

# HOSPITAL / CDCE (VAVS) PROGRAM



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## **Participating in the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program puts us on the front lines of our Veterans Health Care!**

The demand on the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide health care to our Veterans is increasing at an alarming rate. Our Veterans are aging with more health issues. The number of Veterans in Texas has grown to over 2 million and increases daily. As Veterans move to Texas, their benefits come with them to Texas facilities.

For many years our Texas Auxiliaries have committed to serve our Veterans. Thank you for the huge amount of volunteer hours and donations that have been given to support the Hospital Program. Our Veteran's needs are great. We will continue to help them and be there for them. Our actions show them that we care and appreciate their sacrifice for protecting our nation and our freedoms. **Texas Auxiliary members have Texas size caring hearts and helping hands!**

## **SPECIAL PROJECT: VETERAN PATIENT HAPPINESS**

### **Interact with and provide happiness to Veteran patients:**

What is happiness? Happiness is that feeling that comes over you when you know life is good and you can't help but smile. It's the opposite of sadness. Happiness has long been recognized as a critical part of health and well-being. The "pursuit of happiness" is even given as an inalienable right in the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Happiness has been shown to predict positive

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outcomes in many different areas of life including mental well-being, physical health, and overall longevity. Happy people are generally healthier!

*How can we help our Veterans to be happier?*

Our Veterans have many health issues: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), moral and spiritual depression, suicide, substance use disorders, stress, anxiety, isolation, loneliness, and food insecurity are some. *How can we make it better?*

**Identify the Veteran's need:**

- Ask the question, how can I help and what do you need? Always be kind, gracious, and listen.
- Create a plan to meet their need. This is the time to be creative!
- Get a dream list of items needed at the VAVS/CDCE for the VA hospital patients.
- Collect needed new clothes for the homeless Veteran unit.
- Have fun with a “Happy Frog Party” in the long-term health care units.
- Call Auxiliary members for goodies to fill snack bags for the local VA clinic lab.
- Get the Boy or Girl Scouts to help pass out Veteran's Day cards.

Execute your plan! Serve with what you have! The smallest action that is done with compassion, honor, and respect will result in the biggest smiles from our Veterans!

**A Smile is always returned with a Smile (:**

**The VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program** establishes relationships with hospitals, nursing homes, Veteran Homes, VA Facilities and other medical facilities. The second part of the Hospital Program is the VAVS Program. The Department of Veterans Affairs created the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS). Name changed to (CDCE) Center for the Development and Civic Engagement. The VAVS/CDCE operates one of the largest volunteer programs in the Federal Government, supplementing staff and resources in all areas of patient care and support. The mission of the VAVS/CDCE is to provide a structured volunteer program under the management of the VA compensated employees in cooperation with community resources to serve Veterans and their families with dignity and compassion. Total hours from both programs equal our reported hospital volunteer hours. This is the most precious gift to our Veterans - **our time**. Everything that we have achieved has made a difference in our Veterans' lives.

**Thank you, hospital volunteers!**

For more information go to MALTA-Member Resources-Hospital. Download and read the Hospital Program Guide and the VAVS Participation Guide. These guides explain who can volunteer, where you can volunteer, rules, regulations, awards and reporting.

**Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support** are important program core elements. Volunteering is a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labor, often for community service. Volunteering is as rewarding to the volunteer as it is beneficial to the patient, families, visitors, and staff. Volunteering can help you make friends, learn new skills, advance your career, and even feel happier and healthier. New volunteers are needed every day across Texas in our VA and non-VA medical facilities and clinics. Volunteers offset millions of dollars in expenses in health care. Every VA volunteer hour is valued at about \$35.00 per hour by the VA. It takes a huge number of volunteers to keep facilities running smoothly, as they provide proper care for our Veterans. Community volunteer recruitment events are the prime time to illustrate the benefits of volunteering and making a positive difference in the lives of our Veterans. Establish a **Hospital Youth Volunteer Program** in a VA or non-VA facilities. This teaches our young people service and compassion for our Veteran's needs. They may be our future health care professionals. Host a volunteer recognition event for them and all VFW Auxiliary volunteers. Presenting Certificates and Volunteer service pins is a way to show appreciation for their dedication serving our Veterans. A simple Thank You is always welcome. The most meaningful volunteer reward is to see a Veteran's smile and to know that you have made a difference. Show your volunteer support by continued communication and working together.

**Hospital Pledge** is the VAVS/CDCE Program fundraiser. The hospital pledge is **\$0.50 per member** based on Auxiliary membership as of June 30, 2024. Due in August 2024, check should be earmarked "Hospital Pledge". Pledge funds can be earmarked to a VA Medical facility for meeting Veteran's needs. Make check payable to the VFW Auxiliary Department of Texas. Send copy of check with report form to Department Hospital Chairman. To assist the Hospital Pledge, the Auxiliary Relief Fund can be used. Read page 21, yellow page of 2024 Podium Edition Bylaws and Ritual book.

**National Salute to Veterans Patients** week was established to pay tribute and express appreciation to our Veterans, increase community awareness of the VA medical center's role, and to encourage citizens to become involved as volunteers. Valentine's Day falls within this week. The annual VA National Salute to Veteran Patients program began in 1978 when VA took over sponsorship of a program started in 1974 by the humanitarian organization, No Greater Love, Inc. The Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE)/VAVS staff plan and execute local events and activities at VA medical facilities to honor hospitalized and outpatient Veterans. This is the perfect time to promote Valentine's for Veterans. VA is requesting our organization to send **Valentine's Day cards** to your VA to be given to Veterans to show your support and love for their service to our country. The cards provide a small token of your appreciation and really do impact the lives of Veterans. These messages of encouragement

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brighten their day and show them we do honor their commitment to serving our nation. Take bought or handmade Valentine cards and/or sponsor an event or activity in any VA or non-VA medical facility. Let's have parties, bingo, and concerts. Everyone loves to receive a card and a treat bag on a special day!

### **SHE SERVED. SHE SACRIFICED. SHE DESERVES.**

Women had proven their worth during the First World War, serving as nurses in the Army and Navy and as clerical workers in the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve. Some 10,000 Army nurses served overseas in hospitals and field units, often under dangerous conditions, but they held no military rank or grade and were not entitled to the same pay, privileges, and benefits as men. The creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1942 allowed women for the first time to serve with the Army in non-nursing roles. By the war's end, the size of the WAC had grown to almost 100,000 and women had deployed to every major theater of operations, from the Middle East to the Southwest Pacific. For the first time, women held military rank just like their male counterparts and were granted the same allowances, privileges, and protection. Their relatively equal treatment continued after their discharge, as WACs qualified for the GI Bill and other benefits extended to male Veterans. In 1948, the government ended any questions about the right of women to serve by authorizing their enlistment and appointment in the active and reserve components of all branches of the armed forces. Organize an event to show our appreciation for their sacrifice and service. Honor Women Veterans!

A demand on our **Women Veterans Healthcare Program** is fast growing. It is still the most underserved within the VA Health Care System. Less than one-third of women Veterans use their VA earned benefits. We can help spread the word. Familiarization with the various VA services is a great start! Such as the VA Center for Women Veterans, whose mission is to advocate for equitable outcomes and access to VA benefits, services, and opportunities for Women Veterans through education outreach, and collaboration. Go to [VA.gov/Women Veterans](http://VA.gov/WomenVeterans). As their counterparts their health needs are the same with addition of some specialized care benefits. Maternity services are a specialized care benefit that is underutilized. Sponsor a "Baby Shower" for expecting Veterans. This is a great way to get Auxiliary members to volunteer. The members that cannot attend monthly meetings anymore, but still can knit and sew can be asked to donate baby caps, bibs and blankets. Check out what your region has to offer women Veterans and get involved.

While some VA Facilities have an **Honors Escort Program** that is part of the end-of-life protocol to ensure the Veteran's service, accomplishments and sacrifices are not forgotten as they are laid to rest, some do not. Reach out to your local VA facility and non-VA facilities to find out if they have an Honors Escort Program and if not, implement a program. This is an opportunity to provide outreach education and educate staff on how to pay respect to Veterans who depart while in their care. If necessary, provide casket flags to be used at the facility. Every Veteran deserves a flag. They can be purchased from the VFW Store or from American flag companies. Education on flag folding and flag presentation would complete the program. As said

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by John F. Kennedy, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget the highest appreciation is not to utter words-but to live by them.”

## **START THE CONVERSATION!**

Start The Conversation is a black ring worn on the index finger as a symbol of respect and support. When asked about the ring, it is an opportunity to educate others on the issues that service members face, and the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health; and to open a conversation on a topic that otherwise tends to be avoided or ignored. Purchase one at Ways and Means to show your support. Various styles and sizes available. \$5.00 each. Proceeds will benefit Operation Daily Battle.

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** is a 24/7 confidential crisis support for Veterans and their loved ones. Dial 988, then PRESS 1. You may also Chat Online, or text 838255. A caring, qualified responder will listen and help. The call is free, and you can decide how much information to share. You will also be connected with resources that can help when you're in distress.

## **AWARDS**

1. Plaque to the Auxiliary who used the most creative ways to interact with and provide happiness to Veteran patients in each membership Division. Citation to 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Entry form to Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2025.
2. **“Outstanding Overall Support of the Hospital Program”** Plaque to the Auxiliary in each membership Division. Citation to 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>.
3. **“Hospital Volunteer Recruiter of the Year”** Plaque awarded to one VFW Auxiliary member who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025. Entry form required available in MALTA Member Resource. Citation to 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>.
4. **“Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year”** Plaque to Auxiliary member. Citation to 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Due to Department Hospital Chairman March 31, 2025.
5. **“Outstanding Youth Volunteer”** Plaque to youth volunteer. Citation to 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Required form to be sent to Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2025.

**Serving our Veterans with a caring heart and helping hands!**

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## HOSPITAL / CDCE (VAVS) YEAR-END REPORT

- Mail/Email this report to your District President by April 10, 2025
- District President mail/email to Department Chairman by April 20, 2025

AUXILIARY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Number of Auxiliary members that volunteered at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility? (Auxiliary member to be counted ONLY one time per year) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total number of hours that Auxiliary members volunteered at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Total number of hours that Sponsored Volunteers and/or students volunteered under the VFW Auxiliary sponsorship and supervision at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of Auxiliaries that hosted or co-hosted any activity with their VFW Post at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Total dollar amount spent on ALL Hospital Program related items and/or supplies? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
6. **(Only applies to CDCE (VAVS) Representatives)** Was the CDCE (VAVS) - Annual Joint Review (AJR) completed by November 2024, with a copy to Department Hospital Chairman and National Headquarters by January 15, 2025? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Auxiliary Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_