



# Dispatch FROM THE Front Lines

## Expansion of VA Caregiver Support Program: New Resources for Family Caregivers of Our Nation's Veterans

In October 2020, the VA Caregiver Support Program was substantially expanded, providing new opportunities for caregivers of veterans who are severely ill or injured.

Veterans treatment courts across the country may serve veterans who have serious disabling conditions requiring intensive support from a caregiver so that they can live at home. The VA Caregiver Support Program has recently expanded its services and the population who qualifies for benefits. The mission of the program is "to promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our nation's Veterans through education, resources, support, and services."

*"Caregivers are important members of a Veteran's health care team. . . . We recognize their ongoing commitment to the well-being of Veterans and the roles they play in Veterans' lives daily. Providing a wide range of resources to help them care for Veterans and themselves is paramount."*

*— VA Secretary Robert Wilkie,  
November 6, 2020*

*"Caregivers provide stability and security to our most vulnerable Veterans, allowing them to stay in their homes with their loved ones for as long as possible."*

*— VA Secretary Robert Wilkie,  
October 1, 2020*

### What's New?

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), part of the Caregiver Support Program, provides assistance for caregivers of veterans with a service-connected disability. In October 2020, an expansion of PCAFC was launched. Previously available only to post-9-11 veterans, the program is now also available to veterans who served on or before May 7, 1975. In addition, the expansion eliminates the need for a connection between caregiving services and the disabling injury, and now includes any service-connected disability (more than 60 percent of veterans served by the VA's Veterans Justice Programs have such a disability).

PCAFC can offer multiple benefits to caregivers, including a monthly stipend, access to health insurance, mental health counseling, respite care, and education and training. Future enhancements to the program will include availability to all veterans regardless of service era (estimated availability in late 2022) and the addition of access to financial planning and legal services (estimated availability in 2021).

Veterans and their caregivers should consider applying for PCAFC if the veteran has a service-connected disability rating of 70% or higher and is in need of in-person personal care support for a minimum of six continuous months to support activities of daily living (ADLs) or to provide supervision to maintain the veteran's safety on a daily basis.

More information about eligibility requirements is available online, at VA medical centers, and through the Caregiver Support Line.

## Support for All Caregivers

Another part of the Caregiver Support Program offers support for general caregivers of all veterans, regardless of whether they have a service-connected condition. A general caregiver is someone who cares for a veteran who requires assistance with ADLs or who needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological care or other illnesses or injuries. The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) can support these general caregivers through training and education, peer support mentoring, and self-care resources. In addition, caregivers have access to the Caregiver Support Line, which can provide resources and referrals and supportive counseling. General caregivers may also qualify for in-home care, respite care, and equipment and supplies to assist the veteran.

## Spread the Word

We encourage veterans treatment court practitioners of any discipline to help raise awareness of the Caregiver Support Program among all veterans they serve who need caregiving support. See the resources below for more information.

**General website with links to detailed information including application for benefits:** <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/index.asp>

**Caregiver Support Line:** 1-855-260-3274

**Find your local caregiver support coordinator:** [https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New\\_CSC\\_Page.asp](https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp)

**Final rule:** <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/07/31/2020-15931/program-of-comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers-improvements-and-amendments-under-the-va>



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