changes to Expect

There are some common mental changes that can occur with people diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia, but each person will have a different experience. A veteran with either of these conditions may be very unpredictable. Alzheimer's disease begins slowly and ends with severe brain damage. As the disease progresses, symptoms are more easily noticeable and become serious enough to cause individuals with Alzheimer's disease or their family members to seek professional caregiving help.

Physical changes may include: forgetting how to brush his/her teeth or comb his/her hair; incontinence, which means being unable to control bodily functions; poor eating habits; and problems with speaking, understanding, reading, and writing.

Mental changes may include: mild to severe forgetfulness; trouble remembering recent events, activities, or names of familiar people or things; being unable to make decisions and handle money; hallucinations and/or delusions.

Emotional issues may include: anxiety, depression, and sundowning — a condition in which the Veteran may suffer extreme agitation and confusion during the late afternoon or early evening hours.

Other problems associated with the disease may include: behavior problems such as sleeplessness, agitation, becoming aggressive, repeating questions, wandering, and wanting to be with his or her Caregivers all of the time.

What Does This Mean for Me?

As a Caregiver, you can have a positive impact on how the Veteran you care for deals with this condition. You can be encouraging and supportive as he or she faces the struggles, frustrations and changes associated with conditions like Alzheimer's and dementia.

The life of the Veteran you care for can change depending on the types and severity of symptoms he or she is experiencing. Your life may change dramatically as you adjust your already busy schedule to include increasing care needs for (continued on back)

Some Facts

What is Dementia? Dementia is a brain disorder affecting a person's ability to carry out daily activities. The most common form of dementia among seniors is Alzheimer's disease, which involves the parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language. There is no known cause or cure for Alzheimer's disease; however, medications, along with other treatments and strategies, will help you and the Veteran you care for enjoy a better quality of life.

Treatment May Include: medications may help with symptoms, but currently there is no treatment to stop or reverse Alzheimer's disease.

www.caregiver.va.gov

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- the Veteran you care for. In addition, the amount of information you'll need to make good caregiving decisions may feel overwhelming — this is a normal reaction.
- Remember that you are not alone and that it's okay to ask for help. Caregiving is very demanding, so don't feel guilty or as though you have failed if you need help. Support is available, and you should feel comfortable seeking it out. If you don't know who to turn to, a good first step is to call VA's Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.
- ### Caring Tips
1. Educate yourself. Understanding Alzheimer's disease and its related physical and emotional symptoms will help you and the Veteran you care for in coping with the disease and in managing it for the long term.
 2. To help minimize confusion while you are providing care for the Veteran, give short simple instructions in a calm voice, and stick to a routine whenever possible.
 3. If the Veteran you care for is experiencing restlessness, keep him or her active during the day, or provide him or her with simple tasks. These tips can help keep the Veteran you care for occupied and reduce restlessness.
 4. If the Veteran you care for is having a hard time controlling his or her bodily functions, accidents and receiving assistance in the bathroom can be embarrassing and uncomfortable. In these instances, offer him or her reassurance and support, and, if an accident occurs, don't blame or scold.
 5. You can't predict where or when the Veteran you care for might wander. Modify your home environment to make it safe, have the Veteran wear an IDENTITY bracelet, and let neighbors know about his or her condition so they can assist you in keeping the Veteran you care for safe if he or she leaves the house unexpectedly.
 6. Choose clothes that are easy to care for and use Velcro instead of zippers and buttons when possible.
 7. The Veteran you care for will have good days and bad days, both emotionally and physically — which can be hard on you. If you become frustrated, step away for a little while. Ask someone to stay with the Veteran so you can catch a break. You can also take the Veteran you care for to adult day care or request respite up to three times a year from VA to give you some time to yourself.
 8. Visit your doctor regularly for YOUR needs, and get plenty of rest so you can stay strong. Remember, you are doing the best you can and you are making a difference in your loved one's life. Your health is essential to your ability to keep providing for the Veteran you care for.

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

VA knows that being a Caregiver can be both rewarding and hard. You can always find more information at www.caregiver.va.gov, including contact information for the VA Caregiver Support Coordinator nearest you.

You can also call VA's Caregiver Support Line (toll-free) at 1-855-260-3274.

The Caregiver Support Line is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am - 11:00 pm ET, and Saturday, 10:30 am - 6:00 pm ET.

www.caregiver.va.gov

Call to talk to caring professionals who can:

- Tell you about the assistance available from VA.
- Help you access services and benefits.
- Connect you with your local Caregiver Support Coordinator at a VA Medical Center near you.
- Just listen, if that's what you need right now.

<https://www.caregiver.va.gov>



Informational Purposes Only



12

Caregivers Video Series 1 & 2

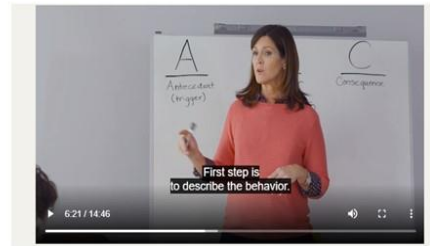
Series 1:

Information and Support for In-Home Dementia Caregivers



Series 2:

Managing Dementia Behaviors: ABC's for Caregivers

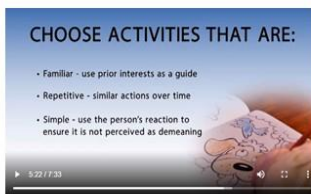


Informational Purposes Only



13

Tips for Dementia: Caregivers Videos



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



Informational Purposes Only



14

National CSP Resources

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



Choose VA

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

15

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



Choose VA

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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



Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

17

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.



Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Campaign for Inclusive Care



Academy for Inclusive Care

<https://www.train.org/inclusivecare/welcome>

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.



Informational Purposes Only



19

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](#)



Informational Purposes Only



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>



Choose VA

Informational Purposes Only

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

21