



How to Volunteer with Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)

“Over 140,000 volunteers gave more than 11 million hours in service to America's veterans. It is impossible to calculate the amount of caring and sharing that these VAVS volunteers provide to veteran patients. VAVS volunteers are a priceless asset to the nation's veterans and to the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

— Laura B. Balun, Director of VAVS

1. What is VAVS?

VAVS was founded in 1946 to provide supplemental support for our nation's veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities. More information about how to volunteer or donate can be found at www.va.gov/volunteer.

VAVS Facts:

- One of the largest centralized volunteer programs in the Federal government.
- More than 350 organizations support VAVS including the American Legion Auxiliary.
- Volunteers have provided more than 676 million hours of service since 1946.
- Volunteer opportunities differ by location.

2. I am an individual interested in volunteering at my local VA facility. Where do I start?

To express interest in volunteering for the VA, contact the VA Medical Center (VAMC) Voluntary Service Office directly by locating the Parent Facility closest to you. Search by zip code for the facility closest to you at www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1. Many VA Voluntary Service offices have their own webpage, but when in doubt, call the general Medical Center and ask to be connected to the center's Voluntary Service Office. Each VAMC places volunteers a little differently. Some would like you to fill out an application at www.volunteer.va.gov/apps/VolunteerNow/, while others would like to speak with you first to explain the process and sign you up for orientation.

3. I am a member of an organization that has a standing relationship with VAVS. Does this affect my volunteer process?

Many times, yes. Organizations often split into small groups to volunteer together at a specific time. The Chief of Voluntary Service will help you get connected with your group if this is the case. Each VAMC holds regular mandatory meetings for representatives from organizations which have a standing relationship with VAVS. The representative from your organization can assist you. Again, the Voluntary Service Office can help you connect with that representative. If there is not a group from your organization, or they volunteer when you cannot, you can still volunteer independently under the supervision of the Voluntary Service Office.

4. I am a member of an organization that has a standing relationship with VAVS. How do I record my service hours?

VAVS records your service hours by having each volunteer sign in and out. You must tell VAVS the organization in which you are volunteering on behalf of in order for the organization to receive credit. Even if you are not a member of the organization, you may volunteer on its behalf and give the organization credit for your hours. Signing in and out is necessary for liability reasons as well.

5. I am a leader of a state or local organization comprised of volunteers, and we wish to establish an organizational relationship with our state or local VA facilities. With whom should I speak?

Each VAMC has a Chief of Voluntary Service and support staff. The Voluntary Service Office will direct you to the appropriate person. You may find the VAMC closest to you at www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1.



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY SUPPORT TOOLS

A collection of resources from National Headquarters to assist and guide members and volunteers in serving veterans, servicemembers and their families.

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6. What should I do if I do not hear back from my local VA facility in a timely manner?

Contact the VA Voluntary Service Central Office: 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420 • (202) 273-8952 • vhaco10c2staff@va.gov • www.va.gov/volunteer

Please see the American Legion Auxiliary's *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Volunteer Expectations* or visit www.va.gov/volunteer for information on what to expect as a VAVS volunteer.