



**HANDBOOK FOR
DAV VAVS
Representatives
and Deputy
Representatives**



**KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO
AMERICA'S VETERANS**

FORWARD

We need your help in continuing to provide the best care and treatment for our ill and injured veterans. We need your help not only because our doctors and nurses are extremely busy applying the best of their knowledge, but also because our veterans need the personal warmth and friendliness only you as a volunteer can bring them.

What better assurance can a veteran have than our interest in getting them well and to have someone from their community volunteer to help them? In return, what better satisfaction can you get than to know you have helped a veteran adjust to their new surroundings or you have helped them become, once again, a well and productive citizen? Our health care staff is looking forward to working with you on behalf of our veteran patients.

–Office of the Under Secretary for Health,
Department of Veteran Affairs

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Commonly Used Acronyms

- HSC – Hospital Service Coordinator
- PTSD – Post-traumatic stress disorder
- LVAP – Local Veterans Assistance Program
- TN – DAV’s Transportation Network
- VA – Department of Veterans Affairs
- VAVS – VA Voluntary Service program
- VS – Voluntary Services



History of the VAVS

On April 8, 1946, at the invitation of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs, representatives of several national veterans and welfare organizations met in Washington, D.C., with representatives of the Veterans Administration Central Office staff. They discussed the plan for the coordination and integration of community and voluntary assistance in hospitals and domiciliaries.

DAV was represented at that initial meeting to take part in forming a plan for Veterans Administration volunteer activities. The meeting resulted in the creation of the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) program, under which volunteers would assist hospital staff by supplementing the individualized patient services.

The plan put into place the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee, composed of national representatives of the participating organizations. The committee advises the Veterans Administration Central Office staff and is a partnership for the planning and administration of the program. The plan also established VA Voluntary Service Advisory Committees at the health-care facility level.

Under the VAVS program, veterans and welfare organizations work in conjunction with the VA to develop the effective use of community volunteer resources. Additionally, these organizations enjoy worthwhile participation in the VAVS program through the VAVS National Advisory Committee.

The committee has taken on projects, conducted studies and developed recommendations that call for specific action from participating organizations. This aspect of the committee's work is considered to be far



beyond the normal functions of an advisory committee. DAV knows of no other federal agency that permits outside groups to participate in the planning and operation of a program, as is done in VAVS.

The VA operates the largest network of health care facilities and domiciliaries in the United States. It also operates many community-based outpatient clinics and vet centers. The VAVS program assists professional staff in the healing and rehabilitation of ill and injured veterans. This joint effort of staff and volunteers assists veterans during the treatment, healing and recovery processes.

Volunteers in no way replace staff members, but they do provide a service beyond the scope of the medical center staff—a touch of home, a feeling of belonging, a bond with the outside world and help instilling a desire in the individual patients to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Volunteers who participate in this program range from teenagers to senior citizens. Most volunteers belong to veterans service and fraternal organizations, which collaborate with the VAVS through their organization's VAVS representatives. Other volunteers participate in the program by directly contacting the Voluntary Service Program Manager at a VA health care facility.

Since the establishment of the VAVS program, countless volunteers have contributed millions of hours to patients in VA health care facilities. Volunteer service has contributed to the expansion of services and improved the quality of care and treatment for veterans. This is indeed an outstanding record of unselfish and dedicated service to America's veterans.

You as a DAV VAVS Volunteer

There is a real and continuing need for volunteer assistance in VA health care facilities. Volunteers assist in providing patients with normal, healthy interactions with the community that help maintain or restore the confidence of patients.

Volunteers bring an extra service to the care and treatment of veteran patients that cannot be provided by paid staff regardless of its size and effectiveness. There are several various opportunities for volunteers in VA health care facilities.

The following are a few traditional ways you can assist as a DAV volunteer in a VA facility:

1. Escorting patients to and from clinics.
2. Coordinating volunteer efforts for special activities.
3. Magazine cart, library circulation and processing assistance.
4. Information desk receptionists.
5. Serving as escorts, ushers, organists or vocalists for chapel services.
6. Instructing and leading group discussions in educational therapy.
7. Preparing displays and assisting patients in menu selections in nutrition and food service.
8. Cutting stencils, issuing tools and supplies or socializing with patients in occupational therapy.
9. Helping with the clinical preparation procedures and patient-motivation activities in the physical therapy clinic.
10. Activity leaders and assistants, instructors and guest speakers in recreation activities.
11. Helping patients with socialization and therapeutic activities.

The VAVS Program Manager at you nearest VA health care facility will be able to discuss all available opportunities with you.

How the VAVS Works

All VA health care facilities have a VAVS Committee. Committee members include one VAVS representative and up to three deputy representatives for each organization taking part in the VA facility's program. As a member of the VAVS Committee, each representative is the link between the VA facility and all chapters, units or posts of the member organization involved in VAVS. In addition, VAVS representatives work with health care staff to plan the best use of community volunteer resources.

Prior to every VAVS Committee meeting, the chairman usually confers with the chief of each health care service to identify a particular need for volunteer assistance. The chief of each service, for example, the Chief of Nursing Service, outlines what volunteers are to do, the number of volunteers needed, qualifications of the volunteers and the days and hours these volunteers are needed.

At each VAVS Committee meeting, the need for volunteer assistance is brought to the attention of the VAVS representatives. Each representative then brings this information to the attention of the various chapters or units within their organization in order to help in recruiting the right volunteers for the assignments to be filled.



How you can become a DAV Volunteer

STEP ONE: Test Yourself

Here are some basic qualifications of a DAV volunteer.

Do you meet them?

- A sincere interest in helping people.
- A sense of responsibility to your community and the individuals in it.
- A willingness to accept health care facility standards of conduct and supervision.
- Find enjoyment in new and meaningful experiences.
- The ability to work with people on a team.
- Tact, patience, congeniality, warmth, kindness.
- The physical ability to perform volunteer work.
- A sense of pride in serving others.



STEP TWO: Information Call

Call your DAV VAVS representative for information about the program and the opportunities for your participation at that facility. You may also contact the VAVS Program Manager directly, but please keep in mind that you must let the Program Manager know that you want your time to be credited to DAV (in order to be considered a DAV volunteer).

STEP THREE: Talk It Over

The DAV VAVS representative will be pleased to discuss with you your interest and proper placement in the VAVS program. The DAV VAVS representative will discuss assignments that are currently available

and in need of volunteers. They will also discuss your placement with the Program Manager in relation to your interests and capabilities.

You and the DAV representative will make the final decision on an area where you can contribute based on your interests and the needs of veterans in your facility.

STEP FOUR: Orientation

All volunteers at VA health care facilities will receive appropriate orientation for their assignments. During orientation, you will receive an introduction to the VA facility and its care and treatment programs for veterans. The basic purpose of the orientation is to provide you with the following information:

1. Knowledge of the policies, functions and objectives of the VA health care facility.
2. An understanding of the nature and significance of the VAVS program.
3. An understanding of the fundamental principles and methods of volunteer assistance in VA health care facilities.
4. Discussions on the proper approach and attitude needed while working with different types of patients at the VA health care facility and your role as a volunteer.

STEP FIVE: Take Your Place on the Team

Following your orientation, you are ready to take your place on DAV's volunteer team through VAVS. Volunteers take instruction from doctors, medical professionals and staff because they know the health care needs of the patients and their abilities and capabilities to participate in activities.

Your Fellow Team Members:

As a member of the health care team, you will gain the respect of your fellow team members by:

1. Knowing and observing all facility rules and regulations.
2. Being dependable in all your assignments.
3. Reporting on time and staying until your assignment is completed.
4. Following instructions of the staff member to whom you have been assigned.
5. Being kind and friendly to all patients.
6. Avoiding emotional or personal involvement in patients' problems.

7. Remembering that all personal information you may learn about a patient is confidential.
8. Performing a needed service in a pleasant and efficient manner.

The VA Health Care Facility Staff:

VA health care providers are grateful for your support through DAV. The relationships developed between volunteers and staff are important. You'll find that the VA health care staff will:

1. Assign you to a needed job.
2. Give you helpful on-the-job instruction.
3. Strive to ensure your job satisfaction through personal supervision
4. Discuss with you any matters concerning your volunteer assignment.

Apprenticeship

You will be considered an apprentice on the team until you have completed a minimum of 10 hours of probationary volunteer service. During this period you will receive additional orientation and necessary on-the-job instruction from the staff member in charge of the program you are assigned. After completing your apprenticeship, you will embark upon one of the noblest careers of all, a career of volunteer service as a regular member of the health care team.

Recording Hours

It is very important that you indicate to the VA Voluntary Service Program Manager that you wish to credit your hours to DAV. There are several organizations in which volunteers can credit their hours, and the VA Voluntary Service Manager has no way of knowing which organization to credit your hours if you do not inform them.

Regular Scheduled volunteers are individuals who accept a designated assignment on a regular schedule (for a minimum of at least four times a year). Regular Scheduled volunteers are provided with individual cards to record their hours. Occasional volunteers (volunteering less than four times a year) are welcomed and can also credit their hours to DAV.

VAVS Health Care Facility Advisory Committee

Each organization serving as a member agency of VAVS selects its own representatives for the committee. The VA looks to the representatives on the committee to advise them on DAV's participation in the VAVS program. Additionally, representatives inform their organization's members and volunteers about VAVS volunteer opportunities and coordinate with the committee chairman DAV's plans for participation in the framework of the program. It is essential that the individuals selected to represent DAV represent our organization well.

Representatives on the VAVS Committee serve in an advisory role and in an operational capacity with the chairman of the VAVS Committee. For example, DAV VAVS representatives advise the chairman on DAV's ability to obtain volunteers in order to assist in various aspects of the program.

It is not an overstatement to say, "The measure of the success of DAV's participation in the VAVS program will largely be due to the caliber of the individuals selected as VAVS representatives and deputy representatives on advisory committees."

Responsibilities of the DAV National VAVS Representatives

DAV has a representative on the national VAVS Committee. This person is known as the national VAVS representative. Our national commander appoints an individual to this position.

The national VAVS representative may also select a deputy national VAVS representative to serve. These individuals advise the committee on DAV's plans and abilities to assist the VAVS program on a national level.

They establish guidelines and inform the DAV VAVS Committee representatives as well as national, state and local officials of our organization about the VAVS program and our participation in it. They represent our organization at the annual national VAVS Committee meeting and serve on subcommittees to which they may be appointed.

Individuals in this role supervise and control the activities of the VAVS representatives at VA health care facilities across the country. The national

representative receives and solicits recommendations for appointments of VAVS representatives at each of the VA health care facilities.

They make all the certifications of appointments to this position on the local level and keep all interested parties informed. They supervise and record reports submitted by DAV VAVS representatives.

Responsibilities of the State VAVS Chairman

Each DAV department commander may recommend to the national VAVS representative the name of an individual to be certified as the state VAVS chairman. If so, the state VAVS chairman will be responsible for coordinating the VAVS program within the department and educating DAV chapters and units as to their responsibilities to the VAVS program.

The state VAVS chairman's responsibility is to ensure that a VAVS representative properly covers each VA health care facility within the state. They also have the responsibility of recommending to the national VAVS representative the name(s) of prospective representatives.

Those in this important role are responsible for ensuring each VAVS representative submits a Monthly Activities Report to the national VAVS representative at National Headquarters. They should encourage DAV department and chapter officials—as well as members within the state—to understand the importance of complete cooperation with the VAVS representative, both financially and in services rendered.

They are encouraged to visit each VA health care facility in the state at least once a year in order to evaluate our organization's participation in the VAVS program. They should organize and conduct a VAVS session at the department convention and encourage attendance by representatives, deputies and associates, as well as all department and chapter officers and members who wish to attend.

Responsibilities of VAVS Representatives

Each organization serving as a member agency of the VAVS program selects its own representative for the VAVS Advisory Committee at local VA medical facilities. For DAV, the state-level department VAVS chairman may recommend to the national VAVS representative the appointment of an individual to serve on a VAVS Advisory Committee.



When there is no VAVS chairman in a department, the department commander may make the recommendation. Where there is no department organization in a state, the recommending official for this appointment will be designated by the national commander.

The VAVS Advisory Committee looks to our representatives to advise them on our organization's participation in the VAVS program. Representatives should inform DAV members and chapters near the location of a VA health care facility what the needs are of the program. Then, representatives should coordinate with the VAVS Advisory Committee DAV's plans to participate in the VAVS program. Representatives serve in an advisory and an operational capacity with the chairman of the committee. They advise the chairman as to DAV's ability to participate in the program, recruit volunteers for DAV to assist in various activities and create community awareness of VAVS events.

Additionally, they are responsible for ensuring that all DAV chapters, units or member participation at the VA health care facility is coordinated through them and to also inform the VA Voluntary Service Program Manager.

A DAV VAVS representative must:

- Be able to organize the efforts of the members and volunteers of our organization.
- Show effective leadership.
- Have the time and interest to devote to committee work.
- Have a clear understanding of the goals of the VAVS program.
- Effectively explain to the chairman of the VAVS Committee the work they believe DAV is best-suited to do in the VAVS program.

- Communicate to potential volunteers the concept of the VAVS program and the purpose underlying our organization's participation in a program.
- Have the support of our membership and the officials of our organization.

Deputy VAVS Representatives

VAVS representatives have the privilege of selecting deputy representatives (no more than three) to work with them and/or in their absence. Upon the selection of the deputy, the VAVS representative should notify the national representative as to the name and address of the appointee for certification purposes. We urge every representative to select a deputy to work with them in representing DAV at the VA health care facility. A representative might consider selecting a deputy from a different area rather than their own. We urge that good judgment be exercised in this selection process because representatives and Deputies are to work together in complete cooperation and harmony.

Further Information for VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives:

1. **TERM OF APPOINTMENTS:** Appointments are for a two-year calendar term, unless circumstances dictate a successor should be appointed. For example, the term of an individual appointed on April 3, 2014, will expire at the end of the second full calendar year, December 31, 2016. The expiration date of a deputy will be the same date as the representative under whom they would serve. The appointment of a replacement representative, deputy or state chairman will be only for the unexpired term.
2. **APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENTS:** All appointments are subject to approval by the national VAVS representative.
3. **IDENTIFICATION CARD:** The representative and deputy representative are entitled to receive a National Headquarters ID card. This is in effect only so long as your term is in effect. It should be destroyed or returned to Headquarters if and when it becomes void.
4. **UNIFORM:** You are authorized to wear a national cap with the appropriate lettering indicating thereon whether you a "VAVS representative" or a "VAVS deputy representative." Caps may be ordered

from National Headquarters. If and when you are no longer our certified representatives, the cap should no longer be used.

5. **CERTIFICATE OF MERIT:** To show our appreciation for service to our organization, we have been authorized in certain instances to award National Certificates of Merit. In order for a representative to qualify, three basic factors must be met:
 - a. **Term of Service:** They must have served at least two years as a VAVS representative.
 - b. **Attendance at local VAVS meetings:** VAVS meeting reports must reflect that our organization has been represented, either by the representative or deputy, in at least 75 percent of the meetings annually.
 - c. **Reports of Participation:** National Headquarters must receive a VAVS Representative Monthly Report each month. This report reflects the representative's leadership and interest in DAV. National Headquarters cannot get a true picture of the extent of DAV's participation from just the VAVS Committee Meeting Minutes. We present to the National Convention an overall report that reflects the extent of participation and service our National Organization has provided to the VAVS program. Our report should, as closely as possible, show how many volunteers have participated in the VAVS program and the approximate total amount of volunteer hours credited to our organization. This would not only include the hours of the representative and deputy, but all volunteers. We should also show the approximate amount of monetary contributions to our program. Additional report forms can be secured from the Office of the National VAVS Representative at:

**DAV National Headquarters
860 Dolwick Drive
Erlanger, KY 41018**
6. **EXPENSES:** National Headquarters cannot make available to you any monetary benefits, either for participation in the program or reimbursement of expenses incurred by you in the performance

of your duties. Funds may be made available by departments. Departments may make resources available through their annual budget to be expended within the VAVS program. To arrive at a sound figure within the budget, first consider all the income that will be available for this service. Then, consider the number of VA health care facilities within the department and pro-rate the amount to be disbursed to the VAVS representatives. In this manner, all funds available for department VA health care facility services are controlled and dispensed through the department. In some instances, chapters within the area of the VA health care facility may make certain funds available. Ideally, the VAVS representative, through whom all participation is coordinated, knows at all times to what extent they may be able to commit DAV's financial participation.

7. HOW TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS:

- a. Make personal contact with prospective volunteers.
- b. Be able to describe assignments available at the VA health care facility.
- c. Know about DAV and the VA health care facility and be able to give accurate information.
- d. Bring prospective volunteers to the VA health care facility for an interview with the VA Voluntary Service Program Manager because all VAVS volunteers must be scheduled through the VA Voluntary Service Office.
- e. Inform volunteers that orientation and on-the-job training will be provided and is a requirement for volunteer service.
- f. Keep the public aware of the need and accomplishments of volunteers.

Associate VAVS Representatives

If a VA health care facility in one state has jurisdiction over a certain portion of the territory of a neighboring state, an associate VAVS representative may represent the neighboring state on the VAVS Advisory Committee. Associate representatives may participate and contribute in all deliberations in these meetings. However, they will have no voting power. The representative from the state where the

VA health care facility is located will cast DAV's vote. Recommendation for the appointment of an associate representative is made by the neighboring state VAVS chairman or, if none exists, by the department commander. The tenure of this position will run in a similar time frame as the VAVS representative.

Department Responsibilities

DAV departments are responsible for ensuring the utmost cooperation among volunteers, chapters, units, members and the VAVS representative. Departments should understand that the national VAVS representative is the certifying official in our organizational structure, and any suggested recommendations for changes should be made to them. Departments should urge each chapter to contribute as generously as possible to the VAVS program, particularly in service through volunteers. If possible, departments should have certain working funds available to be utilized by VAVS representatives, where and when needed to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

Chapter Responsibilities

Local chapters are responsible for ensuring cooperation between the department and VAVS representatives, particularly in providing volunteers to participate in the VAVS program. This allows for greater participation of DAV in the program locally and on a national level.

Primary responsibilities of chapters are:

1. Providing volunteers to VAVS representatives as needed.
2. Arranging available funds to help operate the program.
3. Publicizing and disseminating information about the VAVS program.
4. Participating as a group, chapter or unit in special or regularly scheduled events.
5. Chapters should utilize the services of the VAVS representative and/or VA health care facility officials by inviting them to attend their meetings in order for them to provide information about the VAVS program.
6. All chapter participation at the local VA health care facility must be coordinated through the VAVS representative.

National Service Officer Responsibilities

National service officers give invaluable assistance to the VAVS program, and our organization, by emphasizing widespread participation by DAV members. If they are available, they should visit chapter and other meetings to speak about the importance of participating in the VAVS program.

VAVS Healthcare Facility Advisory Committee

Each organization serving as a member agency of VAVS also selects its own representatives for the Committee. The VA looks to these Committee representatives to advise them on the organization's participation in the VAVS program, to inform the organization's members about the program and to coordinate, with the Committee chairman, the plans for the organization's participation in the framework of the VA Healthcare Facilities Program.

It is therefore essential that the individuals selected to represent DAV really represent our organization. The representatives on the VAVS Committee serve in an advisory capacity and in an operational capacity with the chairman of the VAVS Committee. VAVS representatives advise the chairman on their organization's ability to participate in the program and operate in obtaining volunteers from our organization to assist in the various aspects of the VAVS program. It is not an overstatement to say, "The measure of the success of our organization's participation in the volunteer program will largely be due to the caliber of the individuals selected as the VAVS representative and deputy representative on the Advisory Committee."





Mission

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them, fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill, and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

This mission is carried forward by:

- Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies of government.
- Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people generally, and to disabled veterans and their families specifically.
- Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses and their orphans before Congress, the White House and the Judicial Branch, as well as state and local government.
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live, through a network of state-level departments and local chapters.
- Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs.



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859-441-7300
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TO VOLUNTEER, GET HELP OR
DONATE, VISIT:

DAV.ORG

