Patient File Checklist

VA Caregiver Support

Creating a patient file will assist you in advocating for the Veteran. This file serves many purposes:

- Keeps medical records organized
- Builds a history of the Veteran's health care
- Helps you and the Veteran to partner with the health care team
- Saves time because the Veteran's health information can easily be located

You can create a patient file using a simple three ring binder with dividers, an accordion file, or a computer file. As with any tool, the patient file will be useful only if it is kept up-to-date. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Store the file in a place that makes sense to you — a place where you can grab it quickly in an emergency, or on your way out the door to an appointment.
2. Always keep the file in the same place.
3. Update the Veteran's patient file after every encounter with the health care team whether face-to-face, telephone, vTel or email.

What should the Veteran's Patient File contain?

- Veteran's Medical History
- Insurance Information
- Medications from both VA and non-VA providers including over the counter medications, vitamins, herbal remedies, etc.
- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care
- Contact information (i.e., telephone numbers, addresses, email) for medical providers, nurses, case managers, and other health care providers
- Your observations of the Veteran's response to treatment
- Notes from the visit
- Questions for the next visit
- A large envelope or pouch to store loose documents or CDs

Created 08/2017

Tips for Communicating with a Veteran's Health Care Team

You are a key member of the Veteran's care team, and maintaining effective communication with other team members is an important aspect of providing the Veteran you care for with the best care possible. Try the tips below to help make the most of doctor visits and to promote regular, open communication with the medical personnel on the Veteran's clinical care team.

- Before you go to the doctor, write questions down so you won't forget them. Work with the Veteran you care for to come up with the questions you both need to know. See our **list of suggested questions**.
- Be clear about what you want to say to the doctor. Try not to ramble.
- If you have lots of things to talk about, make a consultation appointment, so the doctor can allow enough time to meet with you in an unhurried way.
- Educate yourself about your loved one's disease or disability. With all the information on the Internet, it is easier than ever before. Be sure to check the information you find with the Veteran's clinical care team.
- Learn the routine at your doctor's office and/or the medical center so you can make the system work for you, not against you.
- Recognize that not all questions have answers – especially those beginning with why.
- Separate your anger and frustration about not being able to help your loved one as much as you would like to from your feelings about the health care team. Remember, you are both on the same side.
- Appreciate what the health care team is doing to help and say thank you from time to time.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Improving Doctor/Caregiver Communications."

Created 05/11

Questions to Ask a Veteran's Health Care Providers

VA Caregiver Support

The list of questions below can help you prepare for discussions with a Veteran's health care providers (e.g., doctor visit, mental health counseling, trip to the emergency room, medical center discharge planning session, etc.) The questions are organized by category. Not all of these questions may apply to you, so select the questions that best fit yours and the Veteran's needs.

About Medical Care in General

- What might have caused this condition/illness?
- What is this condition/illness called?
- Is this condition/illness likely to go away on its own?
- Is the pain likely to diminish or go away?
- How do you want to treat this condition/illness?
- What are other ways to treat this condition/illness?
- What are the risks associated with these treatments?
- What is the likely future of this condition/illness with the recommended treatment? Without the recommended treatment?
- What is the time frame for the treatment?
- Is a hospital stay necessary?
- What is the expected recovery time?
- What lifestyle changes can we expect in the future?

About Medical Tests and Procedures

- Is the recommended test or procedure necessary to confirm or disprove a diagnosis?
- Will the findings of the test change the way the condition/illness is managed?
- What are the risks involved?
- What happens if the Veteran refuses to undergo this test?
- How expensive is the test and will it be covered by insurance?
- Will the test require a change in any of the medications the Veteran is taking?

- What are the chances of inaccurate test results?
- What is the test procedure?
- How will the test make the Veteran feel? Will it be painful?
- How should I help the Veteran prepare for this test?
- Will the Veteran need help getting home afterward?
- Who will interpret the test results?
- Will someone call with the test results or should I phone for them?
- Can test results be sent directly to me or the Veteran?

About How the Doctor's Office Works

- What days/hours is the office open?
- How are medical emergencies handled?
- When is the best time to reach the doctor by phone, fax or e-mail?
- Which method of communication does the doctor prefer?

- Who can answer questions if the doctor is not available?
- Who can I call after hours or when the doctor is away?

Regarding the Costs of Medical Care

- What costs are not covered by the Veteran's health benefits through VA?
- Approximately how much can I expect to pay in the long run for treatment?
- What private insurance plans do you accept?

Planning for Discharge from the Hospital/Health Care Facility

As part of the process of planning for a Veteran being discharged from a medical center or health care facility, many issues related to the Veteran's care need to be resolved. As soon as you know the Veteran you care for is going to be admitted to the hospital, find out who is in charge of the discharge process and arrange a meeting to gather specific answers to the following questions.

- Where is the Veteran going to go after discharge? (Return to the previous setting? Go someplace else temporarily? Move permanently to a new location?)
- Who will provide additional home health care if it is needed?
- Does the Veteran need any home health equipment? What kind?
- Do physical and/or occupational therapy visits need to be arranged?
- What additional services may be needed and for how long (e.g., Meals-on-Wheels, hospice care, housekeeping)?
- What paperwork needs to be processed to get these services lined up?
- How will the added expenses be paid for?
- What additional skills do I need to learn so I can care for the Veteran properly?

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Providers."

Created 05/11

Preventing Medication Mishaps

VA Caregiver Support

Following these simple rules can help you prevent problems caused by interactions between medications, vitamins, supplements, and foods. It is one more way that you can be a good steward of a Veteran's health. It is also a good example of what it means to be a proactive Family Caregiver.

While you are following these steps to protect the Veteran's health, consider following them for yourself as well. Remember, your own good health is essential to your being an effective Family Caregiver.

1. Maintain an Up-to-date List

First and foremost, maintain an up-to-date list of everything the Veteran takes. List medications prescribed by doctors, but also list those purchased without a prescription such as aspirin, vitamins, and herbal supplements. These over-the-counter items can at times interact with prescription drugs and create serious problems. You are probably the only one who knows all the medications the Veteran is taking, especially if he/she sees multiple physicians.

- Be sure to list the name, dosage, and frequency of the medication (e.g., Warfarin 4mg, once a day), the reason for taking it (blood clot prevention), any dosing directions (may be taken with or without food), and the start date. For prescription drugs, add the name and number of the prescribing doctor, and the name and number of the pharmacy that filled the prescription.
- Be sure to put the Veteran's name at the top of the document and include your contact information (or someone else's) as the person to call in an emergency.
- Note any allergies or intolerances, or other significant medical information that might not be obvious.
- Make multiple copies, one for you to carry and one for the Veteran's personal medical file. Keep one on the refrigerator or the family bulletin board for paramedics to find, and send a copy to the Veteran's primary doctor.

- It is critical that you keep this record updated. Not only will an outdated record not do any good, but it may actually do some harm. Using a simple, computer-based document is one of the easiest ways to keep the record current.
- A medication list template is available on VA's Caregiver Support website on the **Staying Organized page.**

2. "Translate" Handwritten Prescriptions

Don't be shy about asking all the Veteran's doctors to "translate" their handwriting so you can write down exactly what a prescribed medication is (name, dosage, etc.).

3. Write the Condition Treated on Each Medicine Bottle

On each medicine bottle, write the name of the condition it treats. You might find that the Veteran you care for is taking three different pills for the same condition, each prescribed by a different physician. That may be exactly what is needed, but it is definitely a red flag to alert you to ask questions.

4. Use the Same Pharmacy

Try to use the same pharmacy for all prescriptions. That way there will be an official record to match your personal record with all the Veteran's prescription medications listed over an extended period of time. It also means that the pharmacist will be able to see all of the Veteran's prescriptions and alert you to any potential issues or interactions.

5. Understand Potential Side Effects and Interactions

When a Veteran is prescribed a new medication, ask the Veteran's health care team and pharmacist about potential side effects and interactions with others drugs, vitamins, or foods. Monitor the Veteran for reactions and, at the first sign of trouble, call the doctor and report the specific symptoms you see.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Safe and Sound: Preventing Medication Mishaps."

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Telephone Tips & Techniques for Accessing Resources

VA Caregiver Support

Today, the Internet is the medium of choice when researching information or trying to track down products and services. No matter how much information you find on the Internet, however, sooner or later you'll have to pick up a telephone to verify the information, find answers to your very specific questions or arrange for the services you need.

The VA Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274) and your local **VA Caregiver Support Coordinator** can be great resources for you as you gather the information you need to help care for a Veteran, but depending on the Veteran's needs, there may be other organizations, service providers or contacts you want to reach out to for additional information. You Caregiver Support Coordinator can help you find local resources for support as well.

To help you get the most out of these telephone conversations, below are some tips and techniques used by people who regularly do telephone research – such as reporters, customer service representatives, telephone support personnel, and persistent Family Caregivers. We hope they will help you find the information and resources you need.

The Big Three

- ***Be Prepared***. Don't start the process when you're rushed. Make sure you have a big pad of paper, a pen, a glass of water, and a reasonable amount of time for the call.
- ***Don't give up***. You have the right to information and respectful service. Be persistent and patient. Realize that sometimes it may take multiple calls to find out what you want. Depending on a Veteran's needs, it may be that no one organization has all the answers.
- ***Try not to put people on the spot***. Enlist the support of the person you are calling. Be calm and friendly as you ask how they can help you find the information you need.

Before You Pick Up the Phone

- Review written material first, if at all possible. Underline key points, or names and phone numbers of people and organizations you think you'll want to call.
- For each encounter, make a list of the questions you want to ask.
- Be clear about what information you need. If you can't explain what you want, it will be difficult for someone else to tell you where you can find it.
- Establish a system for yourself: a check can mean you got through to the person, a minus can mean you are waiting for a call back, and a star can mean you actually resolved your problem or found the answer you were seeking.
- Have a single notebook or organizer in which to record your information. Don't put it on little scraps of paper that can easily get lost. Try creating columns or headings at the top of the page: one for the name of the person, another for the name of the agency or company, another for the phone number, etc.

- If you're feeling nervous or jittery, give yourself a quick pep talk before making the calls. If it will help calm your nerves, role-playing with the Veteran you are caring for or with a friend – practice out loud what you plan to say to the person you're calling.
- Are you a morning person, or do you have the most energy in the afternoon? Know when you're usually at your best and most alert, and make your calls during that time.

Making Your Calls

There are a number of things you can do to increase the likelihood that you will get the information you need. Here are a few of them:

- Be aware of the pitch of your voice. Try to make it lower. According to the experienced telephone researchers who provided tips, a voice in a lower tone is often more pleasing than a high-pitched voice.
- Be modest. Tell the person on the other end of the line that you're not an expert, and that you hope they can give you some guidance. Enlist sympathy and, thereby, help.
- If you're calling someone you think you'll need to call again, try to establish a relationship. Find out the person's name and, if appropriate, some personal information if at all possible. Next time you call you can reference this information and you'll truly have an ally.
- Avoid "yes" or "no" questions. They don't open people up. Read the next two questions: "Do you know where I can find accessible bus service?" With this wording, "yes" or "no" is the likely answer. The following phrasing creates the possibility of dialogue: "Where can I find information on accessible bus service in our town?" The point is to always leave people room for suggesting possibilities and solutions.
- Be empathetic – remember that we all have tough days. If the person you're calling sounds tired or rushed, recognizing that they may have a lot on their plate – for example, "I realize it is late in the day and you must be tired, but I really need your help" – can be a good way to build a relationship and get the information you need.
- Make the person feel like your mentor. Compliment helpfulness, even if you didn't quite get what you needed. The next time you call, that person will be more likely to go out of their way to help you.
- If the person you want isn't in, rather than just leaving a call back number, find out when he or she is expected. This shows you want to make things easier – and you might learn valuable information, such as the person just left for a two-week vacation. If you hadn't asked, the information might not have been offered. If you are transferred to voicemail, leave a short but specific message with times you will be available. It can eliminate the game of telephone tag.
- Be polite, but don't allow yourself to be brushed off. You have a right to information. If you've really tried to get help but are constantly meeting roadblocks, ask to speak to a supervisor.
- Always get the name of the person to whom you are speaking. It's helpful when you get conflicting information and you can say, "When I spoke with Mary S. in the department of such-and-such, she said…" Knowing the person's name also shows you really listened and puts you in control.
- Even though the person on the other end of the line can't see you, it may help you personally to feel like you're "suiting up" for your phone calls. One day try making calls while wearing business clothes. Does it make you feel more in control, more authoritative? Another day wear comfortable jeans and a T-shirt. Any difference? Whatever works for you, whatever makes you comfortable and gets results, is the right approach.

If At First You Don't Succeed…

Getting information and breaking through information log jams can be daunting. There often doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason to the rules that have been established. When one approach doesn't work, try another. Be creative. Turn an idea on its head and try looking at it from another direction.

Remember, you don't have to find everything out yourself – enlist the help of your Caregiver Support Coordinator, or trusted family members and friends. Put the word out that you are looking for certain information or need help navigating a particular organization or system.

Ask a friend, colleague, or relative to lend you a hand – especially in a time of crisis. You'll be giving those who want to help a straightforward task they can sink their teeth into. There is more than one way to get information or resolve a problem. It isn't always easy, and there are no guarantees, but following some of the advice here may help increase your odds of getting what you need.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Accessing Resources: Telephone Tips & Techniques That Can Help."

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What to Do When the Veteran You Care For Is Hospitalized

VA Caregiver Support

If a Veteran's condition requires ongoing or intensive medical treatment, it is likely that you and the Veteran have seen, or will see, the inside of a medical center more than the average person. When hospitalization is necessary, there are things that you can do to feel more confident, ease your stress, and be an effective advocate and respected member of the health care team.

1. Have Needed Legal Documents in Place

Advance Medical Directives inform physicians and family members what kind of medical treatment and care a Veteran wishes to receive in the event of his/her inability to make those decisions. A Living Will and a Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order are examples of advance medical directives. A Living Will comes into effect during end-of-life situations. It records the specific kind of treatment and care a Veteran wants at that time. A DNR order, which must be written by a physician, gives permission to the medical team not to begin resuscitative efforts if the Veteran's heart stops or he or she stops breathing.

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, also known as a health care agent or proxy, is the individual appointed to make decisions about medical care if the Veteran can't. That person may well be you. A health care agent can be assigned as part of the advance directive form. Signed copies of these documents should be given to the Veteran's doctor, and incorporated into the patient chart each time the Veteran is hospitalized.

Be Prepared to Provide Information. You can be proactive, feel more confident in your dealings with medical center personnel and facilitate the Veteran's transition into the hospital setting by providing the following information immediately upon admission:

- The Veteran's medical history, in writing including:
  - A list of the Veteran's allergies;
  - A list of current medications and dosages;

  - A list of all physicians and consultants who are caring for the Veteran, along with phone numbers;
  - A clear and detailed written description of the Veteran's current physical and mental capabilities.

2. Be a Part of the Health Care Team

Think of yourself as a member of the health care team, which also includes the attending physician, the hospital nurses, and a hospital social worker or case manager. Immediately upon arrival at the medical center:

Find out the name of the attending physician of record for the Veteran. This individual is the primary doctor on the case and will coordinate care in the medical center. The attending physician will be in communication with the other consulting physicians and often can summarize the entire treatment plan. Make sure you understand and agree with that plan. Don't hesitate to continue to ask questions until you feel comfortable with the answers.

Find out the best way to get in touch with the attending physician. Who will initiate the phone contact? At what number can the physician be reached and what times are best to call? Make sure the "face" sheet in the Veteran's hospital chart contains your name and your correct phone numbers.

Get to know the nurses who are caring for your loved one. They can answer your day-to-day questions and are an excellent source of information and support. Don't be afraid to ask the nurses about any new procedures or changes in the Veteran's course of treatment. The change of shifts is a very busy time for nurses, so try to hold your questions until the nurse coming on duty has received his or her report.

Speak to a hospital social worker or case manager. This individual will help you with discharge planning issues including who will provide home health care, what home health equipment the Veteran might need, and who will be paying for these additional expenses. While it may not be the first thing on your mind, it is very important to start thinking about discharge planning when the Veteran first enters the medical center. It is important that the discharge planner (and the nurses involved) fully understand the Veteran's physical and mental capabilities, so the most appropriate help for you and your loved one can be ordered as part of the discharge plan. Physical and/or occupational therapists can play an important role at this time in providing a professional evaluation of the Veteran's ability to function independently in the home setting and evaluate the Veteran's need for assistive devices to promote independance.

Stand up for yourself as a Caregiver and advocate. When a chronically ill or disabled Veteran is hospitalized, the focus in the hospital may be palliative (that is, easing the Veteran's discomfort and symptoms) and management rather than curing the condition. Your role as a Caregiver and advocate for yourself and the Veteran you care for is especially important at this time. The other members of the health care team should know that you are speaking not only as a family member or dear friend, but as a Caregiver and advocate. You have the right to feel comfortable, capable, and confident with what is expected of you before the Veteran leaves the medical center.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "When Your Loved One is Hospitalized."

Created 05/11

Crisis Symptom Reporting Guide

When the Veteran you care for is in a medical crisis, your ability to observe symptoms carefully and report accurately could be lifesaving. During this stressful time, you may find it difficult to think or function as clearly as you normally would. Below is a list that will help you remember what to look for during a crisis. It is a good idea to read this list ahead of time so you have some idea of what to expect, and then tuck a copy in the patient file you created for the Veteran for later reference. (See the **Patient File Checklist** for tips on creating a patient file.)

- What time did the problem start?
- What was the Veteran doing when the problem started?
- Do you know or suspect what might have caused the problem?
- What was the first symptom that you noticed?
- What other symptoms/complaints do you remember?
- Did the symptoms come on abruptly or gradually?
- Was the Veteran given any medication or medical treatment just before the problem started? If so, what was it?
- Did the Veteran say anything about how he or she felt when the problem started and/or as it progressed? What was it?
- Does the Veteran have a history of this kind of problem? If so, what was the previous diagnosis?
- What did you do to try to help the Veteran between the time the problem arose and the time you arrived in the emergency room or the doctor's office?
- Did something work well? Seem to make things worse?

When to Call for Help

When is a crisis a crisis? When should you call someone else for help? Get help whenever the Veteran is in medical distress and you aren't sure what to do.

Call your local rapid-response number (e.g., 911) or an ambulance if the Veteran:

- Is unconscious.
- Has unexplained chest pain or pressure.
- Is having trouble breathing or is not breathing at all.
- Has no pulse.
- Is bleeding severely.
- Is vomiting blood or bleeding from the rectum.
- Has fallen and may have broken bones.
- Has had a seizure.
- Has a severe headache and/or slurred speech.
- Has pressure or severe pain in the abdomen that does not go away.
- Is unusually confused or disoriented.

Also Call for Help If:

- Moving the Veteran could cause further injury.
- The Veteran is too heavy for you to lift or help.
- Traffic or distance would cause a life-threatening delay in getting to the medical center.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Crisis Symptom Reporting Guide."

Created 05/11

I'm Caring for a Veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What Do I Need to Know?

Some Facts

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder. The diagnosis of PTSD is made when a Veteran has been exposed to a traumatic event in which **both** of the following have occurred: 1) The Veteran experienced or witnessed an event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury 2) The Veteran experienced a threat to the physical well-being of him/herself or others, and the Veteran's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Treatment may include:

individual therapy and/or group therapy, medication.

Physical and Mental Changes to Expect

While the general symptoms for PTSD are similar, the types and severity of symptoms will differ for each Veteran.

Physical changes may include: difficulty staying or falling asleep; irritability or outbursts of anger; physical reactions — such as profuse sweating, increased heart rate and rapid breathing — when exposed to internal or external cues or reminders of the traumatic event; intense distress when exposed to internal or external reminders of the event such as certain sounds or smells; avoiding any activities, places or people that remind the Veteran of the trauma.

Mental changes may include: recurring and intrusive thoughts about the event; recurring and distressing dreams of the event; acting or feeling as if it the traumatic event were recurring — also known as having flashbacks; being unable to recall an important aspect of the trauma; difficulty concentrating; and efforts to avoid thoughts, feeling or conversations associated with the trauma.

Emotional changes may include: intense distress when exposed to internal or external reminders of the event such as certain sounds or smells; a noticeable lack of interest or participation in important activities; feelings of detachment or estrangement from others; limited ability or inability to show affection or love; feelings of a bleak future, such as limited career or family opportunities, and shortened life span; overly alert or on guard — also known as "hyper-vigilance" — and/or exaggerated response when startled.

What Does This Mean for Me?

One of the areas in which you may notice a difference is in your social lives. The Veteran you care for may become uncomfortable in large crowds or unfamiliar places, and so you may find yourself feeling more socially isolated, losing support networks, or feeling the need to compensate for the Veteran you care for in social situations that are uncomfortable for him or her while providing support and encouragement at the same time. You may also have to learn coping skills to manage the stigma that is sometimes associated with mental health disorders.

You may also notice a difference in your personal relationship with the Veteran you care for. It is important to understand that it may be harder to talk to the Veteran due to changes in his or her behavior and/or communication style.

(continued on back)

Created 05/11

In addition, if the Veteran is experiencing difficulty managing his or her anger, you may feel like you live in an atmosphere of constant chaos. If the Veteran you are caring for is your spouse or partner, you may experience additional changes in your relationship. This might include feeling worried that your Veteran is no longer emotionally or physically attracted to you due to emotional unavailability, or a decreased interest in physical intimacy and sexual activity. In addition, due to sleep disturbance (for example, insomnia, waking-up frequently, nightmares), many couples choose to sleep in separate beds (and rooms), which may cause further feelings of emotional separation.

At times, you may experience your own feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, discouragement and loss when the Veteran you care for experiences symptoms of PTSD. These reactions are normal, but can be challenging to deal with on your own. Consider seeking help either by confiding in a friend, participating in a support group or consulting a professional mental health practitioner.

Caregiving Tips

1. Learn as much as you can about PTSD by reading, going to lectures, talking with others in similar situations, and talking with the Veteran's treatment team.
2. Consider encouraging the Veteran you care for to seek mental health treatment. VA has proven treatments for PTSD that help Veterans manage their symptoms in all types of environments. Just remember that not everyone is ready to admit they need help, so if there is no threat of harming themselves or others, respect a Veteran's decision about seeking treatment.
3. If the Veteran you care for decides to seek treatment, encourage and fully support that decision. It's important for both of you.
4. Request to be part of the Veteran's treatment. If the Veteran you care for agrees, talk with the mental health providers regularly. Ask questions and take notes.
5. Recognize the Veteran's social and/or emotional withdrawal is due to his or her own issues and not **your** relationship. A Veteran with PTSD will have good days and bad days. Foster relationships with family, friends, and others to stay connected and get support.
6. Learn coping skills to manage stigma sometimes associated with mental health disorders.
7. Pay attention to warning signs of a potential relapse, including an increase in symptoms or other changes in behavior. Keep the psychiatrist and/or therapist, local crisis team, Veterans Crisis Line, and other emergency phone numbers handy.
8. If any Veteran talks about suicide, **take it seriously** and seek help immediately. The Veterans Crisis Line is 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1 for Veterans).
9. Don't forget to pay attention to your own needs. Visit your doctor regularly, and get plenty of rest so you can stay strong. Your health is essential to your ability to keep providing for the Veteran you care for.

I have more questions. Where can I go for help?

VA knows that being a Caregiver can be both rewarding and hard. You can always find more information at **www.caregiver.va.gov**, including contact information for the VA Caregiver Support Coordinator nearest you.

You can also call VA's Caregiver Support Line
toll-free at 1-855-260-3274.

The Caregiver Support Line is open
Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 11:00 pm ET,
and Saturday, 10:30 am – 6:00 pm ET.

Call to talk to caring professionals who can:

- Tell you about the assistance available from VA.
- Help you access services and benefits.
- Connect you with your local Caregiver Support Coordinator at a VA Medical Center near you.
- Just listen, if that's what you need right now.

American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 1994.
Sherman, M.D. (3rd ed.) (2008). SAFE Program: Mental Health Facts for Families. Oklahoma City, Veterans Affairs Medical Center).

Medication Log

VA Caregiver Support Line
1-855-260-3274 toll-free

Last Updated: ____/_____/_____

Patient Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/_____/ _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

MEDICATION LIST

Name of Medication*	Dosage	What medication looks like	What medication is treating	When and how to take medication	What NOT to do when taking medication	Prescribed by	Pharmacy that filled prescription	Prescription number	Date started/ Date ended

www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Patient Care Services

*HINT: CUT OUT THE NAME OF THE MEDICATION FROM YOUR PRESCRIPTION INSERT AND TAPE IT HERE. YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO NOTE WHETHER THE DRUG IS BRAND, GENERIC OR OVER THE COUNTER (OTC).

DISPLAY THIS FORM PROMINENTLY IN YOUR HOME IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

Medication Log

REACTIONS

Drug Allergies and Other Significant Reactions

Prescription Name	Reaction

Recent Medications that Caused Problems or Did Not Work

Prescription Name	Problem

PHYSICIANS

Name	Phone	Address

NOTES: _____

Making the Most of Healthcare Visits

VA Caregiver Support

Successful visits with the health care team don't just happen; they require planning.

Before the Visit

It is important to bring a list of questions, pen and paper, or electronic device for taking notes when you meet with the health care team. It's easy to forget both what you and the Veteran wanted to discuss during the appointment and also what the provider has told you.

1. Talk with the Veteran (when possible) and write down the questions you both have for the health care team.
2. Make a list of symptoms and changes since the Veteran's last visit.
3. Put together a current list of all medications.
4. Confirm the appointment.

Providing a current medication list may help prevent drug interactions or other problems with medication from arising.

During the Visit

The provider may be directing their questions and conversation to the Veteran. This is their legal responsibility. Don't take over this relationship, but do correct misstatements and add omitted information. At the end of the visit, summarize the next steps to make sure everyone is in agreement about what is to be done and by whom.

- Describe symptoms and changes.
- Ask questions, especially related to medications.
- Record provider/nurse's instructions.
- Discuss recommendations.
- Verify follow-up.

After the Visit

It is important that you review the appointment with the Veteran, including how you both thought it went and the follow-up that was recommended. If medication was prescribed, it is critical that it be filled.

- Review notes with the Veteran (whenever possible).
- Discuss the visit.
- Fill prescriptions.
- Update the Veteran's patient file.
- Call for test results.
- Make follow-up or referral appointments.

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