

Caregiver Support Program MISSION Act Frequently Asked Questions

March 2020

“Caregivers play a critical role in the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable Veterans. Under the MISSION Act, we are strengthening and expanding our program to positively impact the lives of Veterans and deliver the best customer experience to them and their caregivers.” – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie.

What is changing in the Caregiver Support Program (CSP)?

Under the MISSION Act, Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to give more family caregivers access to the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), so we can support them as they care for Veterans of all eras. Currently, the PCAFC is only available to eligible Veterans injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. Prior to expanding eligibility for the PCAFC, VA must upgrade its information technology (IT) system, implement other enhancements to strengthen the program, and publish final regulation.

When will the program expand?

The first phase of program expansion will occur once the Secretary has certified that VA’s new caregiver IT system is fully implemented and final regulations have been published, which could be in late summer or early fall of 2020.

- In the first phase, PCAFC will expand to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975.
- The final phase of expansion will occur two years later and will expand PCAFC to include eligible Veterans from all eras who have a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.

What does VA offer under the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)?

Through the PGCSS, a host of VA services are available to caregivers of eligible Veterans of any era. The PGCSS includes training, education, respite care, a telephone support line, peer-support mentoring, self-care courses and other services. For information about the Program of General Caregiver Support Services, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.

What does VA offer under PCAFC?

In addition to services offered under the PGCSS, caregivers in the PCAFC may also receive a monthly stipend, beneficiary travel, mental health counseling, enhanced respite services, health insurance, if applicable, and other benefits.

How is VA strengthening its caregiver program?

In recent months, VA has increased oversight in each Veterans Integrated Service Network, provided enhanced training and education to staff and caregivers, and boosted operational capacity with the ongoing hiring of hundreds of new staff across the country.

What else is VA doing for caregivers?

VA is working across the organization to ensure caregivers have a positive experience through program enhancements and initiatives to include:

- The Campaign for Inclusive Care (VA/Elizabeth Dole Foundation collaboration) that aims to integrate caregivers into the health care team through education modules about topics such as, the role and impact of caregivers.
- Telehealth services to enable Veterans and their caregivers to get care in the comfort of their homes.
- A toolkit for caregivers and family members to support their role in the prevention of suicide.
- Annie Caregiver Text Support providing stress management tips via text messaging to caregivers.
- Increased self-care courses for caregivers.
- Home and community-based care alternatives provided through the Choose Home Initiative at 21 VA medical centers.

How can I learn more?

For detailed information on the CSP and the full range of services available to caregivers, visit: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> . For information on the MISSION Act, visit: <https://missionact.va.gov>.