

# Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program

*Guidelines, Eligibility, Getting Connected*



**VA**



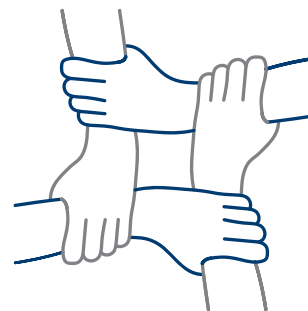
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## Goal:

The Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program was developed to:

- Strengthen relationships between caregivers
- Provide caregivers with networking opportunities
- Empower caregivers to help one another



The Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program provides an opportunity for caregivers to receive guidance and to share their experience, wisdom, skills, and passion with other caregivers.

In addition to providing support, the Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program also helps caregivers establish relationships with each other and create a comfort zone for support. Caregivers offer invaluable knowledge, information, and perspective on the joys and challenges of caring for ill or injured Veterans.

## What is Peer Support Mentoring?

Peer Support Mentoring is a support program where caregiver Mentors are matched with caregivers who are interested in talking with more experienced caregivers. Caregiver Mentors will have access to training, ongoing support, and consultation with the National Peer Mentoring Support Program Manager. As a caregiver Mentor, you will be asked to contact the caregiver you have been matched with on a monthly basis and to make a commitment to the Program's requirements.

## Mentoring Can Provide:

- Personalized guidance, based on experience and knowledge
- Friendship
- Strong practices from those who have been there



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](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)

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



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## Peer Mentor

### Why Become a Peer Mentor?

Mentoring creates a trusting and helpful relationship between two people. Peer Mentors provide mentees personal support, assist with navigation of daily stressors, and can be role models for individuals who need help.

Because caregivers face many challenges, it can help to talk with someone who has “been there” and understands the pressures that come with being a caregiver.

### Benefits of Serving as a Peer Mentor

- Sharing tips about caregiving that you have learned through personal own experience.
- Sharing experience and knowledge of resources such as VA benefits, the VA healthcare team and community agencies that can provide needed assistance.
- Providing an outlet for socializing and networking.
- Helping caregivers build life skills to deal with adversity in the future.

### Becoming a Peer Mentor

There are just four steps to becoming a caregiver Mentor.

1. Connect with the National Program Manager to review the Peer Support Mentoring Program criteria.
2. Register as a Volunteer and receive orientation in the Center for Development and Civic Engagement (formerly Voluntary Service Program) at your VA medical center.
3. Complete the orientation to the Peer Support Mentoring Program.
4. Be matched with another caregiver.

## Peer Mentee

### Why Become a Peer Mentee?

Being the caregiver of a Veteran is full of challenges. VA has developed a Peer Support Mentoring Program to link you to a peer — someone who has experienced similar challenges and situations — to provide you with additional support and guidance along your journey.

### Benefits of Being a Peer Mentee

- Creating an outlet for socializing and networking.
- Learning from the experience and support of those who understand the challenges caregivers face.
- Receiving support from someone who has “been there.”

### Being matched with a Peer Mentor

Caregivers interested in having a Peer Mentor will be matched with an appropriate peer. All caregivers involved in the VA Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program will have an opportunity to talk with a Peer Mentor to discuss the Peer Support Mentoring Program.



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## Eligibility Criteria

- Caregivers of Veterans of all eras are eligible to participate in the VA Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program, both as Mentors and as Mentees and must be enrolled in the CSP Program.
- Mentors will be required to participate in training before being assigned to a Mentee.
- Background and fingerprint checks are required for Mentors through the local VA medical center Voluntary Services Department.

## How Can I Connect with the Peer Support Mentoring Program?

Your local Caregiver Support Coordinator can assist you with a referral. Caregiver Support Coordinators serve to assist Veterans and caregivers access VA services and benefits as well as local community resources. To identify a local Caregiver Support Coordinator, contact your local VA medical center or use the locator link on the caregiver website: [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)

*“When my wife was medically separated from the Army, it became clear I would have to step up my engagement as a husband and become a caregiver,” said Volker Brunke, caregiver to an Army Veteran. “Being an Army husband made me realize very quickly that a husband as a caregiver for a soldier isn’t common. I pretty much felt truly alone. But because of VA, I started to learn about the caregiver program and this program helped me to not only get my caregiver certifications but also enabled me to become part of the mentor program.”*



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## Contact Your Local Caregiver Support Team at:

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