



# Veterans Benefits and Other Programs

January 31, 2012



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## Agenda

- Welcome
- VA Pension and Other Benefits
- VA Programs for the Blind
- VA Caregiver Supports
- QA & Closing Remarks



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## VA Pension and Other Benefits

**Joe Ford**  
**Veterans Service Officer**  
**OC Community Resources**

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## Contact Info

Joe Ford, VCO III  
OC Community Resources Veterans Service Office  
1300 S. Grand Ave., Bldg B  
Santa Ana, CA 92705



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## Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST)

Linda Fitzgerald, MA  
VIST Coordinator and Case Manager  
VA Long Beach Healthcare System

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## VIST Purpose

The Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) is an outpatient program that assists Veterans with the adjustment to sight loss.



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## Who is the “Team?”

- VIST Coordinator – Linda Fitzgerald
- Blind Rehab Outpatient Specialist (BROS) – Gayana Abellana
- Ophthalmologist – Dr. Cote
- Any VA service who provides coordinated care to visually impaired Veterans, e.g.:
  - Primary Care
  - Audiology
  - Prosthetics
  - Social Work
  - Mental Health
  - Geriatrics
  - OT/PT/KT
  - Optometry



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## What are VIST Services?

- Comprehensive
- Individualized based on needs/goals of the Veteran
- In most cases, all services are provided at no cost to the Veteran
- Details in the VIST brochure

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## How to Refer a Veteran

- Provider or Veteran can contact the VIST Coordinator
- Phone: 562.826.5696
- Prefer no email as VA prohibits using unencrypted email to pass Veteran information

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## Eligibility for Services

1. Be a Veteran eligible for VA health care general or honorable discharge from active duty military service).
2. Be enrolled in the VA Healthcare System.

\*\*\*Veteran can be eligible for VIST services whether he/she lost vision during or after active duty.

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## Eligibility... (con't)

3. Meet one of the following criteria:
  - a. Legal blindness: Best corrected central visual acuity in the better-seeing eye less than or equal to 20/200, or visual field dimension in the better-seeing eye less than or equal to 20 degrees, even if central visual acuity is better than 20/200.

or

  - b. Functional loss due to severe low vision where comprehensive treatment is needed for appropriate restoration of the individual's safety or functional independence or for establishment of their personal or social adjustment to vision loss.

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## How to Enroll at VA Long Beach

- Visit the Patient Business Office (PBO) to enroll
  - Building 126, first floor
  - Monday – Friday 7.30 am – 3.30 pm
  - No appointment necessary; first come, first served
  - Counselor will assist with enrollment form, photo id
  
- Veteran brings:
  - DD-214 discharge papers
  - Financial info
  - Current eye report, if available
  
- Call VIST Coordinator the following day at 562.826.5696

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## Contact Info

VIST Coordinator – Linda Fitzgerald  
Phone - 562.826.5696  
Address – 5901 E. 7<sup>th</sup> St  
Long Beach 90822

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## Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC)

Don Vu, BA  
Clinical Coordinator  
VA Long Beach Healthcare System

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### BRC Setting

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- 24-bed facility
- In-patient residential program
- Length of stay varies on the program
- One-on-one instruction



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## Types of Programs

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- Regular (basic) program
- Computer Access Technology
- Power Mobility
- Advanced Wayfinding
- iPhone, iPad

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## Role of Clinical Coordinator

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- Interface with regional VIST Coordinators
- BRC Point of Contact
- Coordinates admission and discharge process

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## Contact Info

Don Vu, BA  
562.826.8000, ext. 6037



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## Assistance & Support Services for Family Caregivers

Zsa Zsa Sanders, LCSW  
Caregiver Support Coordinator  
Long Beach Healthcare System



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## Caregivers of Veterans



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## National Caregiver Statistics

- Approximately 23 million Veterans live in the U.S.
- 300 million US civilians (12.1%) have a disability
- An estimated 65.7 million caregivers provide unpaid care to a care recipient

Department of Veterans Affairs Patient Care Services



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## Long Beach VA Services

- Home & Community Based Care
  - Skilled Nursing
  - Home Health Aide
  - Home Based Primary Care
  - Adult Day Health Care
- Financial Support Aid and Attendance Caregiver Stipend (Post 9-11)
- Respite Care
  - In-Home Respite
- Information and Referral
  - [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)
  - Caregiver Support Line
- Services to Address Mobility Issues
  - Equipment
  - Home Modification
  - Automobile Modification
- Caregiver Support
  - Support Groups
  - Caregiver Support Coordinators
  - Interactive Website
  - Peer Mentoring Program
- Education and Training



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## Comprehensive Caregiver Support Services

- Allow Veterans to remain at home in the community
- Address specific needs of family caregivers with a variety of programs and services
- Promote Veteran and caregiver health and well-being
- Provide one location to obtain needed information
- Provide training and information on common conditions
- Reduce isolation with professional and peer support
- Provide respite care options to give caregivers a break
- Sensitize health care providers to the caregivers' role



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## National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) Report Caregivers of Veterans – Serving on the Homefront

- Physical and Emotional Impact on Caregiver
  - Increased stress or anxiety 89%
  - Sleep deprivation 77%
  - Less time exercising 69%
  - Poor eating habits
  - Weight gain or loss
  - Depression 63%
  - Delaying their own health care needs 58%

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## Education, Training and Support



- Caregiver Education and Training
  - Pre-Discharge Care Instruction
  - Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders
  - Polytrauma Rehabilitation
  - Blind Rehabilitation
  - Family Psycho-education
  - Caregiver Information on VA Health Website
  - Brochures and written materials
- Family Support Services
  - Support Groups
  - Family Counseling
  - Spiritual and Pastoral Care

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## Caregiver Support Coordinators

- At all VA medical centers
- Provides emotional/supportive counseling
- Clinical experts on caregiver issues including VA and non VA resources
- Assist with administrative procedures to process applications, coordinate required home visits, monitor training requirements, and coordinate between clinical teams, business office, and others as required
- Maintains the Caregiver Application Tracker (CAT) web tool for the VAMC and reports to VISN lead
- Organize caregiver focused activities and services
- Ensure caregiver sensitivity is integrated into all programs



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## P.L. 111-163 Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act



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## Eligibility for P.L. 111-163, §§ 101-104

- **Veteran Eligibility Criteria For Comprehensive Family Caregiver Program**
  - Veteran who suffered a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty on or after 9/11/01 including traumatic brain injury and psychological trauma or other mental disorder
  - and*
  - Is in need of personal care services because of
    - an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living;
    - a need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury;
  
- **General Caregiver benefits include all era Veterans**



## Current vs. New Caregiver Benefits

<u>Current Benefits</u>	<u>PL 111-163 Additional Benefits</u>
Available to Veterans of <u>All Eras</u>	Available to subset of post-9/11 Veterans and Servicemembers
World War II	<u>Primary Caregivers Receive:</u>
Korean	
Vietnam	▪ Stipend
Gulf War	▪ Health care (if not otherwise available)
<b>Post-9/11</b> -----	▪ Mental health services
▪ Education and Training	▪ Family Caregiver Benefits
▪ Family Support Services	<u>Secondary Caregivers Receive:</u>
▪ In-Home Care	▪ Travel, lodging and per diem for training
▪ 30 Days of Respite Care	▪ Respite care during training
▪ Aid and Attendance	▪ Lodging and subsistence for Veteran's VA appointments
▪ Additional Benefits	▪ Appropriate instruction and training
	▪ Counseling

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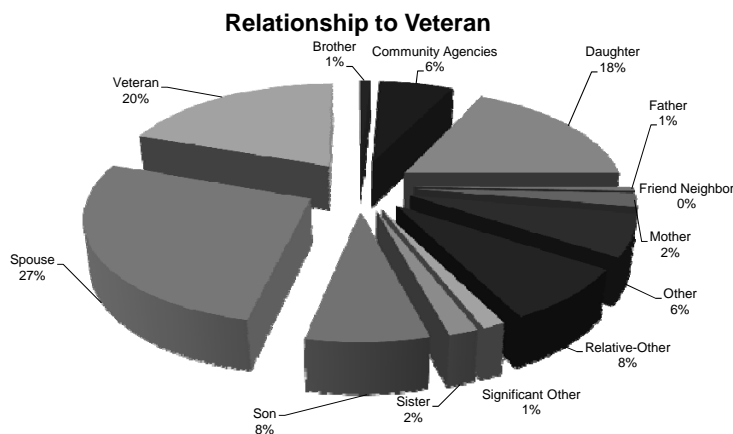
## VA Caregiver Support Program - Support Line

- Over 25,000 calls received to date
- Averaging 100-150 calls per day
- Staffed by licensed social workers
- 24/7 coverage
- Follow-up provided by local Caregiver Support Coordinators
- Consistently positive comments and appreciation from Caregivers



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## Caregiver Support Line – Who is Calling?



Dec 2011 Data



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## VA Caregiver Support Program Website

- Interactive Caregiver Support

- “Caregiver Toolbox”

- Caregiver Stories

- Link to Application for New Benefits

- Caregiver Support Line  
1-855-260-3274



[www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)

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## VA Caregiver Support Program Caregiver Support Groups

- REACH VA Dementia
  - Designed to provide education and support, and teach problem-solving for Caregivers of Veterans with Alzheimer’s Disease/dementia
  - Includes home visits and training as well as monthly phone support groups with other Caregivers
  - Currently available at 15 sites, with 14 additional sites in training
- Spouse Telephone Support
  - Launched Dec 2011
  - Groups of Post 9/11 spouses meet with a VA clinician
  - Program includes problem solving skills, resiliency training, and support
  - Modeled after the Army Spouse Battlemind Program
  - Currently available at more than 15 VA sites, with additional sites added monthly

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## Additional Long Beach VA Caregiver Resources

- Powerful Tools for Caregivers- 6 week psycho educational workshop for Caregivers
- Bereavement Support Group
- Support & Family Education for Family Members – Veteran’s with Mental Illness
- Stress Management Workshop for Women Clinic Participants - 6 weeks.
- VA CSP – Peer Support Mentoring \*New



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## VA Caregiver Support Program Feedback from Family Caregivers

*“I wish this VA caregivers support program was in place back in 2005! I think this service could of helped me get through the process of caring for my husband and coping with my needs as a person who plays an important role in the recovery of a wounded hero. A big factor on the successful healing and recovery of any veterans is the 24/7 caregiver. Sometimes we are forgotten. I am glad that this caregivers support program exist now.”*

*“My husband is diagnosed with Advance Dementia. I often felt overwhelmed, and not supported. Now I have voice , and people who listen to me thanks to the CSP.”*



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## How Can You Help?

- Help educate Servicemembers/Veterans/Caregivers
  - Spread the word about the CSP
  - Share the National Caregiver Support Line Number  
**1-855-260-3274**
  - Share the Caregiver website- [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)
- Contact the local caregiver support coordinator

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## Contact Info

Zsa Zsa Sanders, LCSW  
Caregiver Support Coordinator  
Long Beach VA Healthcare System  
[zsazsa.sanders@va.gov](mailto:zsazsa.sanders@va.gov)  
562-826-8000, ext.4985

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## Questions



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## Closing

- Complete Evaluations
- Next session
  - Housing Options for People with Disabilities
  - March 27
- Thank you

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