



Department of Florida Service Officer

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Post Service Officer

Veterans needing assistance with benefits and programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and other military-related matters, often turn to their Organizations for help. For most veterans, the post/detachment in their community is the local organization **not** the National or Department Headquarters. This means that veterans needing help are going to look for it at the local post/detachment. This is especially true today with the thousands of troops deploying and returning from the War on Terrorism. If a veteran goes to a post/detachment for help and is turned away or treated with indifference, the organizations, not the post/detachment, is seen as not caring about veterans, regardless of what the League has done or is currently doing for veterans at the state and national levels. This is why it is so important that every post/detachment have a Post Service Officer (PSO) truly interested in helping fellow veterans.

The PSO is often the initial contact between The Marine Corps League and the veteran. The PSO, in most instances, is not a professional service officer, nor is he or she an “accredited” representative of The Marine Corps League (the exception would be when a professional service officer, county, state or League, also service as the PSO for his or her post/detachment). It isn’t necessary for the PSO to be an expert in veterans’ law or benefits. What is important is for the PSO to have a strong desire to assist veterans. The purpose of the PSO is to be an initial point of contact regarding veteran issues by providing veterans in the community where the post is located with basic information and assistance, including referral as directed by the Department Service Officer. Given the complexity and broad range of rules that govern VA benefits, it is critically important for the PSO to work with the professional American Legion DSO and ensure any paperwork submitted by the veteran is forwarded to the DSO in a timely manner, to ensure proper service.

The PSO should be familiar with VA laws and regulations pertaining to the filing of claims, as well as the policies and guidelines established by the National VA&R

Commission as outlined in the VA&R “Code of Procedure.” (See Disability Claims section). However, it can not be stressed enough, that given both the volume of regulations and the technical nature of the benefits process, the PSO should coordinate his/her efforts to assist a veteran or dependent with an accredited Marine Corps League / American Legion service officer, according to the customs of his or her department.

Service Officer training is an annual item and the American Legion has this course in July of each year, and the cost is none. You pay only room and board.

Department Service Officer

The term “Department Service Officer” (DSO) includes all Marine Corps League / American Legion professional service officer employees of a Department or a State Veterans agency. The DSO is normally located at the VA regional office (RO). In some states there is more than one RO and there will be one or more DSOs.

DSOs have specialized training and experience that contribute to a thorough knowledge of VA regulations and instructions, and they are familiar with the broad spectrum of VA programs and operations. The DSO is also an accredited representative, responsible for providing assistance and representation in any claim for VA benefits.

Those that are interested in becoming a Service Officer can contact me at the above for more information.