

NETWORK UPDATE

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December 2015

VA Midwest
Health Care Network
Honoring Service. Empowering Health.

Honoring Family and Friends Who Care for Veterans

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In November, VA, along with the entire country, celebrated National Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor and celebrate caregivers who selflessly provide care to ill, injured, or disabled Veterans. The theme of 2015's National Family Caregivers Month was "Respite: Care for Caregivers."

A report released by AARP in June 2015 estimated that about 40 million family caregivers in the U.S. provided 37 billion hours of care, valued at an estimated \$470 billion. This report also noted that caregivers spend an average of about 18 hours a week providing care.

According to another 2015 AARP study, 60 percent of caregivers report being employed during their time as a caregiver — 56 percent of those caregivers report working an average of 34.7 hours per week. Yet surprisingly, 82 percent of caregivers of Veterans report that they have not received any respite care services from VA.

What is Respite Care?

Respite care is short-term care provided to an ill, injured, or disabled individual which provides a break for his or her regular caregiver. Some caregivers utilize informal respite care by asking family and friends for help. VA offers professional respite care to caregivers as well. Respite care can be provided in the home by hiring trained [home health aides](#). It can also be provided in a nursing home facility or one of VA's Community Living Centers.

Eligible Veterans who require the support of a family caregiver may be eligible to receive 30 days of respite care per year. Another service provided to Veterans that can offer a break to caregivers is [Adult Day Health Care](#),

a day program that Veterans can attend to get out of the home and socialize while still receiving the supervision and care they need.

Why Use Respite Care?

[Respite care](#) is an important resource for caregivers. It allows caregivers time to take a break and take care of themselves. Some caregivers choose to use respite so that they can attend their own medical appointments or

accomplish other necessary tasks. It is important, however, for caregivers to remember that respite can and should be used to take a break and do something enjoyable.

VA Voluntary Service: Support for Veterans and Caregivers

[Voluntary Service](#) is a wonderful organization within VA that supports caregivers by providing peer mentoring opportunities and in-home companionship for Veterans. Volunteers can travel to the home in order to allow caregivers time for themselves.

Many Veterans find it fulfilling to connect and socialize with a volunteer, while simultaneously providing caregivers time to pursue what's personally meaningful, whether it's coffee with a friend, yoga, meditation or spending time outdoors. Self-care looks different for everyone, but is essential to recharging and improving one's well-being.

How Can Caregivers Get Help?

Respite care and other caregiver support services can be accessed in a number of ways at each [VA Medical Center](#). Caregivers can contact their local caregiver support coordinator for assistance with connecting to these services.

Find out more information on the Caregiver Support Program and [locate your caregiver support coordinator online](#) or by calling the VA Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.



Upcoming Veteran Town Halls

- 3 Dec 15
 - Fargo HCS – Beltrami County Administration Bldg, Bemidji, MN
- 8 Dec 15
 - Sioux Falls HCS – VAMC Auditorium
- 9 Dec 15
 - Minneapolis HCS – Federal Whipple Building

Check your facility's Facebook page and web page for additional information on upcoming town halls and other scheduled events.

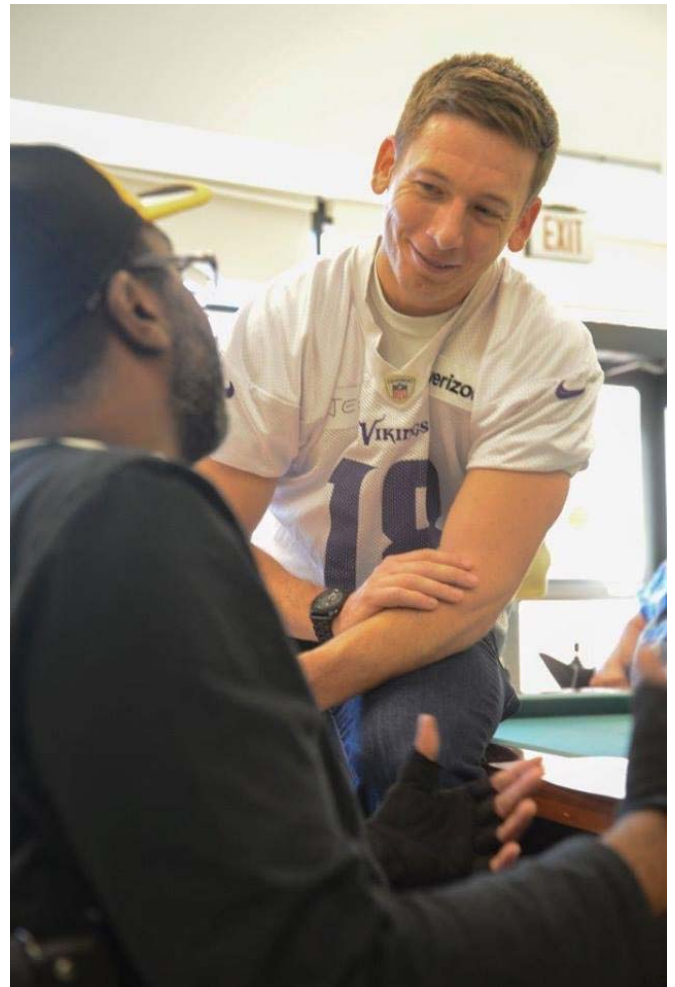


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Minnesota Vikings visit Minneapolis VA Medical Center

When six members of the Minnesota Vikings football team arrived in the flag atrium of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center around 10:30 a.m. on November 10, it wasn't hard to figure out who they were, even if they weren't in uniform! Patients, staff and visitors were immediately drawn to the players, who spent the next 90 minutes visiting patients in the Community Living Center and Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder Center.

Returning for his fifth visit was center John Sullivan; punter Jeff Locke has been here for the past three years. Joining them were: defensive end Scott Crichton, long-snapper Kevin McDermott, running back Dominique Williams and place kicker Blair Walsh. Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars arranged the visit. Players came to the VA on their day off from practice.



Minnesota Vikings punter Jeff Locke visits with a veteran on Nov. 10 at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. (VA photo by April Eilers)