

# Expediting Claims for Departing GIs

In 2001, VFW launched its Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program at military installations across the country. A cooperative initiative with VA and the Pentagon, BDD was established to assist GIs departing from the military.

Pre-discharge claims representatives at each BDD site help wade through all the paperwork for vets seeking VA entitlements. These reps also discuss education and medical benefits, VA home loans, as well as different types of prosthetic equipment, when necessary.

In many cases, the pre-discharge claims reps are the service members' first exposure to VFW. That's why each maintains a certain level of professionalism at all times.

Currently there are nine BDD sites from San Diego to Ft. Bragg, N.C., with more to come.

*"We have a large work load here in Michigan, so I have been able to help so many people. The most important thing vets should know is there is no time limit to filing a claim. It's never too late."*

*-DSO Daniel Crocker  
Department of Michigan*



Tom Parker, a VFW BDD representative, reviews the steps for filing a VA claim with a GI preparing for discharge.

*Benefits*

*"The main reason I am here is to expedite claims for departing soldiers. I would have loved to have had someone walking me through the benefits process. That's why I find this job rewarding — and why it's so important to me."*

*-Pre-Discharge Claims Rep. Tom Parker  
Ft. Hood, Texas*

## Let Us Help You

We want to help you with your earned entitlements. But if you don't contact us, we won't know, and you'll be missing out on a valuable service. To this end, VFW established the Tactical Assessment Center (TAC), a 24-hour help-line for veterans with questions or concerns about VA entitlements.

The TAC collects the facts necessary to create a national database tracking the timeliness, accessibility and quality of VA medical and benefit services to veterans and in many instances directly intervene with VA. Since its inception, the TAC has assisted more than 70,000 veterans.

To reach TAC, call 1-800-VFW-1899 or visit [www.vfwdc.org](http://www.vfwdc.org).

## VFW Can Help You

To file a claim, please contact the nearest VFW representative or call our toll-free HelpLine at 1-800-VFW-1899. Also, a list of VFW service officers is available on the Internet at [www.vfwdc.org](http://www.vfwdc.org). Click on "National Veterans Service" then click on "Directory." Or e-mail us at [vfw@vfwdc.org](mailto:vfw@vfwdc.org).



Washington Office  
National Veterans Service (NVS)  
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002  
Tel.: (202) 543-2239  
Fax: 202-547-3196

National Headquarters  
406 W. 34th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
Tel.: (816) 756-3390  
Fax: 816-968-1177

[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

# Veterans Helping Veterans



*Assistance*



*Explanation*



*Advocacy*



National Veterans Service

# Veterans

## Helping Veterans

Imagine spending years wading through the bureaucratic red tape offered up by VA only to find you've been denied a disability claim. Where would you turn? Maybe you'd just throw up your hands and walk away in defeat. VFW understands the frustration associated with claims and that's why its National Veterans Service (NVS) program was formed.

With a nationwide network of service officers, both on the Department (state) level (full time, professional advocates) and Post level (volunteer advocates), NVS assists more than 120,000 veterans and their families each year. Service officers also are VFW members making them well-versed in the organization's goals.

Specifically, service officers assist in filing the entitlement claims for veterans and will present veterans appeals before the VA Board of Veterans' Appeals, and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, if need be.

Furthermore, field representatives operating out of the Washington, D.C., office evaluate VA operations and services—health-care facilities, regional offices, cemeteries and vet centers.



VFW Department Service Officers are available to assist all veterans through the VA claims process.

*“My service officer is honest, knowledgeable, attentive and dedicated to his job. His efforts have made my dealings with VFW very satisfying.”*

*-Veteran Robert Nava  
Los Angeles, Calif.*

## Service Officers Lead the Way

Service officers are the key to the success of NVS. They advocate for veterans rights. Annually, Department Service Officers (DSOs) garner over a billion dollars in compensation benefits.

As part of NVS's continuing effort to ensure the service officers are properly trained, VFW provides basic and advance training to the VFW cadre of service officers, claims consultants and other VFW-accredited representatives, that includes the following phases:

### Phase I:

Training of new VFW accredited representatives for one week in Washington, D.C.

### Phase II (A):

A one-week, on-site training for new DSOs by a member of the NVS staff.

### Phase II (B):

Mentoring through a one-week visit by a new DSO to an experienced DSO “mentor.”

### Phase II (C):

Surveys of Department service offices or VA regional offices by members of the NVS staff to investigate the quality of service provided to veterans.

### Phase II (D):

Instruction by one NVS staff member at DSO or Post service officer schools.

### Phase III (A):

Proficiency training conferences (PTCs) for VFW service officers. Held once annually at various locations to advance DSOs knowledge and professionalism.

### Phase III (B):

Regional training seminars for expanded audience of veterans service representatives and held four times each year in alignment with the VFW conference areas. This training focuses on the basic tenets of service connection and is more informal than the PTCs, allowing more personal interaction.

### Phase III (C):

VFW conducts training for state VA personnel.

### Phase IV (A):

Individual training to allow DSOs to attend courses of individual training for professional development.



VFW members volunteer at local VA medical centers through the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) program.

## We're in Hospitals, Too

Another facet of NVS is the hospital volunteer program, which includes the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS). VFW was one of five groups comprising the original National Advisory Committee in 1946 that formed VAVS.

More than 6,000 regularly scheduled VFW volunteers provide more than 1 million hours of service annually to our nation's veterans in federal, state and community hospitals and nursing homes through VAVS.

Volunteer opportunities vary by VA location. Here are just a few experiences offered by some VA facilities:

- reading to patients;**
- transporting patients to appointments;**
- manning clothes closets; and**
- providing camaraderie.**

If you are interested in volunteering, check your local phone book for a VFW Post or VA medical facility in your area for more information.

*“I do this because if I ever need help someday, I would hope someone would do the same for me.”*

*-VAVS volunteer Harry Kelley  
Kansas City, Mo.,  
VA Medical Center*