

SPOUSAL AND SURVIVOR BENEFIT
PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT
REGIONS 6-9 as of 10-8-24

Committee Members:

Jennifer Ellis, Region 8 Director – Co-Chair S&S Benefit Program

Gail Dubois Brouard, Chapter 630, Louisiana

Craig Wade, VVA Dual Member Chapter 904, Alaska

Dawn Wait, Chapter 805, Oregon

Kathy Anders, National Vice President, Advisor

The 2024 Leadership and Education Conference was held in Reno, Nevada at the Silver Legacy Hotel, August 20-24th. AVVA leadership requested that the Spousal and Survivor Benefit Program Committee Chairs, Beverly Pounds and myself, present a seminar focusing on the training of S&SB seminars and all that is involved in their presentation. We, along with Nina Schloffel, Sharon Hobbs and Robert Neal, a Certified Veterans Service Officer, worked collectively to develop a power point presentation for the seminar.

Sharon began by introducing the program design which helps local Chapters of AVVA conduct meetings that will educate and inform spouses, survivors and families on the benefits due them because of the veteran's service to our country. She continued by introducing the program itself and the speakers who would be sharing their expertise. Following Sharon was Beverly Pounds, S&SB Co-Chair, who instructed the audience on the preparation of the actual seminar which involves securing a place, date/time and then searching for a certified Veterans Service Officer who would explain the benefits that are available. Beverly explained the need to announce the meeting with a flyer and public service announcement which samples are available on our website. She then explained the educational material that would be made available either in a folder for each guest or on a resource table such as S&S Benefits, DIC Brochures, Paper Safes, AVVA & VVA Applications, Toxic Exposure and Secondary PTSD brochures. After Beverly spoke I was asked to discuss the instructions and examples in detail. Initially it is important to

appoint a S&SB Chairperson for your chapter so that they are recognized as the contact person in your community. Next is scheduling an appointment with your VSO to review the program outline, resource handouts and confirm with them that it flows smoothly. There are additional options for the seminar such as an Invocation, Military Protocol, additional speakers from the nearest VA Medical center, a Funeral Director, National Cemetery Director and others, refreshments, Audio-Visual Equipment, and finally a simple agenda to hand out as your guests are arriving. Following this segment I was able to give my own personal testimony regarding the sudden passing of my husband and why having the 'difficult conversation' with your spouse is so important as we never know when the inevitable will take place and why being prepared is essential.

In addition, I explained the six handouts that the VSO would be reviewing and to make sure that they were in printed form for those attending to take home and review. All of this information including the handouts are available on the AVVA Website under "Programs – Spousal & Survivor Benefit". If you are scheduling a seminar I would suggest thoroughly reviewing the information on the website so that you are prepared. I would like to mention Nina Schloffel who worked tirelessly with us to create the power point and assist us in our seminar presentation. Thank you Nina for your dedication and support.

As many of you may decide to conduct your own S&SB seminar, you might have questions so please contact Beverly Pounds, Co-Chair Regions 1-5 email: Beverly.pounds@outlook.com Phone: 615-812-5442 or myself, Co-Chair Regions 6-9 email: AVVAUmpqua805@gmail.com Phone: 541-373-1030. As I shared with the audience, where there is a will there is a way. So many veterans and their spouses can benefit from this information and getting it out there will certainly benefit many.