

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Caregiver Support Program

## Caregiver 101

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## TWO PROGRAMS IN ONE

- PCAFC- Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers- Stipend based program- requires an application and that strict criteria are met. Once approved they can receive both programs' benefits
- PGCSS- Program of General Caregiver Support Services- Offers no stipend however offers a multitude of support services to assist caregivers with the stress and sometimes overwhelming tasks of being a caregiver



# HISTORY

- **Previously:** VA required a connection between the need for personal care services and the qualifying serious injury (service connection)
- **Expansion Changes:** In addition to expanding to pre-1975 era Veterans, the enhanced PCAFC eliminates the need for a connection between personal care services and the qualifying serious injury. It also redefines serious injury to now include any service-connected disability — regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease. Both these changes greatly expand program eligibility.
- **Why This is Important:** In most cases, the eligible Veteran has multiple conditions that may warrant a need for personal care services. A Veteran's needs may be so complex that it can be difficult to determine what specific condition, out of many, causes the need for personal care services



# VETERAN ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PCAFC

- Be a veteran; or a member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
- Must have a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air services resulting in a 70% Service connection or higher rating.
- Must need personal care services for a minimum of 6 continuous months based on an inability to perform an ADL or a need for supervision, protection, or instruction
- Must receive care at home and not be provided services simultaneously and regularly by another entity. (There are special circumstances for those receiving GEC/HHA/VDC- a CSP staff would be able to help determine eligibility)



# CAREGIVER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PCAFC

- The caregiver needs to be at least 18 years of age
- Must be the eligible Veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, stepfamily member, or extended family member; or Someone who lives with the eligible Veteran full-time or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver
- Be initially assessed by VA as being able to complete caregiver education and training.
- Complete caregiver training and demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and additional care requirements
- There must be no determination by VA of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), abuse, or neglect of the eligible Veteran by the caregiver





# KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Activity of Daily Living (ADL)-** Dressing or undressing oneself • Bathing • Grooming oneself in order to keep oneself clean and presentable • Adjusting any special prosthetic or orthopedic appliance, that by reason of the particular disability cannot be done without assistance • Toileting or attending to toileting • Feeding oneself due to loss of coordination of upper extremities, extreme weakness, inability to swallow, or the need for a non-oral means of nutrition • Mobility (walking, going up stairs, transferring from bed to chair, etc.)  
**EACH TIME PERFORMED**
- **Supervision, Protection, or Instruction-** • Has a need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury on a continuous basis; or Has a need for regular or extensive instruction or supervision without which the ability of the Veteran to function in daily life would be seriously impaired on a continuous basis.
- **Unable to Self-Sustain in the Community-** an eligible Veteran either: • Requires personal care services each time he or she completes three or more of the seven activities of daily living (ADL) listed in the definition of an inability to perform an activity of daily living in this section and is fully dependent on a caregiver to complete such ADLs; or • Has a need for supervision, protection, or instruction on a continuous basis



# THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN REFERRING:

- Our program pays the family caregiver and should not be used to pay someone else to provide care.
  - If the caregiver plans to continue to work or be out of the home for much of the time, Veteran Directed Care (VDC) may be a better option.
- The Family can receive respite care under the PCAFC program. CSP must authorize the hours and it can be reduced. We generally do not approve over 20 hours weekly but can approve larger amounts of respite for a short period of time (Ex. the caregiver needs a procedure, caregiver has a class...etc.)
- If they are receiving HHA hours- these may be affected and should be considered in the planning of care.
  - Ex. A person receiving 15 hrs. of personal care services can be reduced to 9 hrs. by being approved for our program. (We use a case mix index to adjust hours)



# GENERAL APPLICATION PROCESS

- Submit application- 1010CG
  - Through Caregiver Support VA website: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> This is the easiest and best way to apply. Please offer to help your Veteran/Caregivers to do this
- A CSP will perform an intake to ensure eligibility criteria are met within 5 days
- A social worker will perform a Veteran and Caregiver assessment
- Functional Assessment by a clinical assessor
- Sent to Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT) at VISN level for decision to continue or be denied
- If approved to continue the Caregiver completes training and an in-home assessment is conducted.
- Sent for final application review by Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT)
- Notification- by letter and/or phone call of results.





# BENEFITS FOR CAREGIVER FOR PCAFC

- Education and training
- Access to healthcare insurance (If caregiver is otherwise uninsured)
- Mental health counseling
- Financial stipend
- Additional Respite care
- Wellness contacts
- Travel and per diem compensation (when traveling for a Veteran's VA healthcare appointment)



# NOT ELIGIBLE FOR PCAFC?

- **Program of General Caregiver Support Services**
- CSCs are available to help caregivers find the right support to meet their needs and to enroll in PGCSS.
- No formal application is required to enroll in PGCSS however there is a commitment to participate
- Caregivers who enroll in PGCSS have access to education and training, including courses at local VA medical centers (VAMCs)



# PGCSS SERVICES

- Caregiver Support Line- 1-855-260-3274
- Building Better Caregivers (BBC) - an online workshop for caregivers who are caring for someone with dementia, memory problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, a serious brain injury, or any other serious injury
- Annie is VA's text messaging service- promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care and now for caregivers.
- Coaching Into Care - Through 10-30 minute calls, licensed psychologists and social workers offer guidance and help for starting conversations with the Veteran about their mental health or substance use and motivating them to seek treatment if it's needed.
- S.A.V.E training - Suicide prevention training for caregivers
- REACH VA - The REACH VA Program teaches skills to help with problem solving, stress management, and positive thinking
- Caregivers FIRST- a training program for friends or family Caregivers of Veterans with physical or cognitive impairments.



## HOW TO CONTACT?

Contact us:  
Caregiver Support Program  
210-617-5300 x 19278



# Questions?

General information, online application, fact sheets,  
appeals information, and much much more at:

[www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)