

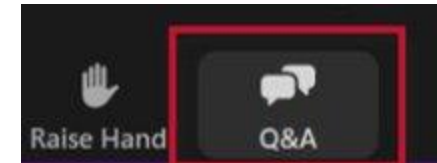
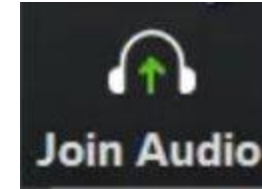


Promoting Social Connection Among Veterans

June 4, 2025

Housekeeping

- **Audio Options**
 - Use your computer speakers, OR dial in using the phone number in your registration email.
 - All participants are muted.
- **Questions and Answers (Q&A)**
 - On the Zoom module on the bottom of your screen, click the Q&A icon, type your question in the box and submit.
 - For any questions that we aren't able to respond to, you may follow-up at info@committoconnect.org.
- **Chat Feature**
 - The Chat feature allows webinar attendees, the host, co-hosts and panelists to communicate for the duration of the webinar.



Accessibility and Support

- **ASL services are being provided today and will be pinned**
- **CART services are also being provided.**
 - Click on the CC Show Captions button or click on the link in the chat
- **Screen Reader Users: Reduce unwanted chatter**
 - Request speech on demand: Insert, Spacebar, “S”
- **To get our attention if you need tech assistance:**
 - Raise or Lower Hand: Alt + Y



Presenters

Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, Administration for Community Living

Prince Taylor, Deputy Director for Operations, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Jay Gorman, Director, Social Reintegration Research Program and Veteran Outreach Into the Community to Expand Social Support (VOICES), VA Bedford Healthcare System

Justin Moor, President/CEO, Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

Rebecca Liebes, VP Government Relations, Nutrition, and Health Division, Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

Samantha Ayre, Supervisor, Veteran-Directed Care Program, Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

Ireatha Hollie, VP, Guiding Paths for Seniors, Director of Medical Education, Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.





COMMIT TO
Connect

Katie Clark
Social Connection Lead, ACL



Commit to Connect

COMBATting SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN ALL COMMUNITIES





Commit to Connect

www.committtoconnect.org

■ **Technical Assistance**

- *Annual National Summit to Increase Social Connections (September 2025)*
- Professional and consumer resources
- Webinars and Office Hours

■ **Communities of Practices on outcome evaluation**

- Impact of Chronic Disease Self-Management Education programs on social connection






■ **“Innovations Hub” to encourage replication**

- Clearinghouse of 100+ model programs, interventions, and solutions



■ **Engage an online Nationwide Network of Champions**

- 600+ leaders at local, state, and national levels

Quick Links

-  My Profile
-  My Inbox
-  My Communities
-  My Settings
-  Help

Recent Blogs

-  Meet a Commit to Connect Champion:
Lori Murphy
By Ali Fehlhaber
-  Meet a Commit to Connect Champion:
Jan Amys
By Ali Fehlhaber

Recent Activity

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Robert Lefkowitz](#), 22 hours ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)
Hi Carol, I'm a volunteer for Conversations to Remember. We're using virtual visits to reach seniors all over the country. All the senior needs is a tablet or computer, and they can meet with a set of ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Keith Moore](#), 3 days ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)
Blooming Health offers a messaging platform optimized for older adults that can send group texts, emails and voice calls in over 70 languages. It can be used for event reminders, wellness checks, and surveys, ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Robert Signore](#), 3 days ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)
Hi Carol. Technology can help with rural older adults since transportation can

Take Action!



CTC Nationwide Network of Champions





Innovations Hub

committoconnect.org/innovations-hub

Filter

Sort

Caring Together, Living Better

ORGANIZATION NAME

AgeOptions

CITY, STATE

Oak Park, IL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Partnering with faith-based groups to offer social engagement activities for Black and Hispanic family caregivers.

INTERVENTION TYPE

Intergenerational Technology

POPULATION SERVED

Older Adults Caregivers

GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED

Suburban Urban

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Area Agency on Aging

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Aging and Disability Resource Ce...

FUNDING SOURCE

Private/philanthropic grant

DESCRIPTION

Program Description

AgeOptions, an Area Agency on Aging based in Oak Park, IL,

Friendly Phone Calling

ORGANIZATION NAME

Decatur Catholic Charities – Faith in...

CITY, STATE

Decatur, IL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Older adults who are homebound received phone calls from friendly volunteers.

INTERVENTION TYPE

Intergenerational Volunteerism

POPULATION SERVED

Older Adults People with Disabilities

GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED

Rural Urban Suburban

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Other Community-Based Organi...

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Area Agency on Aging Faith-base

FUNDING SOURCE

Older Americans Act Private/phila

DESCRIPTION

Program Description

Faith in Action of Macon County provides friendly phone calling

ONEgeneration Letters to O...

ORGANIZATION NAME

ONEgeneration

CITY, STATE

Van Nuys, CA

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This letter writing program allows older adults and students to connect without using technology.

INTERVENTION TYPE

Intergenerational Arts and Creati

POPULATION SERVED

Older Adults

GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED

Suburban Urban

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Aging Services Provider

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Intergenerational groups Nutritic

FUNDING SOURCE

Private/philanthropic grant Other

DESCRIPTION

Program Description

In a world where access to digital resources can improve overall social

COAST-IT (Connecting Olde...

ORGANIZATION NAME

University of Colorado Anschutz Mu...

CITY, STATE

Denver, CO

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Pairs college students studying health with older adults for intergenerational social phone calls.

INTERVENTION TYPE

Health and Wellness Intergenera

POPULATION SERVED

Older Adults

GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED

Rural Frontier Suburban Urt

ORGANIZATION TYPE

University

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Aging and Disability Resource Ce...

FUNDING SOURCE

Other

DESCRIPTION

Program Description

The University of Colorado (CU) Anschutz Division of Geriatrics and

Fairfax County Virtual Cent...

ORGANIZATION NAME

Fairfax County Department of Neig...

CITY, STATE

Fairfax, VA

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Virtual senior center developed in response to closures of in-person senior centers and adult day health centers due to the COVID-19 ...

INTERVENTION TYPE

Arts and Creative Expression Heal

POPULATION SERVED

Older Adults People with Disabilit

GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED

Suburban

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Senior Center

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Aging and Disability Resource Ce...

FUNDING SOURCE

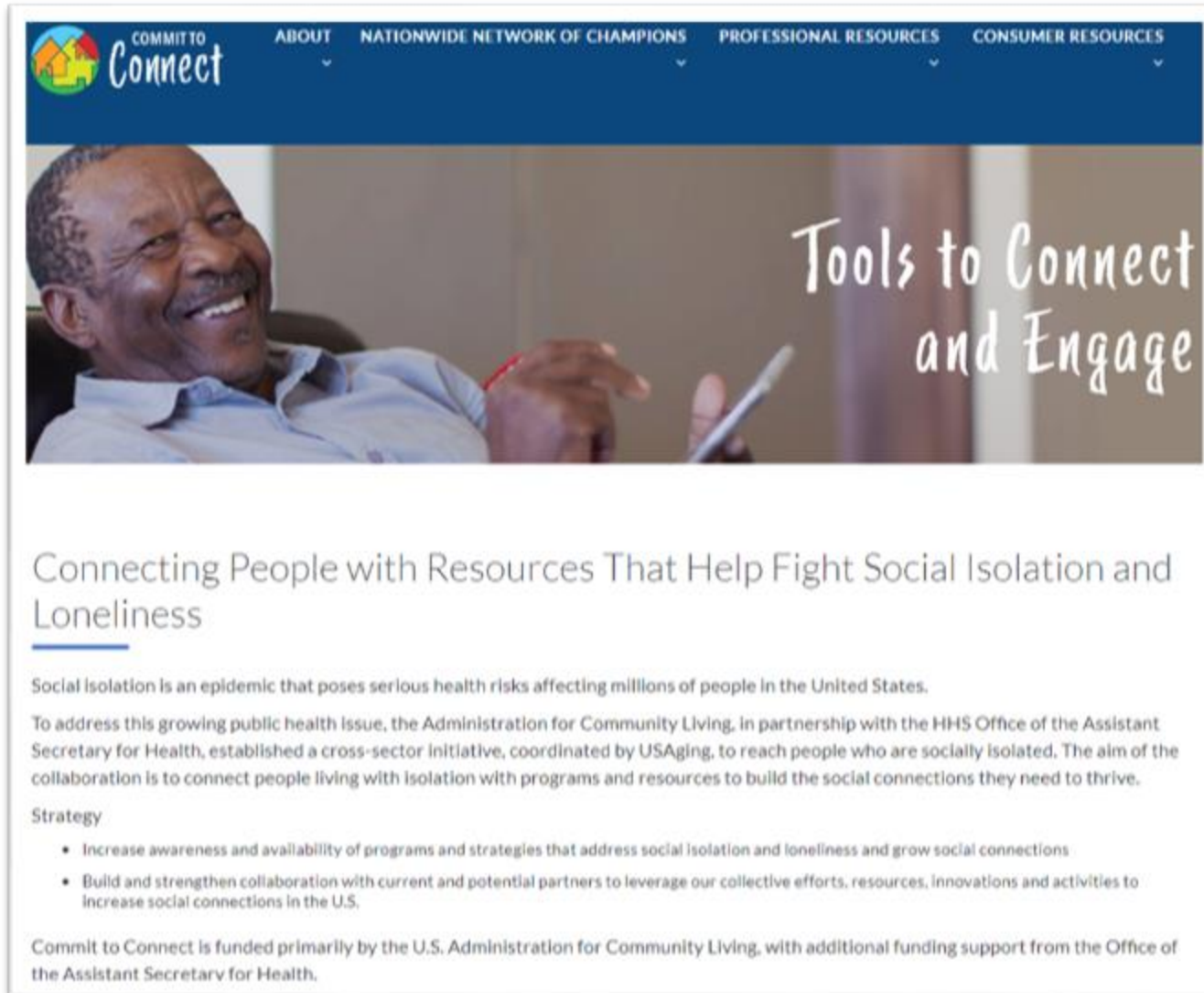
DESCRIPTION

Program Description

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior centers, adult day

Commit to Connect

www.committtoconnect.org



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Commit to Connect website. At the top is a dark blue navigation bar with the 'Commit to Connect' logo on the left and four menu items: 'ABOUT', 'NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS', 'PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES', and 'CONSUMER RESOURCES', each with a dropdown arrow. Below the navigation bar is a large hero image featuring a smiling Black man holding a smartphone. Overlaid on the right side of the hero image is the text 'Tools to Connect and Engage' in a white, handwritten-style font. Below the hero image is a section titled 'Connecting People with Resources That Help Fight Social Isolation and Loneliness' with a blue underline. This section contains a paragraph about social isolation as a health risk, a paragraph about the initiative's establishment by the Administration for Community Living and the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, a 'Strategy' section with two bullet points, and a final paragraph about funding from the U.S. Administration for Community Living.

Commit to Connect

ABOUT | NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS | PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES | CONSUMER RESOURCES

Tools to Connect and Engage

Connecting People with Resources That Help Fight Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social isolation is an epidemic that poses serious health risks affecting millions of people in the United States.

To address this growing public health issue, the Administration for Community Living, in partnership with the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, established a cross-sector initiative, coordinated by USAging, to reach people who are socially isolated. The aim of the collaboration is to connect people living with isolation with programs and resources to build the social connections they need to thrive.

Strategy

- Increase awareness and availability of programs and strategies that address social isolation and loneliness and grow social connections
- Build and strengthen collaboration with current and potential partners to leverage our collective efforts, resources, innovations and activities to increase social connections in the U.S.

Commit to Connect is funded primarily by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, with additional funding support from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA's Compassionate Contact Corps Aging Veterans and Mental Health

HHS/ACL Commit to Connect
June 4, 2025

Dr. Prince Taylor
Deputy Director, Center for Development & Civic
Engagement
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

VA's Compassionate Contact Corps Aging Veterans and Mental Health

HHS/ACL Commit to Connect

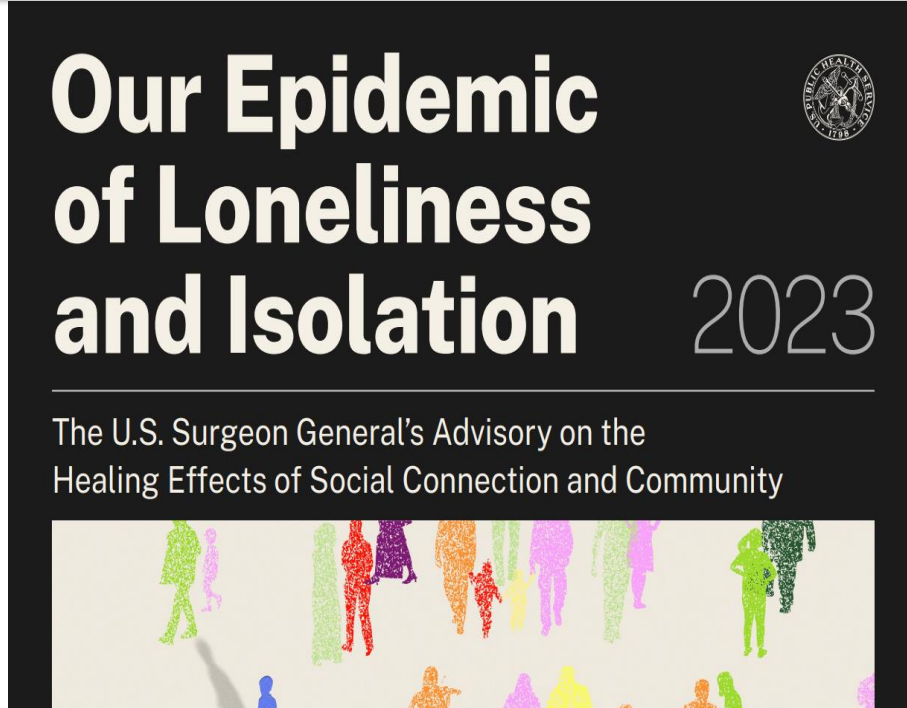
June 4, 2025

Dr. Prince Taylor

Deputy Director, Center for Development & Civic
Engagement

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Addressing Loneliness: A Global Priority



WHO launches commission to foster social connection

15 November 2023 | News release | Geneva | Reading time: 3 min (711 words)

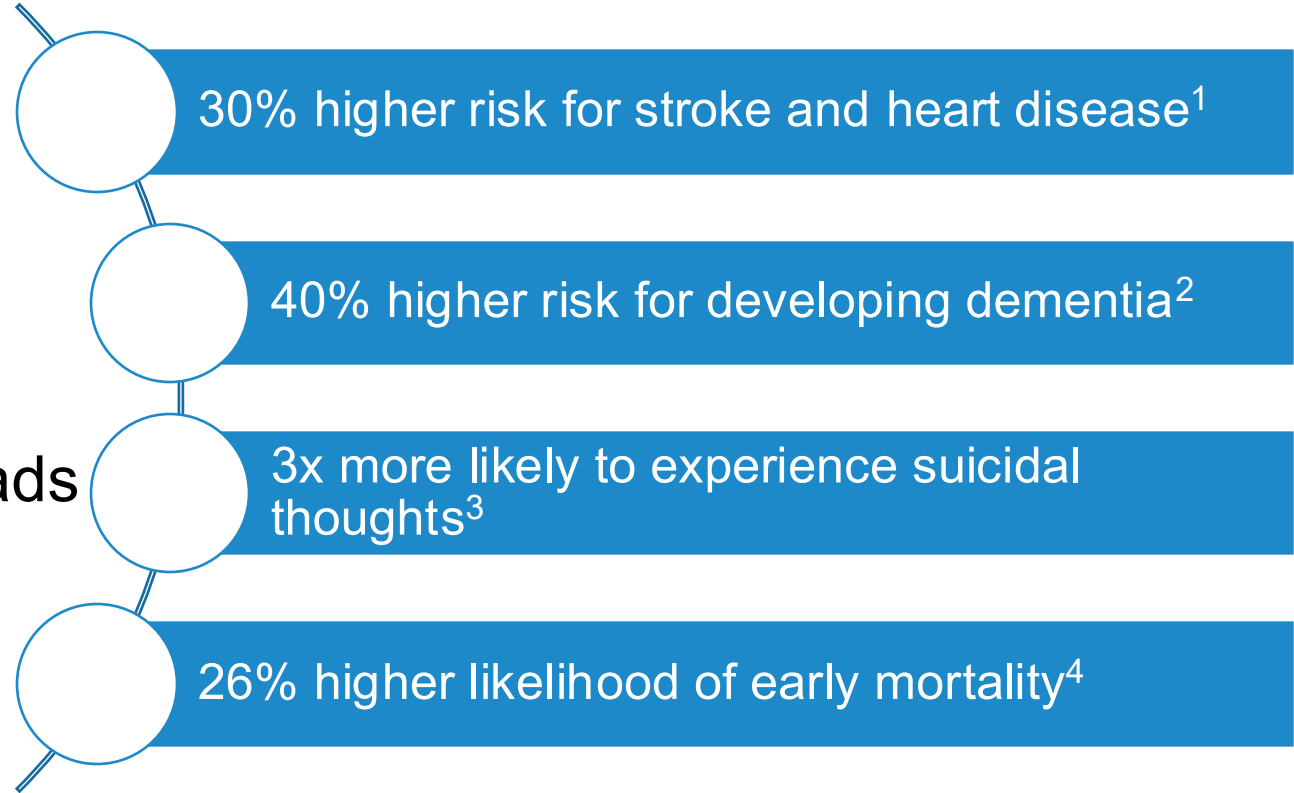
WHO has announced a new Commission on Social Connection, to address loneliness as a pressing health threat, promote social connection as a priority and accelerate the scaling up of solutions in countries of all incomes.

Co-chaired by U.S. Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murthy, and African Union Youth Envoy, Chido Mpemba, the Commission consists of 11 leading policy-makers, thought leaders and advocates. Running for three years, it will analyse the central role social connection plays in improving health for people of all ages and outline solutions to build social connections at scale. The Commission will consider how connection enhances the well-being of our communities and societies and helps foster economic progress, social development, and innovation.

Increased Risks

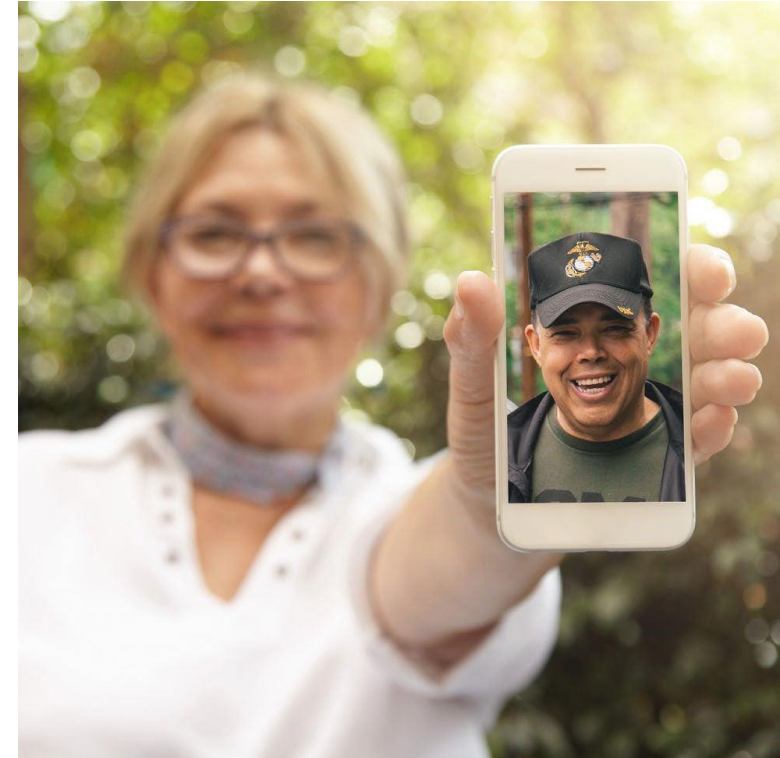


Chronic loneliness leads
to negative health
outcomes



Compassionate Contact Corps

- This is a ***social prescription*** program matching a trained VA volunteer with Veterans who are feeling lonely
- Volunteers call their matched Veteran once a week to provide friendly conversation and ***companionship***
- Mission: Reduce Veterans' feelings of loneliness
- Vision: Engage Veterans who are feeling lonely through ***meaningful connections***



Evidence-based

CCC's participants report that the program reduces loneliness and creates additional benefits¹



83% of Veterans engaged with CCC agree that the program has **helped them feel less lonely**



78% of Veterans engaged with CCC agree that the program has **increased their overall well being**



86% of Veterans engaged with CCC agree the program makes them feel the **VA cares about their well-being**

Multiple studies confirm that phone-based interventions effectively reduce loneliness

JAMA Psychiatry Study

- Layperson-delivered, empathy-focused program of telephone calls can be an effective way to reduce loneliness, depression, and anxiety among adults²

Frontiers in Psychology Journal Study

- Remote-delivered interventions can be effective in reducing loneliness in older adults, particularly phone-based interventions and those that target individual cognitive processes or skills³



CCC's strategy of leveraging our strong Volunteer force through phone-based interventions to reduce loneliness is consistent with both internal results and peer-reviewed studies



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Qualitative Data

"It gives me someone new to talk to, who isn't going to judge me. She is my friend."

~Veteran, West Palm Beach VA

"People aren't meant to be all alone. These calls have been a dream come true."

~Veteran, Central Ohio VA

"I need the conversations with my Veteran (and his caregiver) as much as they need me."

~Sheila Albright, Marion VA Volunteer, DAR, VAVS Rep and former DAR Volunteer of the Year for Illinois

"If I could possibly think of one good thing to come from the pandemic, it would certainly be CCC. I feel so blessed to know these men. Thank you for this opportunity."

~Jennifer, Coatesville VA Volunteer



Choose 

FOR VA INTERNAL USE ONLY

VA

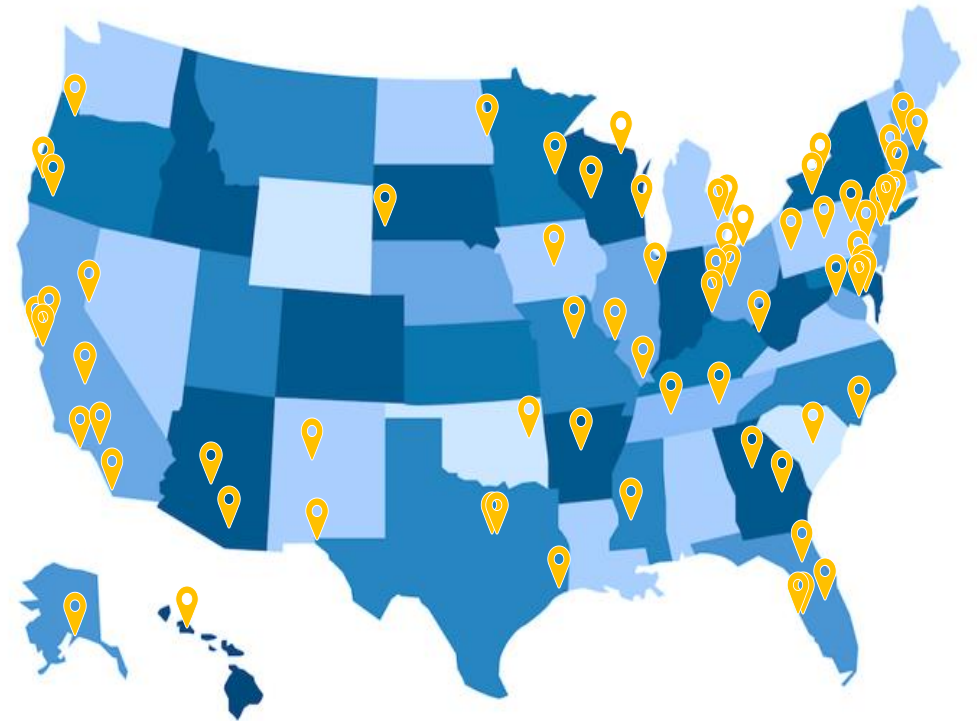


U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA Diffusion of Excellence Innovation Ecosystem

VHA Shark Tank Winner, 2021
Selected for National Diffusion, 2022

- In FY24, **472** volunteers logged **10,830** hours making CCC calls
- Program expanded from **8 to over 117 VA facilities** currently at some stage of implementation
- Compassionate Contact Corps was featured on **VA Under Secretary for Health's** *New Horizons in Health* podcast episode about social connections in June 2024



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of Veterans Affairs

How to Place a Referral



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of Veterans Affairs


Introduction to Social Connection as a Determinant of Health




The Health Impact of Loneliness and Social Isolation

• *Physical and Mental Health Consequences* •

Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad

VA |  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

 **ACL**
Administration for Community Living
Advancing independence and inclusion of older adults and people with disabilities



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Introduction to Social Connection as a Determinant of Health

Technology Innovation, and Social Isolation across Populations and Settings

Stephen Ewell & Katherine Clark





VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



Introduction to Social Connection as a Determinant of Health



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

THE POWER OF CONNECTION

Revolutionizing Healthcare Through
Social Prescribing

Dr. Prince Taylor



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Learn More

Videos



[VA Promotional Video](#)



[CCC Info for Clinicians](#)



[Interview with CCC Veteran](#)



[Atlanta VA Promo Video](#)

Contact

Local CCC Coordinator contact info

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Dr. Prince Taylor
Center for Development & Civic Engagement
Deputy Director for Operations
202-461-6948
Prince.Taylor@va.gov

Web

Compassionate Contact Corps website:

<https://www.volunteer.va.gov/ccc.asp>

VHA Diffusion of Excellence website:

<https://marketplace.va.gov/innovations/compassionate-contact-corps>

REFERENCES

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3. Thayer, C., & Anderson, G. O. (2018). Loneliness and social connections: A national survey of adults 45 and older. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00246.001>
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6. Sutin, A., Stephan, Y., Luchetti, M., & Terracciano, A. (2018). Loneliness and risk of dementia. *Innovation in Aging*, 2(suppl_1), 966–967.
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8. Straus, E, Norman, SB, Tripp, JC, Tsai, J, Sippel, LM, Jeste, DV, Southwick, SM, & Pietrzak, RH (2021). Behavioral epidemic of loneliness in older U.S. military veterans: Results from the 2019-2020 national health and resilience in veterans study. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.
9. Holt-Lunstad, J, Smith, TB, Baker, M, & Harris, TA (2015). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: A meta-analytic review. *Association for Psychological Science*, 227-237.
10. Holt-Lunstad, J. (2017). The potential public health relevance of social isolation and loneliness: Prevalence, epidemiology, and risk factors. *Public Policy & Aging Report*, 27(4), 127–130.
11. Dreyer, K., Steventon, A., Fisher, R., & Deeny, S. R. (2018). The association between living alone and health care utilisation in older adults: A retrospective cohort study of Electronic Health Records from a london general practice. *BMC Geriatrics*, 18(1).



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Connection Through Veterans Socials

Jay A Gorman, PhD

**VA New England Mental Illness Research Education,
and Clinical Center**

June 4, 2025

Veterans Socials

Veterans

Peer-Led Connections **Socials**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

A **Veterans Social** is a regularly occurring community-based event designed to foster interpersonal connections and social support among community members, including Veterans of all branches of service. **Benefits include:**

- Wellness Activities
- Community service
- Recreational activities
- Healthcare services

Interested in hosting a Veterans Social?
[Download the Quick Start Guide](#) and
get started in your community!

CONNECTION



- Inclusive community-based gatherings
- Attendee-driven adaptations
- Promoting connectedness



Choose **VA**

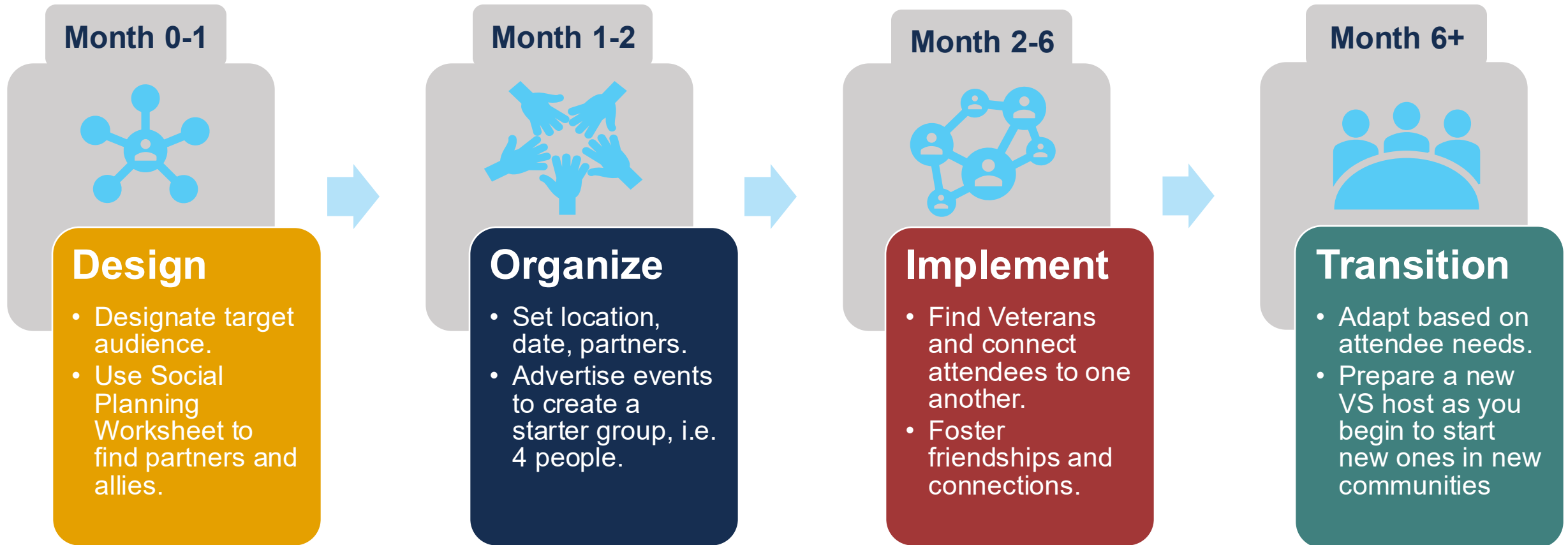
VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

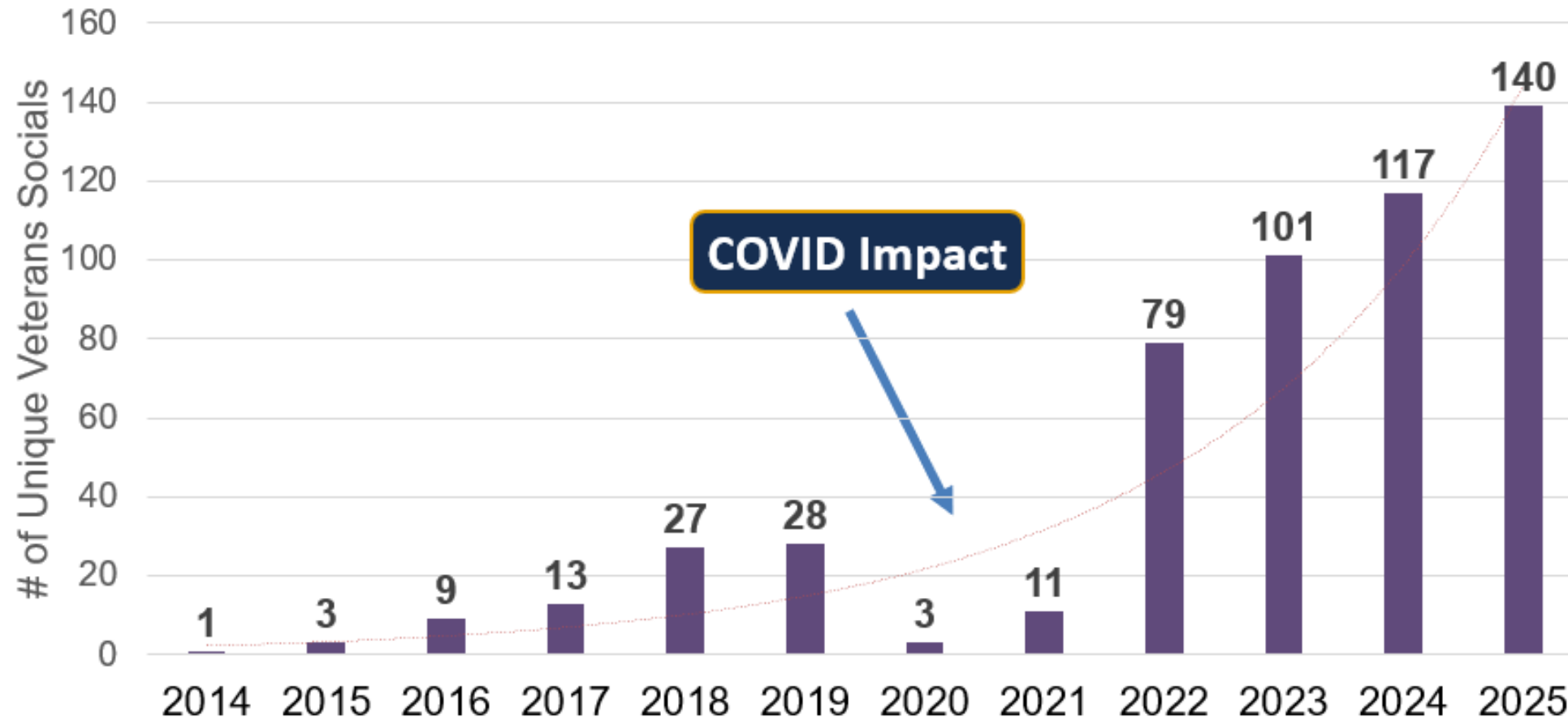
VS Implementation

Veterans Socials can be successfully launched with minimal difficulties through a simple, 4-step process expected to last roughly 6 months⁴.



VA Resources for Social Connection

Growth of Veterans Socials



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

A Veteran's Journey

Background:

- Vietnam-era combat Veteran, 68-year-old
- Retired from sales career
- PTSD and neuropathic pain

Challenges:

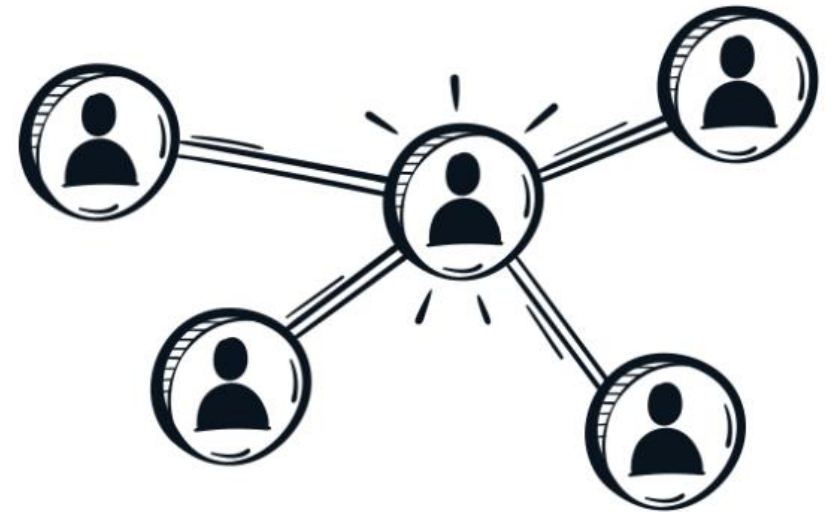
- Feelings of undeserving Veteran status
- Lost social connections post-retirement

Turning Point:

- Joined Veterans Coffee Socials

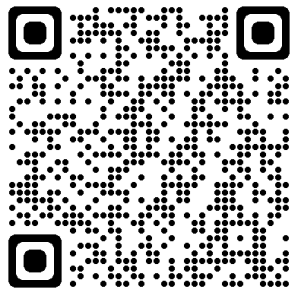
Transformation:

- Built new friendships
- Attended a unit reunion



Veterans Socials

1. Access the [Quick Start Guide for Veterans Socials](#) to learn more about organizing
2. Visit the [website](#) to access all essential resources the guidebook, quick start guide, webpage, YouTube explainer video, and consulting hub
3. Contact us if you are interested in starting a Veterans Social vhabedVOICES@va.gov



QR to Socials Website



Quick Start Guide for Veterans Socials

WHAT IS VETERAN'S DIRECTED CARE (VDC)





HISTORY:

**VELVET ELLIS
PACT ACT
SAMANTHA**

The background of the slide is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes. The stars are of various sizes and are scattered across the blue field. The stripes are horizontal and have a slightly wavy, painterly appearance. The overall color palette is red, white, and blue.

WHAT DOES IT DO FOR OUR VETERANS?

Allow Veterans to remain in their home, maintain their independence and direct their own care.

Allows family members or friends to provide care in-home and be financially compensated.

Consequently, caregiver doesn't need to work outside home, providing better work-life balance.

Many opportunities for engagement in the community, decreasing risk of isolation.

The background of the slide is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes. The stars are of various sizes and are scattered across the blue field. The stripes are horizontal and have a slightly wavy, brush-stroke-like texture. The overall color palette is red, white, and blue.

FUNDING

- Provided a budget by VA
- Chose pay, hours & services
- Extra services/needs

The background of the slide is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes. The stars are of various sizes and are scattered across the blue field. The stripes are horizontal and have a slightly wavy, brush-stroke-like texture. The overall color palette is red, white, and blue.

SERVICE AREAS & WHO

10 counties – mostly rural

Visits can be 2hrs one way

The background of the slide is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes. The stars are of various sizes and are scattered across the blue field. The stripes are horizontal and have a slightly wavy, brush-stroke-like appearance. The overall color palette is red, white, and blue.

VDC CASE MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Home visits (in-person):

- Initial assessment, quarterly, annually
- Consist of health status updates
- Review of services being provided through VDC
- Overall care need adjustments

The background of the slide is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes. The stars are of various sizes and are scattered across the blue field. The stripes are horizontal and have a slightly wavy, painterly appearance. The overall color palette is red, white, and blue.

VA COLLABORATIONS

Ann Arbor VA Medical Center since 2012

Louis Stokes VAMC (3rd largest in U.S.)

What is Veteran-Directed Care? (VDC)

VDC is being in control of services you need to live successfully at home.

Veterans can receive assistance with daily living activities such as bathing, fixing meals or dressing. A personally customized budget for services managed by the Veteran or an authorized representative enables the Veteran to remain in their home.

VDC choices:
Who, Where, How & What services are provided.



Ann Arbor
Ann Arbor MI 48105
734-769-7100



In partnership with



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Veteran Directed Care

Cleveland Louis Stokes
Cleveland OH 44106
216-791-3800

Services Provided:

- Personal Care Tasks.
- Respite Care.
- Care Coordination/Case Management.
- Goods and Services to improve safety in the home.



Who is Eligible of VDC?

Veterans with:

- Must be active with VA Primary Care.
- Interested in directing their own care.
- Complex, chronic medical needs.
- Barriers to traditional home health aide services.
- Personal care needs and are at risk for nursing home placement.

Veteran-Directed Care (VDC)

Eligible Veterans are approved for an annual budget that can be used to purchase services to help the Veteran avoid nursing home placement.

Interested in Evaluation for VDC Program?

Contact your VA PACT Social Worker to request additional information. The VA Interdisciplinary Team will determine clinical eligibility for Veteran-Directed Care.

Enrolling in VDC does exempt Veterans from traditional Home and Community Based Care Programs including Home Health Aide, In-Home Respite and adult Day Healthcare as these would be included in the Veteran-Directed Care budget.

www.va.gov/geriatrics

A Case Manager from the Area Office on Aging, in collaboration with the VA and a Financial Management Services (FMS), will identify care needs, develop a spending plan (which must be approved by the VA). The FMS will assist with paperwork, paying workers and Veteran's taxes. An authorized rep can be appointed to assist Veterans in making decisions.





Questions and Discussion

Please submit your questions or comments through the Q&A.

Thank you!

- Please complete the survey which will be displayed in your browser after Zoom closes.
- The recording will be available on www.committtoconnect.org
- For further questions, contact us at: info@committtoconnect.org

