

VETERAN'S CORNER

Family Caregiver Support

Family caregivers provide crucial support in caring for our Nation's Veterans by allowing them to stay in the homes and communities they defended, surrounded by the loved ones they fought for. Caregivers in a home environment can enhance the health and well-being of Veterans under VA care. The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers allows VA to provide additional supports and services to family caregivers of eligible Veterans injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.

In order to be eligible, the Veteran must have incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma, or other mental disorder) in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001. Because of the qualifying serious injury, the Veteran must require another person (a caregiver) to assist with the management of personal care functions required in everyday living. The serious injury must render the Veteran in need of personal care services for a minimum of six continuous months based on a clinical determination that takes into account various factors. Once enrolled, the Veteran will receive ongoing care from a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) or other VA health care team as a requirement for participation in the program.

The caregiver must be at least 18 years of age, and be the Veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, step-family member, or extended family member; or be someone who lives with the Veteran full time. Prior to approval, the caregiver will be provided with training and must be able to demonstrate the ability to assist the Veteran with personal care functions required in everyday living. Support for caregivers includes a monthly stipend, travel expenses (including lodging and per diem while accompanying Veterans undergoing care), access to health care insurance (if the caregiver is not already entitled to care or services under a health care plan), mental health services and counseling, and respite care (not less than 30 days per year).

If the Veteran is not currently enrolled in VA health care, both the VA Form 10-10 EZ for VA health services and the application for the Caregiver Program (VA Form 10-10CG) will need to be completed. Our office can assist with completing both forms. For more information on the Caregiver Support Program, visit www.caregiver.va.gov.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office web page at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.