



ASSOCIATES OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

SPOUSAL & SURVIVOR VA BENEFITS PROGRAM

There are some twenty-one-and-a-half million veterans in the United States, of which almost two-thirds never interact with the VA. Most are unfamiliar with the array of benefits which they have earned by virtue of their military service. Even the one-third of vets who do interact with the VA's healthcare system and/or its benefits administration are not familiar with much of what is available to them, to their families, and to their survivors.

<https://vva.org/what-we-do/veterans-advocacy/government-relations/>

Introduction

In an effort to educate and support the families of veterans concerning the benefits available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America has created a program focused on bringing awareness to what is currently available to the spouse, widow, widower, and family of the veteran.

Federal benefits are constant for everyone; state-funded benefits can vary. With that in mind, this program is designed to be implemented at the state and chapter levels where both federal and in-state funded programs are relevant. This community event can be very successful if carefully planned and advertised.

This program is only available through our website. Included in this program are all the tools needed to plan and execute your seminar.

Preparation

- A. Procure a knowledgeable certified Veterans Service Officer to conduct the meeting

This person should be local if at all possible. Bringing someone from out of town can be costly; however, if money is no object, then do what is necessary to get the "right" person for the job. (NOTE: perhaps the VVA chapter will co-sponsor the event with you) Also, if there is a Vet Clinic, Veteran Hospital, or National Cemetery, etc. in your area, invite a spokesperson from their organization to participate.

- B. Secure a centralized location meeting room in the community



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A local church or community center is a good fit for this event. Preferably a place that can be reserved free of charge with free parking to hold your cost to a minimum.

C. Set a date and time for Program

Timing is everything. So many of our older veterans and spouses do not travel at night. Mid-afternoon (maybe a 3pm or 4pm start time) on the weekend will get them home before dark. But in the winter time, these hours too might be difficult for them to manage. A weeknight seminar will have to begin later due to work constraints. (Note: If you live in an area where avid college football fans reside, be sure to check the schedule before planning this event in the fall.)

D. Announce the event well in advance

Planning a successful, well attended seminar requires getting the word out. Invite all spouses in your area- not just your AVVA members. Ask permission to include an announcement in the other local Service Organizations newsletters. i.e. VFW, DAV, American Legion. Contact your local TV stations for coverage; ask your local newspaper to run a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that are usually free-of-charge; create a flyer for distribution at the VA Center in your area, and anywhere that is a popular gathering place for veterans.

E. Educational material available from the national organization:

1. DIC Brochures
2. Paper Safes
3. AVVA & VVA applications
4. Toxic Exposure
5. PTSD '2'

These are available free of charge to our AVVA members just for the asking. Contact your State Representative or President.

F. Audio-Visual needs

Having the needed equipment for your seminar is essential so that people can see and hear what is being said and presented. So, consider these amenities when choosing your location for the event. Check with the Service Officer to know if he will need a projector and screen for a Power Point, etc. A microphone and podium are mandatory. Perhaps a microphone setup in the audience for questions should be considered if possible.



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G. Included in these guidelines are:

1. *Example of program outline (for the Service Officer's use)*
2. *Six (6) handouts (these are updated as new handouts are distributed from the VA.)*
 - a. *Survivor's & Dependents' Educational Assistance*
 - b. *Accrued Benefits and Substitution*
 - c. *Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*
 - d. *Survivors Pension Benefit*
 - e. *Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance*
 - f. *Burial and Plot Interment Allowance*
3. *Sign-in sheet (optional)*

H. Optional

1. **Refreshments:** *Serving refreshments is an option to consider if funding is available; however, refreshments should NOT be the main focus of your gathering. Keep everyone focused on the true reason for your meeting. Refreshments after the meeting is adjourned will be more conducive to learning.*
2. **Military Protocol:** *Posting of Colors, National Anthem, and/or Pledge of Allegiance.*
3. **Invocation**

We hope that these instructions/guidelines will lead you to having a successful event. Remember, this event is to be focused on SPOUSES AND SURVIVORS but without our veterans, this need would not exist. Good luck and give us feedback afterwards. And don't forget to record your VISTA hours.