

WAYS I CARE
VALUES WE LIVE BY



Medical Foster Home (MFH) Program VA Central Iowa Health Care System Frequently Asked Questions for Caregivers

1. Q: What is the Medical Foster Home Program?

A: The VA's Medical Foster Home (MFH) Program is part of the Community Residential Care (CRC) program that oversees the placement of veterans with medical needs into community homes. Those who bring veterans into their homes are referred to as a "Sponsors" in the CRC program or "Caregivers" in the MFH program.

2. Q: How old is this program?

A: The CRC program has been active in the VA since the 1950s and is very successful at VA Medical Centers across the country. The concept behind the CRC programs, whereby members of the community care for non-family members in their homes, has been around for centuries. The Medical Foster Home Program takes the concept a step further by joining with the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) Program providing care for those who would otherwise need nursing home care. Our local VA Health Care System recently made a commitment to implement our own Medical Foster Home Program.

3. Q: Why would I want to consider becoming a MFH Program Caregiver?

A: There are many possible answers to this question. If you are interested in becoming a caregiver you will undoubtedly want to do some soul-searching. You may care deeply about our military veterans and want to "give back" in some way. You may have extra space in your home and would enjoy the company. You may enjoy helping others and may be looking to supplement your income. Ideally, your own answer will be comprised of all of these possibilities. However, the desire for additional income alone is not a sufficient reason to become a caregiver.

4. Q: What if I apply to the program and then change my mind?

A: There is no contractual responsibility to follow through with taking a veteran into your home just because you go through the application process.



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5. Q: What happens if I take a veteran into my home and then change my mind?

A: Bringing a veteran into your home and caring for him/her requires a commitment. So, we request that all potential caregivers think carefully about their willingness to participate in this program BEFORE they take in a veteran. However, we recognize that life circumstances change and that it may be impractical or undesirable for you to continue to care for a veteran. In such a case, we ask you to discuss this with MFH and HBPC staff as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements for the veteran.

6. Q: What happens if a veteran's health gets worse or if things don't work out?

A: If a veteran's condition changes, we ask you to contact HBPC or MFH staff immediately so that we can intervene. In some cases, the veteran may be treated on an outpatient basis and remain in your home. In other cases, the veteran may need to return to the VA for a time. If there is an unsuitable match between a caregiver and a veteran and things seem as if they are "not working out," we also ask you to let us know as soon as possible. We may intervene to see if the situation is one that can be improved, or we may look at making other arrangements for the veteran.

7. Q: As a MFH Program Caregiver, what kind of training do I get?

A: The VA provides free training for all caregivers at least twice yearly. These trainings are typically held at the VA Medical Center and include topics that are pertinent to your role as a caregiver. MFH staff is also available to work with you directly throughout the year, and can provide education, reference materials, and referrals, when needed. Plus, MFH caregivers are required to maintain current CPR and First Aid certification (provided through the Red Cross) at their own expense.

8. Q: What do I have to do to become a Caregiver?

A: First, contact the MFH Office **(515-699-5925)** at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System and the Coordinator will arrange to visit your home to discuss the program and answer your questions. Some of the things that we require or recommend you complete before you are eligible to care for a veteran are: a written application, personal and professional references, verification of home-owner's or renters insurance, automobile insurance, verification of a valid driver's license and an inspection of your home.

9. Q: Who pays for the program?

A: The veteran pays for his/her cost of care out of his/her own funds and the VA does not supplement the cost in any way. The VA's only financial involvement is in staffing the MFH and HBPC programs. Some veterans may have payees or fiduciaries that will pay caregivers on their behalf.

10. Q: How many veterans can I take in my home?

A: Our program allows you to care for up to three veterans in your home. Also, the number of veterans you can accept in your home depends upon how much space you have. Private rooms must have at least 100 square feet, exclusive of closet space and semi-private rooms must have 160 square feet, exclusive of closet space. Each veteran must have his/her own bed and rooms should be comfortably furnished.

11. Q: What am I required to provide as a MFH Caregiver?

A: Caregivers are required to provide appropriate 24 hour supervision, three balanced meals per day with attention to special diets, laundry, assistance with ADL's (bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.), monitoring of medications, assistance with transportation to medical appointments, activities and outings. Our hope is that you will welcome the veterans and treat them as members of your family.

12. Q: How much are Caregivers paid?

A: Generally, between \$1700 and \$2500 each month per veteran, depending on the care the veteran needs. This rate has been established to make this program affordable to the veterans who need it most. The amount the veteran will pay the caregiver is worked out and agreed upon before a veteran is placed in a home.

13. Q: What happens if I get sick, need a break or go on vacation?

A: We ask that you arrange for a relief caregiver to help you when you need to be out of your home for errands or appointments or if you become ill. We will help arrange for respite when you need a break or vacation.

14. Q: Is the income from this program taxable?

A: Yes. You will be self-employed, the income is fully taxable and you will be responsible for reporting this income. The VA does not furnish any type of statement as to the amount of money you receive from the veterans.

15. Q: What kinds of veterans might be placed with me?

A: Veterans who have medical issues that may make it impossible for them to live alone. The veterans we place through the MFH program have medical issues, some have mental health issues, and some have a mixture of both. We do not place veterans who are known to have behavioral issues (such as angry outbursts) and we do not place veterans who have active problems with alcohol or drugs. If you have a preference about the type of veteran you want to serve, please make your wishes known to the MFH Coordinator. These will be taken into consideration whenever possible.

16. Q: Will I have a say about who is placed in my home?

A: Yes. We want to make this a positive experience for all involved. One of the most important aspects of the program is matching veterans to caregivers who are most suited to them (and vice versa). When we look at placing a veteran in your home, we will give you information about that veteran and discuss any questions or concerns you may have. If you wish to meet with and spend time with the veteran first, we will make the arrangements. If you still do not feel comfortable taking the veteran, we will make other arrangements for him/her and keep you in mind for future referrals.

17. Q: Do you ever place female veterans?

A: Yes. However, the veteran population is comprised predominately of men. Therefore, most of the veterans served through this program are men.

18. Q: What kind of liability is there for me as a MFH Program Caregiver?

A: There are many checks in place to be sure that you are a suitable caregiver for the MFH program and that your home meets all the criteria to provide care for a veteran. The application process and your home inspections by the VA Interdisciplinary Inspection team assure that you are a suitable caregiver and that your home is safe. Our Fire and Safety Officer heads up the inspections and your home will only be approved with his consent. We go through this rigorous process to help prevent any accidents or mistreatment. Additionally, you are required to attend VA training twice annually and participate in the overall care plan for the veteran. Doing these things ensure that you continue to be a suitable caregiver. All of these requirements are in place to make it unlikely that anything unfavorable will occur. However, you may want to purchase an inexpensive personal liability umbrella insurance policy for your peace of mind.