

HOSPITAL AMBASSADOR



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The Auxiliary Hospital Program is essential to veterans and is equally rewarding to the volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to this Program. After 100-plus years of hospital volunteering for our veterans, the pandemic has altered our Hospital Program in many ways, yet the goal is still the same. We must find new processes and get creative to complete the work. Our new normal in volunteering may never resemble the way we used to do it; some facilities are still not letting volunteers in to see veterans, but the need is still there.

I became a Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Representative during the pandemic. I have yet to visit with inpatients or attend a monthly bingo game, but when the call goes out for assistance, I don't hesitate to be one of the first to respond to that call for help. Many of the day-to-day needs of our veterans can be met by a gift card, so it is important that the VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) or Volunteer Services personnel have gift cards to local businesses on hand. Let's make volunteerism an actual group event again because we can do much more by ***Banding Together for Our Veterans.***

Celebrating Non-Traditional Holidays

While our veterans have come to enjoy special days like Christmas and Valentine's Day for Veterans, I would like to shake it up and celebrate the little-known special days of the year. With this innovative way to entertain our hospitalized or long-term care patients, they are sure to have some good times between the traditional holidays we celebrate yearly. Always be a month ahead on the special days that you want to celebrate. Some facilities still do not allow visitors nor volunteers to deliver and

hand out any giveaways or decorations, so contact each facility to confirm their current protocol.

Did you know:

- January 19 is National Popcorn Day
- March 4 is National Hug a G.I. Day
- June 2 is National Doughnut Day
- July 7 is World Chocolate Day
- August 7 is Left Handers Day

Don't forget about the staff and doctors. While all facilities and hospitals were on lockdown, it was the staff that stepped up to support the needs of veterans. Just like our veterans, the staff has seen the repetition of the traditional celebrations year after year so, please include the doctors and staff in all your new celebration plans.

Here is a great link for you to start planning:
calendar.com/united-states/observances-2023.

Community Care

Please visit: va.gov/communitycare.

Veterans may be eligible for care through a provider in their local community, depending on their health care needs or circumstances, and if they meet specific eligibility criteria. Even if a veteran is eligible for community care, they generally still have the option to receive care from a VA medical facility.

In most cases, veterans must receive approval from VA before receiving care from a community provider to avoid being billed for the care. VA staff members generally make all eligibility determinations for community care. Through the community care system, the veteran can utilize an in-network physician under the following systems or circumstances:

- General Community Care
- Urgent Care
- Emergency Care
- Foreign Medical Care
- Home Health & Hospice Care
- Indian/Tribal Health Services
- In Vitro Fertilization
- State Veterans Homes
- COVID & Flu Shots

The VA Community Care Network is a connection for veterans to access community providers that will assist with timely and high-quality care.

Telehealth & Compassionate Contact Corps

Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) services are health-related services which allow contact between long distance patients and clinicians to quickly provide veterans convenient and secure access to health care services from remote facilities and homes. These services provide veterans with better self-management of chronic health conditions from the comfort of their own homes.

Did you know that the VA has a YouTube Channel? They also have many apps for Apple and Android devices. All these tools are available so veterans can connect in real-time video appointments with VA providers. For more information, refer to the VA App Store at mobile.va.gov/appstore.

Compassionate Contact Corps trains volunteers and matches them with veterans who are experiencing loneliness or may be socially isolated. Volunteers typically call on veterans and family members to assist with socializing and providing companionship via phone or video calls.

Women's Health Care

Women veterans are the fastest growing group within our veteran population and the VA is working towards meeting their health care needs. If one qualifies for VA health care, they can access these high-quality women's health services as part of their benefits.

- General services, like disease prevention and nutrition counseling.
- Reproductive health services, such as birth control, preconception counseling and menopausal support including hormone replacement therapy.
- Screenings, including cervical cancer screens (pap smears) and breast cancer screens (mammograms).
- Mental health services for depression, post-traumatic stress (PTS) and substance abuse problems.
- Free, confidential counseling and treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to military sexual trauma (MST).



HOSPITAL PROGRAM

Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support

Valentines for Veterans • Women Veterans Health Care • Honors Escort

VFW Auxiliary members have been volunteering in hospitals and medical facilities since the organization's inception in 1914. The Hospital Program was one of the first nationally adopted Programs for the organization.

Where can we serve?

Members, non-members and youth can volunteer in many different types of facilities under this Program.

- Local hospitals
- Veterans' homes
- Nursing homes
- Domiciliaries
- Both VA and non-VA medical facilities and clinics

Who can serve?

- Members
- Non-members
- Youth
- Families

What can we do?

Volunteer opportunities are based on the facility where you are volunteering. Some facilities will have a volunteer program in place with specific jobs, events and needs. Many facilities will have varying types of opportunities to suit different ages and abilities. Be sure you follow all the guidelines given by that facility and regularly ask how you can assist them.

What can we earn?

Members can earn Hospital Volunteer Service Pins from National Headquarters for their volunteer hours. More information on hours needed and the proper forms to use can be obtained from Department Hospital Chairmen or in MALTA Member Resources. Hospital Chairmen should track total hours (both VA and non-VA) and submit an application for the pins. Members can also be named an Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year in their Program Division. Applications are available from the Department Hospital Chairmen.

Non-members can also earn a one-time-only volunteer pin for 100 hours. See the Hospital Program Guide or ask the Department Hospital Chairman for more information.

Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support

New volunteers are needed every day across the country. Volunteers offset millions of dollars in expenses in health care. They help create a friendly and caring atmosphere no matter where they volunteer. Here are tips for recruiting and keeping volunteers:

- Monthly sign-up sheet for regular events.
- Emails and phone calls for special events.
- Public recognition of current volunteers.
- Be specific about what volunteers will be doing, including the time commitment.
- Find out how each person best communicates, whether by phone, email, Facebook or texting.
- If someone says "no" to the first invitation, be sure to ask again!

For more information about being a volunteer, how to handle a Department Hospital Fund and other topics about this Program, download the Hospital Program Guide and VAVS Guide in MALTA Member Resources.

Valentines for Veterans

Share the love we have for our veterans and service members this Valentine's Day by sending a store-bought or handmade valentine, hosting a party, recognition event or dinner in their honor. Fellow members, individuals and groups in your community can use their creativity to show compassion for our veterans and service members.

Women Veterans Health Care

Women have served our nation for generations and are the fastest growing group within the veteran population. Comprehensive health services are available and tailored to the unique needs of women veterans. Learn about the resources and health care services available and help them receive the benefits and services they deserve.

Honors Escort

The Honors Escort Program is an opportunity to honor each veteran in a respectful and open manner and provides an opportunity for a veteran's family and friends, other veterans and medical facility staff to participate in a display of high regard and reverence for the individual at the time of death.

HOSPITAL AND VAVS PROGRAMS

The VFW Auxiliary provides volunteers and resources to VA facilities across the country and saves the Department of Veterans Affairs millions of dollars a year.

The table below illustrates how the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program supports the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program.

HOSPITAL PROGRAM

VFW Auxiliary establishes relationships with:

- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Veterans homes
- VA facilities
- Other medical facilities where veterans are served

PROVIDES NEEDS

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Participate in projects voted on and accepted by the Auxiliary.
- Make items such as lap robes, hats, quilts, cards, etc.
- Fundraise for the Department's Hospital fund.
- Encourage volunteers in ALL medical facilities.
- Promote projects and volunteer opportunities to all members and the community.
- Present Hospital Volunteer Appreciation certificates.
- Order VFW Auxiliary Hospital Pins for total hours earned from all facilities.
- Hours are earned in ALL VA and non-VA facilities.

HOURS earn VFW Auxiliary Awards!

VAVS PROGRAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs created the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program for organizations to serve in VA medical facilities:

- Members participate in this VA partnership with Veterans Service Organizations.
- In addition to Auxiliary recognition, the VA National Advisory Council awards a Volunteer of the Year award. For more information, contact either the Voluntary Services personnel or the VAVS National Representative or Deputy Representatives.

COMMUNICATES NEEDS

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Be a Regularly Scheduled (RS) or Occasional volunteer.
- Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers:
 - Comply with VAVS Guidelines.
 - Participate on a regularly scheduled basis.
 - Are supervised by a VA employee.
 - Are appointed by the Department President as VAVS Representative or Deputy Representative.
- Occasional volunteers:
 - Do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers.
 - Volunteer with a group or organization occasionally.

HOURS earn VAVS AND VFW Auxiliary Awards!

**TOTAL HOURS FROM BOTH PROGRAMS
EQUAL OUR REPORTED HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

For more information on the VFW Auxiliary's participation in Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, please see the VAVS Participation Guide or contact the Department Hospital Chairman.

The VAVS Participation Guide is available behind MALTA login in MALTA Member Resources.

HOSPITAL PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Members

1. Citation to one VFW Auxiliary member in each of the 10 Program Divisions who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners after National Convention.
2. "Hospital Volunteer Recruiter of the Year" plaque awarded to one Auxiliary member in the nation who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. Entry form required available in MALTA Member Resources. Plaque to be mailed directly to winner after National Convention.
3. Citation to the Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year in each of the 10 Program Divisions. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners after National Convention.

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event that recognizes veterans on non-traditional holidays.
 - Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that recognizes veterans on non-traditional holidays. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.

The Department Hospital Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2024 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event recognizing veterans on non-traditional holidays.

The Department Hospital Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Hospital Ambassador by April 30, 2024 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Hospital Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion that recognizes veterans on non-traditional holidays at any Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities). Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
2. Outstanding Performance Award in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Program Goals listed at the top of Page 33. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.