

The VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) has worked diligently to put meaningful solutions in place that will have an immediate and positive impact our caregiver and their Veteran participating in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) and the Program of General Caregivers Support Services (PGCSS).

Below highlights some of the efforts VA has taken in the past 9 months:

1. **August 2021** - CSP Published three new forms to assist with the Review and Appeal process:
 - a. VA Form - 10-305, ["YOUR RIGHTS TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW OF PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS \(PCAFC\) DECISIONS"](#) Note: Spanish Version of this form was also just approved and uploaded to website
 - b. VA Form - 10-306, ["REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS \(PCAFC\) DECISIONS"](#)
 - c. VA Form 10-307, [Program of Comprehensive Assistance For Family Caregivers \(PCAFC\) Notice of Disagreement \(NOD\)](#)
2. **August 2021** - CSP website developed a dedicated page that is for PCAFC Review and Appeal information. https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/CSP_PCAFC_Decisions_FAQs.pdf
3. **August 2021** - CSP established a centralized mail intake location with a specific address for Veterans and caregivers to send requests for Review and Appeal of PCAFC decisions. CSP also developed a centralized process to issue outgoing mail related to PCAFC review and appeal requests and decision letters. (Scroll to second page of this link: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/CSP_PCAFC_Decisions_FAQs.pdf)
4. **August 2021 submitted and was approved February 2022** - CSP has received approval of a new organizational model that established a dedicated Review and Appeal Workstream. CSP successfully obtained 32 new positions in support of the Review and Appeal Workstream along with other programmatic functions within CSP. Hiring has begun for permanent staff. Currently, we have implemented Tiger Teams of detailees from the field as an interim solution until permanent staff can be on-boarded.
5. **August 2021, May 2022** - CSP is pairing up high performing Centralized Eligibility Appeal Teams (CEATS), with CEATS that have room for increased improvement in decision making, to share best practices in specifically in "getting to yes", erring on the side of the caregiver and Veteran, improved standardization and consistency, and documentation for outcomes.
6. **August 2021** - VA is addressing the need for better transparency and understanding in PCAFC decisions by updating its notification letter to inform applicants as to the reasons for their application approval or denial.
7. **August 2021** - VA began mailing letters and as of **May 4, 2022**, more than 430,000 Notice Letters have been mailed to individuals who received a PCAFC decision between May 2011 – September 27, 2021, informing them of their right for review or appeal.

8. **September 2021** - CSP developed an internal one-page reference guide for VA CSP and Patient Advocate staff which compares PCAFC Review and Appeal options, to specifically compare responsibility for documentation of these requests within the Caregiver Record Management Application (CARMA) and Patient Advocate Tracking System Replacement (PATS-R).
9. **October 2021 and May 2022** (multiple iterations) - VA continues to streamline its approach to the PCAFC assessment process. Based on feedback from caregivers, Veterans, and CSP staff, it was identified that the assessments were too long and created a poor experience for the caregiver and their Veteran. We have reduced the number of questions that appeared redundant and are continuing to work on improving the Veteran and caregiver experience as part of this process. A streamlined approach will reduce the burden in completing reassessments.
10. **October 2021** - CSP is committed to increasing its quality assurance throughout the program and has deployed a team of Quality Management experts to review charts for consistency and establish best practices to enhance staff training and to promote strong practices and address areas of improvement. To date, CSP has been able to identify ways in which to better improve the electronic health record and information provided by the medical staff to the CEATs. Specifically, CSP has identified how specific documentation has led to improved outcomes for caregivers and Veterans.
11. **December 2021** - A functional assessment of the entire PCAFC program is being done in partnership with the Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT) and the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) to identify redundancy, gaps, and standardization needs. The functional assessment will also seek to identify and adopt strong practices from VBA into the CSP program.
12. **December 2021** and ongoing - The Review and Appeal Workstream has developed initial workflows for each type of Review and Appeal teams including Higher-Level Review, Supplemental Claim, and Legacy/NOD.
13. **January 2022 submitted, and May 2022 was approved** - An automation contract has been secured with the goal of being able to send confirmation of receipt letters for certain types of VA Forms to Veterans and caregivers. Initial deployment is expected by early Fall 2022; however, this date is subject to change.
14. **February 2022**, Caregiver Support Line (CSL) staff have been trained to be able to confirm whether CSP has received a caller's submission of mail to the CSP dedicated address at VA's Evidence Intake Center. Callers can "Press 1" for information about PCAFC review and appeal options.
15. **February 2022** - VA redesigned the PCAFC wellness contact visit process to make them more centered on the caregiver and Veteran's overall needs. CSP heard from caregivers, Veterans and CSP clinical staff that the wellness contact, which is initiated every 120 days, was too overwhelming and not meeting the intended purpose. The wellness contact is an opportunity for the CSP staff to assist the caregiver and Veteran with identified clinical needs and provide

resources and support as clinically appropriate. Therefore, the wellness contact was modified to meet and enhance the services that each caregiver and Veteran identify as a need.

16. **February 2022** - CSP is working in partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) to enhance the provision of mental health services offered to caregivers. Specifically, CSP is looking to leverage mental health hubs to better support and align with providing mental health care to our caregivers.
17. **March 2022** - evidence files for PCAFC decisions are now being provided to the Board, which has allowed the Board to begin reviewing and processing PCAFC appeals in the modernized appeals system (AMA). This was after obstacles presented by the unique challenges in transferring and storing evidence files for Board review in appeals of PCAFC decisions. Following successful testing at the end of March 2022, evidence files for PCAFC decisions are now being provided to the Board, which has allowed the Board to begin reviewing and processing PCAFC appeals in the modernized appeals system (AMA).
18. **March 2022** - CSP is working diligently with the Veteran Experience Office (VEO) to create a customer experience survey that will be used to capture the voice of the caregiver and Veteran. This survey will be used to make ongoing improvements within CSP. We anticipate this survey will be ready for distribution at the beginning of September.
19. **March 2022** - CSP continues to host robust training for CSP staff nationwide to ensure they are updated on latest guidance, information and policies that influence PCAFC and PGCSS. Of recent, a training was conducted on the definition of Safety, Protection, and Instruction (SPI) with a focus on inclusivity. This training had an immediate impact in providing greater flexibility in approving applicants based on SPI as part of evaluation process. This includes the those with mental health diagnoses, traumatic brain injuries and other neuro cognitive disorders that would impact Veterans.
20. **March 2022** - VA put a halt on discharges for all Legacy Applicants, Legacy Participants, and their Family Caregiver based on reassessment. Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants, and their Family Caregivers will remain enrolled in PCAFC and continue to receive support and services under PCAFC, unless revoked or discharged for a reason unrelated to reassessment.
21. **May 2022** - VA values the lived experience and dedication of the caregiver community. To that end, VA has engaged with Veteran Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations, caregivers, CSP staff and other strategic stakeholders to obtain feedback which will inform the continuous improvement process for CSP's programs.
22. **May 2022** - Questionnaire (DBQ) with the aim of implementing strong practices within CSP to process PCAFC applications. See #24 below for more detail.

23. **May 2022** - CSP is partnering with other VA and VHA programs, such as, VA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care office and VA Care Management and Social Work, to leverage resources, services, and programs to ensure caregivers and Veterans get the appropriate supports to address their unique needs. Specifically, CSP is looking at warm handoffs to other programs as clinically appropriate and utilizing case management services to better support our caregivers through their caregiving journey.
24. **May 2022** - CSP is collaborating with VBA to leverage their use of a Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) with the aim of implementing strong practices within CSP to process PCAFC applications.
25. **May 2022** - The CSP Review and Appeal workstream is in the process of developing videos for Veterans/caregivers on how to accurately complete the various review and appeal forms.
26. **May 2022** - CSP is creating a best practice training and education plan for review and appeal team staff who are reviewing cases and rendering decisions to standardize the process and result in consistent decisions. CSP has plans to implement this same process with CEAT staff.