



Caregiver Support Quarterly Newsletter



Family caregivers want their loved ones to have the best care possible – at the doctor’s office, at the hospital, and at home. We encourage family caregivers across the country to ask questions, explore options and share in the care decisions that affect the health and well-being of their loved ones.

#BeCareCurious About

Your Loved One’s Goals

You know your loved one better, and spend more time with them, than anyone else does. Talk to them about what their goals are for treatment and their care in general. It can be hard to talk about goals when facing a disease. But these talks help make sure your loved ones are getting the care they want.

Treatment Options

Is your loved one responding well to treatment? If not, ask your doctor if there are other options. New treatments are available every day. Whether it’s a different dose, a new medication, or a new procedure, speak up and ask your doctor if there are options you and your loved one should consider.

Research

The internet is a great research tool, but it can also be full of conflicting, and even dangerous, advice – so don’t stop there! Be curious about that article you just read. Is it from a reliable source? Talk to friends, family and doctors to ask as many questions as possible to learn about your loved one’s condition.

The Care Plan

If your loved one is in the hospital, be sure to ask what happens next. Will they need home care after being discharged? Are there new medications or procedures you will need to manage at home? Will you be trained on what to do and how to do it? A lot of care happens at home and you need to be prepared to provide that care.

Coverage

Don’t be shy about asking questions about insurance coverage. Is your parents’ Medicare plan the best option or should you change plans during open enrollment? Was a medication switched for a medical reason, or because your insurance no longer covered it? If coverage was denied, what can you do to change their minds?

Family caregiving is stressful, but the more you know, the more confident and capable you will be when providing care. Remember – knowledge is power!

So this November, during National Family Caregivers Month, take time to

#BeCareCurious
about your loved one's care!

ONGOING EVENTS

Fargo VA
Caregiver Support Group
When: 1st Tues. of every month
Time: 5:30 – 7:00 pm
Where: Room 1C-86

Fergus Falls CBOC
Caregiver Support Group
When: 2nd Thurs. of every month
Time: 5:15 – 6:30 pm
Where: Chapel of the
Fergus Falls Veterans Home

Bismarck CBOC
Caregiver Support Group
When: 1st Tues. of every month
Time: 5:30 – 7:00 pm
Where: Bismarck CBOC
Conference Room

Fargo VA
Caregiver Support Coordinators:

Trisha Chadduck, LCSW
(701) 239-3786
trisha.chadduck@va.gov

Amy Gunkelman, LCSW, LICSW
(701) 239-3700 ext. 9-4507
amy.gunkelman@va.gov



A Message From the Fargo VA Health Care System Director:

This is National Family Caregiver Month. Many have not heard of this event, nor, unfortunately, have many even heard of a Family Caregiver. We at the Fargo VA Healthcare System DO know what a family caregiver is, and we appreciate them and what they do tremendously! What would happen to the Veterans we all serve if their caregivers were gone or had never been? I shudder to think about it. Caregivers provide indispensable support to the Veteran, helping them to live better, happier, and more full lives in the least restrictive setting possible.

This month, the theme is “BeCareCurious”. In other words, be involved, ask questions, and think things through for your Veteran. The loved one you care for often needs an advocate, someone to be there for them and speak up for them. I know you do that already, and that is what BeCareCurious is about, and what this month of celebrating National Family Caregivers is about. THANK YOU for all you do!

Sincerely,
Breton M. Weintraub, MD
Director, Fargo VA Healthcare System

Annie Caregiver Text Care Support

Annie is VA’s text messaging service that promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care and now for Caregivers. You just need a phone that can receive text messages to enroll!

- Annie will help you manage stress and support self-care.
- You will receive text messages 3 times per week for a year with the option to renew yearly.
- You can pause or stop at any time.
- Messages will be educational, motivational, and activities to manage stress.



Caregivers already enrolled in Annie reported:

“The fact that it's a Caregiver Program. To know I'm not alone and that you're thinking of us. Caregiving is very lonely, so a phone call or text saying, hey, how are you today? I'm thinking about you, makes a big difference.”

“Used breathing exercises - those were great. Take time for myself to calm down and breathe, then rethink the situation.”

“I don't always know what to do when I'm stressed. Reading the messages calms me down.”

Contact your Caregiver Support Coordinator to enroll in Annie:

Trisha Chadduck 701-239-3786
Amy Gunkelman 701-232-3241 ext. 4507

Upcoming Caregiver Support Line Education Calls:

November – “Own Your Emotions: Labeling and Communicating Your Feelings”

Tuesday, November 5th
at 9am CST

With encore sessions
Wednesday, November 13th
at 6pm CST &

Wednesday, November 20th
at 2pm CST

December – “Finding Comfort in the Healing Gifts of the Season”

Tuesday, December 3rd
at 9am CST

With encore sessions
Wednesday, December 11th
at 6pm CST &

Wednesday, December 18th
at 2pm CST

January – “Making My Goals Matter: Looking Forward to the Year Ahead”

Tuesday, January 7th
at 9am CST

With encore sessions
Wednesday, January 15th
at 6pm CST &

Wednesday, January 22nd
at 2pm CST

To begin accessing these calls please contact one of your local Caregiver Support Coordinators who can assist with your initial registration!

VA strengthens Caregiver Support Program and expands timeline of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

WASHINGTON – September 25, 2019 The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced actions to strengthen the Caregiver Support Program and establish a timeline for expanding the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) in accordance with section 161 of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 ([MISSION Act](#)).

Under the MISSION Act, VA will expand the PCAFC to eligible Veterans from all eras using a phased approach. Currently, the program is only available to eligible Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. Prior to expanding, VA must upgrade its information technology (IT) system and implement other improvements to strengthen the program.

“Caregivers play a critical role in the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Under the MISSION Act, we are strengthening and expanding our program to positively impact the lives of Veterans and deliver the best customer experience to them and their caregivers.”

In December 2018, VA suspended certain discharges from the program due to ongoing concerns about inconsistent application of eligibility requirements at VA medical centers. Since then, VA has held listening sessions with caregivers and other stakeholders, developed or amended 14 standard operating procedures to clarify program requirements for VA staff, increased oversight in each Veterans Integrated Service Network, provided training and education to staff and caregivers and is boosting operational capacity with the hiring of more than 680 staff.

To modernize its caregiver IT system, VA is adopting a three-phased approach and will deploy a new system based on a commercial off the shelf product called Caregiver Record Management Application (CARMA) beginning in October 2019. VA will deploy phase two in January 2020 to centralize and automate stipend payment calculations and expects to deploy phase three in the summer of 2020, which will enable caregivers to apply for benefits online. VA will then perform testing and verify that the system has full functionality before expanding the program as required under the MISSION Act.

The expansion will occur in two phases, beginning in the summer of 2020 or once the Secretary has certified that the new IT system is fully implemented. In the first phase, PCAFC will be expanded to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. The final phase of the expansion will begin two years later. It will expand PCAFC to eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty after May 7, 1975 through September 10, 2001.

Additionally, VA has gathered input and is developing regulatory changes to streamline the program and provide more clarity for Veterans and their family caregivers. VA will publish a proposed rule for public comment prior to issuing final regulations.

VA is also working across the department to ensure caregivers have a positive experience through program improvements and initiatives to include:

- Providing home and community-based care alternatives through the Choose Home Initiative at 21 VA medical centers.
- Establishing the Center for Excellence for Veteran and Caregiver Research named after Senator Elizabeth Dole.
- Expanding telehealth services to enable Veterans and their caregivers to get care in the comfort of their homes.
- Delivering valuable programs for caregivers such as peer support mentoring, a Caregiver Support Line, self-care courses and educational programs to help caregivers succeed.

Caregivers play a critical role in enabling Veterans to maintain their highest level of independence and remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible. VA leads the nation in providing unprecedented benefits and services to caregivers. The MISSION Act strengthens VA’s ability to serve as a trusted partner in the care of our nation’s most vulnerable Veterans.

To learn more about the many support services available for caregivers of Veterans, visit www.caregiver.va.gov, call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 or contact your local Caregiver Support Coordinators:

Trisha Chaddock (701) 239-3786 or Amy Gunkelman (701) 239-3700 ext. 9-4507

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Class Name	Date	Time	Location	Presenter
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/6/2019	2:00 PM	Cando Lutheran Church 304 5th Ave Cando, ND	Beth Olson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/6/2019	3:00 PM	Horizon Assisted Living 705 4th Ave NE Watford City, ND	Audrey Williamson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/13/2019	1:00 PM	Bismarck Senior Center 315 N 20th St Bismarck, ND	Nikki Wegner
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/13/2019	10:30 AM	James River Senior Center 419 5th St NE Jamestown, ND	Beth Olson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/13/2019	12:00 PM	Williston Senior Center 18 Main St Williston, ND	Audrey Williamson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/18/2019	3:00 PM	West Fargo Public Library 109 3rd St E West Fargo, ND	Kendra Binger
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/18/2019	6:00 PM	The Wellington 601 24th Ave SW Minot, ND	Audrey Williamson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/19/2019	3:30 PM	Valley Senior Living on 42nd 4004 24th Ave S Grand Forks, ND	Maggie Gulsvig
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/19/2019	1:00 PM	Eventide Heartland Chapel 620 14th Ave NE Devils Lake, ND	Beth Olson
Effective Communication Strategies (Open to the Community)	11/21/2019	1:30 PM	Lamoure Senior Center 115 First Ave E Lamoure, ND	Beth Olson

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VA
Caregiver
Support