



# Caregiver Support Program Overview & Updates

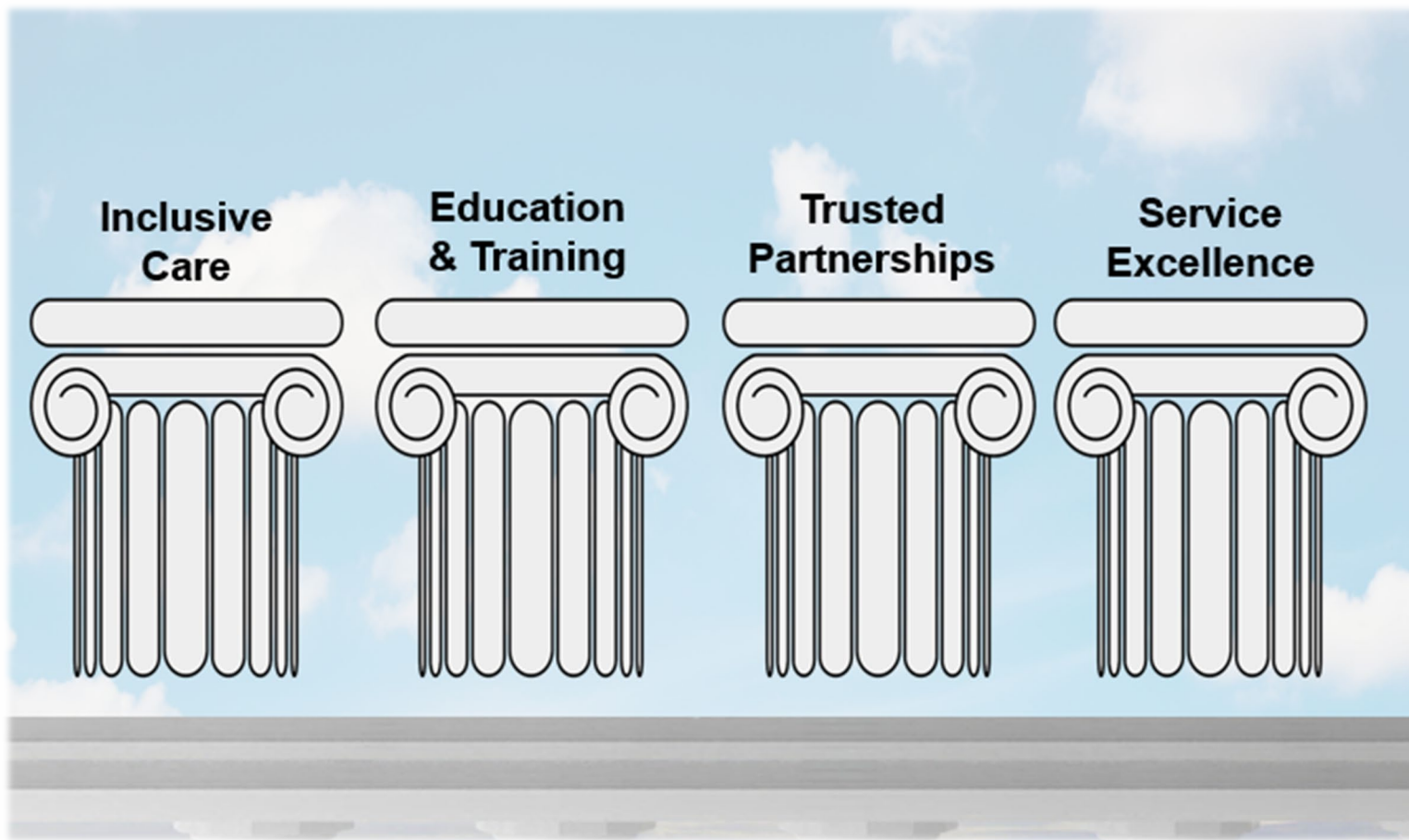
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# Mission Statement

“To promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our nation’s Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.”



# Program Pillars



# Services & Supports for All Caregivers

VA is committed to providing services to all caregivers. These services include, but may not be limited to:

- **Resource and Referral:** Assistance navigating VA services, including those available as part of the Veteran's healthcare and benefits.
- **Education, Training, and Support:** Building Better Caregivers™, Caregiver Support Line, monthly education calls, Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH VA), self-care courses, peer mentoring, support groups, and the VA Caregiver Support website.
- **Counseling:** Provided "in connection with the treatment" of a Veteran's disability to further the objectives of the Veteran's medical treatment plan.

# Caregiving & COVID – TVHS Efforts

VA CSP recognizes that caregivers play a critical role in caring for Veterans every day, and even more so now, in the time of COVID-19.

- Access to supplies needed for caregiving (gloves, masks, etc.)
- Electronic devices available to those that need them to stay connected for appointments, etc.
- Collaboratively creating back up plans in the event the caregiver becomes ill.
- Virtual Self-Care Classes
  - 4 sessions; total attendance of 53 caregivers to date
  - Recognized by VACO as consistently having the highest attendance rates
- Virtual Caregivers First classes
  - 4 cohorts, average 8-10 caregivers per cohort
- Home visits conducted through VA Video Connect
- Increased referrals to Annie Text program for caregivers
- Caregiver monthly newsletter including tips for caregiving during COVID, access to resources
- Mailed all caregivers “Tips for Caregiving during COVID19”

# Caregiving & COVID (cont.)

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

- Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274): support by licensed professionals.
- Medication Refill call-in number (1-877-327-0022).
- Resources on how to connect using VA Video Connect.
- CDC Guidelines regarding COVID.
- VA Mental Health Resources & Guidance for Veterans during COVID Outbreak.
- FAQ about accessing VA Health Benefits during COVID.
- VA Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers.
- VA Intimate Partner Violence Prevention COVID-19.
- Additional resources: AARP COVID-19 Caregiving Tips, American Red Cross Military & Caregiver Network, Caregiver Action Network COVID-19 Tips, Elizabeth Dole Foundation COVID-19 Resources, Family Caregiver Alliance COVID-19 Resources & Articles, Rosalyn Carter Institute COVID-19 Tips, and Sesame Street.org/caring for young children.

# CSP Programs

The Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is comprised of two unique programs to serve and support Veterans and caregivers across all eras:

1. The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)
2. The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

# Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)

## Who is eligible for these services?

- PGCSS serves caregivers of enrolled Veterans of *all* eras.

## What is a 'General Caregiver'?

- A General Caregiver is defined as a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran who:
  - Needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living (ADL) **or**
  - Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological care or other impairment or injury



*Other  
VHA  
Veteran  
services  
that  
support  
Caregivers*



- Monthly stipend
- Access to CHAMPVA (if eligible)
- Mental health counseling
- Caregiver training
- Enhanced respite services
- Certain beneficiary travel
- Ongoing monitoring

# Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

- Offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.



# Current PCAFC Criteria

Veterans may be eligible for this clinical program if they:

- sustained or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or after 9/11/2001 and
- require personal care services to perform one or more activities of daily living or
- require supervision and protection based on symptoms of residuals of neurological impairment or injury
- require the assistance of a family caregiver to live safely in a home setting

# PCAFC Services

Enhanced PCAFC services for eligible caregivers may include:

- Financial stipend
- Access to CHAMPVA health care insurance if caregiver is uninsured
- Mental health counseling
- Caregiver training
- Respite care
- Hero Miles (travel and per diem compensation when traveling for a Veteran's VA medical appointment)

# MISSION Act of 2018

The MISSION Act of 2018 authorized VA to:

- Expand PCAFC to eligible Veterans of all eras of service, which will occur in two phases:
  - Phase I: Eligible Veterans injured on or before May 7, 1975
  - Phase II: Eligible Veterans injured between May 7, 1975-Sept. 11, 2001
- Offer additional services such as legal and financial assistance

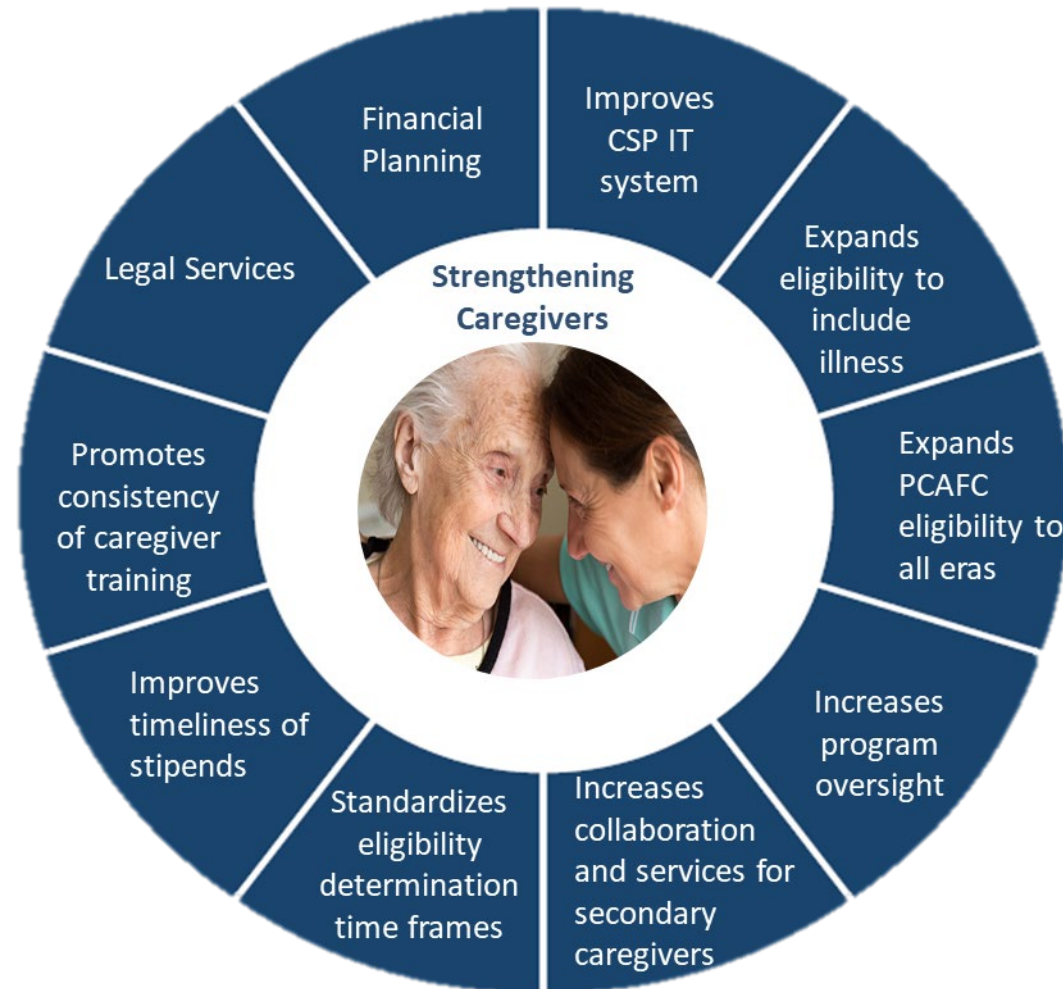
## Expansion timeline:

Expansion of PCAFC will begin when VA has fully implemented a required information technology system and certifies this to Congress. Per regulation release, early fall 2020 is the anticipated target date.

Once the IT system is successfully deployed, the expansion will begin with phase one. The final phase will begin two years later.

# MISSION Act of 2018

- The Mission Act enhances VA support for family caregivers in PCAFC.



# New Regulations

- New regulations for Caregiver Support were published on the Federal Register July 31, 2020. These regulations will be effective October 1, 2020.
- **Reminder**: Expansion cannot occur until VA certifies the IT system to Congress.
- Updated regulations for PCAFC are a part of a broad effort to strengthen the program and incorporate changes made under MISSION Act 2018. The new regulations allow VA to do the following:
  - Expand eligibility to caregivers of pre-9/11 veterans
  - Authorize additional benefits for primary family caregivers
  - Improve consistency and transparency in decision making
  - Focus on eligible Veterans with moderate and severe needs
  - Make operational enhancements which improve the Veteran and caregiver experience

# Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Teams

- Standardizing eligibility determinations
- Assessments completed at the medical center
- Interdisciplinary teams
- PCAFC Appeals per the VHA Clinical Appeals directive.
- 2 Levels of Appeal



# Regulations: Program Eligibility

## Current regulation:

- The Veteran must have a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty **on or after September 11, 2001**.

## New regulation:

- PCAFC will be expanded to Veterans of all eras through two phases:
  - Phase I: PCAFC services will be expanded to include Veterans who have a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975, or on or after September 11, 2001.
  - Phase II: Within two years following Phase I, PCAFC services will be expanded to include Veterans from all eras who have a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

# Regulations: Serious Injury Definition

## Current regulation:

**Serious injury** means any injury, including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma, or other mental disorders, incurred or aggravated in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001 that renders the individual in need of personal care services.

## New regulation:

**Serious injury** would mean any service-connected disability that is rated at 70 percent or more by VA (single disability or combined rating). In addition:

- The definition of serious injury will be expanded to include serious illness. This will allow VA to address the needs of Veterans with signature disabilities of earlier conflicts.
- VA will no longer require a connection between the need for personal care services and the qualifying serious injury.

# Regulations: In Need of Personal Care Services

## Current regulation:

- “In need of personal care services,” is not defined for PCAFC purposes.

## • New regulation:

- “In need of personal care services,” defined to mean 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. The baseline requirements to meet this definition are:
  - An inability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL); or
  - A need for supervision, protection, or instruction.

# Regulations: Inability to Perform ADLs

- Current regulation: an “inability to perform an ADL” includes any one of the seven following:
  1. Inability to dress or undress oneself
  2. Inability to bathe
  3. Inability to groom oneself in order to keep oneself clean and presentable
  4. Frequent need of adjustment to 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.)
  5. Inability to toilet or attend to toileting without assistance
  6. Inability to feed oneself due to loss of coordination of upper extremities, extreme weakness, inability to swallow, or the need for a non-oral means of nutrition
  7. Difficulty with mobility (walking, going up stairs, transferring from bed to chair, etc.)

# Regulations: Inability to Perform ADLS (cont.)

## New Regulation

- Veterans will be eligible if they require personal care services every time they complete one or more of the same ADLs.
- Veterans requiring temporary or episodic assistance would not qualify.

# Regulations: Need for Supervision, Protection, or Instruction

- Current regulation:
  - A Veteran's "need for supervision or protection," is based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury that leave a Veteran requiring supervision or assistance for any specific set of reasons.
- New regulation:
  - A Veteran's "need for supervision, protection, or instruction," would be based on a functional impairment that directly impacts the Veteran's ability to maintain his or her personal safety on a daily basis. By updating the definition, VA would:
    - Focus on functional impairment instead of specific symptoms or diagnosis.
    - Not be restricted in which functional impairments it would consider.

# Regulations: Additional PCAFC Benefits

- Current regulation:
  - VA conducts **monitoring visits** no less than every 90 days unless otherwise clinically indicated.
- Proposed regulation:
  - VA will:
    - Conduct **wellness contacts** at a minimum of once every 120 days.
    - Provide financial planning services to primary family caregivers
    - Provide legal services, including educational opportunities and referrals to primary family caregivers.

# Regulations: Stipend Payments

- Current regulation:
  - Primary family caregivers receive a monthly stipend for each prior month's participation:
    - Stipend payments are calculated using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
    - VA assigns numerical clinical ratings based on the degree to which the Veteran is unable to perform one or more ADLs or needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury.
    - Based on the total of the clinical ratings, VA assigns a number of hours per week that caregiver assistance is needed. This determines the stipend amount.



# Regulations: Stipend Payments (cont.)

## New regulation

Primary family caregivers receive a monthly stipend for each prior month's participation:

- Establishes two levels for stipend payment amounts versus the three tiers in the current rule.
- The monthly stipend rate will be based on the Office of Personnel Management's General Schedule Annual Rate for Grade 4, Step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides, divided by 12.

# Regulations: Stipend Payments (cont.)

## New regulation

- A caregiver for a Veteran determined unable to sustain in the community would receive a monthly stipend at the full 100 percent rate for their locality.
- Unable to self-sustain means the eligible Veteran:
  - (1) Requires personal-care services each time he or she performs three or more of the seven specified ADLs and is fully dependent on a caregiver to complete them, or
  - (2) Has a functional impairment that directly impacts the individual's ability to maintain his or her personal safety on a continuous basis
- All other eligible caregivers would receive 62.5 percent of the full rate.

# PCAFC Legacy Participant

- A legacy participant in the PCAFC is an eligible Veteran whose family caregiver(s) was approved by VA before the effective date of the proposed rule, so long as the primary family caregiver was approved and designated for the eligible Veteran and continues to be approved and designated.
- If a new joint application is received by VA on or after the effective date of the rule that results in approval and designation of the same or a new primary family caregiver, the Veteran or Servicemember would no longer be considered a legacy participant.

# PCAFC Legacy Applicant

- A legacy applicant is a Veteran or Servicemember who submits a joint application for PCAFC that is received by VA before the effective date of the rule and for whom a family caregiver(s) is approved.
- If a new joint application is received by VA on or after the effective date of the rule that results in approval and designation of the same or a new primary family caregiver, the Veteran or Servicemember would no longer be considered a legacy applicant.
- Eligibility for legacy applicants would be based on requirements existing prior to the effective date of the new rule.

# PCAFC Legacy Accommodations: Eligibility and Stipends

- A legacy participant would not be subject to discharge related to reassessment for 12 months following the effective date of the rule.
- During this period, the primary family caregiver's monthly stipend would be not less than the amount the he/she was eligible to receive as of the day before the effective date of the rule (based on the eligible Veteran's address on record with the PCAFC on such date) so long as the eligible Veteran does not move to a new address.

# PCAFC Legacy Accommodations: Reassessment

- Legacy participants would be reassessed under the new eligibility criteria within 12 months of the effective date of the rule.
- Legacy participants who are no longer eligible for PCAFC and will receive 60 days advanced notice before discharge and will receive extended benefits for 90 days. These participants will still have access to resources within the Program of General Caregiver Support Services.

# How to apply

- 1010CG Form completed and mailed to Health Eligibility Center
- VACO CSP working on electronic submission which will be located on [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)
- Currently in beta testing

# Training for Expansion

- VA's Caregiver Support National Program Office is currently executing a far-reaching training plan to both VA staff and external stakeholders on the new regulations.
- FAQ documents related to expansion can be found on [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)
- Stay tuned for more information!





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