

# Caregiver Chronicles

**Mission of the VA Caregiver Support Program: to promote the health and well-being of family Caregivers who care for our nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.**



May 2017

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Caregiver Support Line Telephone Education Group

**Aging & Dementia:  
Understanding Long  
Term Care Options,  
Managing Behaviors,  
Transportation & Driving**

May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>

**Harnessing the Power of  
Communication**

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>

If you would like to participate,  
please contact your Caregiver  
Support Coordinator.

## Iowa City VAHCS Caregiver Support Coordinators:

**Kevin de la Bruere, RN, MSN**  
(319) 358-5987

**Holly Mohr, LISW**  
(319) 338-0581 ext. 6865

## Caregiver Support Line

Offering support,  
resources, tools and a  
listening ear.

**Toll-free Number:**

1 (855) 260-3274

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

## Formation of Support Groups

Being a Caregiver for a Veteran can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life, but also one of the most challenging. Caregiver Support Coordinators (CSC's) are constantly striving to help address common barriers Caregivers experience. One of the most common is feeling isolated.

Providing care for a loved one is a 24-hour job that can create feelings of being alone, or like no one knows what you are going through. It is common to feel guilty about wanting to take time away from Caregiving responsibilities.

Caregiver Support Coordinators are working to create environments which will help Caregivers cope with emotions like isolation and guilt by creating local Caregiver Support Groups. The new groups are intended to:

- Create networks between Caregivers
- Provide an environment of support outside of the home
- Offer education and support to assist with the Caregiver role

Coordinators are in the process of establishing groups to begin Fall of 2017. To best tailor the interests and needs of the participants, the Coordinators are asking for Caregiver input.



Please contact your local CSC with topics you would like to discuss, times and days of the week that you would like the group to meet. Please share any identifiable barriers that may get in the way of your participation in the group. The CSC's may help remove the roadblocks, to ensure as many Caregivers as possible can attend.

Here are some general topics we would like to cover:

- Caregiver Burnout
- Importance of Positive Coping Skills
- Creating a Balance in Your Life
- VA Caregiver Resources
- Positive Communication
- How to De-escalate Situations
- Coping with Stress of Caregiving

# Homemaker Service

The Caregiver Support Program offers resources to not only make the Caregivers life easier, but also the life of the Veteran. Homemaker Service occurs when an arranged community care agency routinely visits the home and helps with light housework the Veteran is unable to perform.

To arrange Homemaker Service, please contact your local CSC.

There are certain criteria to qualify for Homemaker Service which is dependent on the specific injury or illness. Once notified, we will consult the Veteran's provider (mental health or medical) to determine if the service is appropriate. If homemaker services are determined to be needed, the provider will place a consult. Then the community care agency will contact you to get setup.



## Positive Coping Skills

### ***Exercising Outdoors***

The weather is heating up, and spring/summer is a great time to get outdoors. With the okay from your provider exercising outdoors is one of the best ways to get active. Some of the awesome health benefits include:

1. Fresh air has more oxygen
2. Greenspaces raise serotonin level
3. Triggers primal regions of the brain and spirit
4. More sensory stimulation
5. Increases feelings of well-being and lowers depression
6. Sun exposure increases vitamin D levels and helps optimize hormones

In Iowa and Illinois there are a number of beautiful state parks. To check out your local state parks visit your state DNR website.

[www.dnr.illinois.gov](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov)

[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

Illinois hosts a number of activities at their state parks, including archery, biking, boating, camping, canoe/kayaking, cross-country skiing, fishing, geocaching, golfing, hiking horseback riding, hunting, off-highway vehicles, rock climbing, snowmobiling, star gazing, swimming, trails, wing shooting.



## Communication Is The Key

Caregiver Helpbook: Powerful tools for Caregivers

One of the most important aspects of Caregiving is how we communicate with loved ones. Communication cannot only help to avoid conflict, but it can also improve the overall atmosphere within the home. Keep the communication clear and direct, despite the difficulty of the subject matter.

Here are some tips for timing effective communication:

Choosing the time to talk can be very crucial. Choose a time to talk that is best for the person with whom you want to talk with. For example, select a time when:

- Little else is happening to reduce the possibility of distractions
- The conversation fits into a daily routine
- The Veteran feels well rested
- Medication levels are at their most effective
- Temperature and lighting are good
- Eating or toileting are not an immediate concern

## Caregiver Facts

(From [www.Care2.com](http://www.Care2.com))

Statistics from the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) indicate that about 61% of Caregivers work either full- or part-time outside of the home. There are countless variations on the family Caregiver role.

Caregivers may provide round-the-clock care for an aging relative who is living in their home; others might make frequent trips to visit their loved one in assisted living; while some have older family members who can live on their own, but still need help with household chores and money management

## Insider Scoop

Are you using a particularly helpful tool or device to provide better Care? Whether it be an app for your smart phone, a calendar, or chart, we would love to hear from you! With your permission, the Coordinators would like to share what is working with one Caregiver with all of the others in the next newsletter.

Please contact your local CSC with your "insider scoop"!



Please remember that it is very important for the VA to be able to contact you for you and your Veteran's care. Please make sure you have voice mail set up, and return calls to your VA providers. We can't assist you with your care if we cannot get a hold of you.

**A reminder from your local Caregiver Support Coordinator :**

May 2017

# Caregiver Chronicles



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



**BRAIN TEASER**

Thirteen people came into a hotel with 12 rooms and each guest wanted his own room. The bellboy solved this problem:

He asked the thirteenth guest to wait a little with the first guest in room number 1. So in the first room there were two people. The bellboy took the third guest to room number 2, the fourth to number 3, ..., and the twelfth guest to room number 11. Then he returned to room number 1 and took the thirteenth guest to room number 12, still vacant.

Answer: Look for it in the next *Caregiver Chronicles*.