

June 12, 2018: VA System of Care

>>> We will be starting in five minutes. Welcome everybody to our webinar. We will go ahead and get started. My name is

Nanette, and I manage the national information and referral support center. It is administered from the administration for community webbing. I would like to welcome listeners, to today's webinar. This is on the Department of veteran affairs caregiver support program. And the VA Caregiver Support Line Program Coordinator. I would like to cover some housekeeping items before we get started.

The slides, audio recording, and a transcript from today's webinar will be posted on the website within the next several days. Please visit the national support Center project on the website and visit our webpage. The web link is also posted in the chat box for your reference. If you scroll up a little bit, you will see that we have the link right there for you. All of our listeners are on mute during the webinar to reduce background noise. We welcome your questions in the Q & A pod that is available on your screen. Please feel free to submit your questions at any time during today's presentation. We will address the questions following the presentation. We also have real-time captioning for today's webinar. On your screen, you should see a media viewer panel on the bottom right where the captioning will appear. You can minimize this panel, or you can have it open, it will not block the slide presentation. You may need to enter your name and organization and click submit in order to view the captioning in the media viewer.

Serving veterans caregivers with information, assistance, and other support is an important component of work with an aging aging and disability networks. More family caregivers are turning to information referral and assistance or I and are a programs for help

connecting with ordinations and organizations that help veterans and understanding the services that they may provide can be helpful to INRA professionals. Can also be helpful to understand national resources. I am pleased that we have an opportunity today to learn about VA Caregiver Support, including the caregiver support line. For this, we are joined by Christy Reynolds. She is the program coordinator with the VA Caregiver Support Line Program Coordinator. I am going to turn over to you to get started with our presentation.

Inc. you so much. Thank you for having me on your call today. Thank you for joining. Good afternoon, and possibly good morning to some of you. As said, I am Christy Reynolds, the program coordinator at the VA Caregiver Support Line Program Coordinator. I wanted to talk today about the support light, and the services that we's -- we provide, but I also wanted to support about VA supported services for veterans who need a

caregiver, as well as the caregiver support program and what services are available specifically for caregivers through the VA. I wasn't sure that the audience was familiar with the VA support services, and how to connect your clients with those support services, so I thought I would support -- start there. There are number of supportive services available to veterans. The VA has contracts with nursing homes, their community living centers and nursing homes on VA

campuses. There are adult day health programs, home-based primary care when the primary care team goes to the veterans home. They can manage the care at the veterans home if they are homebound. There are also specialty clinics, adaptive equipment, hospice care, home telehealth, respite care to give the caregiver a break, a homemaker slash home health aide -- homemaker and home health aide, skilled homecare, for antibiotics, or wound care, and then family support services. The services have been in place and available for some time throughout the VA. They are for veterans who are enrolled and eligible for VA healthcare. I'm going to speak briefly about enrolling a veteran and how a veteran can apply for veteran healthcare. Basically, if a veteran is eligible, they are set up with a timely care provider. The primary care provider is part of the patient aligned care team.

If anyone is familiar with the VA, we use a lot of acronyms, so they call this, PAC T. Every veteran has access to a social worker. Basically, the primary care provider and primary care team, would help to determine, what services are available at that time for the veteran. They will evaluate the veterans clinical eligibility for services, and if they need help with bathing, dressing, etc. They will address making referrals. The social worker current -- can also help with making connections in the community. If that support is not available at that time, for that particular veteran, they will help to connect the veteran and their caregiver with support in the community. They serve as a case manager. If you are working with a caregiver of a veteran or a veteran themselves, and they need help connecting with services and support, it is best to either have them talk to their doctor, at their next appointment, or they can call the VA, and ask to speak to a social worker that is connected to their Dr. They can give their doctors name, and ask for that social worker, and the operator can connect them. How to access services? Veterans have to be enrolled, and they have to be eligible for VA healthcare benefits. A veteran can apply for benefits -- healthcare benefits by filling out the 1010EZ application. I listed it there, there are three different ways that they can do that. They can apply online, they can apply over the phone, or they can go in person to their local VA eligibility and enrollment office. There is a link on the PowerPoint, where you can find the facility within that veterans area. You can go to that link, and find that facility so that the veteran can apply in person. If a veteran is eligible, they are placed in priority groups, there is a test that is affiliated with the application process. They have to give priority to those veterans who have serious injuries, or illness related to their time in service. Those veterans are in priority group 1, and so on and so forth down to priority group 8. If they are eligible, they will be scheduled for the payment with a primary care physician where they can talk about the services. Any VA medical center has service centers who help veterans to apply, and many of them also collaborate with local veterans services organizations. Those folks can also help them apply for benefits and services. I'm going to pause now, there will be time at the end for question and answer. Feel free to submit in the Q & A pod, but also jot down and make sure to write down any questions that you might have. Now I will speak about the caregiver support program. This is a newer program, where the VA is supporting specifically, the caregivers of veterans. In 2010, President Obama, had signed the caregiver and Omnibus health services act. In that act,

it stated, the VA has to provide enhanced services to caregivers of better -- veterans. There are two parts to the caregiver program. There is the VA program of general support services, and this program is available to caregivers of veterans of any era of any war era. Then there is the program of comprehensive assistance for caregivers which is specifically for eligible post 9/11 veterans. I'm going to start with an overview of the services available through the VA program of general support. Again, veterans do have to be enrolled in the VA healthcare system for caregivers to access the services. The VA has a caregiver website that contains tips and tools, videos, and resources. I will do a thorough review of the website later on. The VA also has a collaboration with building better caregivers, which is a six week online workshop for caregivers. Caregivers login and they can connect communicate with each other over the Internet, they complete workbooks and activities to learn more about caring for themselves, we also have a national support line. This is the program that I managed. We offer monthly telephone education calls. There is an overall theme of care for the caregiver. I will not go into detail on that right now, because I will speak to that a little bit later in the presentation. The VA also offers self-care courses, which are in person classroom trainings . Topics include managing stress, problem-solving, taking care of yourself, and lose -- using technology. We also have a peer support mentoring program. So officer, caregivers feel isolated in their situation. We hear from caregivers all the time, that the peer-to-peer connection, is the most helpful for them. Because, they realize that they are not alone. They realize that there are others who are experiencing the same things , they can share ideas on how to better cope with challenges of caregiving. The peer support mentoring program is where and mentor, and a mentee, are connected. They offer an informal support network. The last, is the REACH VA intervention program. It stands for resources for enhancing all caregivers health. It is a clinical staff that will provide ongoing support to a caregiver. They provide support to caregivers of veterans with PTSD, dementia, ALS, and a variety of disabilities that the veteran may have. They also hold general telephone support or group sessions to offer that support to caregivers as well. Next, I'm going to move into the program of assistance. The program is available for caregivers of veterans of any era. The program of comprehension assistant for family caregivers is specifically for veterans who have sustained or aggravated a serious injury, including brain injuries, PTSD, or other mental disorders. And then that injury had to have been from the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. I don't know if anyone has heard in the media, but they do have recently President Trump, a law to expand this program to veterans of all eras. The VA has to come up with the implementation plan to work with Congress to rule that out. As of now, the eligibility remains the same, but in the future, it will be expanded to veterans of all eras to apply for this program. The veteran has to need assistance with at least one or more activities of daily living, and also need supervision or protection based on symptoms of neurological impairment or injury. An application is required to apply for this program. It is a dual application, meaning both the veteran and the caregiver apply. The application to complete, is VA form 1010 CG. Then there is a process of eligibility. They have a review, that the injury sustained after September 11, does the veteran need a caregiver, there is a caregiver

assessment? Then there is training that the caregiver has to complete, and then a home visit. If eligible for this program, the primary caregiver of the veteran can receive a stipend allowance, or monthly payment for caring for the veteran, health insurance coverage if they don't already have it, travel reimbursement, mental health services, no less than 30 days of respite, and training and education. This is in addition to those other general support services that I had mentioned.

Next, I want to talk about the role of caregiver support court -- coordinators. There is a

caregiver support coordinator located every VA medical center in the country. Their licensed professionals, typically nurses social workers, psychologists. They serve as the subject matter expert for caregiving needs. They help to advocate for caregivers within their facility. They help to educate

the VA staff on caregiver needs, and in incorporating the caregivers into veterans care plan. They also assist with referring caregivers to services for which they are eligible. They also provide them information on resources that can assist with their needs. I have had a couple of people already reach out to me and wanting to collaborate more with the VA. Because I'm manager national program, and we are national call center, we to collaborate on a local level. But the caregiver support coordinator in your area would be the great point of contact for you if you have a caregiver program within your agency, or if you provide a support to veterans or caregivers, they would be a great resource for you to connect with. I have a hyperlink, directly to the VA caregiver website, where you can enter your ZIP Code. On the website, when you entered the ZIP Code, facilities in your area will populate. It will give the name of the facility, how far away it is from that ZIP Code, and then it will list the support coordinator information and those phone numbers go directly to their office. I encourage you to take a look at the website and if you wanted to collaborate with the VA, or have a point of contact, or introduce yourself, feel free to reach out to them. They help caregivers to apply for the program of comprehensive assistance, they are the ones that facilitate that application process. They also enroll the caregivers in the general support program, and help to make referrals to those various services within that program. >> Now I'm going to the caregiver support line. I have our phone number listed here. We have social workers that answer our calls and provide our service. If you ever have a caregiver or veteran that you are working with, and they are needing some health -- help and assistance. As you know the VA is a huge system to navigate and sometimes very difficult. They can certainly help you.

Are social workers can help to provide them with information, they can help to provide them with a referral to the caregiver support coordinator. I just wanted to say that, and move into talking about the caregiver support line. We opened on Fairbury first, 2011. I want to show a few pictures of our call center. We recently moved to a new space, but we are located at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center. If anyone is familiar with this Lake region in upstate New York, that is where this is. Here's a picture of Regina who is one of our social work which -- responders. That is her doing her work, and a picture of some

of our call center. Our services are provided by social workers, and the reason is this that within social workers scope of practice, they are able to dig a little bit deeper. They complete thorough assessments of callers and their needs. They can make direct referrals to various services and support. They can also provide that supportive counseling, this is really what caregivers are needing, someone to talk to, someone to process the issues that they are having with someone in their family. Someone may not be supportive of the care that they give the veteran. Are social workers can provide in-depth assessment, and understanding of the caregiver situation and help to provide them with information and resources and referrals. They talk to caregivers about burnout, and the importance of self-care. They also help them apply for the program of comprehensive assistance by mailing applications. They also make direct referrals to various supportive services such as building better caregivers, support mentoring, telephone education groups, and the REACH VA.

Next I want to talk about our telephone education groups. We hold monthly telephone education groups, where we present a topic. We have presented many different topics, but some include, talking about self-care, PTSD, we presented one in December on rituals in the holiday season and helping caregivers to find ways to cope with the stress of the holiday season. We present on intimacy in relationships, communication, goalsetting, basically, caregivers have to register for these calls. I'm -- they dialin to a one 800 number, and it is called Vance, they dialin, and then -- enter a access code to listen to the call. The presentation is usually about 30 to 40 minutes, and then there is time at the end for caregivers to share comments or questions. What we have found, is that peer-to-peer support is the most valuable to them. We also hold quarterly caregiver led

calls where a caregiver is chosen to share their story. These stories have really been inspiring, not only for the caregivers who are listening, but also for staff. In February, we piloted a small group discussion, after one of our presentations, we have up to 30 caregivers that can participate in a smaller group. On our caregiver calls, we have at least 100 participants each time. As you can imagine, the discussion portion can be very chaotic with 100 disciplines who can't see each other to raise their hand and can't see when someone is about to speak. So we have started the smaller groups so that caregivers can further talk about a certain topic and explore. The reason I wanted to talk about this, is because veterans do have to be enrolled in the VA healthcare system, and they do have to be registered. If you're working with a caregiver or a veteran, and you know that they go to the VA, feel free to pass our phone number along, and our social workers can assist with making the referral to these groups. The can also provide them with information about what the topics are that are coming up, the dates and times that they are being held, and everything like that.

I wanted to share some of our statistics. The program started on Fairbury first, 2011. But we have had over 363,000 calls. We average about 225 calls per day when we did a presentation for the eldercare locator, that is significantly less than what they are used to. Are

social workers do spend at least 20 minutes on every phone call. They assess the situation, talk with the caregiver, provide support, and then make referrals. We have made over 50,000 referrals to the local caregiver support coordinators. We do this through an electronic database. We send the referral, electronically, and then the caregiver support coordinator follows up with the caregiver typically within five business days. We have responded to 10,000 online inquiries. The caregiver veteran can submit an email, and we will respond that way via email or phone call, whichever they prefer. The most frequent category of color in the relationship to the veteran is the spouse. That is in line with the statistics. Top reasons for calling, as needing in-home support services, information about benefits, general caregiver support and education,

eligibility for that program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers, and assistance with the application for that program, and navigating the VA system. The top three states with the most calls are California, Florida, and Texas. Our telephone education group since 2012, when we started those groups, we have had over 70,000 participants. We really have been able to reach a wide range of caregivers from all over the country and from all over the world. I think when they started the caregiver support line, we didn't realize that we were tapping into an unmet need. I don't think anyone suspected that the program would be this successful, and that caregivers would need the support.

Next, I want to go through a couple of scenarios. When you talk about the caregiver support line, sometime it is hard to grasp the concept. We are not a crisis center, nor are we an information and referral source. Because we have social workers answering the phones, we really can provide that in-depth support and assessment and then help to connect caregivers and veterans with needed services. In scenario one, Hello, I am calling to find out more about the caregiver program. I heard from a friend that my wife can get paid for everything she does for me. I got on 2011. I have PTSD, and she has quit her job to stay home with me. Is there a program that can help me and my wife? For this particular veteran, we would talk about the program of comprehensive assistance. Because the veteran said that they were discharged post 9/11, and that they were diagnosed with PTSD, we can also talk about being connected, are you able to work? Are you

aware of unemployability? That we would help them to get connected to the veteran benefit administration, then we would then talk to the veteran if they were engaged in mental health treatment at the VA? Then we would ask about the barriers to access that. How's that going? How is your wife doing? How's it being a care recipient? We would really dig a little bit deeper in talking about what is going on with the veteran, right then and assessing what his pending needs are and then helping to connect the veteran with the caregiver support for Nader, or mailing an application for the program, helping to connect them with their local primary care physician, so that they can seek mental health treatment or what have you. There's a lot that goes into each call. In scenario two, I don't know if I'm calling the right place, I'm just so tired and I need some help. My husband has Alzheimer's disease, and I take care of him. He can be left alone, last

week he left the stove on, forgot about it, and almost at the house on fire. He has wandered outside, gotten confused, and ended up on our neighbor's doorstep. I just want some time to myself. I can't be responsible for him 24/7. I feel more like his mother than his wife. Now my granddaughters getting married in another state, and I don't want to miss it, but I don't think he can make the trip. It be so good to just spend a few days away from my family, but I can't leave him. Is there anything out there to help me? I feel trapped. In this situation, there's a lot going on. This caregiver is needing a break, so respite care and offering information about that would be done. Also, we would talk about resources that might help with wandering and connecting with the Alzheimer's Association. Then there is also a lot of emotional support within this phone call. Talking to the caregiver about how

the relationship with the veteran has changed, are there issues with intimacy? How do you feel connected to the veteran now? Also talking about feeling trapped, or possibly isolated or alone and exploring those feelings. Talking about any informal support, is there a friend or neighbor that might be able to sit with the veterans so that you can get an hour a week to yourself? There are a lot

of issues that we can explore in each of our phone calls. There is a lot of information that we provide. Again, some of these can just be the listening ear. Veterans are often much sicker and need care for longer than nonveterans. The VA caregiver support program was designed to offer that support to caregivers who are so valuable in being part of the treatment team and caring for the veterans in their homes and in the community.

>> Next I want to touch on the caregiver website. This is a great resource, not only for yourself, but also for the veterans and caregivers that you work with. One thing that I want to say is that I really encourage you, if you don't do this already, to ask your client if they are veteran. Or if they are caring for veteran. So often, we hear about veterans who have never applied or enrolled in the VA healthcare benefits such as disability compensation, or pension. It is so important to ask. Sometimes veterans think that they don't know if they are eligible, or they have never done in the past, it is never too late to look into the VA and see what is available. I really encourage you to start asking. I have worked with a lot of veterans in the community, and I never really had thought about it until I worked with this one veteran, who was very well connected to the VA. There were a number of resources that we were able to access for that veteran because he was connected with the VA. The VA caregiver website has many tips, tools, videos, links to resources for caregivers and you can find the caregiver support coordinator. There is contact information for that person in your local area. We also have links to our telephone education groups recording and handouts. If the caregiver is not able to attend a training in real-time, they can access recordings on her website. We have one on caring for a veteran for the for the LGBTQ community. We have one on family relationships. How to set boundaries, meditations that caregivers can access, and they are 15 minutes long, they can quickly listen to a meditation, and there also tips and tools on the website such as how to manage medication, how to talk to your provider, and there are self-care activities for caregivers. We have a activity where caregivers will complete a four week long activity every

day, and they record their physical, mental, emotional health. They have found it really helpful to take that time each day, for four weeks, so that they can have some self-care. There is also information on emergency preparedness, which we had for disseminating information over the last year. Particularly with the hurricanes, and things going on, this was something that we added to our website. There is also a video series on dementia, and collaboration with the office of rural health, that are very health -- helpful for those who have to manage difficult behaviors in dementia. I encourage you to look at the website. If the caregiver has any questions, our phone number is on every page of the website. They can certainly just give us a phone call and we are happy to help them.

Caregiver support is just a phone call away, our hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 8 PM, Eastern standard Time.

Our phone number is one, 855, 260, 3274. Our number is toll-free, and we are happy to take any calls, and please pass our number on to your clients, or any veterans or caregivers that you are working with. That is all in my formal presentation. I am happy to open it up, or take any questions that you may have.

>> Thank you for sharing so much information on the program, and the caregiver support line. This sounds very similar to how information referral and assistant services are progressing in the disability field as well. Our specialists are often providing comprehensive and in-depth support, counseling and other efforts. This can be very ongoing. I think this is the thing that is certainly reflected in our work. I'm wondering if there are -- how many staff you have on the support line?

We have 20 social workers, and because we are open from 8 AM to 8 PM, we have shifts, so that we can cover times that are busiest in call volume. We have three social service assistants, one of them helps with group registration and two of them typically are completing outgoing satisfaction calls. When we receive a call from a caregiver, we follow up with them to see if they are satisfied with the support that we provided. We also talk to them if there are any other unmet needs. If we gave them a phone number, and they couldn't reach the person, we offer them additional support at that time. We have to shift supervisors who work on day-to-day operations with the staff. We have one supervisor who is responsible for training and education of the staff, and also developing the telephone education group. Then we have a lead supervisor who is responsible for any personnel, or staff things that. Then there is myself as the program court Nader. We also have a national program manager out of VA Central office, who is a direct support to the caregiver support line as well.

Before I turn to questions, I want to follow up on something that you mentioned at the end of your slides. You talked about the importance of asking the questions. That reminded me of a webinar that was held recently. One of the states was New Hampshire that has a whole campaign that is called ask the question. They have different types of resources, and wondered if this was an issue for any other programs that are

joining us on the webinar today. There may be some helpful resources , such as the one from New Hampshire that helps and actually phrasing the question. I do have a website that is helpful to focus on the question. Ask the question and H.com. --

Askthequestionnh.com. I want to address the questions that came in on the chat box. One of our listeners asks, my clients are with the veteran directive home and community-based services program. If my client

is accessing respite care, how does that affect the program benefits?

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This might be asking about cross program issues?

Yes, I'm not real familiar with the criteria for the veteran directive home and community-based service program . Honestly, I am not sure if it would impact, because in my understanding for the veteran directive, it is not that the person is getting paid for 24 hours a day. So I would assume that they might be able to access some respite services from the VA. But it would be best to follow up

and this is because this is the contact that I know, with either the caregiver support court Nader, at the VA, that veteran, their past social worker, or primary care social worker, I don't know if you have a contact specifically for that program at the local VA ? But it would be best to follow up directly with them, because like I said, I am not very familiar with that specific program. It is different from the program of comprehensive assistance. >> Let me turn to the next question. One of our participants asks , I read in the news, that all veterans would receive the same care, and it didn't have to be 9/11. Is this true?

That is referring to the program of comprehensive assistance, and recently, President Trump signed into law expanding that program of comprehensive assistance to all era veterans. At this time, the eligibility remains the same. The VA has to come up with an implementation plan and work with Congress to roll that out. It will be sometime before that program is available to veterans of any era, and they can apply. That was recently signed into law.

Let me ask a follow-up question on comprehensive assistance. I may have this wrong, but I feel like I saw this in a national newspaper, recently they ran a story about

some issues with the eligibility determination. It sounds like that there have been some caregivers and families that have lost their benefits? It mentioned specifically, payment for caregivers. The VA responded and said that they are taking a look at those eligibility determinations to see if that family or caregiver does qualify for the program. It is possible that you are seeing some calls through the caregiver line or other agencies that are represented here from people who are very concerned about potentially losing benefits under that program? Do you have any suggestions or have you been seen this?

Yes, a few months ago, I'm not sure how long, there was a lot of stories in the media, and caregivers were feeling like they were having

assistance revoked. They felt, and thought that they were still eligible. One of the things, if you do have a caregiver or veteran that calls, and they are upset, or thinking that they were discharged from the program, and should still be eligible, the VA does have an appeals process, and the caregiver support coordinator can provide them with information on specifically how to appeal the decision. The VA also does have a patient advocate, and there is at least one available at every VA medical center. The caregiver or the veteran, either one could contact the patient advocate, and they can also assist them with any appeals process, provide more systemic information, if there --'s

--. If you don't have the information, you can use that facility locator website that I had listed on the second slide, and find the contact information or the websites for that particular VA medical center. On the website, for that particular VA, there is a number of resources phone numbers, and one of the things that is listed, is that patient advocates number. I encourage your caregiver or your veterans to reach out to the patient advocate. You can also provide our phone number, we do receive many calls from caregivers and veterans. Not just recently, because of the media stories, but throughout the years, we have received a number of calls from caregivers and veterans who were discharged from the program, and want to appeal or want to further talk about their case and see if they can remain eligible. Feel free to pass on the caregiver support line number and we can help them as well.

Thank you, that is very helpful to know that there are advocates available in communities to assist families additionally. Just a reminder that the slides and the audio recording, and the transcript will all be available on the website in the next few days. There is a link in the chat box where you will be able to find that. Does anybody else have a question? We are getting to the end of the presentation. Are these services available for veterans

--? Maybe just clarify if these are available for individual veterans, and then you also have available -- services are available for caregivers. In a comprehensive assistance program, are there events that are available for both the veteran and the keep -- care provider?

Many caregivers are spouses of veterans. The comprehensive program says that the caregiver does not have to be the spouse of the veteran. I'm not sure in the question, if the spouse needs the care? Or is it related to the relationship of the veteran?

I'm not sure either. The person who submitted the question, your always welcome to clarify. I know this can be an issue that we are thinking about within the context of I and R. Often times,

when caregivers don't get -- feel identified, they don't really ask for things for themselves. But we do have services that we can offer them. That can enable them to continue and sustained the caregiving relationship a little bit longer. It can help to avoid some of the burnout or stress that you referenced. The on the question, this can be a tricky issue in terms of teasing out whether they need to support the caregiver, or supporting the veteran. And both

of them are related. Social workers provide emotional and counseling support to the caregiver as well as the care recipient.

That is why we train our social workers to answer the phone, you are right Nanette, so often, they are calling about one particular question, can I get aid? Can my veterans get respite? But there is so much more to their story, they may not realize how burnout they are. But they caregivers in the comprehensive assistance program, as well as the general program are not only spouses, they are also brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, so particularly for the program of comprehensive assistance, where the caregiver receives a stipend, if the caregiver is not related to the veteran, not a family member, they do have to live with the veteran. We have many friends that are caring for veterans,

so it is remarkable to hear the stories of people who meet veterans on the street or at their church, and they take them into their home to take care of them. There is a wide variety of roles that these folks play. >> One of our participants has shared, my experience with a caregiver support for Nader over the general program,

is that they are not responsive to pre-9/11 veterans. What is their role and what services do they provide?

The support care -- for Nader's do provide help for both programs.

Much of their attention could be on the program of comprehensive assistance, because there are certain deadlines and application processes that they have to facilitate. But their role is to in and roll -- is to enroll veterans for any services that they may be eligible for. We have started to make referrals to better making -- syrup report -- -- make referrals to help the coordinators out, as they may be very busy. They can certainly call our support line, and we can help make other referrals to other coordinators for follow-up. We can also help to connect them with other services, specifically for them throughout the VA.

Thank you, we have a question that is similar to when they came in earlier. A person is asking if a caregiver is already enrolled, through another organization, like programs that we offer through aging and disability services, does that prevent them from being enrolled in the VA caregiver support program? It sounds like it's what you are asking, you don't think so. But this may be something that the specialist may want to explore a little bit more at the local level.

If the services are respite services or home care services through the VA, or adaptive equipment, or belting better caregivers, or telephone support or things like that, that would not necessarily disqualify them. It depends on the availability of the services as to what actual services they can get at that VA. If they caregivers in the program of comprehensive assistance for caregivers, within the VA system,

they cannot necessarily be getting paid as a caregiver, to give a veteran a bath only once a week, and then also get paid through the stipend to give the veteran a bath. As far as accessing the services to the VA, it depends on what the availability is it that VA, and what the

veteran situation is . I would encourage veterans to speak to their primary care provider, or for you to contact their primary care team social worker and talk about their specific situation. You never know. For example, I had a veteran that I was providing hospice care through the community, and I did not realize that he was eligible for many more services through the VA. We developed a partnership then. I encourage you to contact locally for each particular case.

Thank you. We had one question that came in early, from the chat box. The participant asks, is a veteran required to have his or her PCP at the VA in order to access the supportive services like those you mentioned on slide number two?

Yes, they do need to have a high Medicare position at the VA . The VA doctor is the one that needs to write the order for those services. -- Medical position at the VA.

Is there a program for veterans who may not have family involved , and are seeking similar options in counseling services?

For veterans, the support that I had mentioned, respite care, in-home care, and adaptive equipment, nursing homes , adult health day programs, veterans can access those services even if they do not have a family member caring for them. The VA -- the supportive services such as peer support,

telephone education group, building better caregivers, many of those services are available for veteran caregivers. Veterans who are actually the caregiver to other veterans. To answer that, in two parts, veterans can access the supportive services, and also if they are a caregiver themselves.

Great, you answered one of our other questions. That relates to whether the spouse can be a care recipient. It sounds like you have resources where the veteran is also serving in the role of caregiver.

The veteran would not be eligible in some cases for a monetary benefit through the VA, sometimes we have veterans who call us, and they are the caregiver for their spouse, and they wonder if they can receive aid and attendance, or pension, because I care for my spouse. Only if the veteran is 100% permanent and totally disabled deemed by the VA. In those circumstances, the veteran may be eligible for additional money if they are caring for the spouse, or paying for a spouse's care. They can access supportive services through the VA as the caregiver . The caregiver support coordinator helps them to connect to those as well.
>> Great, let me turn quickly to the peer support program. We have one participant asking, is the peer support locally or over the phone?

>> We have a coordinator within central office, that manages this program. What happens, is the caregiver is spoken to about the program, and some of them are more appropriate to mentors and some are more privy

to be mentees. It depends on what they are interested in and looking for in the program. The coordinator for this program can reach out to the caregiver, and talks with them about the program, assesses their situation, and then in most cases, they connect the caregiver locally. In some areas, they have developed a peer support group. A number of caregivers might meet at a location on a monthly basis to offer that peer support. Sometimes, it is just two people paired together. Yes, usually they do try to connect them locally with caregivers in their own area. >> Great, if you are able to stay on for just a moment, I would like to turn to some more questions that came in. Jillian, want to see if we address the content or if there are any other questions?

I think you addressed several of them. There are a few more. Some people are wondering what the hours are?

The VA caregiver support line is open Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 8 PM Eastern standard Time. Are -- our number is 1855260, 3274. That is toll-free.

The other question is for you to speak more on the aid and attendance program.

The VA has a financial benefit of aid and attendance. Basically, veteran for regular attendance, would have to qualify for a VA pension. They would have to serve during a wartime period. They also need to meet certain income requirements. If they read -- qualified for that pension, then they need assistance with activities of daily living, they can qualify for additional money called aid and attendance. This benefit is paid to the veteran, and then the veteran would pay for that care, whatever that may be. That is a program through the veteran benefit administration. We encourage caregivers and veterans to contact the veteran benefit administration, and their number is one 800, 827, 1000. They can contact the veteran service officer, there may be some service officers on this call, I'm not sure. They work for the county and the state and to for the -- and they help veterans apply for the benefits with the VA. Many veteran service officers meet with the veteran and do a

test from the beginning. They asked the questions, complete the assessment, and that helps them to determine what benefits the veteran may be eligible for. That particular veteran, may have been looking into aid and attendance, but they may not realize that they have an illness or injury, that they might be able to get disability compensation for. I think it is important for benefits, and to -- in connecting them with a service officer, because there are more benefits in addition to the pension, aid and attendance, that they may be eligible for.

That's all the questions that I have from the chat box.

There's one more question that came into the chat box, and it is asking the question from New Hampshire. One of our participants said that you can also call service link which is the state disability resource Center. This is one 800 -- 1866, 634, -- 866 634, 90

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866 634-9312. Thank you so much for joining us and give us information for these resources and

helping the caregivers that are helping our veterans. We have more information about these programs and services that are available to veterans and caregivers and everyone can hold -- have this knowledge that is available at a national resource. This is a great referral for many of our caregivers and the centers that are working with veterans.

I want to thank you so much for joining us.

Feel free to pass our number on, if anyone has any more questions after this presentation, please feel free to send me an email, I am always happy to talk with anyone. I really appreciate this time. Thank you so much for having me.

Thank you for joining us, I would like to thank all of our listeners for joining us today and for the great questions. I would like to thank our captioner as well. I would like to wish everyone a good afternoon, and a good rest of the week. Thank you again.

Thank you. [Event Concluded]