VA Caregiver Support

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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Steps for Enrollment

An application is not required to participate in PGCSS. To enroll:

- Reach out to a member of your local VA facility's CSP team. Caregivers can find contact information for their local CSP team by using CSP's locator tool.
- Speak to a member of your CSP team and provide basic information about your Veteran and what types of services and supports you may be interested in.

What to know about PGCSS enrollment

- The Veteran receiving caregiver support services must be eligible for VA healthcare and consent to receive care from the identified caregiver.
- The enrolled caregiver will be identified in the Veteran's healthcare record.
    - VA will establish a healthcare record specifically for you as a caregiver.
    - To establish a healthcare record, a local VA facility CSP team member will request specific information to open this record, including your full name, gender, address, Social Security Number, and date of birth.
    - The facility CSP team and VA clinicians will use this healthcare record to provide you with services and support.

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PGCSS Resources and Services

Skills Training

VA S.A.V.E. Training: Caregivers play an essential role in Veteran suicide prevention. They may be the first to notice changes in the Veteran or maybe the person a Veteran turns to when having suicidal thoughts. VA SAVE, which stands for Signs, Ask, Validate, Encourage and Expedite, is designed to equip anyone who interacts with Veterans to demonstrate care, support, and compassion when talking with a Veteran who could be at risk for suicide.

Building Better Caregivers™ (BBC): Is an online, six-week workshop that helps caregivers in two key ways:

- Training caregivers in how to provide better care to Veterans.
- Assisting caregivers to learn how to manage their own emotions, stress, and physical health.

After the six-week workshop, caregivers can stay connected through the alumni community. This service is free and secure. Connect with other caregivers today! Visit BBC's webpage or read these BBC frequently asked questions (FAQs) to learn more.

Mobile Support

Annie Caregiver Text Support: Annie, the VA's text messaging service, has several text programs for caregivers. The app sends caregivers messages to help them manage stress, take better care of themselves, manage dementia-related behaviors, and cope with bereavement. Messages may be educational, motivational, or activity-based. You may stop the service at any time. Caregivers must have a mobile phone with the text-message capability to enroll. Talk to your CSP team to sign up.

Web and Email Support

CSP Website: VA and CSP have a wealth of resources for all caregivers on CSP's website available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help them connect with the caregiver community, learn best practices and self-care, find local events, and more. Below are a few free resources that can be found on CSP's website.

- Self-care worksheets and journals
- Tips and tools for caring for your Veteran
- Resources by diagnosis

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- Announcements
- Special events

CSP Email List: Subscribe to receive email updates and information about VA CSP services.

One-on-One Coaching

Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH) VA: Connect with a coach who will provide you with a workbook and help you with various issues caregivers face. Through individual sessions, coaches will aid in stress management, problem-solving, self-care, healthy behaviors, and Veteran safety, behaviors, problems, or concerns linked to a diagnosis. Your assigned coach will call you for a total of four sessions over a two to three-month period. See Group Coaching learn how caregivers can participate in REACH VA support groups. Learn more about REACH VA here.

Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coaching

Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coaching centers around what matters to you, not what's the matter with you. Your coach is your personal guide who works with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs, and goals. The Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coach uses the Circle of Health visual tool to help explore connections between essential aspects of your life and a self-assessment tool known as the Personal Health inventory to help you create your Personal Health Plan. Caregiver Health & Wellbeing Coaches are trained to draw on your strengths and values to optimize your efforts towards achieving your aspirations.

**Available at select sites. Partner with your local CSP team to determine availability.*

Group Support and Coaching

Caregiver Self-Care/Resiliency Courses: Self-care courses are in-person or virtual group training provided to caregivers focusing on supporting and meeting their needs. The classes are led by trained facilitators. In these fun and interactive sessions, you can learn how to manage stress or cope with your emotions. You may also learn new relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, qigong, or you may listen to music or practice Zen doodling. Contact your CSP team to determine which classes are available at your facility.

Caregivers FIRST: Caregivers FIRST, which stands for Caregivers Finding Important Resources, Support, and Training, is a highly adaptable grab-and-go curriculum package that includes a series of four proactive group classes to help caregivers build self-care and psychological coping, health system navigation, and hands-on clinical skills.

REACH VA: In addition to one-on-one coaching sessions, REACH VA group sessions are available for you, a coach, and other caregivers to meet. A REACH VA coach will provide you with a workbook and help you with various issues faced by caregivers. Learn more about REACH VA here.

Peer Support Mentoring: Developed to strengthen caregivers, provide a networking opportunity, and empower caregivers to help one another, Peer Support Mentoring also offers an opportunity for caregivers to receive guidance and share their experience, wisdom, skills, and passion with other caregivers. Learn more about Peer Support Mentoring by reading this booklet.

Please contact your local CSP team if you want to participate in Peer Support Mentoring.

Respite Care

Self-care is essential for caregivers. VA respite care is a program that pays for care for a short time when caregivers need a break, need to run errands, or needs to go out of town for a few days. This resource can be helpful to caregivers for Veterans of all ages.

Respite care through VA is offered by the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC). Visit GEC's webpage for more information about respite care for caregivers.

Connection and Referrals to Available VA and Community Resources

Your local CSP team can help connect you with other VA and community resources, as well as special events for caregivers. Contact your local CSP team today to learn about upcoming caregiver events.

Need Help?

VA's National Caregiver Support Line (CSL) is a toll-free number for caregivers, family members, friends, Veterans, and community partners to contact for information related to caregiving and available supports and services. The CSL team provides information on caregiver support services, counseling, educational services, and referrals (via electronic notification) to CSP staff at local facilities.

Call VA's Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 to learn more about the support and services available to you.