



TULARE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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VETERANS CORNER

As we have begun the holiday season and your time gets consumed with a multitude of responsibilities including caring for family members, at this time I would like to revisit an earlier column about the VA Caregiver Support Program.

As you may know, the VA provides many benefits and services for veterans; it also provides a number specifically designed to support Family Caregivers. In the interest of collaborating with these individuals, the VA has developed and administers programs to assist in this endeavor.

Finding caregiver assistance is not always easy, and oftentimes caregivers are unaware of available programs and services, and what they may qualify for. The VA has a couple of options to help you find the right support for you and the veteran you care for.

The VA established a toll-free Caregiver Support Line that you may contact at 1-855-260-3274. The support line is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m. ET and on Saturdays from 10:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. ET. By contacting this support line you can learn about:

- Assistance available through the VA
- Accessing services
- Connecting with the local VA Medical Center Caregiver Support Coordinator
- Getting in touch with someone who will listen

You may also visit the VA's website dedicated to the caregiver program at:

<http://www.caregiver.va.gov/index.asp>; you will find further information and links there.

The VA provides a variety of caregiver services under the program, including Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) Centers, Home-Based Primary Care, Skilled Home Care, Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program, Home Telehealth, Respite Care, and Home Hospice Care. For further information with these programs, go to the above website and click on the Caregiver Services link. Keep in mind that some of these programs may not be available locally. To see if the program you are interested in is available, contact the VA Central Valley Healthcare System (VAMC Fresno) at (559) 225-6100 and ask to speak with the Caregiver Support Coordinator, who is a licensed professional and can tell you about the services

Ken Cruickshank, the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County, is a retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer. The Veterans Services Office is located at 205 North L Street in Tulare.



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you might be eligible for, as well as provide valuable information to assist you in taking care of yourself as well as the veteran you care for.

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 provided for additional services implemented specifically for Family Caregivers of Post-9/11 veterans. Under this program, eligible veterans:

- Have sustained a serious injury – including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma or other mental disorder – incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001.
- Need personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living or need supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or injury.
- Must be enrolled in VA health services

Caregivers in this program may qualify for:

- A monthly stipend
- Travel expenses (including lodging and per diem while accompanying veterans undergoing care)
- Access to health care insurance (if not currently entitled under another plan)
- Mental health services and counseling
- Comprehensive VA Caregiver training provided by Easter Seals
- Respite care (up to 30 days per year)

As a caregiver, if you think you might qualify for this program, you can apply at <http://www.caregiver.va.gov/apply>; you will be asked to answer some preliminary questions and then download an application to enroll. The enrollment allows a veteran to designate one primary and up to two secondary Family Caregivers. Should you need assistance, please call the Caregiver Support Coordinator at the VAMC Fresno.

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