

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Proposed Regulation

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)?

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) provides family caregivers of eligible Veterans¹ certain benefits, such as training, enhanced respite care, counseling, technical support, beneficiary travel, a monthly stipend payment, and access to health care (if qualified) through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA).

2. What is the purpose of the proposed regulation?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is proposing to revise the regulations that govern the PCAFC. The rulemaking would update the regulations to comply with the recent enactment of the VA MISSION Act of 2018, which made changes to the program's authorizing statute. Among other things, the proposed regulation would allow VA to improve standardization of the program, focus on eligible Veterans with moderate and severe needs, and make operational reforms to improve the Veteran and caregiver experience.

3. When would caregivers of Veterans from all eras become eligible for the PCAFC?

Once the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has certified that VA's new caregiver information technology (IT) system is fully implemented, PCAFC eligibility will expand in two phases.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

4. What are the major proposed changes to the Veteran eligibility requirements under the PCAFC?

VA proposes to change the Veteran eligibility requirements to include: a service-connected disability threshold in an expanded definition of "serious injury;" a definition to clarify the meaning of "in need of personal care services;" and revised bases upon which a Veteran can be deemed in need of personal care services, to include a "need for supervision, protection, or instruction."

- a. Expanded definition of "serious injury"

¹ The term "Veteran" in this document includes Servicemembers undergoing medical discharge from the Armed Forces who apply for or participate in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

- Serious injury would mean any service-connected disability that (1) is rated at 70% or more by VA, or (2) is combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, and a combined rating of 70% or more is assigned by VA. This would include any qualifying service-connected disability, regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness, or disease.
- VA would no longer require a connection between the need for personal care services and the qualifying serious injury.
- b. New definition of “in need of personal care services”
 - While currently not defined, under the proposed regulation, this would mean that the eligible Veteran requires in-person personal care services from another person, and without such personal care 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.
- c. The bases upon which the Veteran can be deemed in need of personal care services. The Veteran would have to be in need of personal care services based on:
 - an inability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL), which would mean requiring personal care services each time one or more of the specified ADLs are completed (refer to response #5) and/or;
 - a need for supervision, protection, or instruction, which would mean having a functional impairment that directly impacts the individual’s ability to maintain his or her personal safety on a daily basis.

5. How would VA define a Veteran’s “inability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL)”?

VA would define a Veteran’s inability to perform an ADL, as the individual requiring personal care services each time he or she completes one or more of the following:

- a. dressing or undressing oneself;
- b. bathing;
- c. grooming oneself in order to keep oneself clean and presentable;
- d. adjusting any special prosthetic or orthopedic appliance, that by reason of the particular disability, cannot be done without assistance (this does not include the adjustment of appliances that nondisabled persons would be unable to adjust without aid, such as supports, belts, lacing at the back, etc.);
- e. toileting or attending to toileting;
- f. feeding oneself due to loss of coordination of upper extremities, extreme weakness, inability to swallow, or the need for a non-oral means of nutrition; or
- g. mobility (walking, going up stairs, transferring from bed to chair, etc.).

6. What requirements would VA use to determine if a Veteran is unable to self-sustain in the community?

VA would consider “unable to self-sustain in the community” to mean that an eligible Veteran: (1) requires personal care services each time he or she completes three or more of the seven activities of daily living (ADL) listed in the definition of an inability to perform an activity of daily living, and is fully dependent on a caregiver to complete such ADLs; or

(2) has a need for supervision, protection, or instruction on a continuous basis. This term would be applied for purposes of determining the stipend amount for the Primary Family Caregiver.

7. *What stipend amount would an eligible Veteran's Primary Family Caregiver receive?*

Stipend amounts would be based on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule Annual Rate for grade 4, step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides. Because VA provides a monthly stipend, the annual rate would be divided by 12. VA would refer to this amount as the "monthly stipend rate." VA is proposing the following two stipend payment amounts based on the eligible Veteran's needed level of care:

- a. Level 2: For an eligible Veteran who is determined to be **unable to self-sustain in the community**, the stipend amount would be 100% of the monthly stipend rate. For example, the GS rate at grade 4, step 1 in Dallas, Texas for 2020 is \$33,638 annually. Thus, the 2020 monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas at this rate would be approximately \$2,803.17.
- b. Level 1: For an eligible Veteran who is **not** determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community, the stipend amount would be 62.5% of the monthly stipend rate. For example, the 2020 monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas at this rate would be approximately \$1,751.98.

8. *What additional services would be available under PCAFC for family caregivers of eligible Veterans?*

Additional PCAFC benefits would include financial planning services and legal services for Primary Family Caregivers. Please refer to response # 1 for more details about other benefits under the PCAFC.

9. *How can my caregiver and I obtain more information on the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers?*

We encourage all individuals interested in the Caregiver Support Program to contact their local Caregiver Support Coordinator (CSC) to learn more. Caregivers and Veterans can find their local CSC by contacting the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 (Toll Free Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) or by utilizing the *Find Your Local Caregiver Support Coordinator* tool on www.caregiver.va.gov.

10. *How do I get more information on the proposed regulation?*

You can read the proposed regulation on the Federal Register web site at [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov).