



**Service to Veterans
Department of Wisconsin
2024-2025 Program Engagement Plan**

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The Service to Veterans program enhances the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, while providing a volunteer opportunity to thank those who served.

Service to Veterans volunteers provide services to veterans outside a VA Medical Center. Formerly, noted as the Field Service Volunteer program, then Home Service, in 2013, they were combined to form *Service to Veterans*. Volunteers serve from their homes and in the community, making the American Legion Auxiliary the go-to resource for the country's veterans and their families.

Where do you start?

Look within your own Post for any veteran and/or active-duty military and their families who would benefit from a helping hand. Determine the need, then reach out. You can also step into the community. Contact government officials, religious leaders, and social service offices to ask about other programs in the community serving veterans. Once contacts have been obtained, connect to the organizations and ask them to identify their needs.

What can be done?

Offer to assist with yardwork (mowing the lawn/snow removal), light home repairs or housekeeping, tax prep, sewing, cooking, crocheting or knitting afghans, running errands, rides to appointments, relieving a caregiver by sitting with the veteran, or babysitting. Consider adopting a veteran or a service member and family while a parent is deployed.

Organize/host a Stand Down or Job Fair for both veterans and spouses, assemble Care Packages, gift a Buddy Basket to a veteran making a fresh start. Set up a Benefits Briefing to assure they are aware of benefits available to them. Welcome a new veteran or military family to the neighborhood, sharing services available in the area, and if not already members, ask them to join the Legion Family!

Check with a local nursing home or assisted living center to see if there are veterans residing there and if the facility allows visits. Play cards or Bingo, write a letter for a veteran, craft cards and tray favors, assist with a veteran's burial or graveside upkeep.

Is there a transitional housing program in the area? Check to see if items are needed, such as laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, kitchen items, clothing, etc.

Before crafting for veterans in a VA facility, (such as afghans and lap robes), check with the facility to see if they are needed. If not, perhaps veterans in a local nursing home or those who are homebound would benefit from these items.

Recruit more members to work this program.

Operation Comfort Warriors

This is a program of The American Legion, established to meet the needs of wounded, injured, or ill military personnel by providing them with items not usually supplied by the government. These include DVDs, books, electronics, sweatsuits, and puzzles. Larger items might include ping-pong tables, computers, kayaks, etc. Hours spent serving in this area could be counted as Service to Veterans.

Volunteer Recognition

Besides the personal rewards volunteers experience, the Auxiliary recognizes the time and effort with pins and hour bars. Volunteers record their hours, which are submitted to the Unit VA&R Chairman at the end of the year. In turn, those hours go to the Department Service to Veterans Chairman. After certification by the Department Secretary, the information is sent to National Headquarters.

Volunteers are recognized when specific hour milestones are reached: 50 (and pin), 100, 300, 500, and 1,000. After the first 1,000-hour bar is awarded, the next bar will be earned in 1,000-hour increments up to 20,000 hours. The next bars are available at 25,000 and 30,000. After reaching 35,000 hours, a Lifetime Service to Veterans pin is awarded.

The pins are awarded to Senior and Junior American Legion Auxiliary members, as well as nonmembers who represent the ALA.

In addition to the hours, note any expenses, such as donations (in-kind or monetary).

*** Caregivers are now able to report Service to Veterans hours, which may accumulate for hour bars for time spent providing care and assistance to veterans *within* their families if they do not receive compensation for doing so. If the caregiver lives with the veteran, 10 hours per week can be reported. If they do not live with the veteran, up to five hours a week can be reported.

Remember...these hours can only be reported once and cannot be reported again under another program such as National Security or Community Service. If unsure, pick the one that makes the most sense.

Year-End Reports are important. Tracking as you go makes it much easier when the report deadline rolls around. Please share how you have supported our veterans and/or military and their families. Pictures would also be appreciated, but ask for permission if including veterans, military, or a facility.