

## **Fact Sheet - Caregiver Legislation**

### **May 2010**

- On May 5, President Barack Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 into law. The Act will allow VA to provide unprecedented benefits to caregivers who support the Veterans who have sacrificed for this Nation.
- Under the new law, primary caregivers of OEF/OIF Veterans may be eligible to receive a stipend and access to healthcare coverage if they are not already entitled to care or services under a health plan contract, including Medicare, Medicaid or worker's compensation. Mental health counseling, including marriage and family counseling, will also be provided. Caregivers may also be eligible for travel, lodging and per diem when they accompany the Veteran for care or attend training.
- The law includes comprehensive caregiver education and training on caring for a disabled Veteran and counseling services, as well as the development of a comprehensive interactive caregiver Website, [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov).
- Respite services are made available to caregivers up to 30 days per year (a benefit that is currently in place), as well as while designated family caregivers receive training.
- VA recognizes there is no blanket solution to implement the new provisions in the Act for Veterans and their caregivers, many of whom may reside in different regions and living situations across the country. This will require considerable time to implement and to ensure VA has the opportunity to work with Congress and Veteran stakeholders on the technical and budgetary challenges involved. Workgroups with subject matter experts are already addressing the clinical components of the new law, and VA will be submitting an implementation plan to Congress within 180 days for approval by the end of 2010.
- VA has not yet determined the amount of the stipend primary caregivers will receive. However, they will be based on the amount and degree of personal care services the Veteran requires and will be comparable to the cost of local caregiving services.
- VA is planning a national caregiver conference in July of 2010 which will provide education, training and direction to VA practitioners on best practices to provide support and services to caregivers of Veterans.
- Each VA medical center has designated a Caregiver Support Point of Contact to coordinate caregiver activities and serve as a resource expert for Veterans, their families and VA providers.

**-More-**

- VA has long advocated for caregivers as vital partners in providing care worthy of the sacrifices by America's Veterans and Servicemembers. For details on VA support programs for caregivers, look online at [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov). Several are already in place for all Veteran caregivers including:
  - **In-Home and Community Based Care:** This includes skilled home health care, homemaker home health aide services, community adult day health care and Home Based Primary Care.
  - **Respite care:** Designed to relieve the family caregiver from the constant burden of caring for a chronically ill or disabled Veteran at home, respite services can include in-home care, a short stay in an institutional setting or adult day health care.
  - **Caregiver education and training programs:** VA currently provides multiple training opportunities which include pre-discharge care instruction and specialized caregiver programs in multiple severe traumas such as Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders, and Blind Rehabilitation. VA has a caregiver assistance healthy living center on My HealthVet, [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov), as well as caregiver information on the VA's main Web page health site; both Websites include information on VA and community resources and caregiver health and wellness.
  - **Family support services:** These support groups can be face to face or on the telephone. They include family counseling, spiritual and pastoral care, family leisure and recreational activities and temporary lodging in Fisher Houses.
  - **Other benefits:** VA provides durable medical equipment and prosthetic and sensory aides to improve function, financial assistance with home modification to improve access and mobility, and transportation assistance for some Veterans to and from medical appointments.

X X X