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VA Approves HOW Adult Day Services as Community Service Provider

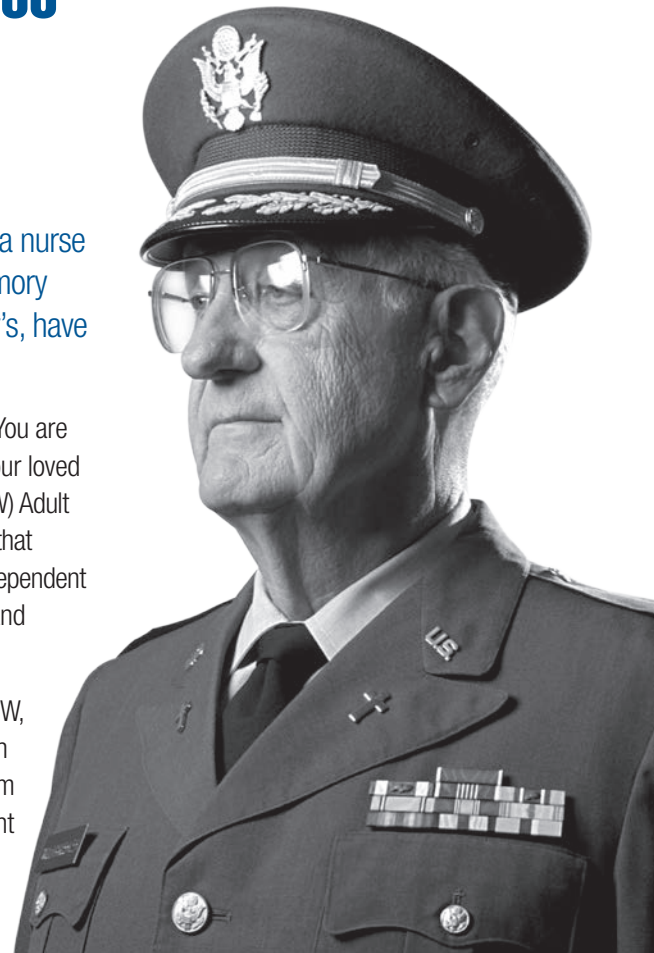
Supporting Veterans as They Cope with Memory Loss

Your husband is a World War II U.S. Navy veteran. Or your mother served as a nurse in Korea. Or your partner was in the army during the Vietnam War. Now, memory loss symptoms from a degenerative neurological disease, such as Alzheimer's, have affected your loved one's ability to manage the activities of daily life.

Your caregiving at home is vitally important, but you realize that you need more support. You are looking for a group or day program that will provide a safe, supportive environment for your loved one and give you respite. So, you think you might connect with the House of Welcome (HOW) Adult Day Services on North Shore Senior Center's Nielsen Campus in Northfield. You've learned that Mind Matters for early memory loss offers stimulating activities to help participants stay independent as long as possible. And you understand that the HOW day program offers socialization and activities to reinforce memories, skills, and values in a comfortable, homelike setting.

However, you are concerned about the cost of the services. According to Cynthia Phon, LCSW, director of House of Welcome, the Center has a generous sliding fee scale for people with limited income and assets, and many families receive reimbursement from their long-term care insurance. Now, eligible veterans of U.S. military service can pursue another payment option: **benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).**

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“This partnership with the VA is an important aspect of the Center’s mission to serve the well-being of older adults, many of whom are veterans. We are pleased to be able to increase access to the HOW day program and Mind Matters for veterans who have dementia. We want to help them stay in the community as long as possible.”

—Cynthia Phon, LCSW

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Partnership

Terri Bohlman, MSW, LCSW, BCD, is a social worker at the VA’s Lovell Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago and coordinates referrals to adult day programs. Cynthia noted, “Terri has been passionate about offering day care options and other programming for veterans who have memory loss. Many conversations over a couple of years as well as the required paperwork led to a partnership that benefits veterans and their families.” **In April, North Shore Senior Center’s House of Welcome Adult Day Services was approved by the VA as a provider of adult day care for veterans who have dementia.** House of Welcome is one of a half-dozen community programs in the area that have contracts with the VA to provide various types of services in a day setting for adults.

Process

If your loved one is not yet enrolled in the VA system for healthcare or mental health services, Terri advises that the first step is to register at a local VA clinic (e.g., in Evanston, McHenry, or North Chicago). Just be sure you have the discharge paperwork (DD 214 form); you can go online to replace it, if necessary. You also will need to fill out a 10-10EC form. This form helps the VA estimate the amount of your monthly copayment. Once the veteran is in the system—that is deemed eligible for VA services and health benefits—and the diagnosis is dementia, a VA healthcare professional will write an order for adult day services.

If your loved one already is enrolled in the VA system, you can make an appointment at a local VA clinic for assessment, diagnosis, and referral. It is important to note that both the diagnosis and order for services must come from a VA provider, and that part of the benefit eligibility requirements includes periodic appointments at the VA.

Once a referral is made, a VA social worker assesses the needs of the veteran and family, and if appropriate, makes a referral to the HOW program. Terri commented, **“Most of the veterans who are enrolled in a day program are referred for**

respite for the caregivers, socialization, or to increase their activity levels. All of these help with the main goal of keeping the veterans at home.”

Although only veterans are eligible for adult day benefits from the VA, support for caregivers is an integral part of HOW services. Mary Lu Osterberg, LCPC, clinical manager, facilitates a monthly family support group and provides referrals and case management for all day program participants.

Contact

Feel free to call 847.242.6250 at any time for information about the program. House of Welcome staff can respond to your questions and help you determine whether the day program or Mind Matters is a good option for your loved one. Eligibility for HOW programs is not dependent on eligibility for the VA benefit. The VA simply becomes another source of funding. ■