What is the Medical Foster Home Program? The MFH Program is an alternative to long-term care for VA healthcare eligible Veterans who are unable to live independently due to physical, mental, and/or cognitive issues. Care is provided in a private home environment, as each caregiver resides in the MFH, providing 24/7 supervision and assistance with ADLs. The program is designed for Veterans who are chronically and/or terminally ill, and require a skilled nursing level of care. Each home can have no more than 3 Veterans/adults being cared for at any time.

What are the requirements to be a MFH caregiver? A MFH Caregiver must be at least 21 years of age, financially stable, must live in the home as their primary residence, able to provide a background clearance free of certain findings (see AP06: Ensuring a Safe Environment for details re: disqualifying offenses) and provide proof that they are not listed on a sex offender or elder abuse registry (relief caregivers and any person age 18 or over living in the home must also provide a background clearance free of the same findings). Additional requirements are as follows: History of healthcare training/education, experience as a caregiver, able to provide 24/7 ADL care and supervision to disabled Veterans, have first-floor rooms available to house Veterans, complete a caregiver application form with supporting documents, be able to understand instruction (written and oral) in the English language, provide a medical clearance for each adult living in the household proving they are free from communicable diseases, provide references, be able to ensure Veteran’s privacy (comply with and sign HIPAA statement), pass initial and annual inspections of your home (Life Safety, Nursing, MFH Coordinator, Dietitian, Physical Therapy). All caregivers must have at least one relief caregiver identified that: can also pass a medical and background clearance and can be available 24/7 as
needed in an emergency. Additional requirements will be reviewed in further detail during the application process and can be located in the MFH Caregiver Guide.

- **Do you need to be a medical professional?** No, however some healthcare training/education is required as well as previous caregiving experience.

- **How much will I get paid?** This depends on the level of care of the Veteran(s) in your home. The MFH Coordinator will facilitate a discussion between the caregiver and Veteran to come to a price that is appropriate for the level of care being provided, prior to admission. The range is typically $2000-3500/month; $3500/mo is for a Veteran that requires full-care (such as bedbound) or extremely close supervision and prompting. The Veteran pays out-of-pocket for their care, and pays the caregiver directly.

- **What is the process to become a caregiver?** A phone conversation/screening is completed by the MFH Coordinator to determine eligibility for the program. If the MFH Coordinator agrees that a potential caregiver appears to be a good fit, then a face-to-face home visit is completed to tour the home and review program requirements in greater detail. If both the caregiver and MFH Coordinator agree that the caregiver would be a good fit, an application is given at that time and further instruction about supporting documents is also provided. Once all application documents are received and reviewed by the MFH team, the inspection process can begin. The caregiver and the home must pass all inspections (Life Safety, Nursing, Coordinator, Dietitian, and Physical Therapy) in order to be recommended for approval to become a MFH caregiver.

- **How long until I get my first Veteran?** This varies, depending on the amount of time it takes a potential caregiver to complete the initial screening process and provide all required documents, as well as the availability of the MFH Inspection team to complete the initial inspections. Keep in mind that the Inspection team may have
corrections that need to be remedied before a caregiver/home can be recommended for approval. Once a caregiver/home is approved, it may take several weeks before an appropriate referral is received and screened for a particular home. If a referral is deemed appropriate for a home (by the caregiver and Coordinator) then the Veteran and/or family will tour the MFH and meet the caregiver. The process from initial screening to receiving a veteran usually takes several months. *Referrals/placements cannot be guaranteed, as the VA’s role is limited to referring Veterans approved MFH; the program is voluntary for the Veterans and the caregivers, and no one is forced to participate.

- **What type of home do I need to have?** Caregivers can own or rent their home, however all homes must pass VA inspections. Unfortunately, manufactured or mobile homes are rarely able to pass inspections, per The National Fire & Life Safety Standards. We prefer that all Veteran bedrooms be on the first floor for safety purposes, however having second story bedrooms will not preclude a home from becoming a MFH. Keep in mind that second story bedrooms will severely limit the type of referrals you will receive, as many of our Veterans are not able to safely reside on the second floor.

- **How do MFH veterans receive medical care for their complex needs?** Every Veteran in the MFH program receives Home Based Primary Care (HBPC), in which a Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Social Worker, Psychologist, Registered Dietitian, PT/OT complete visits to the home to provide the care needed. At times, Veterans will need to come to the main VA facility in Columbus or a community agency for specialty appointments- caregivers must provide or arrange for transportation to/from these appointments. The MFH program also provides a Recreation Therapist that visits each home and provides activities for the Veteran in the home environment and sometimes community outings (dependent on Veteran ability and availability of activities).
• How does the VA ensure the veterans are being cared for appropriately in each MFH? The Medical Foster Home Coordinator completes at least monthly unannounced visits to each home to ensure safety. Members of the HBPC team are also in the MFH on a regular basis to provide care to the Veteran and education to the caregiver as needed. Caregivers must abide by National Regulations and are also mandated to attend 2 half-day caregiver trainings per year.

• How long does a Veteran typically live in a MFH? This varies on the Veteran’s needs and preferences. Some Veterans stay only temporarily for a respite-type stay, however this is very rare. The majority of Veterans stay until the end of their lives and often receive hospice care while in the MFH. This is a long-term placement option where Veterans age in place; caregivers are committed to providing this sort of care for and relationship with the Veterans in their homes.

• What does the caregiver need to supply for the Veterans living in their home/what is included in the cost of care? In addition to 24/7 personal care and supervision, the caregiver is responsible for providing the Veteran with the following: 3 nutritious meals and at least 2 snacks per day, a furnished room (although many Veterans bring their own furniture, and when appropriate the VA may provide a hospital bed), toiletries, transportation, privacy when needed, a loving and peaceful environment. However, this list is not meant to be exhaustive and there may be other items the caregiver may need to supply for the Veteran.

• Does the VA pay for the Veteran’s cost of care in a MFH? No, Medical Foster Home is a private pay program where the Veteran pays the caregiver directly. There are VA benefits that may be available to the Veteran which can assist with paying for cost of care, however a Veteran must meet certain eligibility criteria. Certain VA staff as well as County Veteran Service Organizations can assist a Veteran with determining their eligibility. If a Veteran is admitted into the MFH
program and meets benefit criteria, the MFH Coordinator will assist with applying for these benefits.