



Veterans Affairs 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*

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

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Introduction

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. These changes are based on the new “Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) 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 the PCAFC
-  Offering legal and financial services for designated Primary Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans in 2021
-  Making other changes affecting program eligibility and VA’s evaluation of PCAFC applications

Who qualifies: Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including a 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.

Expansion Overview



Who should consider applying to the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers?

- 1 A Veteran who has a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more, **and**
- 2 Who is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on either:
 - An inability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL) each time the activity is performed, **or**
 - A need for supervision, protection, or instruction, which means a functional impairment that directly impacts his/her ability to maintain his or her personal safety, **on a daily basis.**

Your Caregiver Support Coordinator can provide you with more information. They will help you every step of the way! There are seven eligibility requirements. Please see the Eligibility Requirements section in this document for details.

PCAFC Application

Veterans and caregivers may apply for PCAFC in three ways:

- 1 Access the online application: <https://www.va.gov/familymember-benefits/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers>
- 2 Visit www.caregiver.va.gov and download VA Form 10-10CG. Mail the completed form to: **Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Health Eligibility Center: 2957 Clairmont Road, NE, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30329-1647**
- 3 Apply in person through local Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) Caregiver Support Coordinator

Primary Family Caregiver Benefits

Benefits for Primary Family Caregivers include:

- Education and training
- Access to healthcare insurance (If caregiver is otherwise uninsured)
- Mental health counseling
- Financial stipend
- Respite care
- Wellness Contacts
- Travel and per diem compensation (when traveling for a Veteran's VA healthcare appointment)

Major Expansion Changes – Big Wins for Veterans!

Previously: VA required a connection between the need for personal care services and the qualifying serious injury.

Expansion Changes: In addition to expanding to pre-1975 era Veterans, the enhanced PCAFC eliminates the need for a connection between personal care services and the qualifying serious injury. It also redefines serious injury to now include any service-connected disability — regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease. Both changes greatly expand program eligibility.

Why This is Important: In most cases, the eligible Veteran has multiple conditions that may warrant a need for personal care services. A Veteran's needs may be so complex that it can be difficult to determine what specific condition, out of many, causes the need for personal care services.



Eligibility Requirements



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, the program will expand to include those individuals who served after May 7, 1975, and before September 1, 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.



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 an eligible 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."
- 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

"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.

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

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."



Application Process

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) Application Process

The local Caregiver Support Program (CSP) Team coordinates and communicates with the Veteran and each caregiver applying for the PCAFC throughout the following application process. The step-by-step application process is outlined below.

1 Application Submission

Who: Veteran and caregiver complete the application.

What: Fill out the application or VA can help with the form.

Where:

- Access the online application: <https://www.va.gov/familymember-benefits/comprehensiveassistance-for-family-caregivers>
- Access and download the application for the PCAFC. [VA Form 10-10CG](#)
- Locate and contact the Caregiver Support Program Team at the nearest VA health care facility. A CSP Team locator is available at: <http://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.
- Call the National Caregiver Support Line at: 1-855-260-3274.

2 Application Intake

Who: A member of the Local CSP Team conducts the application intake with the Veteran and each Family Caregiver applicant.

What: Review completed PCAFC application.

Where: In person, by telephone, or via VA Video Connect.



If the Veteran and at least one caregiver applicant meet the specific eligibility requirements, the following steps will occur...

3 Veteran Assessment

Who: A member of the Local CSP Team conducts a clinical assessment with the Veteran.

What: Clinical information about the Veteran, including the caregiver's input on care needs

Where: In person, by telephone, or via VA Video Connect.

4 Veteran Functional Assessment

Who: The CSP Clinical Assessor completes the Functional Assessment instrument with the Veteran.

What: Veteran Functional Assessment Instrument, which assesses the Veteran's functional abilities.

Where: In person or via VA Video Connect.

5 Caregiver Assessment

Who: A local CSP Team conducts a clinical assessment with each Family Caregiver applicant.

What: An assessment to collect specific information about each caregiver.

Where: In person, by telephone, or via VA Video Connect.

6 Initial Application Review

Who: The CSP Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT) conducts a review of the application.

What: A review of assessments and medical records.

When: Internal to VA.

Steps 7 through 10 are followed only when the CEAT determines that the Veteran and Family Caregiver will continue with the application process.

7 Caregiver Training

Who: Each Family Caregiver applicant completes caregiver training.

What: Caregiver Core Curriculum.

Where: Caregiver training is completed online or via workbook.

8 Home-Care Assessment

Who: The CSP Clinical Assessor conducts the Home-Care Assessment with the Veteran and each Family Caregiver applicant.

What: Assessment to determine the well-being of the Veteran and Family Caregiver applicant(s), as well as the Family Caregiver applicant(s)' competence to provide personal care services at the Veteran's home.

Where: In the Veteran's home.

9 Final Application Review

Who: The CSP Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT).

What: Assessment reviewed and final eligibility determined.

Where: Internal to VA.

10 Notification

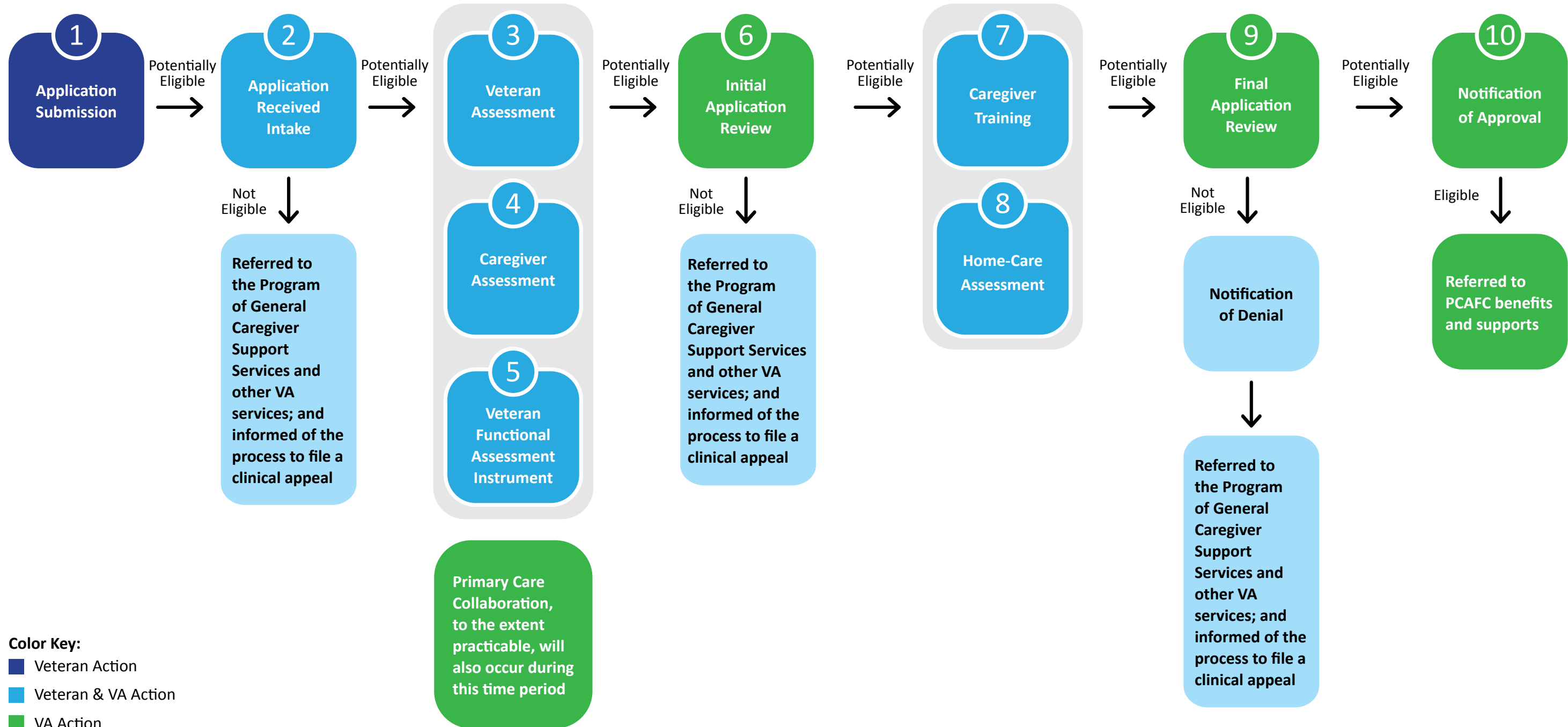
Within 90 days of the application being received by VA, a member of the CSP Team will call the Veteran and Family Caregiver applicant(s) to notify them of the determination. An official letter will also be mailed.



Application Process

Eligibility Decision Within 90 Days of Application Receipt

Application Process Steps for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)



Monthly Stipend for Primary Family Caregivers

PCAFC Monthly Stipend

Caregivers play an important role in the health and well-being of Veterans.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a number of services to support Family Caregivers including a monthly stipend to Primary Family Caregivers of Veterans with moderate and severe needs.

A stipend is defined as a monthly financial payment provided to a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran.

Monthly Stipend Rate

VA bases stipend payments on the definition of “monthly stipend rate,” which means the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule (GS) Annual Rate for Grade 4, Step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides, divided by 12.



Stipend Payment: Two Levels

- VA will apply a specific percentage of the monthly stipend rate based on the amount and degree of personal care services provided to the eligible Veteran by the Primary Family Caregiver.
- The amount and degree of personal care services is divided into two levels. The distinction between the two levels is based on if the Veteran is determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community.

Level 1: For an eligible Veteran who is determined not to be “unable to self-sustain” in the community, the Primary Family Caregiver’s stipend amount will be **62.5% 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 monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas, at this rate (62.5%) of \$33,638 will be approximately \$1,751.98.

Level 2: For an eligible Veteran who is determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community, the Primary Family Caregiver’s stipend amount will 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.
- The 2020 monthly stipend amount for a Primary Family Caregiver of an eligible Veteran in Dallas, Texas, at this rate (100%) of \$33,638 will be approximately \$2,803.17.

Questions About Recurring Payments?

The VHA Office of Community Care (VHA OCC) issues the recurring monthly payments and processes all updates related to the stipend. You may contact VHA OCC for information on the processing activities for the stipend benefit via:

- **Mail:** VHA Office of Community Care
Caregiver Support Program
PO Box 460637
Denver, CO 80246-0637
- **Phone:** Call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 - Toll free - Expanded Hours Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET; Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET
- **Email:** Follow the directions for submitting email via IRIS at <https://iris.custhelp.com/app/ask>
- **Web:** <https://www.va.gov/communitycare/>

For Legacy Participants:

If you were participating in PCAFC prior to October 1, 2020, please see the Legacy Participants section in this document for details.



Legacy Participants



Who is a Legacy Participant?

If you and your Family Caregiver(s) were approved and designated by VA as eligible for PCAFC before October 1, 2020, you are considered a “Legacy Participant.”

What Do I Need to Do?

No immediate action is required if you want to stay in the PCAFC.

VA will schedule a reassessment appointment between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021 to reassess your continued eligibility and care needs. No matter when your reassessment occurs within that one year transitional period, you maintain your automatic eligibility through September 30, 2021.

Is My Stipend Going to Change Due to a Reassessment?

For Legacy Participants who meet the new eligibility requirements and the reassessment results in:

- A higher stipend amount, then the increase will take effect immediately with retroactive payment to October 1, 2020.
- A lower stipend amount, then the current stipend amount remains through the duration of the transitional period.

For Legacy Participants who do not meet the new eligibility requirements (and who are not discharged or revoked on another basis), their current stipend amount will continue for the transitional period.

Legacy Participants: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q1. Why do I need to be reassessed?

A1. VA is making changes to improve and expand the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), including changes to eligibility criteria. Accordingly, all Legacy Participants need to be reassessed to ensure new eligibility criteria are met for continued enrollment.

Q2. Do I need to complete a new application?

A2. No. As a Legacy Participant, you do not need to complete a new application.

Q3. When will I be reassessed?

A3. Between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021, if you wish to stay in PCAFC, an appointment will be scheduled to reassess your continued eligibility and care needs. No matter when your reassessment occurs within that year, you maintain your automatic eligibility for one year – through September 30, 2021. The Caregiver Support Coordinator will contact you to participate in the required reassessment.

Q4. Do I have to come to the medical center during COVID-19 pandemic to be reassessed?

A4. No. Veteran safety is our utmost priority. During the COVID-19 pandemic, assessments will be conducted by local staff either at VA medical centers or by virtual telehealth visits while the Veteran and caregiver are at home.

Q5. Who will decide if I meet the criteria?

A5. Once your reassessment is completed, a Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team will review and make a determination regarding your eligibility beyond September 30, 2021.

Q6. How long after my reassessment will it take for a determination to be made?

A6. The determination will be made within 45 days of the reassessment.

Q7. How will I find out about my reassessment determination?

A7. You will receive a phone call from your Caregiver Support Coordinator, followed by a letter.

Q8. What will happen if I'm discharged from the program?

A8. VA will provide advanced notice of its decision by October 1, 2021. Legacy Participants will stop receiving payments no earlier than December 1, 2021. In addition, the Family Caregiver will receive 90 days of extended benefits following the date of discharge.

Q9. If I disagree with the decision, can I make an appeal?

A9. Yes. If you disagree with a decision under PCAFC, you have the right to appeal. Please contact the Patient Advocate at your local VA medical center to discuss the appeal process. Your Caregiver Support Coordinator is also available if you have additional questions.

Q10. Are there any other programs to help me?

A10. Additional services are available through our Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS), as well as access to a Caregiver Support Coordinator at every VA medical center. Information on available resources is located on the caregiver website at www.caregiver.va.gov.







How to Contact a Caregiver Support Coordinator

Veterans and caregivers can find their local Caregiver Support Coordinator by:



Toll Free: Calling the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 (Expanded Hours Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET; Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET)



Using the Caregiver Support Coordinator locator tool at www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp

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

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

www.caregiver.va.gov