



**VA HEALTH CARE** | Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century



Iowa City VA Health Care System  
601 Highway 6 West, Iowa City, IA 52246

# Veterans Medical Foster Home Program

**Hours:** 8:00am-4:30pm Mon-Fri

**Toll Free:** 1-877-358-5994

**Local Call:** (319) 358-5974

**Program Coordinator:** Angie Gerot, LISW

## *Caregiver Information*

### **Overview**

---

VA Medical Foster Homes provide a safe, supportive, long-term care option for Veterans. Medical Foster Home's (MFH) are known as *The Place Where Heroes Meet Angels*. MFH's are an alternative to nursing home care. Foster Homes may be an option for Veterans who are unable to live alone, or do not have a caregiver who is able to maintain a home and provide care.



MFH's provide a unique partnership between foster caregivers, Veterans, and their VA Home Based Primary Care Team by providing long-term care within a comfortable home environment. The Iowa City VA Health Care System is proud to provide this option to the Veterans it serves.

Veterans living in a MFH enjoy the independence, freedom, and privacy of living in a family home. For instance, homes may have pets for the Veteran to enjoy or may allow Veterans to bring their pet into the home.



The MFH Program takes the idea a step further by making medical care possible at home. The MFH Program will work with the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) team to provide Veterans in-home medical care.

## ***The Commitment***

---

Individuals interested in becoming a caregiver need to give it a lot of thought specifically about “why” they are making the commitment to care for another person. Potential caregivers should also discuss it with family and friends.

## ***Common Questions***

---

### **Why become a MFH Caregiver?**

There are many possible reasons why a person might choose to become a caregiver.

- Dedicated to Veterans and feeling a need to “give back” for their sacrifices
- Using extra space available in your home
- Satisfaction of caring for others
- Enjoying the company of others in the home
- Additional income

*Additional income IS a reason for caregiving, but if it is the only reason, the MFH Program is not a good fit for you, or the Hero who would depend on you.*

### **Does filling out a Caregiver application make me responsible for a Veteran?**

No. The application process is just that, an application, and there is no contractual responsibility. The application is the first in a series of steps before matching a foster caregiver and Veteran.

## **What happens if I take a Veteran into my home and then change my mind?**

Welcoming a Veteran into your home and caring for him/her requires a serious commitment. Caregivers need to think carefully about the commitment BEFORE a Veteran arrives. However, “life happens” and home situations change. Changes may make it too difficult, or impossible to continue as a foster caregiver. If quality care cannot be provided in your home or you foresee changes in the future, please alert the MFH Coordinator or Home Based Primary Care staff. This will allow time to make new living arrangements for the Veteran.

## **What if Veteran’s health declines or the match doesn’t ‘work out’?**

If a change occurs with a Veteran’s health or mental condition please contact the HBPC staff or MFH Coordinator immediately. The Veteran may be treated on an outpatient basis and remain in your home or be admitted to the Medical Center.

Despite trying to make strong Caregiver-Veteran matches, some may prove to be unsuitable or seem as if they are “not working out”. Reach out to the MFH Coordinator and let him/her know as soon as you feel tension. The Coordinator may work with both parties to improve the situation, or discuss making other arrangements for the Veteran.



## **Do MFH Caregivers receive training?**

The VA provides mandatory training for all Caregivers at least twice per year. Trainings are typically held at the VA Medical Center in Iowa City, are free of charge, and include topics important to providing quality care. The MFH Coordinator is also available to work with caregivers one-on-one throughout the year. The Coordinator can provide skills based training, education, reference materials, and referrals, when needed.

In addition, Caregivers are required to maintain Red Cross CPR and First Aid Certification at their own expense.

## How do I become a Caregiver?

To begin the process, contact the Iowa City MFH Program Coordinator and he/she will arrange a visit to your home to discuss the program and answer questions.

VA considers the safety and quality of care provided to Veterans a priority. This is why multiple steps, verifications and trainings are required to become a VA Caregiver. The MFH Program Coordinator will request the following during the application process:

- Written MFH application
- Personal references (3)
- Professional references (3)
- Verification of home-owner or renters insurance
- Verification of automobile insurance
- Verification of a valid driver's license
- Home Inspection per MFH Team

## Who pays for MFH?

The Veteran pays the caregiver directly out of personal funds. Veterans may have differing means of financial management. Some may have a trustee, fiduciary or financial manager who will pay caregivers on the Veterans behalf.

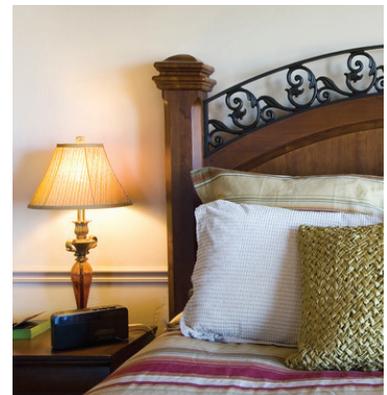
The VA does not supplement MFH in any way, with the exception of staffing the MFH Program Coordinator and HBPC Team.

## How many Veterans per Caregiver?

The number of Veterans allowed per home depends upon square footage. MFH allows for a maximum of three Veterans per home, if it meets the requirements.

- Private rooms must have at least 100 square feet
- Semi-private rooms must have 160 square feet

Measurements do not take into consideration closet space. Every Veteran is required to have his/her own bed, and rooms must be comfortably furnished.



## What type of care is required?

The mission and hope of the MFH Program is for Veterans to be treated as members of your family. At minimum, caregivers are required to provide:

- Appropriate 24-hour supervision (determined by MFH team)
- Three nutritionally balanced meals per day (with attention to special diets)
- Laundry Service
- Assistance with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.)
- Medication monitoring
- Transportation assistance to medical appointments, activities and outings



## How much are Caregivers paid?

The amount varies depending on the amount of care required. Generally, the monthly amount is \$1500-\$3000, per Veteran. This rate has been established to make the program affordable to Veterans who are in need of this type of care. The MFH Program Coordinator will work with the Veteran and caregiver to establish a monthly cost of care *before* the Veteran moves into the home.

## What if a Caregiver gets sick, needs a break or vacation?

Caregivers are required to provide a written back up plan or list of relief caregivers who are willing (and able) to provide care. Caregivers are encouraged to utilize these alternate caregivers in the event of appointments or illness. The MFH Coordinator can help arrange respite care out of the home, as needed for breaks or vacations.

## Is MFH program income taxable?

Yes. The MFH Program is considered self-employment, making the income fully taxable. Caregivers are responsible to report income; the VA does not furnish any type of statement as to the amount of money received from the Veteran(s).

## What “kinds” of Veterans need MFH’s?

Any Veteran whom medical staff have determined unsafe to live alone, and do not have another option. Veterans in the MFH program are individuals, with unique backgrounds and needs. Some may have medical problems or mental health concerns, and some a mixture of both.

*Veterans who are known to have unsafe behavioral issues (such as angry outbursts) and recent problems with alcohol or drugs are not accepted into the MFH Program.*

If you have an idea about the type of Veteran you want to serve, please mention your preference to the MFH Coordinator. Caregiver preferences will be honored whenever possible.

### **Will I have a say about who is placed in my home?**

Absolutely. One of the most important aspects of the program is to find a suitable match between the Veteran and Caregiver. During the process of placing a Veteran, the MFH Coordinator will share information about the Veteran and discuss any questions or concerns you may have. Arrangements can be made for you to meet, and spend time with the Veteran prior to placement. If do not feel comfortable with the match, the coordinator will make other arrangements, and keep you in mind for future referrals.

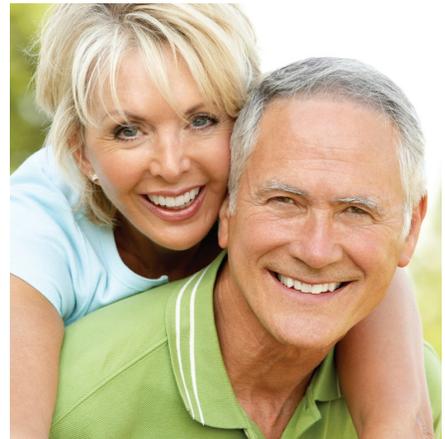
### **Are female Veterans offered MFH?**

Yes. However, the Veteran population requiring MFH is mostly male at this point in time. Currently, the largest sub-group of Veterans enrolling in VA health care is female Veterans. Therefore, future housing needs for female Heroes may increase.

### **Is there liability protection for Caregivers?**

The MFH Program has many elements built into it to help protect caregivers from unfavorable occurrences. These include:

- Detailed Application Process
- Home safety inspection by interdisciplinary team
- Fire and Safety Officer inspection
- VA Mandatory training twice annually
- Participation in Veterans plan of care with HBPC Team



The MFH Program does not provide personal liability insurance. If concerned, caregivers may consider purchasing an umbrella liability policy, or check with their current homeowner policy regarding coverage questions.