




# Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

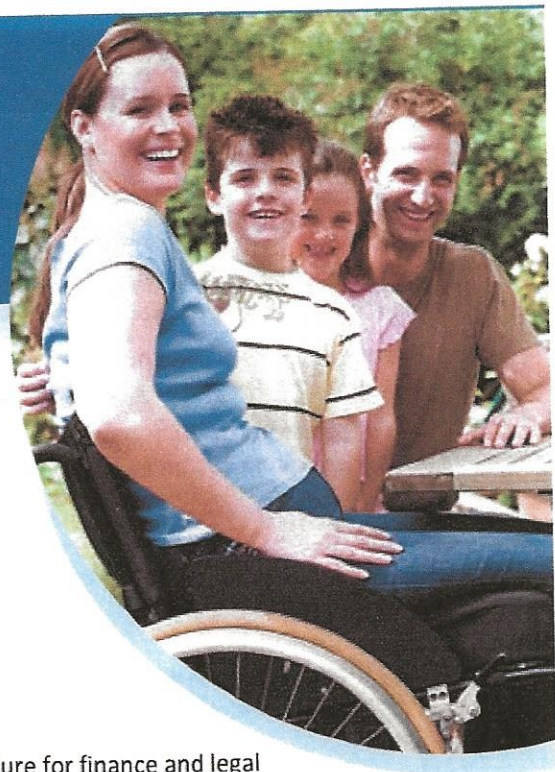
## Eligibility Criteria Fact Sheet



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans who are seriously injured. Changes to the program result from the new "Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Improvements and Amendments Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018" Final Rule, RIN 2900-AQ48, effective October 1, 2020. These changes include:

-  Expanding eligibility for PCAFC.
-  Working towards a contract solution in the near future for finance and legal services for eligible Primary Family Caregivers.
-  Making other changes affecting program eligibility and VA's evaluation of PCAFC applications.

**Who qualifies:** Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including serious illness) in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or after September 11, 2001, or on or before May 7, 1975.





### Veteran Eligibility Requirements:

The Veteran must have a serious injury, which is a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more, and meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers:

- 1** The individual is either:
  - A Veteran; or
  - A member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.
- 2** The individual has a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service:
  - On or after September 11, 2001; or
  - On or before May 7, 1975; or
  - Effective October 1, 2022, after May 7, 1975 and before September 11, 2001.
- 3** The individual is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following:
  - An inability to perform an activity of daily living; or
  - A need for supervision, protection, or instruction.
- 4** It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.
- 5** Personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver will not be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity.
- 6** The individual receives care at home or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.
- 7** The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

#### How to Contact a Caregiver Support Coordinator:

**Veterans and caregivers can find their local Caregiver Support Coordinator by...**

-  Calling the Caregiver Support Line *Expanded Hours* **1-855-260-3274** (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET; Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm ET) Toll free
-  Using the Caregiver Support Coordinator locator at [www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New\\_CSC\\_Page.asp](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp)

Online applications will soon be a reality, as well.

<https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers>





## Family Caregiver Eligibility Requirements

For you to be eligible to be a Family Caregiver you must:

- 1 Be at least 18 years of age.
- 2 Be either:
  - The eligible Veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, stepfamily member, or extended family member; **or**
  - Someone who lives with the eligible Veteran full-time or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver.
- 3 Be initially assessed by VA as being able to complete caregiver education and training.
- 4 Complete caregiver training and demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and additional care requirements.

In addition, there must be no determination by VA of abuse or neglect of the eligible Veteran by the caregiver.



### Stipend Levels:

As a Primary Family Caregiver, you may qualify to receive a monthly stipend, which is paid at one of two levels. Here are the details:

- 1 If a Veteran meets all seven eligibility requirements (listed above), then VA must determine whether the Veteran is "unable to self-sustain in the community" in order to determine the stipend level.
- 2 **Level One:** If VA determines that a Veteran is **not** "unable to self-sustain in the community" the designated Primary Family Caregiver will receive the lower-level stipend payment.
- 3 **Level Two:** If VA determines the Veteran is "unable to self-sustain in the community" the designated Primary Family Caregiver will receive the higher-level stipend payment.

#### Unable to self-sustain in the Community Definition

"Unable to self-sustain in the community" means that an eligible Veteran either:

- 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 in this section, and is fully dependent on a caregiver to complete such ADLs;   
*or*
- Has a need for supervision, protection, or instruction on a continuous basis.

#### Inability to Perform Activity of Daily Living (ADL)

The "inability to perform an ADL" means the Veteran or service member requires personal care services **each time** he or she completes one or more of the ADLs listed below.

- Dressing or undressing oneself
- Bathing
- Grooming oneself in order to keep oneself clean and presentable
- 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.)
- Toileting or attending to toileting
- 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
- Mobility (walking, going up stairs, transferring from bed to chair, etc.)

Requiring assistance with an ADL only some of the time does not meet the definition of an "inability to perform an ADL."

#### A Need for supervision, protection, or instruction

A "need for supervision, protection, or instruction" means the Veteran or service member has a functional impairment that directly impacts their ability to maintain his or her personal safety on a daily basis







## Program of General Caregiver Support Services

### ? Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



### What is the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)?

The Caregiver Support Program's (CSP) PGCSS provides services to caregivers of Veterans of all eras enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare.

PGCSS offers a wide array of services to family and friends who care for Veterans, including peer support mentoring, skills training, coaching, telephone support and online programs.

### Who is a General Caregiver?

- A General Caregiver is a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran enrolled in VA healthcare who:
  - ▶ Needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living or
  - ▶ Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological care or other impairment or injury.
- General Caregivers do not need to be a relative or live with the Veteran.

**“ I have very much enjoyed the VA Caregiver Support Program. I have learned a great deal...if I have any questions or concerns, I feel like I can contact our Caregiver Support Team without hesitation”**

– Caregiver in PGCSS

### What services does PGCSS provide for a caregiver?

- Training and support through in-person, online and telehealth sessions.
- Skills training focused on caregiving for a Veteran's unique needs.
- Individual counseling related to the care of the Veteran.
- Respite care, which offers medically and age-appropriate short-term services to eligible Veterans, allows caregivers to take time for themselves while the Veteran is cared for in a safe and caring environment.

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

**VA Caregiver Support Line**  
☎ 1-855-260-3274 toll-free





## How do I enroll in PGCSS as a caregiver?

- Reach out to the Facility CSP Team or request a referral from the Veteran's provider. No application is required.
- Complete an intake with the Facility CSP Team. The Veteran will need to agree to receive care from you as their caregiver, as you will be listed in their healthcare record.
- Enroll and begin to utilize the supports and services offered.
- VA will establish a healthcare record specifically for you.
- To establish a healthcare record, a member of the Facility CSP Team will request specific information to open this record, including your full name, gender, address, Social Security Number, and date of birth.
- This healthcare record will be used by the Facility

CSP Team and VA clinicians who provide services and support to you.

- PGCSS services are provided free of charge.

## How can engaging in PGCSS help me as a caregiver?

- PGCSS can:
  - ▶ Provide clinical support based on your needs and requests. This support may include coaching, supportive counseling, support groups, skills training or peer support mentoring.
  - ▶ Assist in identifying ways to decrease your burden and anxiety to better manage your frustrations and stress.
  - ▶ Help you best manage challenging behaviors or concerns by enhancing problem solving skills.
  - ▶ Connect you with VA and community benefits and services.



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:

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**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



## YOUR RIGHTS TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW OF PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS (PCAFC) DECISIONS

If you disagree, in whole or in part, with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) decision under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), the following options are available for you to appeal or request Veterans Health Administration (VHA) review the decision:

### Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Review Options

- Supplemental Claim (only available for PCAFC decisions provided by VA on or after February 19, 2019)
- Higher-Level Review (only available for PCAFC decisions provided by VA on or after February 19, 2019)

Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) (available for all PCAFC decisions regardless of the date the decision was provided)

**NOTE:** VHA's current clinical review process (also referred to as the VHA Clinical Appeals Process) will also continue to be available. This process will work in tandem with the two additional VHA review options noted above (Supplemental Claim and Higher-Level Review). Please contact the Patient Advocate at your local VA medical facility for more information on the clinical review process.

### **PCAFC Review and Appeal Options**

Supplemental Claim and Higher-Level Review are only applicable to PCAFC decisions provided by VA on or after February 19, 2019. To provide additional choices to Veterans and caregivers, VHA is also continuing to offer its clinical review process.

It is important to note, ALL PCAFC decisions may be appealed to the Board. This includes decisions provided by VA prior to February 19, 2019 and on or after February 19, 2019. Decisions that result from a Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or the VHA clinical review process are also appealable to the Board.

Of the three options below – a Supplemental Claim, a Higher-Level Review, or an appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals – you can only pursue one of these three options at a time for each specific decision with which you disagree. For example, if you submit a Supplemental Claim to VHA based on a denial of the VA Form 10-10CG application, you must receive a decision on that Supplemental Claim, or elect to withdraw the claim, before filing an appeal with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

### **Supplemental Claim**

If you have new and relevant evidence that was not considered when VA made its prior PCAFC decision, you can file a VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*. New evidence is evidence not previously part of the record VA considered. Relevant evidence is information that tends to prove or disprove a matter at issue in a claim. When you submit this form, include any new and relevant evidence that you believe supports your claim. A Supplemental Claim may be filed at any time.

The form for a Supplemental Claim can be found at: <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-20-0995-ARE.pdf>. For Supplemental Claims concerning a PCAFC decision, please submit your completed request form (VA Form 20-0995) to:

**Veterans Affairs Evidence Intake Center  
PO Box 5154  
Janesville, WI 53547**

Submission of this form to any other location may result in delay in processing your Supplemental Claim request.



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### **Higher-Level Review**

If you would like your decision reviewed by a higher-level decision maker within VHA without submitting additional evidence, you can file a VA Form 20-0996, *Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review*. A Higher-Level Review must be requested within one year of the date PCAFC provided notice of the decision.

The form for a Higher-Level Review can be accessed at: <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-20-0996-ARE.pdf>. For requests for Higher-Level Review concerning a PCAFC decision, please submit your completed request form (VA Form 20-0996) to:

**Veterans Affairs Evidence Intake Center  
PO Box 5154  
Janesville, WI 53547**

Submission of this form to any other location may result in delay in processing your Higher-Level Review request.

### **Appeal to the Board**

If you disagree with your PCAFC decision, you can appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. For more information on the Board of Veterans' Appeals, visit <https://www.bva.va.gov/>.

For a PCAFC decision provided by VA on or after February 19, 2019, you can appeal to the Board by filling out VA Form 10182, *Decision Review Request: Board Appeal (Notice of Disagreement)* (available at <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA10182.pdf>) and sending it directly to the Board at:

**Board of Veterans' Appeals  
P.O. Box 27063  
Washington, DC 20038  
Fax: 844-678-8979**

A Notice of Disagreement on VA Form 10182 must be filed within one year from the date VA mailed notice of the PCAFC decision.

Please note that the law requires a different process for appealing to the Board for any PCAFC decisions issued prior to February 19, 2019. A Notice of Disagreement must first be sent to VHA for VHA to provide both you and the Board a detailed statement of reasons for VHA's decision, known as a "Statement of the Case." Updates on the process to appeal a PCAFC decision issued before February 19, 2019 will be posted to [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) as they become available.

When deciding whether to appeal to the Board, please be aware that decisions made by the Board are VA's final determination on an issue.

### **Information or Assistance**

If you would like more information about the Caregiver Support Program, including your decision under PCAFC, you may contact the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 toll free, Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m. ET and Saturday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET.

You can receive help with your individual claim or appeal from a Veterans Service Organization representative, an attorney, or agent accredited by VA. For a list of VA-recognized organizations and VA-accredited individuals who are authorized to help with VA benefit claims, visit <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>.