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VA publishes proposed regulations to improve the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

WASHINGTON –The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will publish a [proposed rule](#) in the Federal Register March 6 that would improve and standardize [VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers \(PCAFC\)](#) and ensure the program regulations reflect changes required by the [VA MISSION Act of 2018](#).

A component of the [Caregiver Support Program](#), the PCAFC was established in 2011 to provide additional benefits including a monthly stipend for qualifying family caregivers of eligible Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

In the proposed rule, VA seeks to standardize eligibility by expanding the definition of serious injury to include any service-connected disability — regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease — defining what it means to be in need of personal care services, and ensuring that the eligibility criteria capture the personal care service needs of Veterans and Servicemembers with cognitive or neurological impairment or mental health conditions, among other things.

Additionally, VA is proposing changes to the stipend payment methodology, definitions for financial planning and legal services and procedures for revocation and discharge, to include advance notice requirements aimed at improving communication between VA and PCAFC participants.

“We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to caregivers who work tirelessly to provide critical support for our nation’s Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This proposed regulation would improve the assistance we provide to help ensure our most vulnerable Veterans can stay in their homes with their loved ones for as long as possible.”

VA’s Caregiver Support Program is the first of its kind and addresses the complexity and expense of keeping loved ones out of institutions and at home with their families who provide personalized care. The program offers unparalleled support services including training, peer mentoring, respite care, a telephone support line and self-care courses for caregivers of all Veterans enrolled in VA health care who need personal care services.

The regulations are part of a broad effort to [strengthen PCAFC](#) in advance of a planned expansion under the MISSION Act which expanded eligibility for PCAFC to eligible Veterans from all eras, beginning with those who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. Two years after the first phase of program expansion, PCAFC will include eligible Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty between May 7, 1975 and Sept. 11, 2001. Prior to expanding, VA must fully implement an information technology (IT) system required by the MISSION Act.

In October 2019 VA launched a commercial off-the-shelf IT system and expects to complete deployment in late summer or early fall of 2020. The department also standardized operating procedures for the Caregiver Support Program, provided new training for staff and caregivers and is boosting operational capacity through hiring of additional staff. These changes are necessary as VA prepares to expand PCAFC.

Learn more about support services available for [caregivers of Veterans](#) or call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.

The proposed rule will be open for public comment in the Federal Register for 60 days.

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