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Caregiver Recognition Benefit

Advisory Group on Families
May 21, 2020





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Part I - History, Evolution, Eligibility





- Following introduction of the New Veterans Charter in 2006, advisory groups and stakeholders were critical of the lack of formal recognition of family members who provided informal care and support to high needs Veterans
- June 2014 – Report on the Statutory Review of the New Veterans Charter was released by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA). It recommended:
 - *“that financial support be provided to family members of seriously-disabled Veterans acting as “primary caregivers”*
- Budget 2015 announced a new tax-free Family Caregiver Relief Benefit (FCRB):
 - *“seriously disabled veterans requiring daily assistance from an informal caregiver. The new benefit would provide annual financial support of \$7,238 to eligible veterans so that they can purchase services to allow respite for their informal caregiver”*
- July 1, 2015 – FCRB came into force
 - The policy rationale for the FCRB was to recognize the personal sacrifices and quality of life impacts that informal caregivers experience
 - The target group for the benefit was Veterans with highest degree of functional incapacity. The FCRB was modelled on a similar benefit by USVA – Primary Family Caregiver Stipend



- Budget 2017 announced the replacement of the FCRB with the Caregiver Recognition Benefit (CRB). New funding of \$187.3 M over 6 years was provided with \$9.5 M ongoing
- Budget approval for the CRB was contingent upon there being no expansion of FCRB program eligibility
- Eligibility for the CRB remained identical to the FCRB, aside from two key enhancements:
 - The benefit amount was increased from an annual payment of \$7,238 to a monthly amount of \$1,000 (currently 1,043.46/month with indexation); and
 - Payment was to be made directly to a designated caregiver in recognition for their invaluable contribution to the well-being of the Veteran
- The CRB was introduced on April 1, 2018, requiring a transition period from FCRB
 - In 2017/2018, there were 363 Veterans who had received an FCRB payment
 - FCRB recipients were invited to apply for the CRB upon the expiry date of their benefit (i.e., a year after their last FCRB approval)
 - An expedited application was used to facilitate the transfer to CRB
 - This staggered the incoming applications for the CRB to manage the transition
- The policy rationale for the CRB remained the same as the FCRB: to recognize the personal sacrifices and quality of life impacts that informal caregivers experience

▼ Eligibility - Caregiver Recognition Benefit

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Eligibility (Veteran)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has had an application for a Disability Award or Pain and Suffering Compensation approved ▪ Requires ongoing care as a result of the disability for which the DA or PSC has been approved, meaning the Veteran's physical, mental or cognitive health is not likely to substantially improve for at least 12 months ▪ Requires either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A level of care and supervision that is consistent with admission to an institution, ▪ Daily physical assistance of another person for most activities of daily living, ▪ Ongoing direction and supervision during the performance of most activities of daily living, or ▪ Daily supervision and is not considered to be safe when left alone
Eligibility (Caregiver)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 years of age or older ▪ Plays essential role in providing or coordinating care in the Veteran's home without which the provision or coordination of ongoing care would be compromised and the health and well-being of the Veteran would be put at risk ▪ Receives no remuneration
Not Eligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serving CAF members ▪ RCMP ▪ Receipt of Disability Pension at 1% or higher or Prisoner of War Compensation ▪ Permanent residence in a long term care facility
Payment Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monthly payment of \$1,043.46 (2020 rate, non-taxable, indexed annually) ▪ Paid to the caregiver ▪ Veteran not eligible to be paid the CRB

- To qualify for the CRB, a veteran must require:
 - A level of care and supervision that is consistent with admission to an institution,
 - Daily physical assistance of another person for most activities of daily living,
 - Ongoing direction and supervision during the performance of most activities of daily living, or
 - Daily supervision and is not considered to be safe when left alone
- The intention was that these 4 criteria are equal; it is not a sliding scale.
- “Most activities of daily living” (ADL’s) is defined in the CRB Policy to mean “a minimum of 4 activities out of 7” of the following “a set of activities necessary for self-care”:
 - Mobility (considered 1 ADL):
Transfers – changing the position of the body independently; and Ambulation – moving the body from one point in space to another (e.g. climbing stairs, walking, etc.).
 - Self-care (6 ADLs):
Feeding – eating and drinking of prepared foods (e.g. cutting up food, buttering bread, etc.).
Washing – washing of face, trunk, extremities and hair.
Dressing – putting on and taking off all pieces of indoor and outdoor clothing.
Grooming/Foot Care/Personal Care – brushing of hair and teeth, shaving and make-up application, skin and nail care, cleansing and personal care associated with toileting.
Toileting – continence of bowel and bladder, using toilet facilities.
Taking medication – preparing and self-administering medication

- The CRB Policy clarifies that an informal caregiver plays an essential role in the provision or coordination of the ongoing care to a Veteran in the Veteran's home if there is evidence that:
 - the Veteran relies on the informal caregiver to provide or coordinate:
 - daily supervision;
 - direction and/or physical assistance with most activities of daily living; or
 - assistance with completion of instrumental activities of daily living; and
 - the Veteran's health and well-being would be placed at risk and the provision or coordination of the Veteran's ongoing care would be compromised without the informal caregiver

- "Instrumental activities of daily living" (IADL's) are only defined in the CRB Policy to be those daily activities that individuals normally do, unassisted, to live independently. The following IADL's are considered for the purpose of determining if the informal caregiver plays an essential role in the provision or coordination of ongoing care to the Veteran in the Veteran's home:
 - Preparing food
 - Managing money (e.g. banking, paying bills)
 - Driving or accessing public transportation
 - Using the telephone
 - Running errands
 - Shopping
 - Housekeeping
 - Grounds maintenance

Between April 1, 2019 and January 31, 2020:

736 Veterans applied for CRB

- 503 were completed
- 213 were withdrawn¹
- 20 are pending

Of the 503 completed decisions:

- 93 were favorable
- 368 were unfavorable
- 41 were suspended or terminated
- 1 was “no change”

Of the 93 Veterans who obtained eligibility for CRB since April 1, 2019, 72 (77%) were in receipt of a DA for a psychological condition²

Of the 368 Veterans with an unfavourable decision, 238 (65%) were in receipt of a DA for a psychological condition.

Between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019:

2,162 Veterans applied for CRB

- 1,511 were completed
- 635 were withdrawn¹
- 16 were pending

Of the 1,511 completed decisions

- 667 were favourable
- 809 were unfavourable
- 24 were suspended or terminated
- 11 were “no change”

Of the 667 Veterans who obtained eligibility for CRB in 2018/2019, 550 (82%) were in receipt of a Disability Award for a psychological condition²

Of the 809 Veterans with an unfavorable decision, 517 (64%) were in receipt of a DA for a psychological condition.

1 Veterans withdraw their applications for a variety of reasons such as they enter a long term care facility after they have applied or they were in receipt of a Disability Pension and were counselled to apply for Attendance Allowance instead

2 Veterans tend to have multiple awarded conditions, does not mean CRB was awarded for this condition, but may have been



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Part 2 – Next Steps and Discussion



- Veterans Ombudsman
 - Ombudsman Dalton appeared before ACVA to discuss the 2019 Report Card and highlighted the outstanding OVO recommendation on “*Expanding access to caregiver benefits that assist injured Veterans with meeting their daily needs, ranging from activities like household tasks, transportation to medical appointments, and child care*”
- Mental Health Advisory Group
 - Believe CRB criteria excludes some Veterans suffering from mental health conditions because the application questions focus on physical ability whereas the most basic understanding of mental health issues would show that the person may be physically able to perform an activity, but due to mental limitations, he or she cannot
 - Perceived Exclusion of Certain Caregivers - Veterans requiring assistance with only “instrumental activities of daily living” (e.g., meal preparation, housekeeping, errands, paying bills) do not meet eligibility criteria
- Policy Advisory Group
 - Recommended that the CRB be replaced with Attendance Allowance from the *Pension Act*
- Advisory Group on Families
 - The group agreed that a joint letter to the Minister be prepared from both the Mental Health Advisory Group and the Advisory Group on Families with their recommendation that would include a short term solution as well as a longer term solution that would recommend a completely new model be considered.

- The policy rationale for both the FCRB and the CRB is:

To recognize the contributions that a caregiver makes to the health and well-being of a Veteran with physical and/or mental health condition(s) who requires continuous provision of care and supervision.

- The eligibility for the CRB, like the FCRB before it, was designed to ensure that Veterans with physical, mental and cognitive health problems could qualify
- The fact that the ADL's that are considered in determining eligibility are physical in nature (mobility and ambulation, feeding, washing, dressing, grooming/foot care/personal care, toileting and taking medication intention was that the qualifications activities of daily living daily living) does not mean that the eligibility can only be met by Veterans with physical health problems
- Veterans with mental or cognitive health problems can meet the eligibility criteria if they cannot perform the ADL's because of their mental or cognitive health problem, even when physically they would otherwise be able to do so

- VAC's Audit and Evaluation Division is currently completing an evaluation of the Caregiver Recognition Benefit to determine if the program is being delivered effectively and efficiently, and to assess to what extent it is achieving its intended goals and outcomes
- Key Activities being undertaken in support of the evaluation include: a survey, file and documentation reviews (including documents/feedback relating to the Ministerial Advisory Groups), data analysis, and interviews with operational, program management, and policy staff. A published evaluation report is expected in the spring 2020
- The results of the file review and Evaluation may inform possible future policy amendments and/or recommendations to Senior Management
- The Department will keep the Advisory Groups informed of the findings and observations that come out of the file review and Evaluation