

Veterans & Family Support Program Diana Kulhanek

Veterans are our Number 1 Priority!



Program Goals:

1. VFW National Service
2. VFW Veterans and Military Support Programs
3. Assist Veterans, Service members and their Families.
4. Promote Veteran and Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness.

What's your "WHY?" regardless of your personal reasons for joining the Auxiliary, we all have the common love for our veterans, and we all strive to serve and honor their service to our country in any way we can.

Veterans and Family Support (VFS) is the heart of our organization and a program that every member can and should participate in.

National Veterans Service (NVS) and Veterans & Military Support Programs:

NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Service Officers who are experts in dealing with the claims process and helping veterans cut through the bureaucratic red tape. They are the key to recovering earned benefits and compensation for our veterans...approximately \$1 billion in earned benefits and compensation for veterans each year!!

VFW Service Officers are trained experts, helping veterans develop their case with ease by reviewing and applying current law, pertinent legislation, regulations and medical histories. As skilled professionals, they assist in filing for disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. Furthermore, they won't hesitate to request hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments when needed.

VFW Accredited service Officers can help guide our veterans and their families in their efforts to obtain their service benefits. Financial aid is also available to those service members and veterans who are looking to further their education and find a new career path in life.

For more information, visit the VFW website at vfw.org/assistance/va_claims_seperation-benefits or vfw.org/assistance/financial grants.

Suicide Prevention and Mental Health:

Our veterans may experience mental health issues and not know how to find resources to help them cope. By banding together with other organizations such as the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Give an Hour, we are able to raise awareness and foster community engagement to change the stigma surrounding mental health. We need to be proactive in looking after our heroes. Be mindful of the characteristics associated with thoughts of suicide and be watchful of our veteran's mental health. One veteran lost to suicide is one is too many

Help spread the word about NVS.

The VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) was established to help all veterans, service members, their families, and survivors. NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in dealing with the VA and are the key to your success. With your support, the VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) helps veterans with VA claims. The claims process can be confusing and no veteran should ever have to go it alone. VFW has offices across the nation, including locations on military installations to help those who have served.

NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in dealing with the VA and are the key to your success. Our cadre of highly trained and professional advocates help veterans cut through bureaucratic red tape. VA reports veterans represented by the VFW have recouped more than \$11.2 billion in compensation in pension on behalf of veterans and eligible family members in fiscal year 2022.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are trained experts, helping veterans develop their case with ease by reviewing and applying current law, pertinent legislation, regulations and medical histories. As skilled professionals, we assist in filing for disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. Furthermore, we will not hesitate to request hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments when needed.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they are ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer -- free of charge -- to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

VFW Veterans and Military Support Program:

Veterans and Military Support contains programs initiated by the VFW Military Assistance Program (MAP) Unmet needs and the VFW "Sport Clips" Help a Hero Scholarship. These programs serve active duty and recently discharged military.

Donations to veterans and Military Support can be made online or by mail.

- Donate online at [vfw.org/ways](https://www.vfw.org/ways) to help select veterans and Military Support click contribute.

- Donate by mail by sending funds to the VFW earmarked for Veterans and Military Support Mail check to:

VFW National Headquarters
Attn: Veterans and Military Support
405 W. 34th Street, 9th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

Military Assistance Program (MAP) Funds Ways to Connect to Troops:

MAP helps provide financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor morale-boosting send-offs, homecomings, and get-to-gathers.

Post and Auxiliaries participating in Adopt-a-Unit and Family readiness Group events can also receive assistance. MAP keeps care packages circulating by covering postage costs.

For guidelines to apply for MAP funds, contact the VFW Veterans & Military Support office at 816-756-3390.

Unmet Needs (Financial Grants):

The VFW understands the challenges veterans, service members and military families can face and believes that experiencing financial difficulties should not be one of them. That is the premise behind VFW's **Unmet Needs** program.

Unmet Needs is there to help America's military families who have run into unexpected financial difficulties as a result of deployment or other military-related activity or injury. The program provides financial aid grants of up to \$1,500 to assist with basic life needs in the form of a grant - not a loan - so no repayment is required. To further ease the burden, we pay the creditor directly.

The needs of our veterans, service members and their families should never go unmet. Let us offer a hand up when they need it!

For additional information, and to see if you or someone you know qualifies for a grant through the Unmet Needs program, please visit vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants.

VFW "Sports Clips" Help a Hero Scholarship Program

The VFW "Sports Clips' Help a Hero Scholarship Program awards scholarships of up to \$5,000 to qualifying veterans and service members to help them complete their educational goals without incurring excessive student loan debt. To learn more, visit vfw.org/student-veterans-support.

Veterans & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness:

You can make a difference in the life of a veteran or service member in crisis by educating yourself and others about the warning signs of suicide.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified caring Department of Veteran Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can:

- Call 1-800-MYVA411 to access all VA departments.
- Call 988 and press 1.
- Chat online at veteranscrisisline.net, or
- Send a text message to 838255.

Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 385 days a year! Support for deaf or hearing-impaired individuals is available.

TIP: add the Veterans Crisis hotline in your phone for easy referral

Wear the Auxiliary Suicide Awareness pin available from the VFW store to help bring awareness about the rates of suicides among veterans and military service members; we want everyone to be aware of the unique stress they face.

Mental Wellness Support and Resources:

The Mental Wellness Support program's goal is to raise awareness, foster community engagement, improve research, and provide intervention for veterans, service members, and their loved ones who may be suffering from invisible injuries or emotional stress. The VFW and Auxiliary are committed to helping change the conversation and stigma surrounding mental health. You can help change the stigma improve research support your community and explore treatment options at the resources below:

- **VFW Mental Wellness Campaign-** vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness
- **The Campaign to Change Direction** – changedirection.org.
- **Give an Hour-** giveanhour.org.
- **Patients Like Me** – patientslikeme.org
- **One Mind-** onemind.org
- **The Elizabeth Dole Foundation** – elizabethdolefoundation.org
- **Help Heal Veterans (Therapeutic Craft Kits)-** healvets.org
- **Veterans Voices Writing Project** – veteransvoices.org

Veterans & Family Support Program Awards

National Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity/event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.

- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health. Entry form required and available in MALTA member resources Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Program Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.
 - Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.
 - Citation and \$25 to one auxiliary in each of the four conferences that host the most outstanding activity and or event to increase awareness of military suicide and mental health.
 - The department chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed department winning entry form to the National Veterans and family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2024.
 - Citations will be mailed directly to the winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.
2. Most outstanding activity and or event to increase support veterans, service members, and their families.
- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and or event to increase the support of veterans, service members, and their families Entry form required and available in MALTA Member resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.
 - The department Veterans & Family Support 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.

Department Awards

Department Certificates

3. To the Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of the VFW National Veterans Service
4. Certificate to the District Chairman Auxiliary in each Membership Division with the Best Promotion of the VFW National Veterans Service
5. Certificate to one Auxiliary in each Membership Division for Outstanding Performance in the following
 - a. Raising awareness of mental health issues and resources in the community
 - b. Forging bonds with local military units

Department Legacy Awards

- A Legacy Award will be awarded to one Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman for best Performance in the VFS Program.



Civil Disaster Grant Application

Name: _____

Membership No. _____ Member Since: _____

Auxiliary and District No.: _____

Current Address:

Home Number: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Give brief description of loss (including out of pocket amount and date and attach official report of damage):

If the Member was forced to evacuate their home and area, but sustained no actual damage to their home, but incurred costs for lodging, submit copies of receipts for lodging.

Address where check should be mailed: _____

Printed name and signature of person validating this:

(Printed Name)

Signature

Date: _____

Mail this form to:
VFW Auxiliary Department Headquarters
9136 Elk Grove Blvd. – Suite 101
Elk Grove, CA 95624
(916) 509-8724