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VETERANS Health MATTERS

WINTER 2024

Award Winning Wellness Magazine for VISN 8 Veterans
in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands



How Health & Wellness
Coaches Can Help You

Caring for Those Who
Care for Others

Understanding Veteran
Directed Care



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Veterans Health Matters is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail to: visn8communicationoffice@va.gov

Visit VISN 8 on the web:
department.va.gov/integrated-service-networks/visn-08

To Our Readers



Caregivers play a vital role in ensuring Veterans receive the best possible support to lead fulfilling lives. That's why the VA is committed to caring for our caregivers. VA's Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is here for caregivers of eligible Veterans enrolled in the VA's health care system. Read about the wide range of CSP helpful resources available on pages four and five.

Are you a Veteran seeking help with in-home personal care services? Veteran Directed Care may be a program that is right for you. You can learn about Veteran eligibility, support services, and more on page six.

We also want to remind Veterans that Health and Wellness Coaches, also called Whole Health Coaches, are available to assist you in setting goals related to your Whole Health, well-being, personal values, and lifestyle. Find out how Health and Wellness Coaches can help you achieve what matters most to you on page three.



Finally, try the word scramble puzzle and the tasty sweet potato apple bake recipe on page seven. And get ready for the new year by downloading the VISN 8 2025 Healthy Living! Calendar by clicking on this QR code.

Be well and stay safe!

David Isaacks, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 8



VA App Highlight: Stay Quit Coach

Stay Quit Coach is designed to help anyone who would like to quit or reduce the use of cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, cigars, and chewing tobacco.

Stay Quit Coach helps users identify their reasons for quitting, set goals, and track their progress over time. It provides information about tobacco use and nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Interactive tools help users cope with urges and motivational messages help users quit and stay tobacco-free.

The app can be used alone, but for maximum benefit, use Stay Quit Coach with the help of a counselor or health care provider. For more information about Stay Quit Coach, please visit **mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach**.

How Health & Wellness Coaches Can Help You

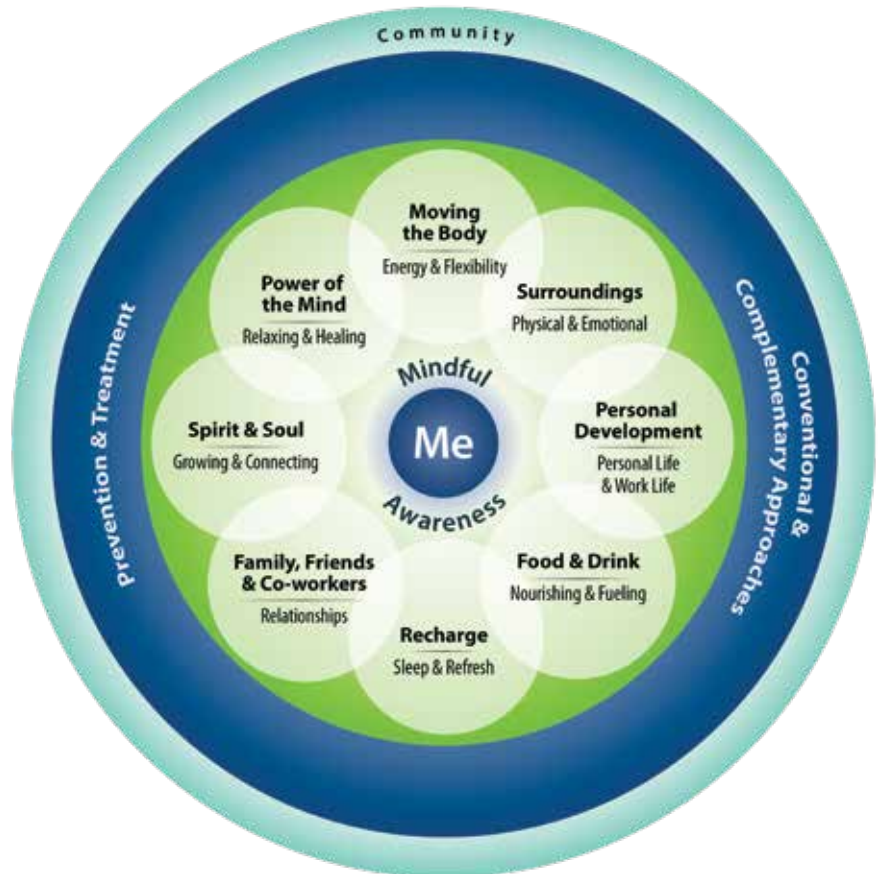


VA Health and Wellness Coaches, also known as Whole Health Coaches, empower Veterans to develop and achieve goals related to their health, well-being, and personal values, inspired by what matters most to the Veteran.

This empathetic connection helps Veterans feel heard, acknowledged, and inspired, enabling them to navigate difficult emotions, build resilience, and find the motivation to persist in their journey.

Health and Wellness Coaches often use Veterans' Personal Health Plans (PHP) to help guide and hold Veterans accountable for their health and wellness goals.

A PHP starts with Veterans completing a Personal Health Inventory (PHI). A PHI helps Veterans decide what really matters in their lives and what goals they want to achieve relative to the eight self-care areas identified on VA's Whole Health Circle of Health.



The eight Whole Health areas of self-care include:

- Moving the Body: Energy and Flexibility
- Surroundings: Physical and Emotional
- Personal Development: Personal Life and Work Life
- Food and Drink: Nourishing and Refueling
- Recharge: Sleep and Refresh
- Family, Friends, and Co-workers: Relationships
- Spirit and Soul: Growing and Connecting
- Power of the Mind: Relaxing and Healing



To complete your PHI and to learn more about Health and Wellness Coaching, please visit www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH. To get started with a Health and Wellness Coach today, please speak with your primary care team.

Caring for Those Who Care for Others

Caregivers play a vital role in ensuring Veterans receive the best possible care to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. Their dedication goes far beyond the physical aspects of care with compassion, patience, and understanding. Caregiving for Veterans can be both challenging and rewarding.

VA's Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is here to support those who care for our nation's heroes. With a wide range of resources, trainings, services, and tools, the CSP can assist you in caregiving, help you navigate challenges, and support your physical and emotional well-being.

The Caregiver Support Program is made up of two separate programs: the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) and the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC).

Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)

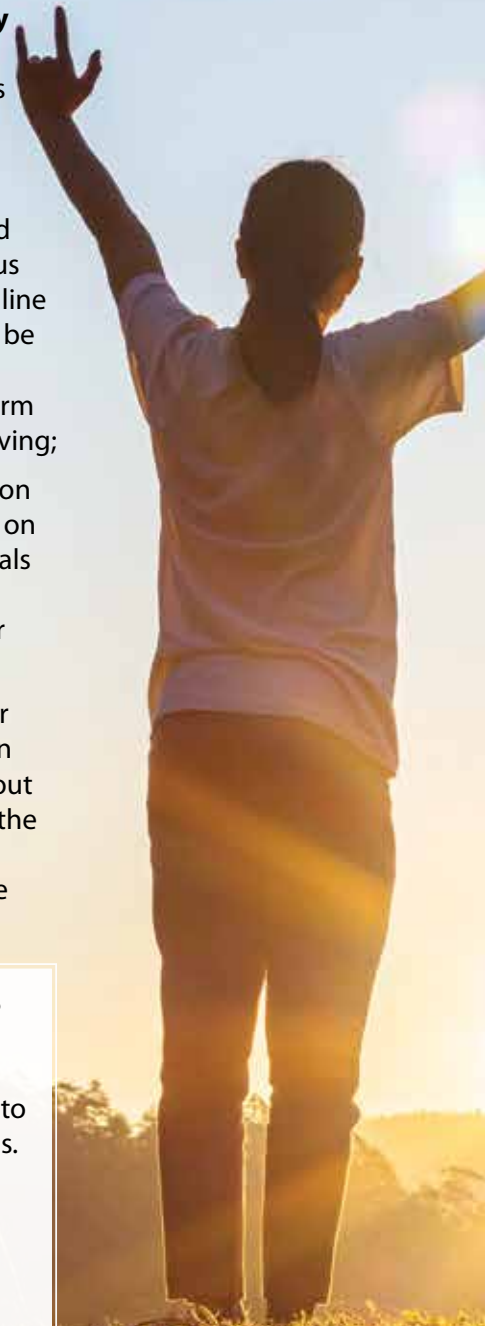
This is VA's core CSP program that provides caregivers with peer support mentoring, skills training, coaching, telephone support, online programs, and referrals to local resources. You do not need to be a relative or live with a Veteran to become a caregiver to access this program. The PGCSS is for any individual who provides personal care services to Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system.

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

This program includes all of the resources of the PGCSS and more. This program is for Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury or illness in the line of duty. Veterans may be eligible if they have:

- An inability to perform an activity of daily living;
- A need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of a 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.

Eligible caregivers who enroll in either the PGCSS or PCAFC can also participate in VA's Building Better Caregivers (BBC) program. This program offers a free, six-week online workshop designed to train caregivers to provide better care for Veterans. The BBC program helps caregivers learn how to manage their own emotions, stress, and physical health. This includes six, self-paced lessons, facilitator guidance, and caregiver peer support.



Caregiver Self-Care Matters

Caregiver self-care is the practice of taking care of one's own physical, emotional, and mental health while providing care for our Veterans. It involves activities that help caregivers recharge, reduce stress, and maintain their well-being.

The CSP offers a wide range of self-care services and resources for caregivers, such as:

- VA Caregiver Support Line (CSL)

- Caregiver Support Program Teams available at each VA Medical Center
- Peer support
- Respite care
- Podcasts that cover vital topics, like how to manage anger, address loneliness, and learn to create a healthy work-life balance
- Health and Wellness Coaches who offer guidance in developing personalized health plans based on the caregiver's values, needs, and preferences
- Annie Caregiver Text Support App that sends caregivers messages to help manage stress, take better care of themselves, manage dementia-related behaviors, and cope with bereavement
- Self-care activities, such as journaling and meditation guides
- Handouts offering coping techniques for common struggles caregivers face

If you're caring for a Veteran and want to learn more about self-care, visit the VA Caregiver Support homepage, www.caregiver.va.gov, to access these resources. Remember, when caregivers make it a priority to care for themselves, they're also investing in the quality of care for our Veterans.



Caregiver Support Line

Whether you're in need of immediate assistance or have questions about what services you may be eligible for, the caring responders on the Caregiver Support Line can help.

VA's National Caregiver Support Line is available for caregivers, family members, friends, Veterans, and community partners to contact for any information related to caregiving. Call this toll-free number (855-260-3274) to learn more about VA's extensive caregiver support services and resources.



Watch the Video!

Check out the video "Caring for Those Who Care for Others: VA Caregiver Support Program" by scanning this QR code.



Understanding Veteran Directed Care

Veteran Directed Care allows Veterans of all ages to receive the home and community-based services they need in a consumer-directed way.

This program is for Veterans who need personal care services and help with daily living activities. It is also for Veterans who are isolated or whose caregivers are experiencing a burden.

Veterans in this program are given a budget for services that are managed by the Veteran or the Veteran's representative. With the help of a counselor, Veterans hire their workers to meet their daily needs and help them live at home or in their community.

Who is Eligible?

All enrolled Veterans are eligible for Veteran Directed Care if they are eligible for community care, meet the clinical criteria for the service, and it is available. Services may vary according to location.



Available Services

Services are based on assessed needs. Veterans can talk with a VA social worker to find out what specific help they may be able to receive. As a part of this program, Veterans or their representatives receive help developing a spending plan and hiring workers. This might include their own family member or neighbor to help Veterans thrive and live independently.

Examples of daily activities Veterans may be able to receive help with include:

- Eating
- Getting dressed
- Personal grooming
- Bathing
- Using the bathroom
- Moving from one place to another
- Grocery shopping

Is Veteran Directed Care Right for You?

Veterans can use the Veteran Decision Aid for Care at home or in the community to help them determine what home or long-term care services may best meet their needs now or in the future. You can access this helpful decision aid at www.va.gov/geriatrics/docs/Veteran_Decision_Aid.pdf.

There's also a Caregiver Self-Assessment available at www.va.gov/geriatrics/docs/Caregiver_Self_Assessment.pdf. It can help caregivers identify their own needs and decide how much support they can offer. This information, along with the involvement of care teams and social workers, can help Veterans make the best short-term and long-term care decisions.

If Veteran-Directed Care seems right for you, talk with your VA social worker to find out if it is available in your location.

Word Scramble

Unscramble these words that appear in this issue of **Veterans Health Matters**.

HOCAC _____

NGAEHLI _____

VIGERCAER _____

YERNUOJ _____

POPSURT _____

HTBAIGN _____

ALICNLCL _____

DLOENREL _____

CIAIONDET _____

Sweet Potato & Apple Bake

INGREDIENTS

3-1/2 cups canned sweet potatoes, drained (save 2 tablespoons of the canned liquid)

2 cups apples (peeled, cored, and cut into bite-sized pieces)

2 tablespoons brown sugar, packed

1/3 cup chopped nuts (pecans, walnuts, or any other type)

2 tablespoons flour

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted



DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Put sweet potatoes and apples in baking dish and toss together.
3. Pour 2 tablespoons of the sweet potato liquid over the mixture.
4. Mix brown sugar, nuts, flour, and butter together and sprinkle over the potato/apple mixture.
5. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, until the top is golden brown.

Nutritional information: (6 servings). Per serving: 230 calories, 8 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 38 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 3 g protein, and 64 mg sodium.

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Farmington Hills, MI 48334

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(800) 345-2476 – press 5 for English or press 6 for Spanish



VISN 8 Office of Communication
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
 Tampa, FL 33612



2025 Calendars Are Here!

Pick up yours during your next visit or visit [department.va.gov/integrated-service-networks/vsn-08](https://www.department.va.gov/integrated-service-networks/vsn-08) to download it in English or Spanish.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network



The Right Care, Right Now
1-877-741-3400
 24/7/365 Virtual Urgent Care

NOTE: This map shows medical center locations only and associated service areas. To locate a VA healthcare center, outpatient clinic, or community based outpatient clinic near you, please use VA's facility locator at: www.va.gov/find-locations.

Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center
 1201 NW 16th Street
 Miami, FL 33125
 305-575-7000 • 888-276-1785
www.va.gov/miami-health-care

C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center
 10000 Bay Pines Blvd.
 Bay Pines, FL 33744
 727-398-6661 • 888-820-0230
www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
 Tampa, FL 33612
 813-972-2000 • 888-716-7787
www.va.gov/tampa-health-care

Lake City VA Medical Center
 619 South Marion Avenue
 Lake City, FL 32025
 386-755-3016 • 800-308-8387
www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care

Malcom Randall VA Medical Center
 1601 SW Archer Road
 Gainesville, FL 32608
 352-376-1611 • 800-324-8387
www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care

Orlando VA Healthcare System
 13800 Veterans Way
 Orlando, FL 32827
 407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521
www.va.gov/orlando-health-care

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
 7305 North Military Trail
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