



## ISSUE BRIEF: COMPREHENSIVE CAREGIVER SUPPORT

### The Situation

- PCAFC continues to provide essential caregiver support for severely injured veterans, including health coverage, respite care, training, and stipends.
- The MISSION Act of 2018 expanded PCAFC eligibility to caregivers of veterans injured before September 11, 2001.
- November 2025, VA has published a final rule which extends the transition period of legacy participants, legacy applicants, and their family caregivers (the legacy cohort), through September 30, 2028.
  - The extension means legacy participants, legacy applicants, and their family caregivers will remain eligible for PCAFC and will not experience a reduction in their monthly stipend based on a reassessment for an additional three years, with limited exceptions.
  - Legacy participants are veterans or service members whose family caregivers were approved and designated by VA as of Sept. 30, 2020. Legacy applicants are veterans or service members who applied for PCAFC before Oct. 1, 2020, and were accepted into the program on or after Oct. 1, 2020. The primary family caregiver must remain the same individual named in the application submitted before Oct. 1, 2020.
    - Key details of the extension include:
      - An extended transition period for the legacy cohort.
      - Continued eligibility and no reduction in stipends with limited exceptions.
      - Members of the legacy cohort may still be discharged or revoked from PCAFC in certain circumstances, such as at the request of the veteran or family caregiver, or for noncompliance with program requirements.
      - Suspension of certain reassessments remains in effect. Individuals may still request a reassessment, including if they believe they are eligible for increased support.
- VA will no longer issue PCAFC paper checks. If enrolled in PCAFC and receiving a stipend by paper check, participants must enroll in direct deposit, to ensure timely payments.

### The Challenge

- Many legacy veterans were deemed ineligible for PCAFC or had their caregiver stipend levels lowered without clear explanations.
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), such as DAV, still lack full access to veterans' records, hindering their ability to support appeals for caregiver benefits.
- VA has not fully addressed systemic issues related to eligibility, reassessment, and appeals, leading to inconsistent, non-transparent, and inequitable administration of the program.
- Many PCAFC caregivers are unbanked, have limited digital access, or face difficulties navigating direct-deposit enrollment—creating a risk of missed or delayed stipend payments during the transition.

### The Solution

- Ensure VA, Congress, and VSOs collaborate to strengthen PCAFC for veteran caregivers.
- Establish clear, transparent, and equitable eligibility criteria with consistent reassessment rules.
- Provide detailed explanations on eligibility decisions sent to veterans and caregivers.
- Revise ADL assistance standards to remove the “each time” requirement, ensuring fair eligibility.
- Develop objective, consistent, and equitable replacement criteria for ADL assessments.
- VA needs to give equal consideration to ensuring that a replacement standard can be objectively, consistently, and equitably assessed and administered.
- VA should provide a simple transition plan: proactive outreach, direct-deposit enrollment assistance, temporary hardship options (e.g., Direct Express), and a short grace period to prevent any interruption in PCAFC stipend payments.