

VETERANS CHRONICLE

September 2020

Family caregivers

VA expands program to
support caregivers of veterans



VETERANS CHRONICLE

‘I am a family caregiver for a Vietnam veteran, and I need help!’

By Don Walker
VETERANS HELP NET

Does this story sound familiar?

“Anne* was married to her husband Jake just prior to him shipping out to Vietnam as an Army infantryman. Certainly, he was a different man when he returned, but the real health issues didn’t start showing up until he was in his 50s and 60s.

“In his 50s, Jake started having lots of heart and circulation issues. At 66 he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease. All of his health issues were Agent Orange related. Jake is now a 100% disabled veteran and receives all his medical care from the VA.

“Anne has become a full-time family caregiver for Jake and spends most days helping, caring, transporting, and coordinating Jake’s care. Anne is proud, willing and committed to care for Jake, but rarely has time to do anything else.

“The VA offers some support services for family caregivers, but financially Anne can’t afford to get help to care for Jake and is pretty much tied to the house with him.”

This story is about to change. Effective Oct. 1, the new Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) will offer extra help, information and training. PCAFC will also provide a financial stipend. A family caregiver in Spokane County will receive a monthly stipend of \$2,600 for caregiving services as well as periodic respite care if needed (up to 30 days a year in some cases).

Before we go much further, keep in mind that this is a new program and it will require some paperwork, evaluations and patience to qualify and get the full benefit that the program allows.

But it is coming and it is real.

In this issue, you will find more information about PCAFC guidelines and requirements, as well as the steps to take to start the application process. Read the articles, look up the program, fill out the forms and send them in the application.

If you need have questions, please see “How Can I Get Help” on page 5. You can also contact your VA social worker or Primary Care Team.



If you or someone would benefit from this information, please share this issue with them. While the program begins Oct. 1, you can start the qualification and application process now. Visit www.caregiver.va.gov/ to learn more.

**Anne and Jake are a composite of several individuals who have encountered these common challenges of veterans and their family caregivers.*



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VETERANS CHRONICLE

IN THIS ISSUE

A common caregiver request 3

Did You Know? 4

How Can I Get Help? 5

VA expands program for caregiver support 6

Long-term care options 7

Survivors Pension eligibility 8

Women at the Wall 9

Adult Day Health Care 10

Housing support with SSVF 11

VETERANS CHRONICLE

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

September 18, 2020

VETERANS HELP NET

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Veterans Help Net partners with The Spokesman-Review to publish Veterans Chronicle on the third Friday of every month to increase awareness about veteran issues and to help veterans find hope and help.

To share a veteran story or information about resources for veterans, please contact info@veteranshelpnet.com or visit www.VeteransHelpNet.com.

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HEY VETERANS, DID YOU KNOW ... ?

... A spousal caregiver of a veteran can be paid?

Under the VA's "Aid and Attendance Benefit," a spousal caregiver of a disabled veteran is eligible to receive payment. It is paid in addition to a veteran's basic pension. The benefit may not be paid without eligibility to a VA basic pension. Do you know any disabled veterans that this might help? Contact a Veteran Service Officer or resource center for information; see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

... Homemaker or Home Health Aide Care is available?

A Homemaker or Home Health Aide is a trained person who can come to a veteran's home and help the veteran take care of themselves and their daily activities. Homemakers and Home Health Aides are not nurses, but they are supervised by a registered nurse who will help assess the veteran's daily living needs.

This program is for veterans who need personal care services and help with activities of daily living, like eating, bathing, grooming and dressing. This program is also for veterans who are isolated, or if their caregiver is experiencing burden.

Homemaker and Home Health Aide services can be used in combination with other Home and Community Based Services. Services may vary by location.

Homemaker Home Health Aides work for an organization that has a contract with VA. Homemaker or Home Health Aide services can be used as a part of an alternative to nursing home care, and to get Respite Care at home for veterans and their family caregiver. The services of a Homemaker or Home Health Aide can help veterans remain living in their own home and can serve veterans of any age.

Ask your social worker or primary care physician if you qualify so they can authorize and arrange the care.

Does this sound like someone you know? Show them this article and look for veteran resources on page 5.

... You can direct your own at home health care?

Veteran Directed Care gives veterans of all ages the opportunity to receive the Home and Community Based Services they need in a consumer-directed way.

This program is for veterans who need personal care services and help with activities of daily living. Examples include help with bathing, dressing, or fixing meals. This program is also for veterans who are

isolated, or if their caregiver is experiencing burden.

Veterans in this program are given a budget for services that is managed by the veteran or the veteran's representative. With the help of a counselor, veterans hire their own workers to meet their daily needs to help them live at home or in their community.

Would you or a veteran in your life benefit from this service? Contact a VA social worker or your primary care physician to review qualification and authorize care.

... You can get Skilled Home Health Care to help you move back or stay at home?

Skilled Home Health Care is for veterans who need short-term care as they are moving from a hospital or nursing home back to their home. It can also be used to provide continuing care to people with ongoing needs.

The program is for veterans who need skilled services, such as skilled nursing, case management, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, wound care or IV antibiotics.

Skilled Home Health Care can be used in combination with other Home and Community Based Services. The care is delivered by a community-based home health agency that has a contract with VA.

Does this type of care interest you or someone you know? Ask a social worker or primary care physician about qualifications so they can authorize and arrange the care.

... Caregivers can get a break with Respite Care?

Respite Care is a program that pays for care for a short time when family caregivers need a break, need to run errands, or need to go out of town for a few days. Respite Care can be helpful to veterans of all ages, and their caregiver.

There are two types of respite:

Home Respite Care is a service that pays for a person to come to a veteran's home or for a veteran to go to an adult day health care program while their family caregiver takes a break or runs errands.

Nursing Home Respite Care is a service that pays for a veteran to go to a nursing home while the family goes out of town for a few days without worrying about leaving the veteran alone at home. Nursing home respite may take place in a VA Community Living Center or a community nursing home and is available for a maximum of 30 days each calendar year. This type of re-



spite should be scheduled in advance. Services may vary by location.

The program is for veterans who need help with activities of daily living. Examples include help with bathing, dressing, or fixing meals. This program is also for veterans who are isolated, or if their caregiver is experiencing burden. Respite Care can be used in combination with other Home and Community Based Services.

Respite Care can help lower the stress the veterans and their family caregiver may feel when managing a veteran's short-term or long-term care needs at home.

Does this type of care interest you or someone you know? Ask a social worker or primary care physician about qualifications so they can authorize and arrange the care.

... The VA has a new program to help caregivers?

The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) provides resources, education and support to caregivers of veterans. The veteran does not need to have a service-connected condition, and may have served during any era. No formal application is required.

Caregivers who enroll in PGCSS have access to education and training, including courses at local VA medical centers (VAMCs). In addition, caregivers can participate in support services and take advantage of VA Home and Community Based Care.

To connect with a local Caregiver Support coordinator, contact Mann-Grandstaff VAMC at (509) 434-7755 or contact VA's Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 (toll free, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET) to learn more about the Program of General Caregiver Support Services. You can also visit www.caregiver.va.gov

to learn more about resources for caregivers.

... A surviving spouse could be entitled to VA benefits?

When a veteran pass, their spouse could be entitled to benefits such as Burial, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) or Survivors Pension Benefits.

DIC benefits depend upon the veteran having died from a service-connected disability with that cause(s) being listed on the Death Certificate, and, Survivors Pension eligibility is dependent upon the veteran having served during a wartime period.

Since there are variations and exceptions to VA rules and policies, it is best to contact your local Veterans Services Officer (VSO) to assist in determining which benefits to pursue through the claims process. This process can begin before a veteran's passing.

In order to qualify for any of these benefits there is some information that your spouse/family member will need to provide to the VA via the VSO. The VA requires certain documentation in order to process claims.

Some key documentation needed for such claims is the veteran's DD214, Death Certificate, previous Marriage Certificates and Divorce Decrees, past VA claims documents and current financial information.

Note: Burial allowances are driven by service-connected disabilities. If not service connected, there is no monetary allowance. The non-monetary benefits will usually be handled by the funeral home.

For more information, contact Tom Freeman and Terri Dickerson at Kootenai County Veterans Services Office or see "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.

**GO ONLINE****VA.gov**

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.

**IN PERSON****Spokane County Regional Veteran Service**

1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,
Spokane Valley, WA
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 5 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls,
ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA
(509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.

**BY PHONE****Spokane County Regional Veteran Service**

(509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092

Veteran Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

Dial "2-1-1" for health and human resources referrals.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans HCHV

In Person or Phone
504 E. Second Ave.,
Spokane, WA

Phone: (509) 435-2019

Provides healthcare and outreach for housing, job opportunities and counseling.



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Shoppers tour the cereal aisle of the commissary at Naval Station San Diego Friday, April 20, 2007, in San Diego.

Millions more veterans, caregivers gain commissary, exchange access

Military.com

This year, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs instituted the largest expansion of patrons to the military commissary system and exchanges in 65 years, making sure that shoppers will be able to get on base and find the shelves fully stocked.

Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and all service-connected disabled veterans, regardless of rating, as well as caregivers enrolled in the VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers program, gained

access to shop at Defense Commissary Agency stores and military exchanges starting January 1, 2020.

They also have access to revenue-generating Morale, Welfare and Recreation amenities, such as golf courses, recreation areas, theaters, bowling alleys, campgrounds and lodging facilities that are operated by MWR. At commissaries, however, there is an added cost for new patrons who use a credit or debit card to pay for their groceries, in addition to the 5% surcharge commissary patrons already pay.

App combines telehealth tools for faster service

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently launched a new mobile application designed to save veterans and their caregivers time online.

VA Launchpad for Veterans simplifies and organizes several existing tools and resources into one convenient location to help manage health care needs.

"VA has developed dozens of apps for veterans to take charge of their health care," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA Launchpad makes it easier to have these important tools available at your

fingertips."

VA Launchpad arranges all of VA's apps into five categories for veterans: health management, health care team communication, vital health information sharing, mental health improvement and quality of life improvement. The new app enables veterans to access all the features with a single secure login.

VA Launchpad for Veterans is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play.



VETERANS CHRONICLE

Family caregivers of pre-9/11 disabled veterans soon to be eligible for benefits

By Stephen Whitehead, DAV National Commander, and Diane J. Franz, DAVA National Commander

We wanted to update you with new information from VA about when newly eligible veterans will be able to apply for caregiver benefits. As previously reported, VA recently published new regulations to expand the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) to pre-9/11 veterans, beginning with those from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam war eras whose injuries or illnesses occurred on or before May 7, 1975. The second expansion phase will cover veterans whose injuries or illnesses occurred between May 8, 1975 and Sept. 10, 2001.

According to VA, this expansion will not occur and become official until the Secretary certifies a new caregiver IT system and it is fully implemented. VA also notes that it will not approve any new applications for caregiver benefits based on this expanded eligibility prior to that date, which is expected to be Oct. 1, 2020 (the same day the new regulations take effect). Only new applications received by VA on or after the IT certification date (also expected to be Oct. 1) will be considered or approved based on the new expanded eligibility for World War II, Korean War and Vietnam veterans in phase one.

It is important to remember that having a service-connected injury or illness – regardless of the level of disability compensation – does not automatically qualify a veteran for PCAFC benefits. The VA must first make a clinical assessment of each individual's caregiving needs and approve both the veteran and their designated caregiver into



the program before VA will begin to provide benefits.

According to VA's new regulation, a phase one veteran's effective date for caregiver benefits, including stipends, would be the latest of the following dates:

- The date the joint application that resulted in approval and designation of the Family Caregiver is received by VA.
- The date the eligible veteran begins receiving care at home.

- The date the Family Caregiver begins providing personal care services to the eligible veteran at home."

Therefore, if you are a World War II, Korean War or Vietnam era veteran who currently has a family caregiver providing you with caregiving services in your home, you may become eligible on the date your application is received by VA as long as it is on or after the IT certification date (expected to be Oct. 1) and

VA has determined that both you and your caregiver meet the clinical criteria for the program.

To reiterate – if your application for benefits is approved, and your designated caregiver is approved into the program, your benefits may be payable back to the date the application was received (on or after Oct. 1) if your caregiver was already providing personal care services at your home. If you do not currently have a caregiver but you

are found to be eligible for the program, and your application is approved and clinical need is determined, the effective date would be the date the designated caregiver begins providing personal care services to the eligible veteran.

VA is expected to provide further information in late summer about the IT certification date and will make an official announcement when applications will be accepted.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Am I a 'caregiver'?

Often people do not identify themselves as a "caregiver." Most of us, at some point in our lives, will be in a caregiver role. Caregivers can be parents, spouses, adult children, grandparents, devoted friends. Caregivers manage a wide range of responsibilities. Here's how you know if you fulfill the role of caregiver for a veteran.

Do you:

- Buy groceries, cook, clean house or do laundry for a veteran who needs help with these tasks?
- Make medical appointments, drive the veteran to the doctor, or pick up pre-

scriptions for a veteran at the pharmacy?

- Help a veteran get dressed, take a shower, or administer medicine?
- Help transfer a veteran in and out of bed, or with physical therapy, injections, feeding tubes or other medical procedures at home?
- Talk with doctors, nurses, social workers, and others to understand what medical care or other benefits a veteran might need?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are a caregiver and may be eligible for caregiver service and support through VA.

GET YOUR PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS APPLICATION STARTED

PREPARATION

You can check your eligibility in one of these ways:

- Go online to www.va.gov/health-benefits/resources/Caregiver_Eligibility_Check.asp.
- Call the Caregiver Support line at (855) 260-3274.
- Collect identification and health coverage information for both you and your veteran to complete the application. Note: You'll both need to sign and date the form.

APPLICATION

You can submit documents in one of two ways:

- Download VA form 10-10CG online at <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/>

medical/pdf/10-10CG.pdf and mail the completed form to Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, Health Eligibility Center (2957 Clairmont Road NE, Ste 200, Atlanta, GA 30329-1647)

- Apply in person with the Caregiver support Coordinator at Spokane VA Medical Center (4815 N. Assembly St. Spokane, WA 99205). Call (509) 434-7755 for more information.

DECISION

The application process is multi-step and includes an assessment of both the veteran and caregiver, training and a home visit. Your Caregiver Support Coordinator will remain in contact with you during the review process.

VETERANS ASSISTANCE LONG-TERM CARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

As a veteran, you may be able to get assisted living, residential (live-in), or home health care through VA. Find out how to access these long-term care services.

What kinds of long-term care services does VA offer for sick or disabled veterans?

Our long-term care services include:

- 24/7 nursing and medical care
- Physical therapy
- Help with daily tasks (like bathing, dressing, making meals, and taking medicine)
- Comfort care and help with managing pain
- Support for caregivers who may need skilled help or a break so they can work, travel, or run errands

You can get this care in many different settings – some run by VA and others run by state or community organizations that we inspect and approve.

Care settings may include:

- Nursing homes
- Assisted-living centers
- Private homes where a caregiver supports a small group of individuals
- Adult day health centers
- Veterans' own homes

How do I access these services?

You may be able to use one or more of these services if you meet all the following requirements:

- You're signed up for VA health

care.

- The VA concludes that you need a specific service to help with your ongoing treatment and personal care.
- The service (or space in the care setting) is available near you.
- Other factors, like your service-connected disability status or insurance coverage, may also be considered.

To find out how to access these services, contact your VA social worker. Or, call our toll-free hotline at 877-222-8387, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET.

If you're not currently in the VA health care program, you can apply for benefits at www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/.

Does VA pay for these services?

Some of these services may be covered under your standard health benefits if you're signed up for VA health care. You may still need to pay a co-pay for some covered services.

Other services aren't covered under VA health care benefits. For these services, you may be able to pay through Medicaid, Medicare, or your own private insurance.

Where can I get more information and support?

Get help setting goals and priorities and making tough decisions about things like long-term care.

You can find services and resources to help with geriatric (elder) and long-term care at www.va.gov/geriatrics.

Got more questions? See the "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to connect with a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) or other organizations to support veterans.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

WHO QUALIFIES FOR A VA SURVIVORS PENSION?

A VA Survivors Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits set by Congress.

Am I eligible for a VA Survivors Pension as a surviving spouse?

If you haven't remarried after the veteran's death, and if the deceased veteran didn't receive a dishonorable discharge and their service meets at least one of the requirements listed below, you may be eligible for this benefit.

The veteran:

- Entered active duty on or before Sept. 7, 1980, and served at least 90 days on active military service, with at least 1 day during a covered wartime period.
- Entered active duty after Sept. 7, 1980, and served at least 24 months or the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions), with at least 1 day during a covered wartime period.
- Was an officer and started on active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, and hadn't previously served on active duty for at least 24 months.

Furthermore, your yearly family income and net worth meet certain limits set by Congress. Your net worth equals the value of everything you own (except your house, your car, and most home furnishings), minus any debt you owe.

Am I eligible for a VA Survivors Pension as the child of a deceased wartime veteran?

If you're unmarried and you meet at least one of the requirements listed below, you may be eligible for this benefit.

- You're under age 18.



- You're under age 23 and attending a VA-approved school.
- You're unable to care for yourself due to a disability that happened before age 18.

What wartime periods do you recognize for pension benefits?

Under current law, the United States recognizes the following wartime periods to decide eligibility for VA pension benefits:

- Mexican Border period: May 9, 1916, to April 5, 1917, for veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or in adjacent waters
- World War I: April 6, 1917, to Nov. 11, 1918
- World War II: Dec. 7, 1941, to Dec. 31, 1946
- Korean conflict: June 27, 1950, to Jan. 31, 1955
- Vietnam War era: Feb. 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975, for veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975,

for veterans who served outside the Republic of Vietnam.

- Gulf War: Aug. 2, 1990, through a future date to be set by law or presidential proclamation

Does this sound like someone you know? Share this article with them, and direct them to "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5 to find veteran support resources that can help them apply.

You can also go online to www.va.gov/pension/how-to-apply/.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Diane Carlson Evans, founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, left, hugs fellow Vietnam veterans during the dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue, Nov. 11, 1993, in Washington, D.C.

WOMEN AT THE WALL: VIETNAM WOMEN'S MEMORIAL

By Wesley S. Anderson

VFW POST 51 CHAPLAIN

A short distance from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial stand three women. Who are they? We may never know, but they are there tending their charge and overlooking The Wall.

Who were they? They were called "Mother," "Daughter," "Wife," and "Girlfriend" when the wounded and dying called out.

"These women were the last people those guys saw or talked to before they died," said Tim Davis, a former Marine who lost his legs in Vietnam in 1968, at the statue's dedication in 1993.

Theirs was a duty that touched the lives of all who came in contact with them. Giving comfort to all and asking for nothing

in return.

What were their names? We do not know their names; we never asked. They were the nurses, the female corpsmen and the medics who volunteered to be there. They do not look at The Wall; they are looking after their charge, doing their best to ensure his name does not go on that mirror of black granite.

These women were the youngest group of medical personnel ever to serve in war time. They did not have to come, but they did. They endured the same hazards we all endured.

Eight of them are forever enshrined on the Wall with more than 58,000 other names. But these three will forever stand in silent testament to all those that chose to be there, and for that we shall always be grateful.



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The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers home loans to active military members, reservists, and retirees, as a benefit of service in our nation's Armed Forces.

Many service members are not aware this earned benefit is available to them; many sellers are not aware of the advantages to VA loans in the transaction process.

We encourage all Spokane realtors - to become familiar with this loan type so that we can all join in saying "We believe in VA financing!"

Visit www.spokaneopen.com to view VA qualified homes in your preferred area

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Program can aid veterans or caregivers who need support or are feeling isolated

Adult Day Health Care is a program that veterans can go to during the day for social activities, peer support, companionship, and recreation.

The program is for veterans who need help with activities of daily living. Examples include help with bathing, dressing, or fixing meals. This program is also for veterans who are isolated, or if a caregiver is experiencing burden. Adult Day Health Care can be used in combination with other Home and Community Based Services.

Health services such as care from nurses, therapists, social workers and others may also be available. Adult Day Health Care can provide respite care for a family caregiver and can also help veterans and their caregiver gain skills to manage the veteran's care at home.

The program may be provided at VA medical centers, State Veterans Homes, or community organizations.

Mann-Grandstaff VAMC does not have an on-site Adult Day Health Care program, but does work with three community partners that provide this service: Providence ElderPlace in Spokane, the Bennett House in the Coeur d'Alene area, and Circles of Caring in Pullman.

Am I eligible for Adult Day Health Care?

Since Adult Day Health Care is part of the VHA Standard Medical Benefits Package, all enrolled veterans are eligible if they meet the clinical need for the



service and it is available.

A copay for Adult Day Health Care may be charged based on your VA service-connected disability status and financial information.

Contact your VA social worker/case manager to complete the Application for Extended Care Benefits (VA Form 10-10EC) to learn the amount of your copay.

What services can I get?

Adult Day Health Care can be a half- or full-day program.

Usually, you would go to an Adult Day Health Care center several times a week. Based on availability and need, you can create a regular schedule that works for you and your family caregiver.

You may be able to get

assistance with transportation to and from an Adult Day Health Care center. Services may vary by location.

How do I decide if it is right for me?

You can use a Veteran Decision Aid for Care at Home or in the Community to help you figure out what home or community care services or long-term

care services may best meet your needs now or in the future.

There's also a Caregiver Self-Assessment. It can help your caregiver identify their own needs and decide how much support they can offer. Having this information from your caregiver, along with the involvement of your care team and social worker, will help you reach good short-term and

long-term care decisions.

Ask a social worker for these resources or download copies from the Making Decisions and Advance Care Planning section at www.va.gov/Geriatrics.

If Adult Day Health Care seems right for you, your VA social worker can help you find an Adult Day Health Care center near your home, if available, and assist with arrangements.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Veterans facing homelessness or eviction during COVID-19 can turn to SSVF

Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest

In May, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program received an additional \$1.6 million to provide rental assistance and emergency housing support to area veterans impacted by COVID-19. The SSVF program added staff to help meet the need for services. The program has seen an increase in the need for services since COVID-19 hit in late March.

"We usually see around 20 enrollments a month, but we had almost 40 in May," said Braden Fish, the general manager for homeless transition services. The SSVF program saw five new enrollments on

June 1 alone.

Veterans are facing some big hurdles right now because of COVID-19. Like many people, they are losing their jobs and are unable to pay rent. They are living paycheck to paycheck. Washington governor Jay Inslee has mandated a moratorium on evictions until October 15, but that day is coming quickly.

"The additional CARES funding we received allows SSVF to help veterans who are behind on their rent and out of work to get caught up and avoid becoming homeless," said Fish.

The SSVF program recently added two employment specialists who can assist veterans who are unemployed to find work. SSVF program staff report that af-

fordable housing is more limited than usual because evictions have been on hold. To keep veterans from living on the streets, SSVF can place eligible veterans into transitional or emergency housing, such as a hotel, until more permanent units become available.

In a report released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in January, homelessness in the U.S. increased 2.7 percent in 2019. It is anticipated that rate will continue to rise in 2020 because of multiple economic impacts from COVID-19.

"This funding comes at a critical time for veterans who are in shelters, on the street, or at risk of becoming evicted," said Michele Harris, Vice President of Work-

force & Family Services. "With unemployment at all-time high levels, many of our citizens are struggling to pay rent and shelters are running at full capacity. This funding increases homeless prevention assistance, which is in very short supply in our community."

Veterans who need help in Spokane, Stevens, Ferry, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Whitman, Kootenai, Bonner, Shoshone, Benewah, and Boundary counties should call the 24-hour veteran hotline at (509) 828-2449. Veterans can also visit the Goodwill Administration office located at 130 E. Third Ave. in Spokane, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Staff are on hand to assess their needs and eligibility for services.



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