

# VAVS Representative Guide

For VFW Auxiliary Members



**VFW Auxiliary Veterans Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS)**  
**Representative, Deputy Representative, Associate Representative,**  
**and Honorary Representative Guide**

This guide is meant to explain the history and importance of the relationship between the *Veterans Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS)* and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary (VFW Auxiliary). It will also provide more detail and explanation to the duties and responsibilities of the VFW Auxiliary VAVS Representatives as well as the Deputy, Associate, and Honorary Representatives.

The VFW Auxiliary has the honor of being one of the first charter members of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) established after World War II in 1947 just one year after the Veterans Administration (VA) added Voluntary Service to their medical centers under the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

A VAVS Representative holds a position of great importance, not only to the VFW Auxiliary, but to the VA as well. The purpose of the VAVS National Advisory Committee as written on page 9 of the VHA Handbook 1620.01 states: *“The VAVS NAC advises the Secretary of the VA, the Under Secretary of Health, and other members of VHA Central Office staff on how to coordinate and promote volunteer activities within VA health care facilities and on matters relating to volunteerism. The members are responsible for:*

- a. Promoting VAVS Programs*
- b. Communicating VA policies to their constituencies, and*
- c. Making recommendations to improve volunteer services to veterans.”*

The VFW Auxiliary holds representation at nearly 100% of the VA facilities across the United States. All appointed VAVS Representatives to a particular VA medical facility have the same responsibilities outlined above as a member of the medical facility’s VAVS Advisory Committee. The VAVS Advisory Committee is the local equivalent to the VAVS National Advisory Committee. To emphasize the importance of the position, the local VAVS Representatives are the source of the feedback. The VFW Auxiliary National VAVS Representative looks to for recommendations to review with the Secretary of the VA, the Under Secretary of Health and the Washington D.C. Office of VA Voluntary Service.

The Department President appoints all VAVS Representatives and up to three (3) Deputy Representatives per VA facility with a Voluntary Service Program; however, the Department Hospital Chairman is the immediate supervisor of all VAVS Representatives.

## VAVS Representatives:

### VFW Auxiliary duties:

- *Department expectations:*
- The Representative will comply with the “Representative requirements per the VA” (see below).
- The Representative shall follow the Department’s instructions in communicating with the Auxiliaries the needs of the VA facility along with reports required by the Department.
- The Representative is to make an accounting to the Department of any funds received for the purpose of supporting the VAVS Program and/or approved expenses per the Department’s Hospital Fund and Program. It is recommended that the Representative meet with the Department President and/or Department Hospital Chairman before the new budget is approved to discuss the anticipated financial needs of their respective VA facility’s Voluntary Service Program for the coming year. (see Hospital Budget)
- *Duties re: Volunteers:*
  - The Representative is
    - to establish contact with the Auxiliary volunteers to obtain feedback on their experiences as a volunteer, to acquire their input in creating new volunteer opportunities, and receive their recommendations (if any) on improving the VAVS Program.
    - to ensure that all volunteers adhere to the VA policies, procedures, and rules of behavior or risk being removed. The Representative does assist VAVS in the removal of a volunteer.
    - to communicate the need for volunteers and pursue recruiting members to fill the volunteer openings through the area Auxiliaries. This includes recruiting members, non-members, and youth volunteers crediting their hours to the VFW Auxiliary. The Representative is to give a description of the duties for each volunteer position as well as the particulars on urgency to fill, skills, frequency, and amount of time needed to fulfill the requirements per the VAVS Program Manager.
    - to promote and encourage youth volunteers to apply for the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Award. (see James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship brochure for details)
    - to review in December with the VAVS Program Manager the performance of VFW Auxiliary volunteers to enter a candidate for the Male and/or Female VAVS NAC Volunteer of the Year. The deadline for the application to be received by the VFW Auxiliary National VAVS Representative is January 15. **The application does not go to the Department Hospital Chairman.** (see criteria and nominating procedure elsewhere in this guide)
- *Networking:* The Representative will establish a relationship with other organizations on the VAVS Advisory Committee to work together to provide needs and services not

otherwise provided for in government appropriated funds. Most times, accepting appointments on subcommittees presents this opportunity to work with other groups.

- **Deputy Representatives:** The Representative should be sure to include Deputy Representatives in the program by delegating to them responsibilities such as calling Auxiliaries for available volunteers for special events, following up on commitments to donate, and/or encouraging them to accept an appointment on a VAVS subcommittee – like Christmas or Wheelchair Games. Be sure they are invited to sit in on meetings with the VAVS Program Manager and share with them any communications they were not included in, so they will have the same knowledge as the Representative of VFW Auxiliary participation in the program. Remember that in the event the Representative is absent, the Deputy fills in and casts the VFW Auxiliary vote at meetings. In the event, a Deputy Representative without an excused absence misses 3 consecutive quarterly VAVS Advisory Committee meetings, the Representative shall communicate with the Department Hospital Chairman and the Department President to remove the Deputy and appoint a replacement.
- **Monitor Auxiliary Support:**
  - The Representative will periodically monitor the VFW Auxiliary donations and volunteer activities to ensure VAVS is accurately posting them in their volunteer timekeeping and donation system. Discrepancies do happen and if followed routinely, they can be caught early. Once the VA’s fiscal year is closed, corrections cannot be made to the postings.
  - In reviewing volunteer activities, the Representative is better able to ensure volunteers are being recognized accordingly. The Representative can share with Auxiliaries the names of their members who regularly volunteer to encourage local recognition of the volunteer’s achievements and to order VFW Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer pins as earned.

NOTE: The new VAVS timekeeping system makes it possible to post occasional hours by Auxiliary (not by the name of the occasional volunteer) and the donation part of the system continues to permit posting of all donations – monetary, in-kind, and activity values – by Auxiliary. Therefore, the Representative can request these reports from the VAVS Program Manager at any time.

**Representative requirements per the VA:**

- The Representative must be a current member of the VFW Auxiliary and a member within the state of the VA facility.
- The Representative must be a Regularly Scheduled volunteer of the VA facility. Regularly Scheduled volunteer assignments are determined by the facility’s VAVS Program Manager.
- The Representative must attend all quarterly VAVS Advisory Committee meetings. Attending a VFW Auxiliary Department or National meeting where the Representative’s presence is required is the only “excused” absence accepted by VAVS.

- The Representative is responsible for providing annually an updated list of the names and addresses of the Department Officers and assigned Auxiliary Presidents to the VAVS Program Manager.
- Although optional and not required, the Representative should give the VAVS Program Manager a complete roster of the Department Officers and Auxiliaries. There are times when a VA may receive donations from Auxiliaries not assigned to it and the Auxiliary check has only the name of the Auxiliary on it without an address.

### **VAVS Advisory Committee Meetings:**

The express purpose of attending the VAVS Advisory Committee meetings is to learn and communicate to the Department and local Auxiliaries the goings on at the VA facility in terms of improvements in services, policy and procedure, patient needs, and program support. Program support can be to supply items on their ongoing needs list, fill volunteer opportunities, or funding for special events.

It is also held to provide opportunities for the Representatives to offer suggestions in how to improve the Voluntary Service Program, make procedures more efficient, and how to make the Veteran experience at the VA more enjoyable through feedback from the volunteers working throughout the facility.

At each of these meetings, VAVS is required to provide Representatives with a quarterly report of volunteers, their hours, and Auxiliary donations. The Representative should review the report for accuracy and any action that may be needed. For instance, if a volunteer has not completed his/her annual training, the Representative should follow up with the volunteer to ensure they are in compliance with VAVS policies and procedures. The report of donations should be reviewed to ensure all donations have been posted correctly.

If any business during the meetings require a vote of the committee, each organization on the committee has one vote and the Representative casts that vote. It is only in the absence of the Representative that a Deputy Representative casts the vote.

The Representative is to invite all Deputy Representatives to the meetings as they too are required to attend every quarterly meeting unless there is an Auxiliary meeting that creates a conflict and therefore, they would have an excused absence.

VAVS is required to provide a copy of the VAVS Advisory Committee meeting minutes to every Representative on the VAVS Advisory Committee as well as a copy to the National VAVS Representative. **The Representative is responsible for giving a copy to the Department Hospital Chairman.**

### **Annual Joint Review:**

The Annual Joint Review is exactly what it states – a review of the VFW Auxiliary participation in the VAVS Program jointly completed with the VFW Auxiliary Representative, Deputy Representatives, and the VAVS Program Manager (see sample of the form). It is the duty of the Representative to make sure the review is conducted in November and to initiate the scheduling of the appointment with the VAVS Program Manager to get it done. The review

compares the current year to the previous year participation of the VFW Auxiliary in the program. It includes spaces for comments on the results as well as for setting goals to achieve in the coming year. The Representative should be sure the Deputy Representatives are invited to attend the review as they may offer suggestions and recommendations not otherwise considered.

It is the responsibility of the VAVS Program Manager to send a copy of the completed AJR to the National VAVS Representative. **The Representative receives a copy and provides a copy to the Department President and Department Hospital Chairman.**

### **Hospital Budget:**

While the Department budget is being developed for the ensuing year, each VAVS Representative should discuss with the incoming Department President and/or Department Hospital Chairman the approximate amount of funding needed to cover

- a. VFW Auxiliary sponsorship of annual and/or anticipated activities and special events held at their respective VA medical facility (such as bingos, cookouts, adaptive sports events and Hospitalized Veterans Recognition Week)
- b. Emergent needs of patients such as underwear, personal care items, and cab fare
- c. VAVS Representative and Deputy Representative mileage to/from official VAVS meetings, stationery, and postage.

**NOTE:** Refer to page 28 of the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Guide:

#### **TRANSPORTATION COSTS AND POSTAGE**

*Travel expenses (mileage) of the VAVS Hospital Representatives, Deputies, Associate and Deputy Associate Representatives may be taken from the Department Hospital Fund, when they are performing official duties at their medical facilities. All postage and office supplies necessary to handle the hospital program should be provided by the Department.*

**VAVS Deputy Representative:** The Deputy Representative must meet the same VAVS requirements as the Representative. The Deputy Representative is the right arm to the Representative and therefore, he/she must attend the quarterly VAVS Advisory Committee meetings. In the absence of the Representative, the Deputy needs to be able to step in and take over the Representative's responsibilities with the knowledge needed to carry them out. The Deputy participates in the discussions at the VAVS Advisory Committee meetings and is encouraged to accept an appointment on a subcommittee. The Representative may delegate some of his/her duties to the Deputy.

### **VAVS Associate Representative and Deputy Associate Representative**

VAVS Associates Representatives and Deputy Representatives are assigned to VA facilities located in neighboring states when the Department President of the neighboring state feels there is enough volunteer and Auxiliary support from his/her state of the facility to warrant appointing them. They too are required to attend the VAVS Advisory Committee meetings. An Associate and one Deputy Associate Representative may be appointed. The other differences are:

- Associate Representatives/Deputies are not members of nor do they have a vote at the VAVS Advisory Committee meetings held at the neighboring state's VA facility. They can participate in the discussions, but they are only there to assist the VAVS Representative of the home state of the facility in developing and coordinating program support from their respective Departments.
- In the event the VAVS Representative and Deputy Representatives are absent from a VAVS Advisory Committee meeting and with the approval of the home state's VAVS Representative, the Associate Representative can cast the VFW Auxiliary vote.
- The Associate Representative may not order hospital pins as that would be the responsibility of the volunteer's Auxiliary or the VAVS Representative of the home state's facility.
- The Associate Representative and Deputy Associate Representative may serve on VAVS Subcommittees.

*NOTE: Per VHA Handbook 1620.01 on page 20 under Associate Representatives it states: "Appointments of Associate Representative or Deputy Associate Representative to the designation of Representative and/or Deputy Representative are authorized when the home state organization is not represented. These appointments must be made with the clear understanding that if the respective state organization later certifies representation, the previous appointment will revert to associate status."*

### **Honorary VAVS Representative:**

A Representative, Deputy Representative, Associate Representative, or Associate Deputy Representative who has served 10 consecutive years in any combination of those capacities may be appointed to serve as an Honorary Representative. The Honorary Representative has no voting power however, he/she does serve as an advisor to the VAVS Committee and can participate in discussions and serve on VAVS Subcommittees.

It is the responsibility of the incoming Department President who receives notice that the qualifying representative chooses not to serve again to request in writing the appointment of the member to Honorary Representative. The letter is addressed to the VFW Auxiliary National VAVS Certifying Official.

### **Resources:**

1. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration Handbook 1620.01 (found on the [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) website. Search for 1620.01 and it will come up)
2. VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program Guide (located on [www.vfwauxiliary.org](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org) under the Hospital Program)

**Attachments:**

1. **James Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award brochure and sample application.**
2. **VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) Volunteer of the Year information and sample worksheet.** Note the worksheet is used to identify the various types of volunteer activities the candidate has participated in in order for the VAVS staff to write the required narrative submitted with an application to the National VAVS Representative.
3. **Annual Joint Review form.**