

## Preparing to Apply for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

### **Background**

The VA MISSION Act of 2018 created a new standard for the VA's Caregiver Support Program's (CSP) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). It also expanded eligibility beyond Post 9/11 caregivers. These changes prompted a revision in the evaluation process which VA established in CFR RIN 2900-AQ48 issued October 1, 2020. The new standards are defined in VHA Directive 1152(1) issued October 1, 2020. Two significant changes are: (1) the Activities of Daily Living (ADL) standard requires care to be provided "each and every time" an ADL is performed and (2) the standard for Supervision, Protection, and Instruction (SPI) now requires "regular care". While Quality of Life Foundation (QoLF) anticipates that more changes to the assessment and decision-making process will be forthcoming in the near future, we feel it is best to prepare you for the current evaluation, as any changes will likely only impact how decisions are made, not the information collected to make them.

### **Purpose of the Document**

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers expands eligibility to the post-Vietnam to Pre 9/11 generation of veterans as of October 1, 2022. Quality of Life Foundation's (QoLF) Wounded Veteran Family Care Program (WVFCP) has put together an education program to prepare caregivers and veterans for this assessment process. It is an information gathering process. The better prepared you are for the process, the more comfortable you will feel in knowing that you have provided as much information to your Caregiver Support Program team as possible. While the people administering your assessments are not the people making a decision on your application, they are the people tasked with making your application as complete and correct as possible. As such, QoLF's process is designed to help you help your Caregiver Support Program assessment team gather the information needed for the veteran and caregiver complete assessment process.

## Information to Gather

In preparation for your application to the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, you should gather some information from sources other than the VA Medical Record. Those pieces of information are:

**1. The veteran's Department of Veterans Affairs disability ratings:** Many older veterans have applied multiple times for VA disability ratings or increases in their disability ratings. Veterans Health Administration only receives a copy of those ratings if the veteran brings in the ratings changes each time they receive a new letter from Veterans Benefits Administration. As such the Caregiver Support Program may not have the most up to date VA disability rating for the Veteran. The veteran can call 1-800-827-1000 and request ratings letter be sent to his address. (It must be the veteran, as long as the veteran is able. If the veteran is unable to make the call, legal documentation will have to be provided in the form of a POA/ROI for this.) This letter will come with all the current ratings that the veteran has. You can then provide this copy to the Caregiver Support Program when they begin the assessment process.

**2. The veteran's private and community care medical records for the past 24 months:** Many veterans, young and old alike, see many clinical providers outside of the VA. Some of these providers may be through the VA Community Care Network, and some of these providers may be through the veteran's private insurance, Medicare, TRICARE, or another type of insurance or nonprofit program. Do not assume that VA has been able to obtain the VA Community Care records. If at all possible, obtain the records from these providers now. If your state charges a fee to obtain the records, you can put on them "continuity of care with VA providers" and in most states that is an exception to being charged for the copy of the records from a provider. When you start your VA Caregiver Support application, let them know that you are either in the process of obtaining those records or that you have those records. Depending of the policy of your local CSP office, they may have to submit these records in a variety of ways. No matter what, there should be a note in the veteran's MyHealthVet that states that records were received and are being scanned it to be considered by CSP.

**3. Fiduciaries or guardianship paperwork, if applicable:** If the state, the Social Security Administration, a medical facility, the Department of Veterans Affairs, etc., has declared the veteran incompetent to handle financial transactions (fiduciary) or incompetent for legal purposes (guardianship) and appointed a fiduciary or guardian, please have that paperwork ready to be provided to the Caregiver Support Program team.

## Information to Gather (cont.)

**4. Your veteran's requirements for assistance:** So far, we have given you a list of things to obtain. This last piece is the hardest. Over the next week, please take time and focus on writing down each thing that you do for your veteran AS A CAREGIVER. For each thing that you do, ask yourself what injury/illness creates the need for you to do this for your veteran. What part of that task is your veteran unable to complete, and why? List the time that it takes to complete the task. Write down how often you need to complete this task in a day, week, or month. For example, if your veteran has Parkinson's and shakes to badly to do fastenings but can dress himself independently minus the fastenings, you would say, "My veteran has Parkinson's that causes him to shake, and while he can get his larger pieces of clothing on, he needs my help with his fasteners. I have to help with fasteners \_\_\_ times per \_\_\_\_ (day, week, month, etc). You will use this information in the interviews and application process for the Caregiver Support Program.

## Finally

On or after October 1, 2022, fill out VA Form 10-10, your application for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. Once this information is collected and the application sent in to the VA, sit back and take a deep breath. You have gathered the information to prepare for your Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers' application and assessment process.