

**DESCRIPTIONS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DUTIES OF DETACHMENT VAVS VOLUNTEERS
(VAVS), DETACHMENT SERVICE OFFICERS(DSO'S) AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ACCREDITED VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS (VSO'S)**

VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICE (VAVS)

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program was founded in 1946 to provide support and services for Veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities. VAVS volunteers are a priceless asset to our Nation's Veterans and to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Marine Corps League is one of over 350 organizations that support VAVS by providing volunteers at VA Medical Centers nationwide. In addition to volunteering with VA staff and Veteran patients, detachment members may, as determined by the National VAVS Representative, be assigned to serve on the VAVS committee at their local VA hospital. The VAVS Committee is comprised of Veterans Service Organizations and other interested community and service organizations and personnel. In addition to the VA hospitals, VAVS volunteers may also have the opportunity to volunteer at outpatient clinics, readjustment counseling centers, national cemeteries, or at a VA Regional Office.

VAVS volunteers provide many important functions throughout the Medical Center and help make patients' stay more enjoyable. Volunteers can perform a number of services, and a volunteer's talents are closely matched with one of many assignments. These assignments may include Information desk volunteer, parking lot golf cart driver, office assistant, patient reminder caller, patient escort, hospitality beverage cart, magazine/book cart, mail room assistant, van driver, and assisting with planning and coordinating events. The primary goal is to spend time at the hospitals assisting patients by augmenting facility staff, and/or soliciting donations of funds or items that may be needed by Veteran patients. These may include books/magazines, telephone cards, clothing and hygiene products, or other items determined by the hospital staff.

The VAVS Officer for the Detachment should be responsible for coordinating events with detachment members and planning donation activities. The National VAVS Representative will guide and instruct Department and Detachment VAVS coordinators and volunteers in the proper conduct of their functions related to the VAVS Program, and will establish standards for required reports.

DETACHMENT SERVICE OFFICER (DSO)

The Detachment Service Officer (DSO) is a vital part of our organizational structure, and serves as the front line contact for most Veterans in the community. Many times this is the first contact a Veteran or family member has with an established veterans service organization. The DSO will assist members of the Detachment, other Veterans, and dependents/family members of deceased Veterans in obtaining rightful benefits from the Federal and State Governments.

They must have a fundamental understanding of Federal Benefits for Veterans, dependents, and survivors, and understand the basics of the VA claims process.

Duties include but are not limited to (1) Providing information regarding the Veteran's claim process, (2) Assisting Veterans in filling out VA Form 21-526 Application for Compensation and Pension benefits (VA Form 21-526) and VA Form 10-10EZ for Enrollment in VA Healthcare, (3) Providing information regarding local VA healthcare facilities and Vet Centers, (4) Assisting Veterans in obtaining a copy of DD Form 214 or service medical records, (5) Providing assistance to survivors of deceased Veterans, (6) Assisting Veterans in connecting to community services and resources, and (7) Assisting transitioning service members/Veterans with reintegration, readjustment, and employment.

The DSO is important to the success of the Marine Corps League Service Program, but it is important that they understand the somewhat limited role (by law) that they play in assisting Veterans with the VA claims process. The majority of DSOs will not be formally accredited with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and are therefore not considered to be National Service Officers who are authorized to represent Veterans before the VA. Most DSOs will not have sufficient training to do more than refer a Veteran to a National Service Officer (VSO) to meet their needs, however they should know how to access the VA forms used to apply for benefits, and can assist with preparation. A DSO should be familiar with the VA accredited National Service Officers (VSO's) in their areas so that they can refer Veterans as needed.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER (VSO)

Veterans Service Officer (VSO) are those who have received the requisite training through a State or County Department of Veterans Affairs, or a major Veterans Service Organization that is recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs, such as VFW, DAV, American Legion etc. Once that training has been completed, the original organization submits the VSO's name and credentials to the Department of Veterans Affairs for accreditation. After the accreditation is approved, that person is then eligible to be certified by the Marine Corps League as a National Service Officer (VSO). Marine Corps League VSO's provide information, assistance, counseling and referrals on a wide range of subjects, benefits, and veteran programs. The people who are served by VSO are referred to as "clients" and they come from a wide range of society, including the veteran, widows of veterans, dependent children of veterans as well as dependent parents who lost a son or daughter in military service.

The topics that a VSO deals with are not limited to the ones listed here but these do indicate the variety of issues in which they might become involved in any given week. This list includes GI loans, compensation, pensions, education (On-The-Job Training and Apprenticeship Training), rehabilitation, medical and dental treatment, hospitalization or outpatient treatment or nursing home care, residency at the State Veterans' Home, other state benefits, Social Security, alcoholism and drug dependency treatment, corrections of military records, review of discharges, burial in a national cemetery, expense reimbursement, headstone or burial allowance, obtaining flags, as well as the protection of veterans' and widows' preferences.