

Rural Vets seek Homemaker/ Home Health Aide Benefit

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The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Standard Medical Benefits Package includes Homemakers / Home Health Aides (H/HHA). H/HHAs help Veterans remain living safely in their own home alone, and/or allow respite for their existing caregivers. *Are rural Vets falling through the cracks as far as access to this benefit?*

Eligible Vets qualify for the H/HHA benefit if s/he has infirmity of old age; or s/he may be of any age with an illness, injury or disability. The service can last for a few weeks or months, or indefinitely. H/HHAs are made available several times a week or just once in a while based on need for assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs). ADLs include such things as bathing, dressing & personal hygiene, laundry & tidying up, grocery shopping & errands, getting to appointments, paying bills & managing money, taking medicines, cooking & eating.

The H/HHAs presence also helps minimize emergency room visits or hospital admissions through exposure to better health literacy & self-management, medication identification, and adherence to medical advice (Advisory Board Company).

The DVA contracts with local or regional home health agencies to manage the service so that DVA Primary Care providers can refer Vets to them. An agency evaluates the Vets for scope of care needed. They screen, authorize, and then deploy H/HHAs, who are supervised by a brief registered nursing visit every other month.

The process seems simple enough, but it is a futile effort for some rural-dwelling Vets. This is case if the DVA is unable to contract with a local or regional home health agency that is Homemaker / Home Health Aide certified, and also *willing* to serve their remote area. The obstacles include recruiting & managing a work force in areas remote from their main offices.

While the H/HHA benefit may not be currently available in some rural New Mexico regions, a straightforward point of contact will be the Albuquerque DVA Community Nursing Program. The staff seems aware of and concerned that rural Vets are falling through the cracks. Purportedly in development is a program to ensure high-quality H/HHA service to remote areas. Keep informed by calling them at 505- 265- 1711.

For an example of a contracted Home Health Agency DVA Community Nursing program visit:
www.regalhealth.com.au/healthcare-at-home/dva/.