

Patient Education Q&A: 2/11/2015

1. How do I get an attendant?

One veteran advocated for both advertising and using Craigslist. Also using Independent living center resources can be a good option. "In Home Support of Services" keeps an updated and finger printed list of qualified individuals. Using the "grapevine", that is asking friends and even your attendant if they know other people they can recommend. While people who work for an agency can't privately offer their services to you but they can recommend others. Check into local nursing or occupational therapy programs as students in these programs may be looking for work.

Your community church can also be a resource to find people. As an "employer" you should agree to meet people if you can away from your home in a public place. Working with you attendant is important so that you can express your expectations but also be flexible around you attendant needs so your relationship will work and you will not constantly have to get new attendants.

2. I think I need to remodel my home, how can I get it done and does the VA help with that?

Contact Larry Francesconi in Prosthetics he is the HISA coordinator (x57-73579). Get grant information about Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA). Service connectedness is key as there is a \$2000 limit for non-service connected veterans. For service connected veterans the application goes thru a bigger review process.

Make sure that your project gets VA approval before any work is done or it will not be paid for. City programs may be a great option as there are local grants that may be available. Some items that are part of a remodel can possibly be ordered thru prosthetics.

3. How can I receive information about the progress of my ramp/home modification?

Contact Prosthetics (x60661) and they can call the vendor and give you the status on your ramp. Contact Larry Francesconi in Prosthetics about home modifications (x57-73579).

**4. What's the chance of getting better bedside tables for patient rooms?
How can we/veterans advocate for that?**

Discuss new models with your nurse case manager. Also talk to your patient advocate about this matter as well as your PVA National Service Representative.

5. My wheelchair has never been properly evaluated, who can do this for me and what is the process?

Consult with your doctor and get an initial evaluation to be prescribed.

6. What is the Exo-Skeleton and who gets to use it?

An exoskeleton is a rigid frame that attaches to your legs and torso and has a battery pack. The VA Palo Alto is currently using the EKSO which was originally developed by Berkeley bionics (now called EKSO Bionics). The technology was a spin-off of the "Hulc" a military version. There are other brands of exoskeletons on the market. The EKSO is currently being used as a rehab tool to improve and retrain an individual's gait. Generally you need to have one upper extremity and lower extremity that work and be able to use a walker or loft strand crutches and have some trunk

strength. Additionally there are height and weight restrictions as well as hip flexor contractures and or ankle range of motion issues that can limit your ability to use this device. You should consult your therapists and provider to see if the device is right for you. Currently the FDA has not approved the devices for at home use. It is advisable to have a second person for safety and operation.

7. Can I drive with a cervical brace?

Braces help both neck and back areas heal. While wearing a neck brace for the first three months driving is prohibited. Evaluations can be made after three months for safety and abilities.

8. Can I bring a shorter list of equipment when I come for an annual evaluation?

First talk with your admission coordinator. Often bringing equipment is necessary if it needs to be evaluated. Airline carriers should not charge for bags of medical supplies, if you run into problems you may need to ask to speak with a supervisor.