



Support for Caregivers of Service Members

As a caregiver of a service member, you play an important role. Whether you provide hands-on assistance, lead your household, or offer emotional support, the care and support you provide matters. Caregiving can take a toll on a caregiver's emotional and physical health, making self-care critical.

The U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Caregiver Support Program (CSP) has online information and support services available to you. Please visit www.caregiver.va.gov where you will find information about our programs, tips and tools to assist you in caring for yourself and the service member you support, along with some inspiring stories from other caregiver. The following are some VA resources available online that may be of interest to you:

Caregiver Self-Care

It is important that caregivers take time for themselves in support of their overall health and wellbeing. Even small moments of self-care can make a difference. For a self-enrichment journal, a self-care workbook, and self-care ideas, visit: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Self_Care_Activities.asp

Caring for oneself can include taking specific steps to improve one's health and wellbeing. VA's Live Whole Health app allows caregivers to engage in their Whole Health journey, a holistic approach that focuses on what matters to you. This app provides information on Whole Health, helps you fill out a personal health inventory, and set goals: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/live-whole-health>

Self-care can also include mindful practices. Mindfulness means noticing and paying attention to what is going on in the present moment. It is effective in reducing stress, improving emotional balance, and increasing self-awareness. VA's Mindfulness Coach provides audio-guided mindfulness exercises to help adopt simple practices: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach>

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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Finances

Caregivers often care for the finances of the household. A series of videos that can assist in establishing a budget, building an emergency fund, and getting an estate plan together is available at: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/Caring_for_your_Finances.asp

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) includes a range of symptoms that can impact family members. When someone has PTSD, their ability to function as a parent or partner can be affected and changes in their functioning can lead to unmet family needs and increased stress. For tips on caring for someone with PTSD, visit: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Tips_by_Diagnosis/PTSD.asp

For families caring for someone with PTSD, VA offers a publicly available mobile app called PTSD Family Coach. The app contains information on PTSD, including tips to help support someone with PTSD, facts for managing PTSD in a relationship, and tools to manage stress:

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/familycoach_app.asp

In addition, information and resources on PTSD, including how to communicate and support someone with PTSD, how to care for oneself and how to help a loved one through treatment can be found in the following guide: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd_family_booklet.pdf

Suicide Prevention

Caregivers play an important role in a service member's life — sometimes a lifesaving one. Caregivers or family members may be the first to recognize changes in mood and behavior, such as expressions of anger, emotional pain or increased use of alcohol or drugs. Caregivers can play a vital role in supporting service members and preventing a crisis.

For information and steps you can take, visit: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/PublicationsResources/VA-Suicide-Prevention-Toolkit-for-Caregivers-508.pdf#>



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Traumatic Brain Injury

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as “a disruption in the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or a penetrating head injury”. Caregivers can support service members’ TBI progress and recovery. For information on TBI, caregiving tips, educational courses, and other resources, visit: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Tips_by_Diagnosis/TBI.asp

CSP Information

The VA’s Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) offers support to caregivers of Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare who need assistance with either activities of daily living or have a need for supervision or protection. Support includes skills training, coaching, counseling related to the care of the Veteran, respite, and connection to available resources. A caregiver can participate in PGCSS when a service member obtains Veteran status, is enrolled in VA healthcare, and agrees to receive personal care services from the caregiver. For more information about enrolling in VA health care, visit: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply>

The VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans who are seriously injured. Support includes a financial stipend, access to health insurance (if caregiver is otherwise uninsured), mental health counseling, wellness contacts, travel and per diem compensation, respite care, and training. A caregiver should consider applying to PCAFC when providing personal care services to a member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge. Please review the eligibility fact sheet to learn more about the requirements for participation in PCAFC:

https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/CSP_Eligibility_Criteria_Factsheet_1-4-21.pdf

An online application is available: <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10CG.pdf>

For more information about CSP, contact your local team, available at every VA Medical Center. To find the team near you, please visit https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp



Community Resources*

CaringBridge provides free, secure, personal websites – as a dedicated platform – to assist family and friends in communicating with loved ones during any type of health journey. CaringBridge makes it easy for family caregivers and friends to communicate health updates, request help for chores and errands, stay connected with loved ones, share photos and more. Please visit caringbridge.org/military.

Elizabeth Dole Foundation Hidden Heroes Community is available for those caring for wounded, ill, or injured Veterans or service members along the caregiving journey. Whether this is comprehensive case management support, assistance with applying for benefits, or just a listening ear, Hidden Heroes is available to help. By signing up with the registry, caregivers have access to local events and programs in one's hometown. A directory of resources and support through caregiver peers is available at <https://hiddenheroes.org>.

Military Veteran Caregiver Network (MVCN) offers peer-based support and services to connect those providing care to service members and Veterans living with wounds, illnesses, injuries and/or aging. The mission of the MVCN is to provide our nation's military and Veteran caregivers of all eras with peer support to reduce isolation and increase connection, engagement, knowledge, skills, and hope. For more information, visit: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html>

PsychArmor offers courses to help caregivers balance caregiving and self-care. This library of 45+ courses provides information, resources, and strategies on managing the demands and stressors of caregiving. Courses are available at: <https://psycharmor.org/caregivers>

Respite Relief for Military and Veteran Caregivers offers family caregivers of Veterans and service members access to free, short-term relief with the help of in-home care professionals. Please visit Respite Relief - Hidden Heroes, to learn more and apply at: <https://hiddenheroes.org/respite/>



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Rosalynn Carter Institute-Operation Family Caregiver Program provides free and confidential one-on-one coaching to families/caregivers who are taking care of an injured or ill active duty service member or Veteran from any era. They have additional programs for caregivers, as well. Please visit Military – Rosalynn Carter to learn more at: <https://www.rosalynncarter.org>

Sesame Street Workshop provides Little Children, Big Challenges family support services, kids' learning resources and other support for military children, which helps all families of military service build the skills they need to be resilient. For more information, visit: <https://www.sesameworkshop.org/what-we-do/military-families>. When a loved one needs extra support, it can mean big adjustments for everyone in the family. For military and Veteran families, these transitions can mean a unique set of challenges. But no matter the caregiving situation, embracing a sense of family togetherness will help as old routines and responsibilities make way for new ones. Facing what lies ahead as a family means that everyone feels heard, understood and valued. Sesame Street in Communities offers games, videos and topics that are important to caregivers and their children via this link: <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/family-caregiving>

****These resources and links will take you outside of VA's Website. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the linked websites.***



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