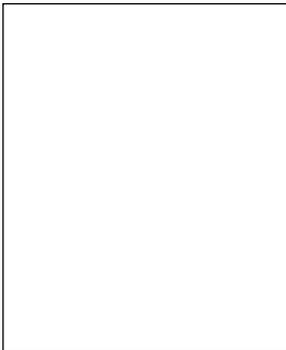


# Veterans & Family Support Ambassador

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Could you imagine not having a home – being on the streets? Foraging for food, asking for handouts just to eat? In the article “Homeless Veterans in America” published on June 12, 2020 in The Military Wallet, a personal finance and benefits website for military members, veterans and their families, writer Ryan Guina states there are more than 630,000 homeless individuals in America, and more than 67,000 are veterans. Veterans comprise 10.6% of the homeless population. That is an average of one in every 10 homeless individuals being a veteran.

Studies show the veteran population is two times more likely to become chronically homeless than any other American group. Contributing factors include long periods of unemployment, foreclosure, mental illness and poverty. More 968,000 veterans lived in poverty last year. Seventy-six percent (76%) of homeless veterans experience alcohol, drug, or mental illness struggles and 30% of veterans ages 18-24 are unemployed.

Of homeless veterans:

- 89% received an honorable discharge
- 67% served three or more years in the military
- 47% are Vietnam veterans
- 15% served before Vietnam
- 5.5% are Iraq and Afghanistan veterans

This means nine out of 10 homeless veterans received an honorable discharge and two out of three served at least three years.

## Support for Homeless Veterans

Assist a homeless veterans initiative in your area, such as Stand Downs, Veterans Administration, local homeless veteran housing/assistance programs, faith-based programs, etc.

Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events during which VA staff and volunteers provide food, clothing and health screenings to homeless and at-risk veterans. In addition, veterans also receive referrals for health care, housing solutions, employment, substance use treatment, mental health counseling and other essential services.

For more information on local Stand Downs, contact your local VA, or visit [va.gov/homeless/events.asp](http://va.gov/homeless/events.asp)

Other resources:

- National Coalition for Homeless Veterans: [nchv.org](http://nchv.org)
- Help for Homeless Veterans: [va.gov/homeless](http://va.gov/homeless) (877) 424-3838

## National Family Caregivers Month and Month of the Military Caregiver

National Family Caregivers Month is observed each November while Month of the Military Caregiver is observed each May. Both recognize and honor more than 5 million caregivers in the United States. There are innumerable ways for Auxiliaries to bring attention to caregivers and the important role they play in the lives of veterans and the family members of veterans.

As the daughter of a deceased veteran and the caregiver of my mother, I know how hard it is to receive assistance in this capacity. It usually falls to the parents, spouse, child(ren), other family members, a friend or acquaintance to provide emotional support and/or physical care for a veteran or family member.

The VA has many support services to assist the caregivers within the VA System. For more information, please visit [caregiver.va.gov](http://caregiver.va.gov). October 2020 was the first time that spouses have been able to file to receive benefits for being a caregiver to a veteran. The form is on the caregiver webpage provided at the link above.

Don't forget the family of veterans, that we, as an Auxiliary, need to assist as well. Show them respect for caring for the ones who were left at home or loved our veterans after they returned. There are simple ways to show our support of them and acknowledge their importance.

- Be a good listener. Visit with them in-person, by phone or electronically.
- Offer to take over caregiving duties for a short time or offer to assist them (respite care).

- Bring or have delivered a meal or a gift card to a local eatery.
- Mail a thinking of you card and/or send flowers.
- Provide personal care gift cards for a spa day.

There are many more ways to show your support of the important position caregivers hold in their family member's life. Caregivers often lose themselves in the care of others and stress levels rise, sometimes unnoticed, until it is overwhelming.

Now is the time to contribute time and/or money to programs and organizations that benefit homeless veterans and family caregivers of veterans. Look into options in your area and choose those that best fit your Auxiliary's Veterans & Family Support Program. As always, keep yourself, your family, our Auxiliary Sisters and Brothers and our veterans safe and healthy.



# Veterans & Family Support Program

**VFW National Veterans Service • VFW Veterans & Military Support Programs**  
**Assist Veterans, Service Members and Their Families**  
**Promote Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness**

## **Spread the Word about National Veterans Service (NVS)**

The VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) helps veterans, service members and their families obtain the benefits they deserve – at no cost.

NVS provides a nationwide network of nearly 300 VFW Service Officers who help veterans navigate the Veterans Affairs system. Those VFW Service Officers recover more than \$1 billion annually in VA benefits for veterans and their dependents.

These highly skilled professionals assist all veterans, whether they are VFW members or not, in filing claims for:

- Disability compensation.
- Rehabilitation and educational programs.
- Pension and death benefits.
- Employment and training programs.

NVS also works to ensure veterans receive quality, timely and accessible VA health care, including:

- Hospital care.
- Outpatient care.
- Specialized health care for female veterans.
- Alcohol and drug dependency treatment.
- Medical evaluation for disorders associated with military service, exposure to Agent Orange, radiation or other environmental hazards.

Donations to NVS can be made online or by mail.

Donate online at [vfw.org/ways-to-help](http://vfw.org/ways-to-help), select National Veterans Service, click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending funds to the VFW earmarked for NVS. Mail check to:

VFW National Headquarters  
Attn: NVS  
406 W. 34th Street, 11th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64111

## **VFW Veterans & Military Support Program**

Veterans & 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 & Military Support can be made online or by mail.

Donate online at [vfw.org/ways-to-help](http://vfw.org/ways-to-help), select Veterans & Military Support, click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending funds to the VFW earmarked for Veterans & Military Support.

Mail check to:

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

## **Military Assistance Program (MAP) Funds Ways to Connect with Troops**

MAP helps VFW and Auxiliary members give more to their local military units. It helps forge and nurture bonds with those units by providing financial assistance for Posts, Districts and Departments to sponsor morale-boosting send-offs, homecomings and casual get-togethers.

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 Can Help in a Crisis

A soldier is serving on foreign soil, but the rent is due back home. A soldier is driving a tank on alert for IEDs, and the family car needs a new radiator the family cannot afford. These are the situations Unmet Needs can address.

Grants of up to \$1,500 payable to a creditor can bridge the gap to make a mortgage or rent payment or to fund home and auto repairs, insurance, utility costs, food and clothing. To learn more, visit [vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants](http://vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants).

## VFW “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship” Program

The VFW and Sport Clips are giving the gift of scholarships to our nation’s heroes as a way of thanking them for their dedicated service to our nation. The VFW “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship” 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](http://vfw.org/student-veterans-support).

## Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness

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 Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can:

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1,
- Chat online at [veteranscrisisline.net](http://veteranscrisisline.net), or
- Send a text message to 838255.

Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available. Tip: Add the Veterans Crisis Line number as a contact in your cell phone for easy referral.

Purchase the **Auxiliary Suicide Awareness Prevention Pin** from the VFW Store. When someone asks you about your pin, tell them that the VFW Auxiliary is concerned 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

A staggering 20 veterans commit suicide each day, and the VFW and VFW Auxiliary are committed to helping change the conversation and stigma surrounding mental health in the United States. 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](http://vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness)
- **The Campaign to Change Direction**  
[changedirection.org](http://changedirection.org)
- **Give An Hour**  
[giveanhour.org](http://giveanhour.org)
- **Patients Like Me**  
[patientslikeme.com/join/vfw](http://patientslikeme.com/join/vfw)
- **One Mind**  
[onemind.org](http://onemind.org)
- **The Elizabeth Dole Foundation**  
[elizabethdolefoundation.org](http://elizabethdolefoundation.org)
- **Help Heal Veterans (Therapeutic Craft Kits)**  
[healvets.org](http://healvets.org)
- **Veterans Voices Writing Project**  
[veteransvoices.org](http://veteransvoices.org)

# Veterans & Family Support Program Awards

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## AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event that increases awareness of homeless veterans.
  - Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event to increase awareness of homeless veterans. Criteria and entry form (required) available at [vfwauxiliary.org/resources](http://vfwauxiliary.org/resources). Auxiliaries are to send entry form to their Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2022.  
The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must send a copy of all submitted entry forms to National Headquarters by April 30, 2022.  
Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.
  - Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding activity and/or event that increases awareness of homeless veterans.
2. Most outstanding activity and/or event that supports veteran, military and family caregivers.
  - Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that supports veteran, military and family caregivers. Criteria and entry form (required) available at [vfwauxiliary.org/resources](http://vfwauxiliary.org/resources). Auxiliaries are to send entry form to their Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2022.  
The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must send a copy of all submitted entry forms to National Headquarters by April 30, 2022.  
Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.
  - Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding activity and/or event that supports veteran, military and family caregivers.

## AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN

1. Citation to each Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman for participation in this Program.
2. \$25 VFW Store Gift Certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion to increase awareness of homeless veterans.
3. \$25 VFW Store Gift Certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of support for veteran, military and family caregivers.
4. Outstanding Performance Award in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of Program Goals listed at the top of Page 58.