

CAREGIVERS FOR INJURED VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) championed legislation creating the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Family Caregiver Program for post-9/11 veterans and their caregivers. This program provides essential support, respite, and stipends to caregivers of injured veterans. Policy makers must implement and update this program effectively to recognize the valuable service that caregivers provide.

- ★ VA has implemented the Family Caregiver Program inconsistently across geographic regions and over time. It has an insufficient number of Caregiver Support Coordinators (CSCs) to cover all enrolled and potential caregivers. Perhaps because of workload, CSCs in many cases do not consult with medical teams and caregivers. Additionally, in many cases, CSCs do not adequately communicate rationale for tier reductions and removal. VA should reform the Family Caregiver Program for more effective and consistent implementation and better consultation and communication by CSCs.
- ★ The Family Caregiver Program, as written, limits eligibility to veterans who suffered a service-connected wound, illness, or injury after September 11, 2001. It is WWP's belief that caregivers from all generations deserve aid and assistance. As such, WWP supports expansion of the Family Caregiver Program to other generations, but only assuming such expansion can be accomplished without affecting the efficacy of the existing program. Prior to expansion, VA must fix problems with the current program, and Congress must provide funding adequate to cover any increase in the covered population.
- ★ Many caregivers and veterans report difficulty with VA processes designed to allow caregivers to serve as fiduciaries. Difficulties include burdensome paperwork and regulations designed for professional fiduciaries but inappropriate for family members. Caregivers and veterans also report unintended consequences of becoming a fiduciary, including loss of the veteran's Second Amendment rights. Congress and VA should address these issues.

There are a number of other challenges faced by full-time caregivers including the need for financial planning resources, respite, and vocational rehabilitation. Congress and VA should address these issues.

