Support Resources for Military Caregivers

Caregivers: You are not alone
RAND research estimates that there are 5.5 million people in the United States who provide informal care for veterans with disabling injuries or illnesses. These individuals—who we label military caregivers—are spouses, parents, siblings, friends, neighbors, and children of our nation’s veterans. They are critical to veterans’ reintegration and recovery, helping them to live longer and better-quality lives.

Caregiving can be a heavy burden
Many caregivers provide care while balancing work and family obligations. Our study revealed that caregiving can take a lot of time and impose a heavy burden on caregiver health and well-being. Finding help and support can minimize this burden and improve their well-being.

Finding help
The RAND study identified more than 120 programs that provide support services for military caregivers. Finding the right program and support can be challenging. There are many places to begin your search, but you will need to assess whether specific programs match your needs. In our review of programs for military caregivers, we found that these support services fall into a few basic categories (see box).

Accessing federal and state benefits and programs
You may be eligible for benefits and services through the federal government, some of which are administered by state or local county government through designated agencies.
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a series of programs and benefits for caregivers. Respite care, social support services, aid and attendance benefits and training are also available. More information can be found at www.caregiver.va.gov. Caregivers of veterans who served post-9/11 may also be eligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. You can check your eligibility at the link listed here, or reach out to the Caregiver Support Coordinator at your local VA hospital: www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/Caregiver_Eligibility_Check.asp

Department of Defense (DoD) Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (SCAADL) financial stipends are available for active-duty service members who served post-9/11; have permanent, catastrophic injuries; are in outpatient care; and have a designated primary caregiver. Check through your Service Branch’s Wounded Warrior Program or Warrior Transition Unit.

Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Through your state, you may be eligible for a wide range of services through the Medicaid HCBS programs. For more information, visit www.caregiver.org/home-and-community-based-services-program-hcbs

State and Local Respite Care Services. Many states have state-based respite coalitions and funding through the Lifespan Respite Care Act to support additional respite services for caregivers. For more information, visit www.archrespite.org/respitelocator

**Accessing health care**

Ensuring that you have access to a regular source of health care is important for your own health and well-being. Service members and families who have not qualified for VA benefits, are in the process of qualifying for them, or who are not accessing TRICARE insurance may be eligible for health care coverage through their employer, member-based organizations such as AARP, the new health insurance exchanges, Medicaid, or Medicare. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov/blog/4-steps-to-getting-covered-in-the-health-insurance-marketplace

**Protecting your own well-being**

As a military caregiver, you are contributing to the health and well-being of our nation’s veterans, enabling their successful recovery and rehabilitation, and contributing to their quality of life. Whether you perform these caregiving tasks for a short period of time or for many years, caregiving can affect your own health and well-being. Getting help can minimize this impact and promote your own long-term well-being. Make sure to avail yourself of the benefits and resources available to support you and your family. These links may offer additional insights and resources on finding help:

www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/caregiver/
www.caregiver.org/
www.caregiving.org/resources
www.elizabethdolefoundation.org
www.rosalynncarter.org/resources/
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