

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION



Caregiver Support Program Overview

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VA Caregiver Support Program

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- There are an estimated 14.3 million caregivers caring for military members or Veterans
- Caregivers of Veterans face unique challenges:
 - High caregiving intensity, financial strain, emotional stress, and a need for specialized support
 - Veterans often have complex caregiving needs
- Caregivers are partners in VA's care of Veterans
 - Apart from having expertise about the patient, caregivers can also provide critical information to providers about their own capacity and limitations in providing care safely in the home

Sources:

Ramchand R, Dalton S, Dubowitz T, Hyde K, Malika N, Morral AR, Ohana E, Parks V, Schell TL, Swabe G, Trail TE, Williams KM. (2024). *America's Military and Veteran Caregivers: Hidden Heroes Emerging from the Shadows*—RAND Corporation.

Tanielian, T., Ramchand, R., Fisher, M. P., Sims, C., Harris, R., & Harrell, M. C. (2014). *Hidden heroes: America's military caregivers*. RAND Corporation.

Van Houtven CH, Miller KEM, O'Brien EC, et al. *Development and Initial Validation of the Caregiver Perceptions About Communication With Clinical Team Members (CAPACITY) Measure*. Medical Care Research and Review. 2017;76(6):784-806. doi:10.1177/1077558717747985

- VA has a long history of supporting caregivers
 - Respite, homemaker/home health aides, home-based primary care
- Increased legislative support
 - Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006
 - Caregiver Support Program (CSP) was established within the Veterans Health Administration in 2007
 - Veterans and Caregivers Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010
 - In 2011, VA implemented its Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) and a Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers
 - VA MISSION Act of 2018
 - Expanded PCAFC and added additional benefits for Primary Family Caregivers

To participate in PGCSS:

- Contact the local CSP team and participate in a brief intake process
 - There is no application, and clinical evaluation is not required

The Veteran must:

- Be enrolled in VA health care, and
- Need personal care services because the Veteran is either:
 - Unable to perform an activity of daily living, or
 - Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury

The caregiver must:

- Provide personal care services to the Veteran



**Department of Veterans Affairs
Program of General Caregiver
Support Services**

Factsheet

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) understands that the caregiver community is vital to the recovery and care of many Veterans. These caregivers may need support, which is why the VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) offers clinical, educational, and wrap-around services to individuals who care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) is one of two programs under CSP. PGCSS offers many services, including skills training, coaching, telephone support, and online programs to caregivers of Veterans of all eras enrolled in VA.

PGCSS General Caregivers
Caregivers within PGCSS are recognized as General Caregivers. A General Caregiver is a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran enrolled in VA health care who:

- Needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living or
- Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or other impairment or injury.

PGCSS General Caregivers may have access to:

- Training and support through in-person, online, and telehealth sessions.
- Skills training focused on caregiving for a Veteran's unique needs.
- Individual support related to the care of the Veteran.
- Respite care, a resource that offers medically and age-appropriate short-term services to eligible Veterans and allows caregivers to take time for themselves. In contrast, the Veteran is cared for in a safe and caring environment.
- Peer Support Mentoring.

More information about the services listed above can be found on pages 3-5.

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

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[PGCSS](#)

To participate in PCAFC:

- Submit an application
 - A Veteran may apply with one Primary Family Caregiver applicant and up to two Secondary Family Caregiver applicant(s)
 - The Veteran and each caregiver must submit an application (VA Form 10-10CG)
 - Each applicant must complete and sign the form
 - Mail or online
- Participate in a series of evaluations
 - VA must determine whether the Veteran and each caregiver applicant meet specific eligibility criteria and requirements
 - Veterans and caregiver may submit relevant non-VA records as additional information to support PCAFC eligibility (not required)

Among other criteria, the Veteran (or servicemember undergoing medical discharge) must:

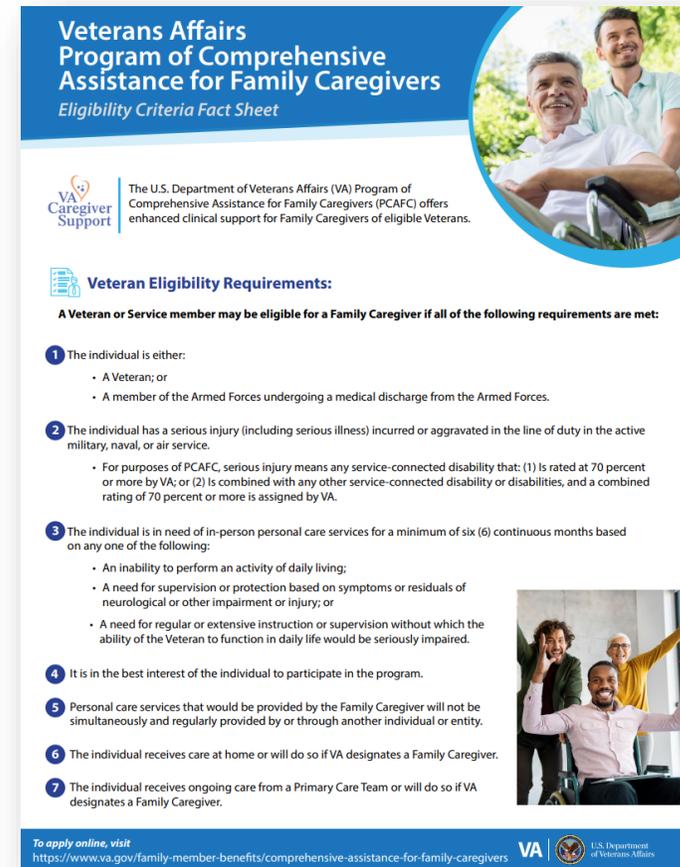
- Have a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
 - Serious injury means any service-connected disability that is rated 70% or higher, singular or combined
- Be “in need of personal care services” for a minimum of six (6) continuous months
 - To be in need of personal care service means that the Veteran requires in-person personal care services, and without such services, alternative in-person caregiving arrangements (including respite care or assistance of an alternative caregiver) would be required to support the eligible Veteran's safety.

In addition, the Veteran must:

- Be “in need of personal care services” for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on one or more of the following:
 - An inability to perform an activity of daily living
 - A need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury; or
 - 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
- Have a determination that PCAFC is in the Veteran’s best interest
- Receive care at home
- Receive ongoing care from a primary care team

Among other requirements, the caregiver must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be either:
 - the Veteran’s spouse, son, daughter, parent, step-family member, or extended family member, or
 - Live with the Veteran full-time if designated as a Family Caregiver
- Have no determination by VA of abuse or neglect of the Veteran by the caregiver
- Complete required caregiver training
- Participate in an initial home-care assessment
- Demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and any additional care requirements of the Veteran



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 Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans.

Veteran Eligibility Requirements:

A Veteran or Service member may be eligible for a Family Caregiver if all of the following requirements are met:

- 1 The individual is either:
 - A Veteran; or
 - A member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
- 2 The individual has a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.
 - For purposes of PCAFC, serious injury means any service-connected disability that: (1) is rated at 70 percent or more by VA; or (2) is combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, and a combined rating of 70 percent or more is assigned by VA.
- 3 The individual is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following:
 - An inability to perform an activity of daily living;
 - A need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury; or
 - 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.
- 4 It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.
- 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.
- 6 The individual receives care at home or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.
- 7 The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

To apply online, visit <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers>

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[List of PCAFC eligibility requirements](#)

HEALTHCARE BENEFITS AND CLINICAL SUPPORTS

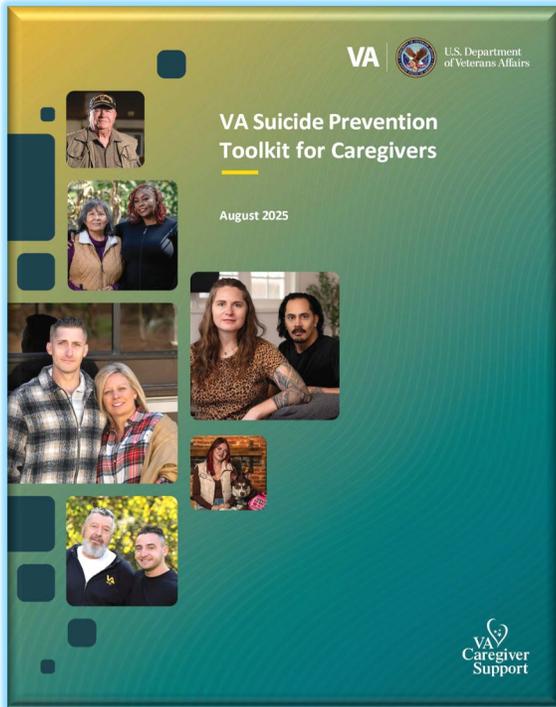
PGCSS	PCAFC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver Support Program Teams • Skills Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – VA S.A.V.E Training for Caregivers – Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid for Caregivers • Online & Mobile Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Annie Caregiver Text – Building Better Caregivers • One-to-One Coaching & Individual Support • Group Support & Coaching • Peer Support Mentoring • Respite Care • Resource & Referrals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – VA Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274) – Caregiver Support Program Website www.caregiver.va.gov* 	<p>All the benefits available under PGCSS, plus:</p> <p>Family Caregivers are eligible to receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Contacts • Virtual Psychotherapy Program for Caregivers (VPPC) • Beneficiary Travel (as applicable) <p>In addition, <u>Primary Family Caregivers</u> are eligible to receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monthly stipend • Access to healthcare coverage through Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA), if eligible • Certain legal and financial planning services

- There is a CSP Team at every VA medical center.
- CSP Teams use a person-centered approach to provide caregivers with support and connection to the best resources and services to meet their needs.



[Caregiver Resources in 2 CSP Teams](#)

VA S.A.V.E. for Caregivers



Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers

CPR for Caregivers

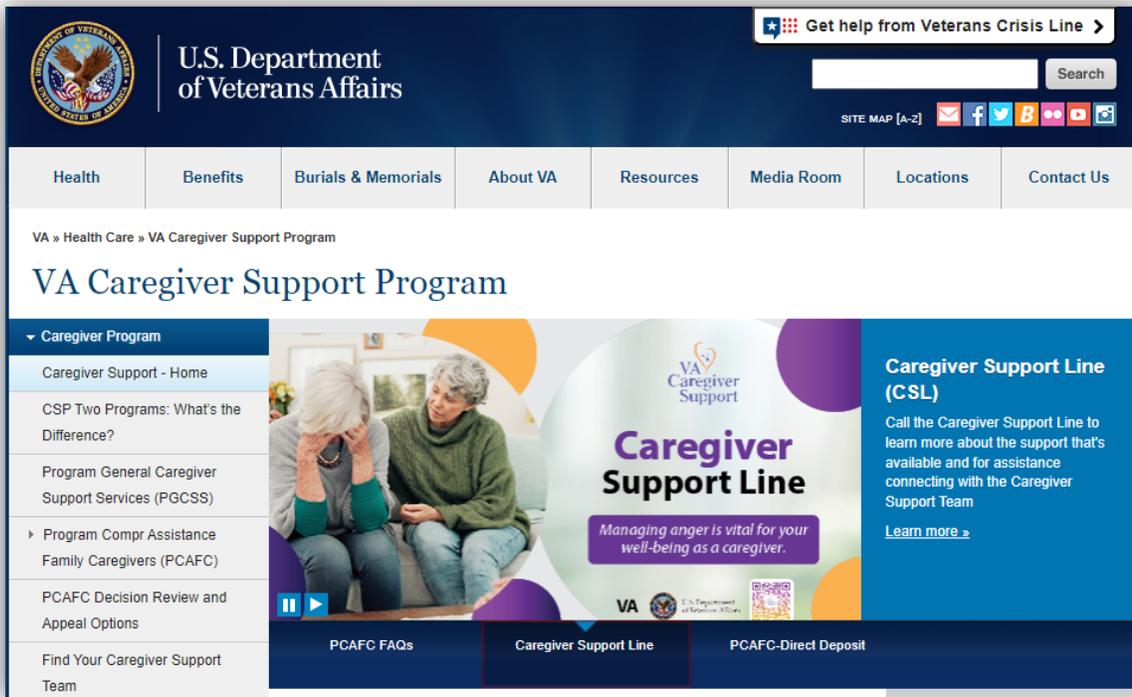


Hands-Only CPR Training

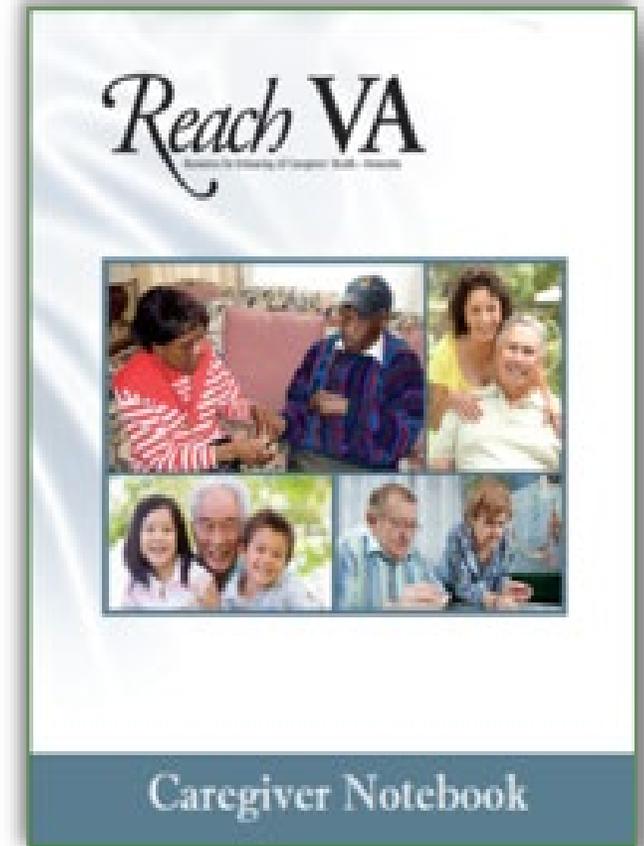


CPR+

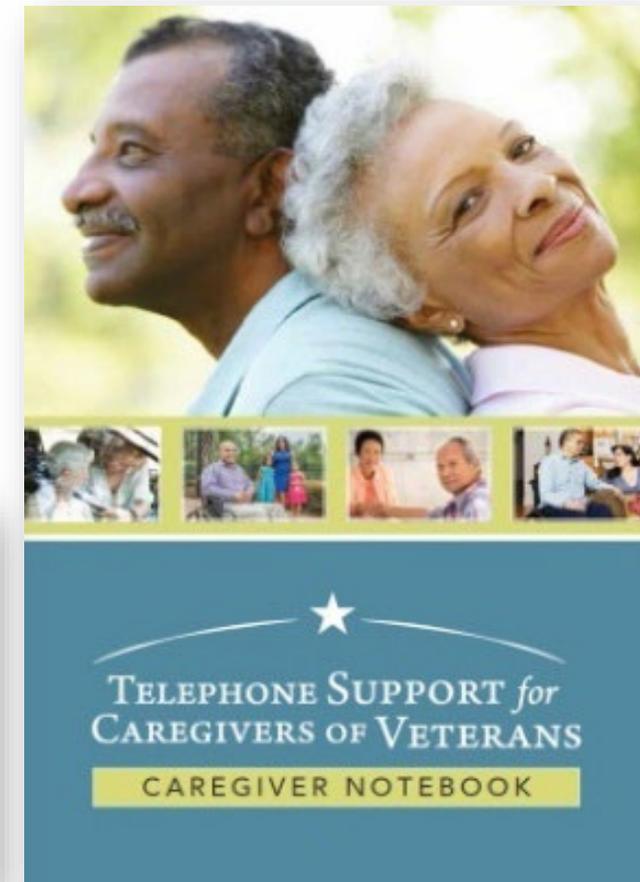
- Building Better Caregivers®
- Annie Caregiver Text Messaging Program
- CSP Website Library of Resources



- Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coaching (CHWC)
- REACH VA (Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers' Health)
- 1:1 Clinical Support



- Caregivers FIRST
- Self-Care and Wellness Courses
- REACH VA Caregiver (group)
- Art Journaling for Caregivers
- Caregivers Supporting Veterans in Mental Health Recovery
- Dementia Education to Empower Caregivers
- Parkinson's Disease Training for Caregivers
- Power of Living Connected
- Thriving Through Change & Loss



* Availability may vary across medical centers based on the common needs and interests of each caregiver population.

PEER SUPPORT MENTORING

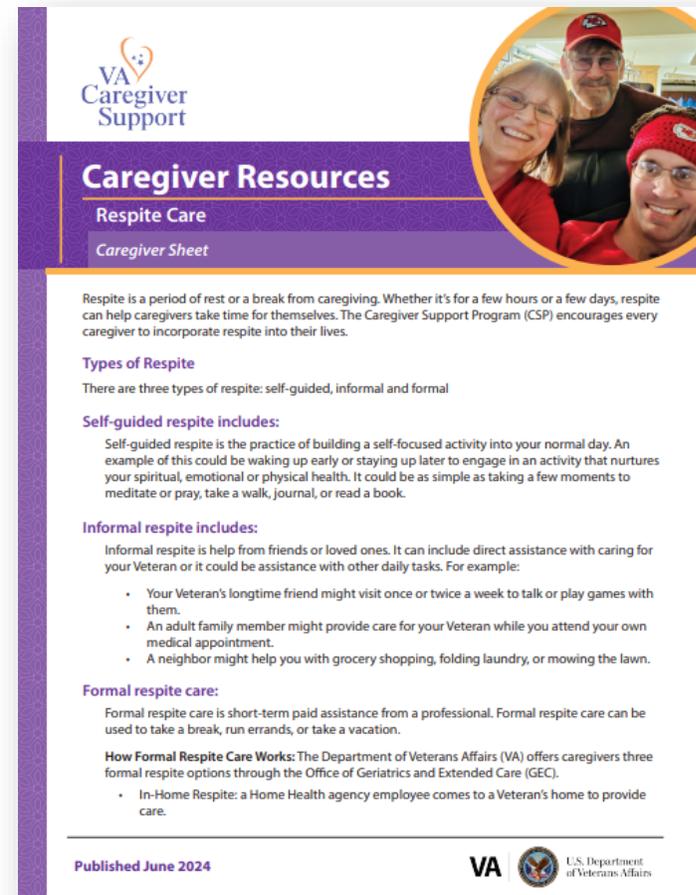


The Peer Support Mentoring (PSM) Program provides an opportunity for caregivers to receive support and to share their experience, wisdom, and skills with other caregivers. PSM can help:

- Strengthen relationships between caregivers
- Provide caregivers with networking opportunities
- Empower caregivers to help one another

Respite Care

- Respite is a period of rest or a break from caregiving. Whether it's for a few hours or a few days, respite can help caregivers take time for themselves
- Self-guided, informal, or formal
- Can be helpful to Veterans of all ages and their caregivers



The screenshot shows a webpage titled "Caregiver Resources" with a sub-section for "Respite Care". It includes a "Caregiver Sheet" link and a circular photo of three smiling people. The main text defines respite as a period of rest or a break from caregiving. It lists three types of respite: self-guided, informal, and formal. The self-guided section describes building self-focused activities into a normal day. The informal section describes help from friends or loved ones, with examples like a friend visiting, a family member providing care, or a neighbor helping with tasks. The formal section describes short-term paid assistance from a professional. It also includes a "How Formal Respite Care Works" section mentioning the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC) and listing "In-Home Respite" as an option where a Home Health agency employee comes to the Veteran's home.

Respite Care
Caregiver Sheet

Respite is a period of rest or a break from caregiving. Whether it's for a few hours or a few days, respite can help caregivers take time for themselves. The Caregiver Support Program (CSP) encourages every caregiver to incorporate respite into their lives.

Types of Respite
There are three types of respite: self-guided, informal and formal

Self-guided respite includes:
Self-guided respite is the practice of building a self-focused activity into your normal day. An example of this could be waking up early or staying up later to engage in an activity that nurtures your spiritual, emotional or physical health. It could be as simple as taking a few moments to meditate or pray, take a walk, journal, or read a book.

Informal respite includes:
Informal respite is help from friends or loved ones. It can include direct assistance with caring for your Veteran or it could be assistance with other daily tasks. For example:

- Your Veteran's longtime friend might visit once or twice a week to talk or play games with them.
- An adult family member might provide care for your Veteran while you attend your own medical appointment.
- A neighbor might help you with grocery shopping, folding laundry, or mowing the lawn.

Formal respite care:
Formal respite care is short-term paid assistance from a professional. Formal respite care can be used to take a break, run errands, or take a vacation.

How Formal Respite Care Works: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers caregivers three formal respite options through the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC).

- In-Home Respite: a Home Health agency employee comes to a Veteran's home to provide care.

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[Caregiver Resources: Respite Care](#)

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

- Staffed by licensed Social Workers
- Links callers to their local Caregiver Support Team
- Provides information about assistance through the VA or local communities
- Offers supportive counseling when needed



THANK YOU!

VA Caregiver Support

Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Caregivers of Veterans

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1-855-260-3274

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

To find your local Caregiver Support Program Team,
or for more information, please visit: www.caregiver.va.gov