



# Celebrating Our Independence and Our Heroes

by Kyle Laramie | CEO | Veterans Care Coordination

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

On July 4, 1776, 13 colonies formally claimed their independence from Great Britain. It would be nearly 100 years, though, before July 4 was declared a national holiday<sup>1</sup>.

Since then, the 4th of July has been a time to celebrate our country's freedom. It's also a celebration of the sacrifices our military men and women make every day to protect that freedom. Still, independence doesn't always come easily for those whose physical or mental health is in decline. Many of the heroes who've fought for our independence now need our help in order to keep their own.

More than 90% of seniors<sup>2</sup> live with at least one chronic health condition and nearly a third live alone. We can likely assume that these percentages hold true among the Veteran population. For these aging heroes, independence is less about rights than it is about abilities. Pride in being independent, though, can keep Veterans from asking for help even when it's needed.

## Independence vs Isolation

Social isolation and loneliness are common among aging Veterans who live alone. What's more, these seniors are at an increased risk of mortality<sup>3</sup> and are more likely to report poor physical or mental health<sup>4</sup>. In fact, chronic conditions such as lung disease, arthritis, high blood pressure, impaired mobility, and depression<sup>5</sup> were all associated with social isolation in the same study. Veterans suffering from loneliness are also more likely to report risky health behaviors<sup>6</sup> such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, and smoking.

Fortunately, home care services can help our aging heroes keep their independence while protecting their comfort and security. These include:

### Assistance with Daily Tasks

When mobility declines, simple tasks can become difficult. Stairs, steps, and slippery surfaces can be a burden for an elderly Veteran who is afraid of falling. Dressing can become a chore when arthritis or joint pain interferes with fastening buttons and zippers. Home care providers can help these seniors navigate daily tasks with dignity.

## Companionship

Loneliness is tied to high levels of depression<sup>7</sup> and is especially common among older adults. Rather than being left to remedy loneliness on their own—oftentimes in unhealthy ways—the presence of a home care provider can bring companionship, solace, and both physical and emotional support.

## Meal Preparation

A healthy diet is critical to those suffering from chronic symptoms such as high blood pressure or heart disease. Still, aging Veterans who live alone may not take the time to prepare and eat healthy, balanced meals. Home care providers can help cook nutritious meals that include plenty of fruits and vegetables so that elderly Veterans get the vitamins they need to live longer, more healthful lives.

## Transportation

Failing eye sight and slower reflexes make driving more difficult in advanced years and public transportation isn't always accessible or easy to navigate. A dedicated home care provider can provide safe transportation to the grocery store, pharmacy or doctor's office.

## Medication reminders

Up to 50% of prescribed medications<sup>8</sup> are “taken incorrectly, particularly with regard to timing, dosage, frequency, and duration,” according to the CDC. For elderly Veterans, missing a dose or taking the wrong dosage amount can be fatal. There is also the possibility that a medication causes adverse side effects such as dizziness or drowsiness—symptoms that can increase the risk of falling. Home care providers can help elderly Veterans remember to take their medications as prescribed and help to ensure they are able to safely move throughout their homes despite any side effects they may be experiencing.

The majority of Veterans want to remain independent in their homes as they age. Home care services can help them keep that freedom while protecting their comfort and security with the respect they deserve. This month, as we celebrate our independence, VCC will also be focused on helping our aging heroes retain their own independence with dignity and honor.

Veterans with limited income may be eligible for the Pension with Aid and Attendance benefit, which can be used to help offset the cost of home care services. Surviving spouses of Veterans may also be eligible for this benefit.

Veterans Care Coordination's mission is to improve the quality of life for Veterans and their families. We partner with quality home care providers to help navigate the VA's process of applying for pension funds, and help to maximize VA pension funds and get care started as quickly as possible.

**If you have questions about VA Pension funds that may be available to you, contact your provider today or call us at 855-380-4400**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ioaging.org/aging-in-america>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.pnas.org/content/110/15/5797.full>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2756979/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.aplaceformom.com/planning-and-advice/articles/elderly-depression>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21534675?dopt=Abstract>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0218-The-loneliness-factor-in-depression.cfm>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.aginginplace.org/a-comprehensive-guide-to-medication-management/>