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VALUES WE LIVE BY



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

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 "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 in the family home 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 living in a Medical Foster Home?

A: There are many possible answers to this question. You may need of 24-hour care or your safety may be at risk if you are living alone. You may choose a MFH that provides individualized one-on-one care in a family home rather than moving to a nursing home. The VA Medical Center and the Home Based Primary Care Team will provide your medical care. The HBPC Team has nurses, therapists, a dietician, social worker and psychologist can all come to the MFH to help take care of you.

4. Q: What do I have to do to be considered for the program?

A: First, contact the MFH Office (**515-699-5715**) at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System and the program Coordinator will arrange to visit you to discuss the program and answer your questions.

5. Q: Who pays for the program?

A: You, the veteran, pay for your care with your own money. The VA does not supplement the cost in any way. The VA's only financial involvement is in staffing the MFH and HBPC programs and assisting you in maximizing your VA pension and special Aid & Attendance pension. Some veterans may have payees or fiduciaries that will pay caregivers on their behalf.



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

A: There is no contractual commitment to follow through with moving into a Medical Foster Home just because you express interest and talked with the Coordinator.

7. Q: What if I move into a Medical Foster Home and then change my mind?

A: You would certainly be free to move to another Medical Foster Home if one is available or you could move into a nursing home. If your health improves while living in the MFH, you might be able to live on your own again. We hope you will be happy in the MFH and if at all possible, we will arrange for you to visit the home and introduce you to the caregiver before you decide to move in. So, we request that you think carefully about whether Medical Foster Home living is what you want, and talk with family and friends about it BEFORE you move in.

8. Q: What happens if my health gets worse or if things don't work out?

A: If your condition changes, your caregiver will contact HBPC and MFH staff immediately so we can intervene. In some cases, you may be treated on an outpatient basis and remain in the Medical Foster Home. In other cases, you may need to return to the VA Medical Center for treatment. If there is an unsuitable match between you and your caregiver and things seem as if they are "not working out," we ask you to let us know as soon as possible. We may intervene to see if the situation can be improved, or we may look at helping you make other living arrangements.

9. Q: What kind of training do the MFH Caregivers receive?

A: First of all, we look for caregivers who have some experience plus the VA provides 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 the caregiving role. MFH staff is available to work with your caregiver 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.

10. Q: How many veterans live in each Medical Foster Home?

A: Our program allows for up to three veterans in each home. The number of veterans depends upon how much space there is in the home. You have the choice of having a private room or you may choose to share a room with another veteran. Semi-private or shared rooms have to be larger and must be set up so you both can have privacy.

11. Q: What is required of my 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. Your caregiver will assist the HBPC medical team with your care and follow their recommendations and your doctor's orders. Our hope is the caregivers will welcome you into their homes and treat you as members of their family.

12. Q: How much will it cost me to live in a Medical Foster Home?

A: Generally, between \$1700 and \$2500 each month, depending on the amount of care you need. This rate is well below the cost of a nursing home and has been established to make this program affordable. The amount you pay your caregiver is worked out and agreed upon before you move in. The rate will only increase if you need more care and will be reviewed at least on a yearly basis.

13. Q: What happens if my caregiver gets sick, needs a break or goes on vacation?

A: We ask that each caregiver arrange for a relief caregiver to help when they need to be out of the home for errands or appointments or if they become ill. The VA Medical Center helps arrange for respite when caregivers need a break or go on vacation. Of course, you may accompany your caregiver on errands, shopping or vacation if your caregiver agrees.

14. Q: What kinds of veterans are eligible for the MFH program?

A: Veterans who have medical problems that may make it impossible for them to live alone and who do not have family able to care for them. 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.

15. Q: Will I have a say about which MFH I move into?

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 for a MFH for you, we will give you information about that home and discuss any questions or concerns you may have. If you wish to meet with and spend time with the caregiver first, we will make the arrangements. If you do not feel comfortable with the caregiver or in the home, we will look for another MFH for you.

16. 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.

17. Q: What kind of oversight is there for the MFH Program?

A: There are many checks and balances in place to be sure that each caregiver is suitable for the MFH program and that each home meets all the criteria to provide care for veterans. The application process for caregivers and home inspections by the VA Interdisciplinary Inspection Team assure that caregivers are screened, your care is monitored and the home is safe. Our Fire and Safety Officer heads up this inspection team and the Medical Foster Home will only be approved with his consent. We go through this rigorous process to help prevent any accidents, problems or mistreatment. Additionally, caregivers are required to attend VA training twice annually and participate in your overall plan of care with your HBPC nurse. All of this oversight is in place to make it unlikely that anything unfavorable will occur.