



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 8, 2010

VA Celebrates National Family Caregiver Month

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is marking National Family Caregiver Month by honoring the service of family members and friends who have dedicated their lives to caring for chronically ill, injured, or disabled Veterans.

“Caregivers are the family members and loved ones who take care of the severely injured Veterans who need assistance on a daily basis,” said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. “These mothers, wives, fathers, husbands and other loved ones make tremendous sacrifices to be there every day for the Veterans who served this Nation. They are our partners in Veteran health care and they deserve our support.”

November is National Family Caregivers Month, and VA medical centers nationwide will offer locally sponsored events for caregivers. Because caregivers often experience stress, burnout, or feel overwhelmed by the caregiving experience, planned activities will provide useful information about VA and community resources that offer support and assistance to caregivers and Veterans.

Caregivers provide a valuable service to Veterans by assisting them beyond the walls of VA medical facilities with support such as accessing the health care system, providing emotional and physical support, and allowing injured Veterans to stay in their homes rather than living their lives in an institutional setting.

Caregivers help Veterans maintain a better quality of life and gain more independence. As the Veteran population ages and continues to increase, the role of caregivers as partners in supporting Veterans is even more prevalent. The Veteran population aged 65 and older is expected to increase from 37.4 percent to 44.8 percent by the year 2020. VA is also treating a new era of younger, severely injured Servicemembers. Many Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan will need lifetime care. VA recognizes the support of their caregivers is vital for these Veterans.

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On May 5, 2010, President Obama signed into law the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. Passed by Congress, this law will allow VA to care for those who provide supplemental help to family caregivers of the most severely wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. VA has been consulting with Veterans organizations, as well as individual Veterans and their family members, to ensure these new programs are implemented to provide the best possible support for those who have sacrificed so much.

These benefits will add to the wide range of compassionate and practical programs for Veteran caregivers that are already available from VA:

- **In-Home and Community Based Care:** This includes skilled home health care, homemaker home health aide services, community adult day health care and home based primary care.
- **Respite care:** Designed to temporarily relieve the family caregiver from caring for a chronically ill, injured or disabled Veteran at home, respite services can include in-home care, a short stay in a VA community living center or other institutional setting or adult day health care.
- **Caregiver education and training programs:** VA provides multiple training opportunities which include pre-discharge care instruction and specialized caregiver programs such as polytrauma and traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury/disorders, and blind rehabilitation. VA has a caregiver assistance healthy living center Web page on My HealtheVet, www.myhealth.va.gov, as well as caregiver information on the VA's main Web page health site; both Websites include information on VA and community resources and caregiver health and wellness.
- **Family support services:** These support services can be face to face or on the telephone. They include family counseling, spiritual and pastoral care. Polytrauma Centers also offer family leisure and recreational activities and temporary lodging in Fisher Houses.

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- **Other benefits:** VA provides durable medical equipment and prosthetic and sensory aides to improve function, financial assistance with home modification to improve access and mobility, and transportation assistance for some Veterans to and from medical appointments.

Caregivers should contact their nearest VA medical center for caregiver activities in the local area. Facility locators and contact information can be found at www.va.gov.

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