



June 2026

REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER

Serving the Counties of: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon



SUPPORTING THOSE WHO CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

Let's not wait until Veterans Day each year to offer our gratitude or support for those who have served our great Nation, protected our freedoms, and who need us now more than ever. Caring for a veteran is both an honor and a daily challenge, and Michigan offers one of the strongest support systems in the country for caregivers. Thank you for the compassionate care you provide every day. Your dedication strengthens Michigan's veteran community, and you are never alone in this work. If you need support or guidance, remember help is always available.



SUPPORTING VETERANS WITH DEPRESSION & ANXIETY

Over 1.7 million Veterans received mental health services at VA last year. The VA reports that 1 in 3 veterans who visit their doctor present with symptoms of depression, and 1 out of 9 veterans have major depressive disorder MDD.



Schedule an Appointment with VA Medical Services



Know the Signs of Depression



Find a Support Group and Resources for them



Explore Coping Strategies

"CAREGIVERS ARE THE QUIET HEROES WHO CONTINUE THE MISSION LONG AFTER SERVICE ENDS."





VETERAN RESOURCES



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

A one-stop hub for caregivers of veterans. It offers a wide variety of downloadable guides, training modules, and self-care tools covering topics like emotional well-being, financial planning, emergency preparedness, palliative care, and peer mentoring.

CHOOSEVA

ChooseVA is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' official benefits portal, designed to help veterans, active service members, and their families explore and apply for a full range of VA services. Whether they are looking for health care, housing assistance, education and career support, disability compensation, life insurance, or burial benefits. ChooseVA provides a centralized, easy-to-use gateway to explore options and initiate the application process.

MICHIGAN VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY (MVAA)

Michigan's central advocate and resource hub for veterans and their families. As part of the Michigan Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, MVAA connects former service members with the benefits and programs they've earned both at the federal and state levels. Call 1-800-642-4838 for help accessing benefits, finding a Veteran Service Officer (VSO), or getting state-specific support. Provides 24/7 access to information, support, and referrals.

MSUE VETERANS OUTREACH

MSU Extension is committed to providing veterans with programs and services that support their personal and financial wellness. Whether they served decades ago or recently discharged, MSUE Veterans Outreach wants to support the success of veterans, family members, and caregivers.

VA SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLKIT FOR CAREGIVERS

Designed specifically for those supporting veterans. It offers practical information on recognizing warning signs, helping create safety plans, and promoting self-care for both caregivers and their veterans. The toolkit also highlights mental health and substance use treatment options, provides crisis resources, and emphasizes the powerful role you play in suicide prevention.

AARP VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES CAREGIVER GUIDE

Designed to help you navigate the challenges and opportunities of caring for a veteran or service member. It walks you through your caregiving journey—assessing needs, holding important conversations, creating a concrete care plan, and building a dependable support team.

COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICES

- Alcona County Veteran Affairs: 989-846-9080
- Alpena County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-354-9671
- Charlevoix County Veterans Affairs: 231-547-7220
- Cheboygan County Veterans Services: 231-627-8833
- Crawford County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-344-3861
- Grand Traverse County Veterans Affairs: 231-995-6070
- Harbor Springs Veterans Office: 231-242-1400
- Montmorency County Veteran Service Office: 989-785-8043
- Ogemaw County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-345-5170
- Oscoda County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-826-9500
- Otsego County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-731-7575
- Presque Isle County Department of Veterans Affairs: 989-734-0302
- Roscommon County Veterans Services: 989-275-6047
- Traverse City Vet Center: 231-935-0051



[Click here to visit the VFW Directory: www.vfwmi.org](http://www.vfwmi.org)



VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Provides assistance, education, and resources to caregivers of eligible veterans. Key benefits include:

1. Training & Education

- Caregiver training on medical, physical, and emotional care skills.
- Online courses and in-person workshops for managing complex care needs.

2. Respite Care

- Short-term relief for caregivers through paid or arranged respite services.
- Helps prevent burnout and supports caregiver well-being.

3. Financial Support

- Monthly stipend for eligible family caregivers of veterans injured in service.
- May include access to health insurance through VA coverage programs.

4. Health & Wellness Services

- Mental health counseling, peer support, and self-care programs for caregivers.
- Access to caregiver support coordinators for individualized guidance.

5. Support Resources & Networks

- Access to caregiver support coordinators and local caregiver support groups.
- Educational materials, publications, and online resources to guide caregiving.

6. Specialized Programs

- Programs for caregivers of veterans with severe injuries or illnesses, including those related to PTSD or other mental health challenges.
- Assistance in navigating VA benefits, healthcare, and veteran services.

PROGRAM OF GENERAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES (PGCSS)

PGCSS is for general support, guidance, and education for caregivers of any Veteran.

Eligibility: Caregivers of veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. The veteran must be enrolled in VA health care and be receiving care from a caregiver.

What it offers:

- Peer support and mentoring.
- Skills training and coaching.
- Telephone support and online programs.
- Referrals to resources.

PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS (PCAFC)

PCAFC is a more intensive program with financial, health, and comprehensive benefits for caregivers providing full-time care to seriously injured Veterans.

Eligibility: Family caregivers of veterans who need personal and medical care due to serious injuries or illnesses.

Based on the veteran's specific needs and service era; you can find more information at VA Caregiver Support Program.

What it offers:

- All benefits from PGCSS, plus enhanced support.
- A monthly stipend paid directly to the caregiver.
- Health insurance.
- Beneficiary travel assistance.
- Enhanced clinical support.



TIPS FOR SUPPORTING VETERANS WITH PTSD OR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Caring for a veteran with PTSD or a TBI can present unique emotional, behavioral, and cognitive challenges. These conditions may affect memory, mood, communication, and reactions to everyday situations. As a caregiver, your role is essential in creating a safe, supportive, and structured environment. Understanding triggers, practicing patience, and using clear communication can make a meaningful difference in your veteran's daily life. It's also important to remember, you are not alone. Utilizing available resources, building a support network, and prioritizing your own well-being are key parts of providing sustainable care.



Reduce loud noises, sudden changes, or crowded spaces that may trigger stress or confusion.



Speak slowly and calmly. Break instructions or information into small, manageable steps. Avoid arguing; offer choices instead of commands.



Understand that anger, anxiety, memory lapses, or mood swings are symptoms, not personal attacks.



Help connect them with VA mental health services, TBI clinics, or therapists trained in trauma care.



Encourage regular sleep, exercise, and balanced meals.



Practice grounding exercises, deep breathing, or mindfulness together.



Use respite services, peer support, or caregiver counseling to maintain your own well-being.



Identify known triggers and develop a crisis plan with professionals.

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE:
24/7 CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT FOR
VETERANS IN CRISIS.**

DIAL 988 AND PRESS 1, OR TEXT 838255.





CARE PLAN: SUPPORTING A VETERAN

Veteran's Name: _____

Caregiver Name: _____

1. Known Triggers: (List situations, environments, or events that may cause stress)

2. Early Warning Signs: (What behaviors signal distress? Ex: agitation, withdrawal, confusion)

3. Calming Strategies That Work: (What helps soothe or ground the veteran?)

- Deep breathing
- Quiet space
- Music
- Walking
- Other: _____

4. Communication Preferences: (What works best?)

- Short/simple instructions
- Written reminders
- Calm tone
- Extra processing time

Additional Notes:

5. Daily Routine (Important Activities)

Morning:

Afternoon:

Evening:

6. Support Team & Resources: (List providers, contacts, or services)

Name/Service: _____ Phone: _____

Name/Service: _____ Phone: _____

Name/Service: _____ Phone: _____

7. Emergency Plan: (Who to call / what to do in crisis)

8. Caregiver Self-Care Plan: (What will YOU do to stay supported?)

- Take breaks
- Ask for help
- Attend support groups
- Practice self-care activities





HELPING FROM FAR AWAY

You can still provide support as a caregiver, even if you don't live close by.



Arrange for in-home care, such as a home health aide.



Research long-term care options, such as nursing homes.



Plan occasional in-person visits to help out the day-to-day caregivers.



Order medical equipment, medicines, and other supplies.



Assist with paying bills and managing insurance claims.



VETERAN COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS SOCIAL EVENTS

ALCONA:

First Sunday of every Month.
2:00PM - 4:00PM

Alcona High School Auditorium
51 North Barlow Rd. Harrisville, MI 48740

ALPENA:

Fourth Thursday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

Art of the Loft
109 North 2nd Ave.
Suite 300
Alpena, MI 49707

ARENAC:

First Tuesday of every month.
9:00AM - 12:00PM

Veterans Club
3221 M76
Standish, MI 48658

CHEBOYGAN:

Fourth Wednesday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

Great Lakes Grill Banquet Room
817 East State St.
Cheboygan, MI 49721

CRAWFORD:

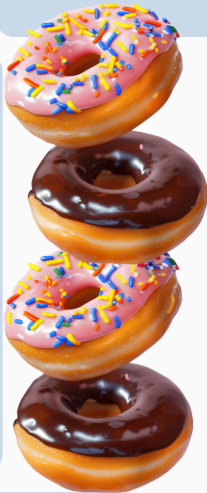
Second Thursday of every month.
10:00AM - 11:00AM

American Legion Post #106
106 South James St. Grayling, MI 49738
989.344.3861

IOSCO:

Third Thursday of every month.
8:30AM - 10:00AM

Audie Johnson American Legion
900 E. Lincoln St, East Tawas, MI, United States, 48730



OGEMAW:

First Wednesday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

Ogemaw County Commission on Aging, 1528 M-33 West Branch, MI 989.390.0614

OTSEGO:

First Wednesday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

Gaylord Regional Airport
1100 Aero Dr.
Gaylord, MI 49735

OSCODA:

Third Tuesday of every month.
10:00AM - 11:00AM

Oscoda County Veterans Affairs
205 East 11th St.
Mio, MI 48647

PRESQUE ISLE:

First Thursday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

Presque Isle County Council on Aging
6520 Darga Hwy. Posen, MI 49776 &
4203 S Lynn Street Onaway, MI 49765
989.766.8191

ROSCOMMON:

First Thursday of every month.
9:00AM - 10:00AM

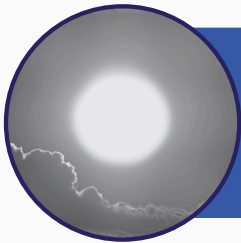
The Roscommon County Airport
5218 East Houghton Lake Drive
Houghton Lake, MI 48629

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING

Feel less lonely, isolated, or judged.

Get advice or information about practical solutions or treatment options.

Improving or learning healthy coping skills.



DIABETES AND HEAT: SAFETY TIPS

People with diabetes should be extra careful during hot weather. Temperatures of 80°F or above, especially with high humidity, can affect medication, testing supplies, and your health.

Here are suggestions from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on taking care of yourself during hot weather:

- Heat can affect your blood glucose (sugar) levels and also increase the absorption of some fast-acting insulin, meaning you will need to test your blood glucose more often and perhaps adjust your intake of insulin, food and liquids.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, to avoid dehydration. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages such as sweet tea and sodas.
- If your doctor has limited how much liquid you can drink, ask what to do during times of high heat.
- Check package inserts with medications to learn when high temperatures can affect them. Take medications with you if you will need to take them while you're away from home, and protect them from the heat.
- If you're traveling with insulin, don't store it in direct sunlight or in a hot car. Keep it in a cooler, but do not place it directly on ice or on a gel pack.
- Check glucose meter and test strip packages for information on use during times of high heat and humidity. Do not leave them in a hot car, by a pool, or on the beach.
- Heat can damage insulin pumps and other equipment. Do not leave the disconnected pump or supplies in the direct sun.
- Get physical activity in air-conditioned areas, or exercise outside early or late in the day, during cooler temperatures.
- Use your air conditioner or go to air-conditioned buildings in your community.

In the United States:

- About 38 million adults have diabetes, and 1 in 5 of them don't know they have it.
- Diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death.
- Type 2 diabetes accounts for about 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes; type 1 diabetes accounts for about 5% to 10%.
- Diabetes is the No. 1 cause of kidney failure, lower-limb amputations, and adult blindness.
- In the last 20 years, the number of adults diagnosed with diabetes has more than doubled.
- Medical costs and lost work and wages for people with diagnosed diabetes total \$413 billion yearly.
- Medical costs for people with diabetes are more than twice as high as for people who don't have diabetes.

DIABETES IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF NEW CASES OF BLINDNESS IN ADULTS AGED 18–64 YEARS.





SUPPORTING AGING VETERANS LIVING ALONE

Loneliness and social isolation among seniors have long been recognized as serious public health risks. Loneliness can take its toll on our bodies as well as our minds. Loneliness has been connected to physical health challenges, including increased risk of high blood pressure, cognitive decline, depression, and mortality. The incidence of reported loneliness and isolation is higher in veterans than in the general population. The Department of Veterans Affairs identifies more than 1 in 5 Veterans live alone, putting them at risk of the associated physical and mental side effects.



Medication Management



Grocery Shop



Prepare Meals



Light Housework



Assist with Activities Daily Living



Drive them to Appointments



Home Safety Checks



CARING FOR VETERANS WITH DEMENTIA

Veterans experience more risk factors, such as age, genetics, family history, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI), increasing their likelihood of dementia. As soon as you notice changes in thinking in memory in yourself or someone you know, see a doctor. An earlier dementia diagnosis offers significant benefits, like the ability to stay independent for as long as possible.



Validate, Don't Correct:

If a veteran thinks they are back in service, validate their feelings instead of arguing. Use phrases like "You're safe now" rather than correcting their confusion, which can cause increased agitation.



Manage Triggers & Environment:

Minimize loud noises, sudden movements, or media that could trigger combat memories. Approaching from the front prevents triggering self-defense reflexes.



Maintain Safety:

Use safety locks, remove trip hazards, and monitor for wandering by notifying neighbors or using GPS devices. Remove firearms from the home, or secure them safely.



Establish Routine & Structure:

Implement a predictable, structured daily routine to reduce anxiety, which aligns with military backgrounds.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION:

VETERANS AND DEMENTIA RESOURCES

WWW.ALZ.ORG/HELP-SUPPORT/RESOURCES/VETERANS-DEMENTIA



IMPORTANT DATES

DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SERIES

June 17, June 24, & July 1, 2026

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

VIA ZOOM

ALZHEIMER'S LONGEST DAY

June 21, 2026

DEMENTIA INFORMATION FOR EVERYONE PRESENTATION

July 23, 2026

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

ALCONA COUNTY LIBRARY

(312 W MAIN ST, HARRISVILLE, MI 48740)

CAREGIVER WELLNESS WORKSHOP

August 19, August 26, September 2, & September 9, 2026

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

VIA ZOOM

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATOR TRAINING

September 1, 2026 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
VIA ZOOM



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE HELPFUL INFORMATION?

Region 9 Area Agency on Aging Special Projects Coordinator is available weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to answer your questions, register you for caregiver workshops, provide resources, and to support you and the person you are caring for.

Contact **989.358.4667** or healthyaging@nemcsa.org



CAREGIVER SELF-CARE WHEN SUPPORTING VETERANS

Self-care for veteran caregivers is essential to prevent burnout and maintain personal well-being, focusing on setting boundaries, prioritizing health, and seeking support.



Establish a Routine



Set Aside Time 5-10 Minutes



Prioritize Physical Health



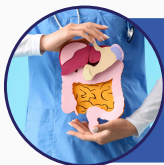
Practice Mindfulness



Maintain Social Connections



Join a Support Group



WARNING SIGNS OF COLORECTAL (BOWEL) CANCER

Colorectal cancer starts in either your colon or your rectum, both of which are parts of the large intestine. The latest report from the American Cancer Society finds that cases of rectal cancer are on the rise, making up nearly one-third of all colorectal cancer diagnoses. The American Cancer Society finds nearly half of new colorectal cancer cases are being diagnosed in adults under 65, up from 27 percent three decades ago. For adults under 50, colorectal cancer is now the number one cause of cancer-related mortality.

1. A change in bowel habits (think diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of your stool) that lasts for more than a few days.
2. An urge to have a bowel movement that's not relieved by having one.
3. Rectal bleeding. "Any bleeding you see, even if it's just one time, should not be ignored," says Dr. Daniel Labow, surgical oncologist at the Nuvance Health Praxair Cancer Center in Connecticut.
4. Dark brown or black stool (which can indicate blood).
5. Cramping or belly pain.
6. Weakness and fatigue.
7. Unexplained weight loss.
8. Unexplained anemia.