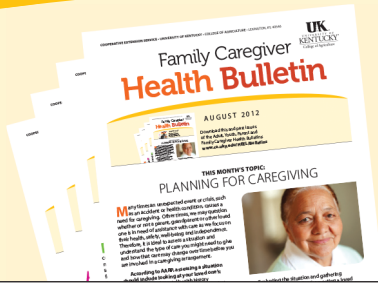


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



MAY 2014

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

MILITARY FAMILY CAREGIVERS AND RESPITE

There are approximately 1.1 million military family caregivers who provide services and support to a service member who was wounded in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom. Some services they provide include personal care, transportation, advocacy, companionship, financial management, love and emotional encouragement. In addition to such "normal," caregiving duties, military family caregivers often face additional care challenges that come with conditions invisible to the human eye. These "invisible wounds," such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) can be difficult for caregivers, families and the general public to understand because the person may look like nothing is wrong. Because these soldiers are often injured at a young



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Respite care is one way military family caregivers can catch a break. Respite involves temporary relief from usual care.

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age, the caregiving journey is estimated to last two times longer than other caregiving populations.

As a result of all the caregiver responsibilities, it is not uncommon to feel overwhelmed, uncertain, angry or confused. An accumulation of such emotions, strain and stress can eventually prohibit you from taking care of yourself and eventually others. Therefore, it is critical that caregivers take regular, purposeful and meaningful breaks.

Respite care is one way military family caregivers can catch a break. Respite involves temporary relief from usual care. It is important to remember that caregivers are more effective in helping others when they help themselves first.

Overall, there are two categories of respite programs: in-home and out-of-home respite.

- **In-home respite** is easier on many families because surroundings are familiar, necessary equipment is often in place and transportation is not required. In-home respite may be free of charge when offered by family, friends, neighbors, faith-based communities and some agencies or organizations. Paid, trained staff may also visit from social service or human service organizations, private or nonprofit agencies or home health agencies.
- **Out-of-home** respite may last from a couple of hours, to an overnight, to a handful of days. Common out-of-home respite services include adult day services, which typically provide day care services in facilities designed and with staff that is trained to meet the needs of adults with disabilities. Some facilities will have health,

For more respite information, see ARCH http://archrespite.org/images/docs/The_ABCs_of_Respite_for_Family_Caregivers_Updated6_12.pdf

therapeutic, life skill or recreational activities designed for various health needs. Sometimes it can take longer to adjust to new environments and routines, but some advantages include, being around people the same age or with similar conditions, the experience and challenge of new surroundings, opportunities for peer relationships and cognitive and emotional stimulation.

It is important to obtain reliable recommendations and background checks when trusting someone with your wounded warrior's care. ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center also recommends telephone screenings, personal interviews, references and the creation of a specific service contract.

According to ARCH, respite services are usually offered on a sliding fee schedule or there may be a combination of family fees and state and federal funding, including support through Veterans services. Your State Lifespan Respite Program (<http://archrespite.org/lifespan-programs>) or State Respite Coalition (<http://archrespite.org/state-respite-coalitions>) should be able to help you find respite services and ways to pay for them. For more information, you can also visit the VA Caregiver Support Program at <http://www.caregiver.va.gov/> or call the VA Caregiver Support Line at (855) 260-3274.

ADAPTED FROM:

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Family Caregiver
Health Bulletin

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