



CAREGIVER WEBINAR

Navigating the VA Maze: A Veteran Caregiver's Roadmap

August 27, 2026



VOICE OF

Amera Bilal

VP of Programs & Policy
Caregiver Action Network

MEET THE **PRESENTERS**



Leah Christensen
Owner
Christensen Strategies



Dakota Heath
**Programs & Policy
Associate**
Caregiver Action Network



Caregiver Action Network Community

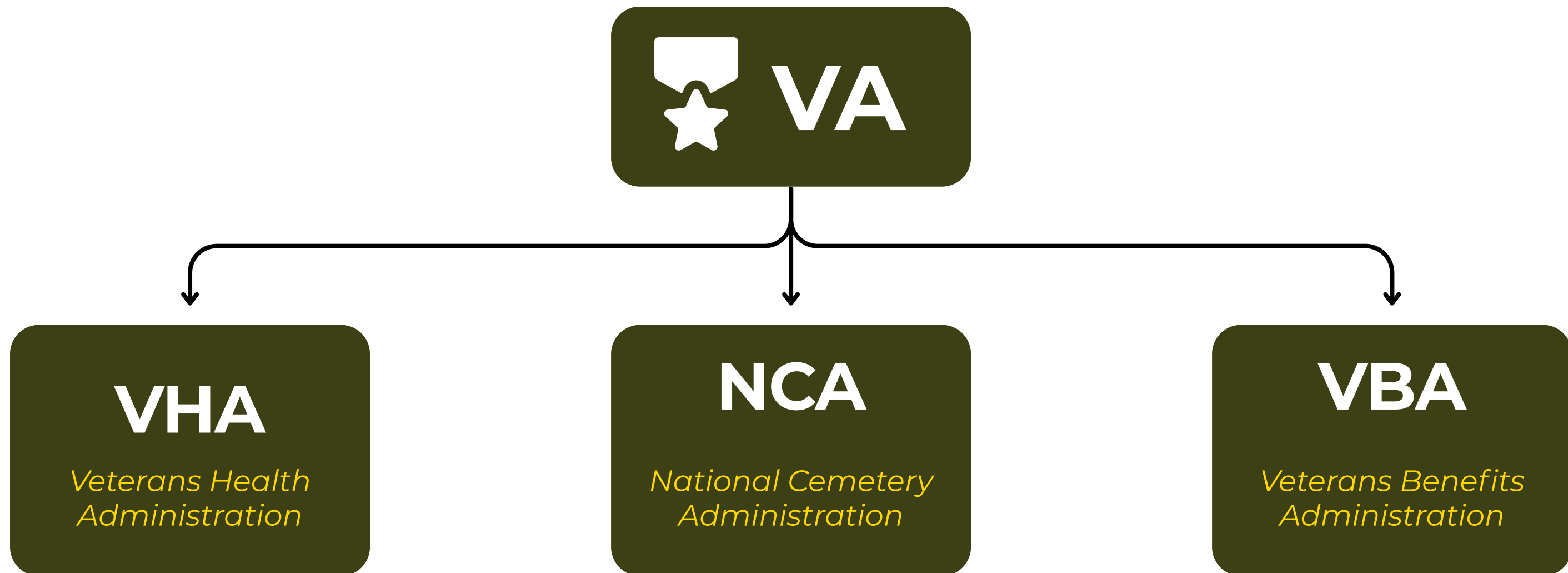
facebook.com/groups/caregiveraction

Navigating VA & Accessing Support

Leah Christensen, LCSW

Christensen Strategies LLC

Disclaimer: This presentation is for informational purposes only. I am not affiliated with or representing the Department of Veterans Affairs. All descriptions of VA programs and services are drawn from publicly available sources and should not be considered official VA statements.



Navigating the VA

- Know it can feel like a big system
- Know you **can** advocate
- Know your resources
- Know **you are not alone**



Veterans Health Administration Social Workers

**Social Workers can help you
and your Veteran get the
care and support you need.**

Here are just some of the
ways that VA social workers
can help:

- Suicide screening and intervention
- Assistance with access to care
- Education and assistance with financial or housing resources
- Linkage to resources from VA or community agencies
- Education and application for benefits from the VA, Social Security, and other government and community programs
- Assessment and implementation of treatment approaches which address health-related social needs

Veterans Health Administration Social Workers

**Social Workers can help you
and your Veteran get the
care and support you need.**

Here are just some of the
ways that VA social workers
can help:

- Facilitate Veteran communication with interprofessional healthcare teams on goals of care discussions and advanced care planning
- Education and linkage to resources offering support for caregivers
- Provision of case management
- Provision of counseling and other evidence based therapeutic interventions

[National Social Work Program Directory](#)

VA CAREGIVER **SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Every VA has a Caregiver Support Program Team.

Find your local team here:
www.va.gov/resources/caregiver-support-teams

The Caregiver Support Line (CSL)
is available *Monday-Friday*
8-8 EST: **1-855-260-3274**

How CSL Can Help

The CSL team can help assist you with understanding your options and the services available to you and the Veteran you care for. We can help you:



Learn

more about CSP, its various services, and program eligibility.



Navigate

barriers to accessing care.



Connect

with the CSP team at your local VAMC, who assist with referrals to local services and enrollment in CSP.



Discover

additional VA and community resources available to help care for a Veteran.



Receive

supportive counseling.

If you're just getting started with VA, calling the **Caregiver Support Line** is a great first step to take to learn more about the support that's available to you.

VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

- 7 eligibility requirements must be met to qualify
- Application required
- Multi-part assessment process
- If approved, receive comprehensive benefits

www.caregiver.va.gov/CAREGIVER/support/support_benefits.asp#Fact%20Sheets



Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Application Process

Fact Sheet



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) provides enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans and Service members. A Veteran or Service member may be eligible for a Family Caregiver if all the following requirements are met.

1. The individual is either:

- A Veteran; or
- A member of the Armed Forces undergoing a medical discharge from the Armed Forces.

2. The individual has a serious injury (including serious illness) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service. For purposes of PCAFC, serious injury means any service-connected disability that: (1) Is rated at 70 percent or more by VA; or (2) Is combined with any other service-connected disability or disabilities, and a combined rating of 70 percent or more is assigned by VA.

3. The individual is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following:

- An inability to perform an activity of daily living;
- A need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury; or
- A need for regular or extensive instruction or supervision without which the ability of the Veteran to function in daily life would be seriously impaired.

4. It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.

5. Personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver will not be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity.

6. The individual receives care at home or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

7. The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

Every VA facility has a CSP team who assists with information and referrals. To learn more about services available, visit us online:

www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support Line
1-855-260-3274 toll-free



VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Program of General Caregiver Support Services

- Veteran must be enrolled in VA healthcare and need caregiving assistance
- Caregiver can receive training and support, skills training related to the needed care, and peer support mentoring

www.caregiver.va.gov/CAREGIVER/Care_Caregivers.asp



Department of Veterans Affairs Program of General Caregiver Support Services

Factsheet

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) understands that the caregiver community is vital to the recovery and care of many Veterans. These caregivers may need support, which is why the VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) offers clinical, educational, and wrap-around services to individuals who care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) is one of two programs under CSP. PGCSS offers many services, including skills training, coaching, telephone support, and online programs to caregivers of Veterans of all eras enrolled in VA.

PGCSS General Caregivers

Caregivers within PGCSS are recognized as **General Caregivers**. A General Caregiver is a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran enrolled in VA health care who:

- Needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living or
- Needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or other impairment or injury.

PGCSS General Caregivers may have access to:

-  Training and support through in-person, online, and telehealth sessions.
-  Skills training focused on caregiving for a Veteran's unique needs.
-  Individual support related to the care of the Veteran.
-  Respite care, a resource that offers medically and age-appropriate short-term services to eligible Veterans and allows caregivers to take time for themselves. In contrast, the Veteran is cared for in a safe and caring environment.
-  Peer Support Mentoring.

More information about the services listed above can be found on pages 3-5.

Every VA Facility has a CSP Team who assists with information and referrals. To learn more about PGCSS and caregiver services offered, visit us online:
www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support Line
☎ 1-855-260-3274 toll-free

VA  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Published October 2025

VA Aid & Attendance

Am I eligible for VA Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits as a Veteran or survivor?

VA Aid and Attendance eligibility

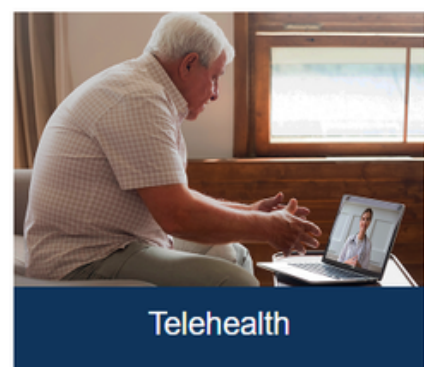
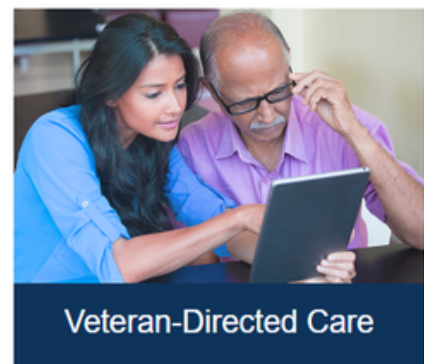
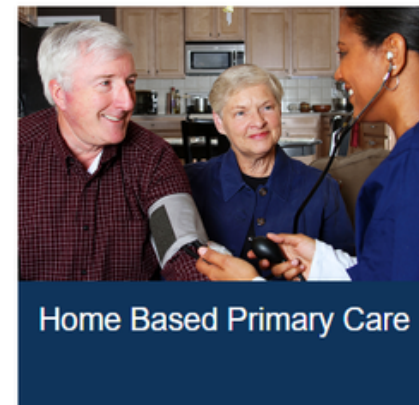
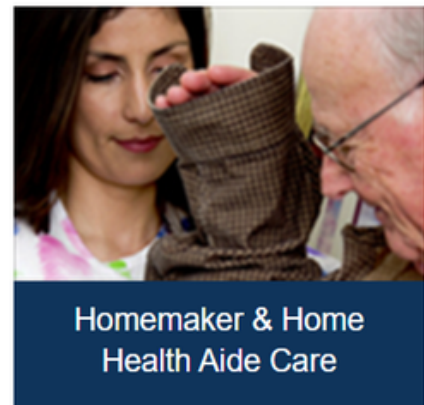
You may be eligible for this benefit if you get a VA pension and you meet at least 1 of these requirements.

At least 1 of these must be true:

- You need another person to help you perform daily activities, like bathing, feeding, and dressing, **or**
- You have to stay in bed—or spend a large portion of the day in bed—because of illness, **or**
- You're a patient in a nursing home due to the loss of mental or physical abilities related to a disability, **or**
- Your eyesight is limited (even with glasses or contact lenses you have only 5/200 or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less)

Home Health & Respite Care

Home and Community Based Services



- **A Home Health Aide** is a trained person who can come to a Veteran's home and help the Veteran take care of themselves and their daily activities.
- **Skilled Health Home Care** is for Veterans who need skilled services such as: skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, wound care, or IV antibiotics.
- **Home Respite Care** is a service that pays for a person to come to a Veteran's home or for a Veteran to go to an adult day health care program while their family caregiver takes a break or runs errands.

www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/

www.caregiver.va.gov/CAREGIVER/support/docs/docs2024/Caregiver-Respite-Tool-2022.pdf

VA FORM 10-5345

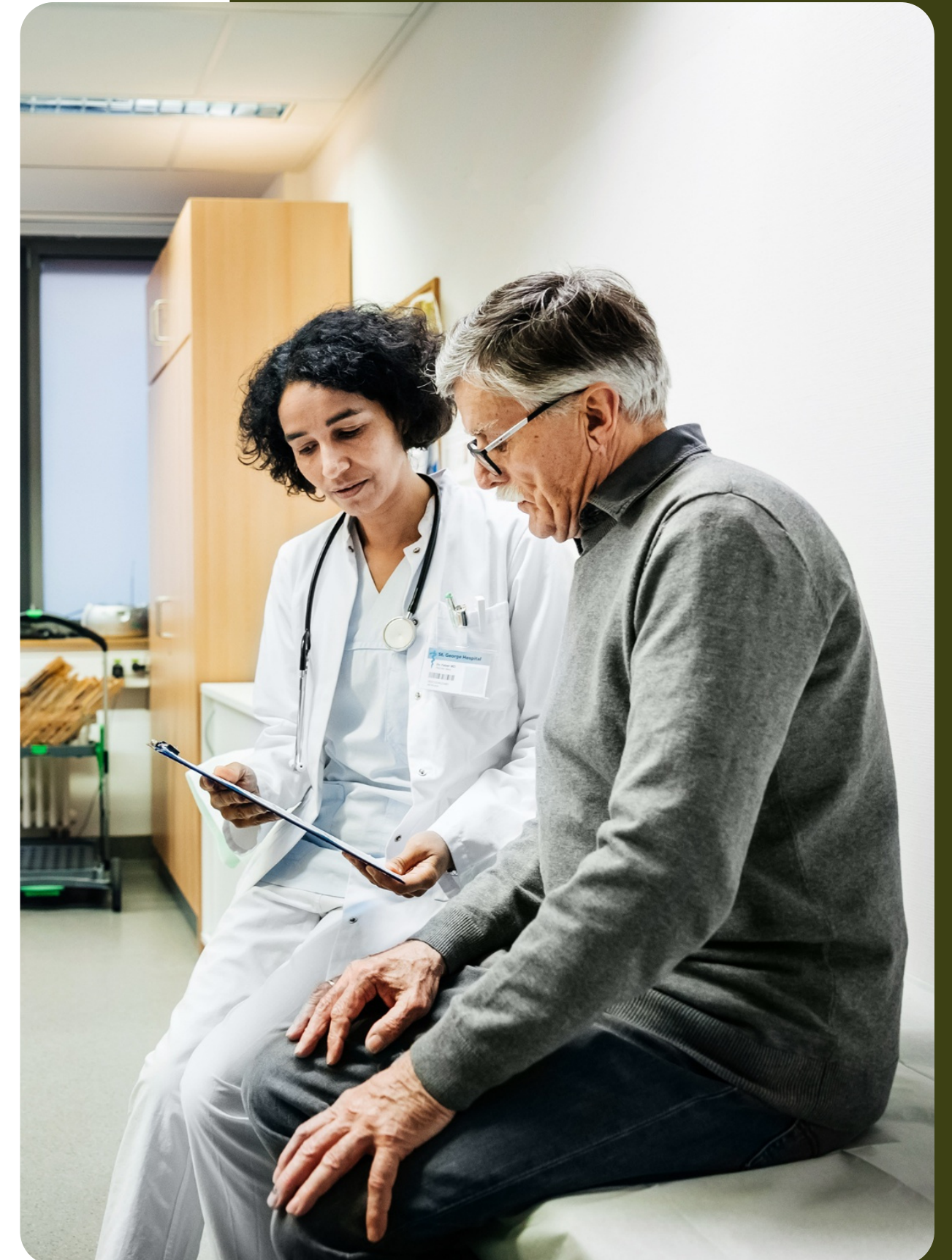
The Request for and **Authorization to Release Health Information (VA Form 10-5345)** is used when a Veteran wants VA to share their medical information with someone outside VA, such as:

- A non-VA clinician or hospital
- A lawyer or employer
- A family member or caregiver
- Any third-party organization the Veteran designates

Department of Veterans Affairs		REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION
PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT: The information requested on this form is solicited under Title 38 U.S.C. The form authorizes release of information in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164; 5 U.S.C. 552a; and 38 U.S.C. 5701 and 7332 that you specify. Your disclosure of the information requested on this form is voluntary. However, if information needed to locate records for release is not furnished completely and accurately, VA will be unable to comply with the request. The Veterans Health Administration may not condition the provision of treatment, payment, enrollment in the VA Health Care Program, or eligibility for benefits on the signing of an authorization, except for research-related treatment where an authorization for the use or disclosure of individually-identifiable health information for such research is required. VA may disclose the information that you put on the form as permitted by law. VA may make a "routine use" disclosure of the information as outlined in the Privacy Act system of records notices identified as 24VA10A7 "Patient Medical Record - VA", 08VA05 "Employee Medical File System Records (Title 38)-VA" and in accordance with the Notice of Privacy Practices. VA may also use this information to identify Veterans and person claiming or receiving VA benefits and their records, and for other purposes authorized or required by law.		
TO: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (Name and Location of the VA Health Care Facility)		
LAST NAME- FIRST NAME- MIDDLE NAME		DATE OF BIRTH (mm/dd/yyyy)
PATIENT'S MAILING ADDRESS (including City, State and Zip Code)		
NAME AND ADDRESS OF ORGANIZATION, INDIVIDUAL, OR TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM INFORMATION IS TO BE RELEASED		
PURPOSE(S) OR NEED: Information is to be used by the requestor for: ☐ TREATMENT ☐ BENEFITS ☐ LEGAL ☐ EMPLOYMENT ☐ OTHER (Please specify below):		
INFORMATION REQUESTED: Check applicable box(es) and state the extent or nature of information to be provided: ☐ HEALTH SUMMARY (Prior 2 Years) ☐ PATIENT MEDICAL RECORDS (Dates): ☐ INPATIENT DISCHARGE SUMMARY (Dates): ☐ PROGRESS NOTES: ☐ SPECIFIC CLINICS (Name & Date Range): ☐ SPECIFIC PROVIDERS (Name & Date Range): ☐ DATE RANGE: ☐ OPERATIVE/CLINICAL PROCEDURES (Name & Date): ☐ LAB RESULTS: ☐ SPECIFIC TESTS (Name & Date): ☐ DATE RANGE: ☐ RADIOLOGY REPORTS (Name & Date): ☐ LIST OF ACTIVE MEDICATIONS: ☐ VACCINATION (Dose, Lot Number, Date & Location): ☐ ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS: ☐ OTHER (Describe):		
VA FORM 10-5345		Page 1 of 2

VA Patient Advocate

- If you have a compliment, suggestion or concern regarding your care, first speak with your treatment team.
- Your treatment team includes your doctor, nurse, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, chaplain, therapist and other professionals associated with your medical care.
- If you feel your concerns are not being addressed by your treatment team, you may contact a VA Patient Advocate.



VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER

- A Veteran Service Officer (VSO) can help you file a claim or request a decision review, including helping you appeal a decision

- Find a VA accredited VSO here:
www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/find-rep



The screenshot shows the top of the VA website. The header is dark blue with the VA logo, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs seal, and the text 'U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs'. A search bar is in the top right. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: 'VA Benefits and Health Care', 'About VA', and 'Find a VA Location'. The main content area is white and shows a breadcrumb trail: 'VA.gov home > Get help from a VA accredited representative or VSO > Find a VA accredited representa...'. The main heading is 'Find a VA accredited representative or VSO'. Below this is a paragraph: 'An accredited attorney, claims agent, or Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative can help you file a claim or request a decision review. Use our search tool to find one of these types of accredited representatives to help you.' A note follows: 'Note: You'll need to contact the accredited representative you'd like to appoint to make sure they're available to help you.'

Elizabeth Dole Foundation



Elizabeth Dole Foundation offers a range of support services designed specifically for military and veteran caregivers and their families.

From mental health resources to peer support and financial assistance, EDF programs ensure caregivers have the tools, connection, and care they deserve.

hiddenheroes.org/meet-other-caregivers/ slide 18



**American
Red Cross**

Military and Veteran
Caregiver Network



Connect with caregiver peers to increase connection, engagement, knowledge, skills, and hope.

Created for caregivers by caregivers, the **Military and Veteran Caregiver Network (MVCN)** is your gateway to connect with caregivers from all eras, all relationships and all locations united in caring for someone who serves or served in the military.

www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/whole-health/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html

PSYCH ARMOR

UNDERSTANDING THE VA FOR CAREGIVERS

PSYCH/ARMOR®

About this course



Free



3 lessons



0 hours of video content

learn.psycharmor.org/courses/understanding-the-va-for-caregivers-2

RESPIRE FOR MILITARY & VETERAN CAREGIVERS

PSYCH/ARMOR®

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Start Learning

Partner With Us to Educate
Your Team

 30 Mins

 18 Lessons

learn.psycharmor.org/courses/take/respire-for-mil-vet-caregivers/lessons/46114945-what-is-respire-part-1

Key Take Aways

- Find your People
- Use your Voice
- Engage in Support

*Thank you for all you do to
care for the Veteran in
your life...*

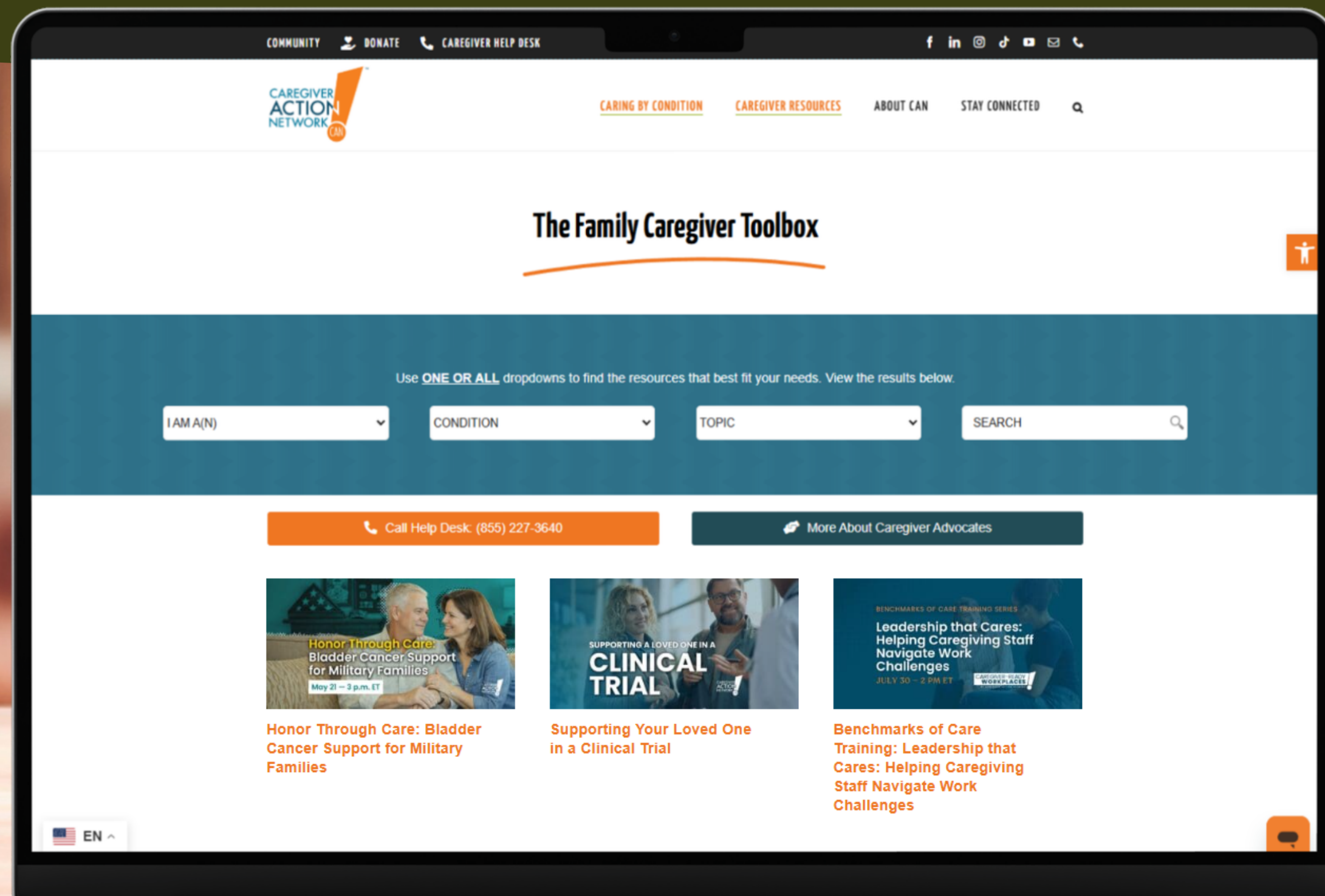


Caregiver Resources



Caregiver Action Network Family Caregiver Toolbox

CaregiverAction.org/toolbox





*Caregiving doesn't come with a manual.
But it does come with help.*

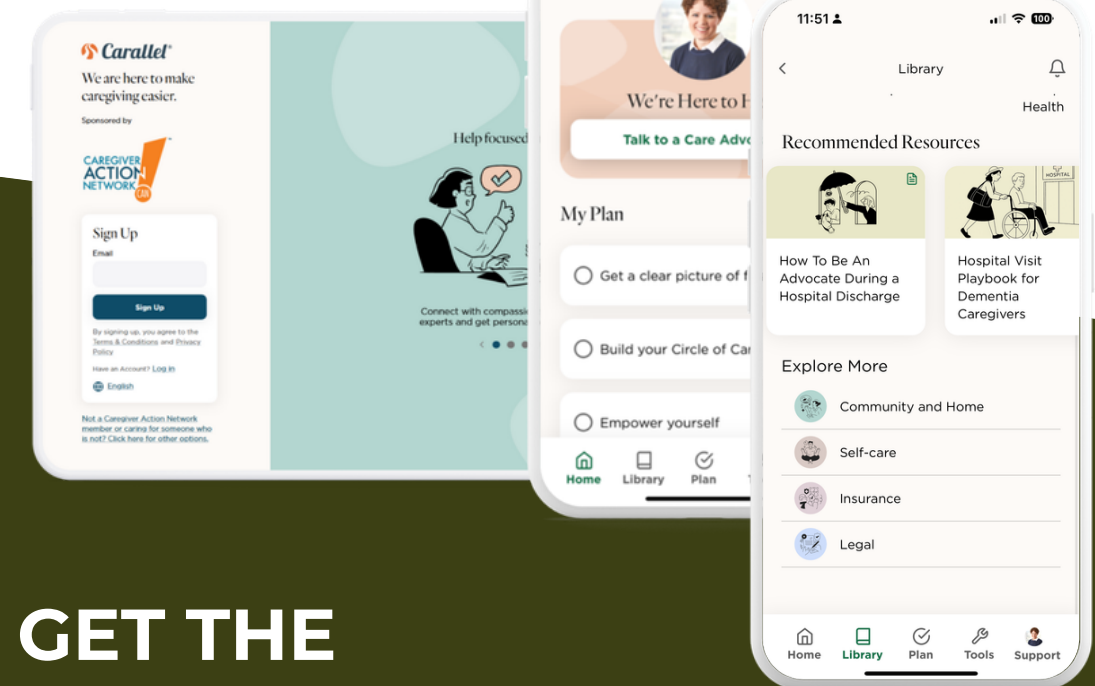
The National Caregiver Help Desk

Get advice from a caregiving expert, easy access to hundreds of resources, and a caregiving community...for free today!



**CAREGIVER
HELP DESK**
855.227.3640

CaregiverAction.org



**GET THE
FREE APP!**



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