

QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative

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VA Caregiver Support

Durham, NC

Overview

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law: 111-163) enacted legislation to ensure services and supports for family caregivers of Veterans through two landmark programs: the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), and the Program of General Caregiver Support Services. These two programs—referred to as the Caregiver Support Program—serve to enhance support and services for family caregivers for qualifying Veterans, including education and training and respite care. Since the PCAFC's inception, uptake in participation has far surpassed initial projections with more than 100,000 applications received and nearly 36,000 caregivers served by the end of FY2017. In that year, VA obligated approximately \$477 million in support of the overall budget for the Caregiver Support Program. VA-CARES QUERI Partnered Evaluation will assess the impacts of these programs on Veterans and caregivers.

VA CARES QUERI evaluated the short-term impacts of the PCAFC and the Program of General Caregiver Support Services by addressing the following aims:

- Assess the impact of the PCAFC on the health and wellbeing of Veterans by examining healthcare encounters expected to be sensitive to caregiver support (i.e., acute, primary, and specialty utilization);
- Assess the impacts of the PCAFC on the health and wellbeing of primary family caregivers;
- Understand how caregivers use and value components of both the PCAFC and the Program of General Caregiver Support Services; and
- Generate a detailed profile of the costs and services provided in both programs to assess the value of the program to Veterans, caregivers, and the VA healthcare system.

VA CARES QUERI also will address the following aims: Examine the effect of PCAFC participation on Veterans' total healthcare costs at three years;

- Conduct formative evaluation of the PCAFC application process to identify areas and approaches for supporting consistency across VA; and
- Characterize and examine the caregiver and Veteran characteristics associated with discharge of Veterans from the PCAFC, and whether these drivers vary across facilities.

Methodology

Extending this work, VA CARES investigators will estimate the average treatment effect of the PCAFC on three-year healthcare costs up to six years post-enrollment. They will also use data from a survey of caregiver support staff, interviews with staff, and case studies to examine the PCAFC application process. Additionally, investigators will examine factors associated with discharge from the PCAFC, examining a range of Veteran and caregiver characteristics.

Anticipated Impact

Results from this evaluation will help inform the VA Caregiver Support Program about its impact and value—and will provide information on best practices for improving and targeting its interventions. The results of the evaluation will contribute to the implementation of evidence-based treatments or programs designed to improve quality of care for Veterans.

Operations Partner(s):

The VA Caregiver Support Program, and the Office of Care Management and Social Work.

VA



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