Chronic illness can wear at the threads that hold a quality life together, for both the Veteran and caregiver. One of the primary guiding principles of palliative care is enhancing the quality of life for those who suffer from chronic illness and supporting and engaging the family and caregivers that care for them.

What is Palliative Care?

- Palliative care is specialized medical care for those suffering from chronic, severe, or life-limiting illnesses at any age or stage of illness.
- Palliative care is provided by a team of specialists, which may include a doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain, and other medical professionals who provide consultation or work in conjunction with the Veteran’s current medical providers.
- Palliative care may be considered when a Veteran has been diagnosed with a severe or chronic illness, for example, cancer, heart condition, lung disease, dementia, or kidney failure.
- Palliative care is best started early to enhance the quality of life throughout the illness.
- Veterans receiving palliative care are still actively receiving treatment meant to cure the illness.

What is the goal of Palliative Care?

Palliative care is patient-centered, meaning the care team supports the Veteran and their unique values, preferences, and needs to improve the quality of life for the individual. Goals include the following:

- To assist the Veteran in finding relief; from pain, debilitating symptoms, and the emotional distress caused by severe illness and its treatment.
- To recognize and support the significant role of the Veteran’s family and caregivers and include them in planning.
To provide support in coordinating and navigating the healthcare system and providers of the Veteran’s care.

To provide clear information to help guide the Veteran in making informed decisions about their healthcare, including understanding life-sustaining treatments and developing an advanced care plan.

**Conversation Guide for Patients and Caregivers for Identifying their Health Priorities** is dedicated to helping the Veteran make sure their health care lines up with their priorities.

**Advance Care Planning**

Every adult over the age of 18 should take some time to consider the difficult questions that occur in advance care planning. Still, it is especially critical if they have been diagnosed with a chronic disease. Advance care planning provides documented directions for healthcare providers and family members, that support the patient’s wishes and identifies a person who can advocate for their wishes if they are unable to for themself. Advance care planning documents are available through VA providers or by visiting Advance Care Planning - Geriatrics and Extended Care. Non-Veterans may also want to visit [https://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/](https://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/) for more information.

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