



**American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Texas
PO Box 1629
Little Elm, Texas 75068
(214) 733-7945**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION
GUIDELINES/POLICY**

**Approved by the
Department Executive Committee
September 28, 2019, Update Approved
September 24, 2022, Update Approved
September 23, 2023, No Update
September 20, 2024, No Update
September 21, 2025, No Update**

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General Information

- A. The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas, has a financial obligation to any VAMC (VA Medical Center aka VA Hospital) and VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), in which we have appointed VAVS Representatives and Deputies. This includes Amarillo, Big Spring, Bonham, Dallas, Houston, Kerrville, San Antonio, Waco, Temple, Beaumont, El Paso, Ft Worth, Longview, Lubbock, Lufkin and McAllen.
- B. For these policies, “hospitalized veteran(s)” shall be defined as any veteran hospitalized in a VA facility that has an American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas, appointed VAVS Representative and/or Deputy, volunteering there and that facility is NOT a Community based Outpatient Clinic. (CBOC)
- C. These policies will clearly list mandatory requirements, such as reporting, for appointed VAVS Hospital Representatives and/or Deputies. It will serve as a guideline for expected behavior from the appointed VAVS Representatives and/or Deputies and explain the consequences of failing to adhere to these policies. It will clarify which VA facilities are eligible to receive financial support and what type of support the facilities qualify for.
- D. These policies shall be reviewed annually by the VA&R Committee and changed as needed, to be read and approved by DEC, if changes are made.

Reports

- A. Accurate and current records must be kept for audit purposes. Representatives are encouraged to keep copies of all transactions. Reports are due no later than the 10th of every month. **Representatives that are not current in their reports will not receive any funds, including Christmas Assessments, Gift shops and/ or party funds.**
- B. VA Hospital and VA Clinic reports are to be turned in, no later than the 10th of every month, to the Department Treasurer, Department Secretary, Finance Chair and VA&R Chairman. Bank statements, receipts, individual mileage forms, copies of checks, etc. must be attached to the report for reconciliation and audit. These reports are **mandatory**. (The VA&R Chairman does not need the bank statements)
- C. All donations from Units or other sources, received by appointed VAVS Hospital AND Clinic Representatives and/or Deputies (aka “Reps and/or Deps”), should go through Department Headquarters. Reps and/or Deps should encourage Units and individuals to send all monetary donations to Department Headquarters in accordance with the Department Constitution and Bylaws. Reps and/or Deps should never accept checks made out to them personally, as donations for the facility.
- D. If the Representative or Deputy (hospital and/or clinic) receives money directly from Units or individuals, she must report it to Department in a timely manner, so that proper acknowledgement and credit may be given the Unit or other contributors. These donations should be listed on the monthly report form along with a copy of the donation(s). **A copy of each check should be made before it is deposited.**

- E. Failure of the Representative to report such funds, creates discrepancies in her report, difficulties for the Department Treasurer and subsequently, issues with the audit. It will also affect monies she receives from Department (**see additional instructions on page 7, number 9 *Monthly Reports***)

Bank Accounts

- A. All appointed VAVS Hospital Representatives are required to have a bank account in the name of the "American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas Rehabilitation Funds." The Representative and at least one Deputy should be on the signature bank card and a copy of the current signature card shall be forwarded to Department Headquarters.
- B. The signature of the Department Treasurer and/or Department Secretary must also be on file with the bank.
- C. All checks require two signatures and are to be co-signed by a Deputy.
- D. All purchases are to be paid by check and must be documented.
- E. If there is a bank charge, list it as an expense on the report form.

Hospital Funds

- A. Each appointed VAVS Hospital Representative will be allotted an annual budget. This budget will be based on the previous year's average expenditure (formerly known as bedload). The Representative may request additional funds as needed, but **all requests must be approved by the VA&R Chairman and Finance Chairman.** (The Treasurer may be given the authority to approve request, but only with approval from the Finance Chairman **and** President)
- B. The appointed VAVS Hospital Representative, must submit all requests for additional funds, in writing (request forms are available) to the Department Treasurer and VA&R Chairman. The request must clearly describe the item(s) to be purchased and purpose. Receipts should reflect those requests.
- C. The Finance Chairman and VA&R Chairman must be notified of all requests by the Department Treasurer.
- D. Checks will not be sent to Representatives until reports for the previous month are received in Department Headquarters. Reports on due no later than the 10th of every month. (**These reports are mandatory**)
- E. The VA&R Chairman and/or Department President may deny all request if they are deemed as an inappropriate use of the funds.

Clinic Funds (CBOC)

- A. This is a "petty cash only" account and does not require a Clinic checking account.
- B. Initial funding of a \$100.00 cash account was established at the September 2004 DEC meeting in Austin, Texas.
- C. This fund is only available when the clinic does not have enough funds to provide services for veterans and/or the Representative has not received donations from Units or individuals. Funds can only be used for the benefit of the veteran or for needed supplies, when not provided by the facility.
- D. Request for Reimbursement/Funds form will be forwarded to the VA&R Chairman and Department Treasurer. The treasurer will issue a check to the outpatient clinic to bring the Petty Cash Fund back to its original \$100.00.
- E. Upon receipt by Department Headquarters, a check will be made out to the Clinic Representative. The check number, amount and date will be brought forward on the new monthly report form for audit and tracking purposes.
- F. Any shortages in the fund will be the responsibility of the Clinic Representative.
- G. When reporting or requesting reimbursement, receipts must be attached to a "Request for Reimbursement/Funds" form listing the name of the Clinic; vendor/supplier; items purchased; amount paid, signed by the Representative and dated.

Hospital Designation List

A. Veteran Administration Medical Centers (VAMC) as determined by the Veterans Administration: Amarillo, Bonham, Big Spring, Dallas, Houston, Kerrville, El Paso, San Antonio, Temple, Waco.

B. Veteran Administration Community Based Out-Patient Clinics (CBOC's): Beaumont, Ft Worth, Longview, Lubbock, Lufkin, McAllen, Corpus Christi.

Hospital representatives are reimbursed monthly based on the approved stipend amount for each Hospital. When the representative's reports are received their stipend funds will be replenished to their original amount. The stipend amount established currently for each hospital and VAC are the following:

Amarillo--\$300 Dallas--\$700 Houston--\$800 Kerrville --\$300 San Antonio--\$800

Temple--\$300 Waco--\$300 El Paso - \$700 Big Spring \$300 Bonham -\$300

Veteran Administration Out-Patient Centers (CBOC):

Beaumont, Ft Worth, Longview, Lubbock, Lufkin, McAllen, Corpus Christi, \$100 per CBOC.

Line items

A. Christmas Assessment

1. A gift of at least \$5.00 cash will be given to every “hospitalized veteran” in the VAVS Representatives and Deputies’ assigned areas, if funds are available at Christmas time. (see “**hospitalized veteran(s) on Page 2, Number 1B General Information**”)
2. If funds are not available, the Finance committee Chairman, in conjunction with both the VA&R Chairman and Department President, will determine which facilities will receive funds, based on their account balances.
3. Should the VAMC not allow the patient to receive actual cash, then a canteen book may be purchased. If canteen books are going to be purchased, the Representative may put in her Christmas Assessment request in October, giving time to request the VA to order the books. If the Chief of Volunteer Services in any facility, request that merchandise or a gift card of equal or lesser value be purchased in lieu of cash or a canteen book, this may be done with the approval of the VA&R Chair and Department President.
4. All Christmas Assessment amounts requested from Department Headquarters, must get final approval by the VA&R Chairman and Finance chairman. These funds are not included in the allotted budget.
5. The Representative shall provide the Department Treasurer, the number of veterans expected in their appointed hospital, no later than November 1st.
6. The Representative **must be current** in her monthly reports to receive these funds.
7. Department will forward these checks via U.S. Mail, upon authorization of the VA&R Chairman and Department Finance Chairman, **no later than December 1st**. These funds **must be distributed prior to December 20th** per our Constitution and Bylaws.
8. All Christmas assessments funds that are not used shall be returned to Department Headquarters no later than February 1st of the New Year.

B. Christmas Gift Shop/Christmas Party

1. The purpose of the Christmas Gift Shop is to provide a hospitalized veteran (or active duty) the opportunity to give Christmas gifts to his immediate family since he/she is in the hospital during the holidays.
2. The purpose of a Christmas party is to ensure that those veterans (or active duty) that are hospitalized during the holidays, will receive a gift and be able to partake in Christmas festivities.
3. The appointed VAVS Representative must contact the VA&R Chairman with the dates for the Christmas Gift Shop and/or Christmas party, as soon as they are confirmed.

4. All facilities, which are not CBOCs, and have an appointed Representative or Deputy volunteering there, are eligible to receive funds for a Christmas gift shop or Christmas party, if funds are available.
5. If funds are not available, the Finance Committee Chairman, in conjunction with both the VA&R Chairman and Department President, will determine which facilities will receive funds, based on their account balances. **(Representatives and/or Deputies are encouraged to seek outside donations to offset the cost, particularly with shipping costs.)**
6. A request for Christmas Gift Shop/ Christmas Party funds must be sent to the Department Treasurer, with a copy to the VA&R Chairman, at least 30 days prior to said event. These funds are not included in the allotted budget.
7. The Representative may purchase Christmas Gift Shop/ Christmas Party items throughout the year from her budget. She may exchange or donate merchandise from her Gift Shop with other Department of Texas, Hospital Representatives, if she has an excess of leftover items and no storage space. Under no circumstances will the Department of Texas pay for storage.
8. Units and individuals wishing to donate new merchandise to a Gift Shop should have the merchandise at the hospital prior to November 1st or at the earliest convenience of the Representative, giving her time to do inventory and then purchase additional needed items.
9. During a Christmas Gift Shop, all gift(s) to the veteran's family, **must have a label or card indicating the merchandise is from the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas.** These cards may be requested from Department Headquarters and should be ordered at least 15 days prior to the event.
10. If the veteran has an out of state address, gift cards, not to exceed \$10.00, may be sent, in lieu of gifts.
11. The number of gifts allowed should not exceed four (4). If there are extenuating circumstances, anything more than four is at the discretion of the Representative. (We ask that she keep in mind that as membership declines, so does the amount of money Department receive from dues and Units, for the VA&R program)
12. **Gifts are only for the veteran's immediate family that are residing in the veteran's house. Gifts are to be mailed to the veteran's address only.** (Note to Representatives: The heavier the gift, the more it will cost to ship. Please keep this in mind when purchasing gifts as shipping is our biggest expense)
13. The package return label must indicate American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas and should bear the return address of the VA Hospital.
14. If the person for whom the gift is intended is present, their package may be given to them after it is wrapped and sealed with brown paper, and ONLY if the hospital Representative has given their approval.

15. No merchandise leftover from the Christmas Gift Shop/Christmas Party is to be sold or donated to another organization. Items may be used for other hospital events, with the approval of the VA& R Chairman.
16. If there are any gift cards left over after the event, they may be sold at actual value to volunteers/hospital staff, with all refunds returned to Department Headquarters, to be deposited in the Christmas fund for that facility.
17. Should the gift cards be lost or expire while in possession of the Representative, she will be responsible for reimbursing the Department of Texas for the value of the cards.
18. A Christmas Party **is in lieu of** a Christmas Gift Shop and at the discretion of the local VAMC facility's wishes. It is the VAMC Volunteer Services Officer/VAMC Director who determines how Holidays activities will be provided to the hospitalized veterans at their hospital.
19. Items purchased (gifts, food, entertainment) for a VA Christmas party, are at the discretion of the Representative but funds must be requested and approved by the Department VA&R Chairman and Finance Chairman.
20. All Christmas Gift Shop/ Christmas Party balances, more than \$500.00, after the event, **MUST BE RETURNED TO DEPARTMENT** with a list of the remaining merchandise and supplies inventory, no later than February 1st of the New Year.

General Fund

- A. Units may prefer calling their donation to this fund "Gift of the Month"; however, all donations are placed into the VA&R General Fund.
- B. No facility can have more than \$2,500.00 (GOM) plus their allotted budget, in their General Fund account. Anything over that amount must be sent back to Department to be held for that facility.
- C. Money from their allotted budget may be used for items (formerly known as bedload) entertainment (social gatherings, parties) and other such necessary items that have been requested and approved.
- D. Each item distributed, should be marked in some manner to show it is distributed through the courtesy of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas.
- E. If items are left at the nursing station, some method of control must be used. Distribution of items should be made at the discretion of the Representative. Carts containing items should not be left unattended in wards or hallways.
- F. Should there be a sizeable donation (\$1,000.00 or more) made to a VA&R Fund from a specific individual or family, the family will be consulted prior to the expenditure, to concur that the purchase is in line with their designated use of the donation(s).

Mileage

- A. Mileage reported for reimbursement must be the actual miles driven by the Representative/ Deputy using her personal vehicle. Sharing of rides will not constitute mileage reimbursement for both individuals.
- B. Mileage reimbursement is available for one (1) trip per week to perform volunteer work at the hospital/clinic. Mileage requests are also permitted for the quarterly VAVS meeting if it does not fall on the regularly scheduled volunteer day. This must be requested on the mileage report.
- C. Additional mileage reimbursement may be requested. This would include shopping for the Christmas gift shops/Christmas parties and special occasions when the VAVS Chief requests the presence of an ALA Representative and/or Deputy at an event. Reimbursement would have to be approved by the VA&R Chairman and Finance Chairman.
- D. The VAVS Representatives will include **ALL monthly mileage** of the Reps and/or Dps on their report to the VA&R Chairman for the National report and put the total mileage amount **requested for reimbursement**, on the monthly VAMC/Clinic Report form.

Monthly Reports

- A. If you are mailing in your reports, please make three copies, one for the Department Treasurer, one for the VA&R Chairman and one for your file.
- B. Your report to the VA&R Chairman should include total mileage for the “reps and/or deps” (not just for reimbursement), total number of veterans served, total number of volunteers including their affiliation and total number of volunteer hours.
- C. Reports must be received, no later than the 10th of the month, at Department Headquarters and by the VA&R Chairman. A fax or e-mail may be sent, but original documents, including canceled checks and deposit slips, must be mailed monthly to the Department Treasurer for audit purposes.
- D. The monthly report to the Department Treasurer shall include the actual receipt(s) for each check written with the number of the check on the receipt. Please note any void checks on your report and include the void check(s) as a part of your report.
- E. All donations must be listed on both the Hospital and Clinic reports. This includes clothes, food, etc.
- F. The monthly report should include the list of volunteer hours served for that month. Printouts for the hours given to the ALA are available at the Volunteer Service office. Please comply with the wishes of the VAMC and convert it to the computerized system (VS26), if that is what they are using.

G. **Clinic hours worked by Hospital reps, are to be included on the hospital hours report.** Exception: Longview Clinic hours need to be reported on the monthly report form, as Louisiana does not provide Texas with the number of volunteers and hours worked.

Audit

- A. The fiscal year ends August 31. Bank statements should be sent to the Department Treasurer monthly; therefore, there is no need to send any other records to Department for audit, unless requested.
- B. If a Representative and/or authorized Deputy resigns, it is her/their responsibility to have her name removed from the signature card and the new Representative/authorized Deputy's name placed on the account via a new/amended bank signature card. A copy of this updated signature(s) card will be forwarded to Department Headquarters immediately for file, audit, and information purposes.
- C. It will be the prerogative of the Department President, Secretary and/or Treasurer, to request that all materials and funds be returned to Department Headquarters, if necessary.
- D. Failure of the Hospital Representative to turn in monthly reports and any other requested items will result in the Hospital's checking account being frozen and unavailable for use.

Special Projects or Holidays

- A. Any Special Project/Holiday suggested or initiated by the Volunteer Service Office, including funding, shall be cleared through the American Legion Auxiliary VA&R Chairman and the Department President before adoption by a Hospital Representative.
- B. These approved Holiday Projects should be funded by unit contributions, however, if funds are needed, the "Request for Reimbursement/ Funds" form must be filled out and sent to the Department Treasurer and Department VA&R Chairman for approval.

Volunteer Hours

The Representative should maintain an accurate current file on all regularly scheduled and occasional volunteers. She should also keep a record of hours independent of the Hospital's computerized record (VS26).

Honor Bar Certification for VAVS Volunteers

- A. Upon receipt of certification, National will send the appropriate bars to designated Departments Representatives.
- B. Volunteers are recognized when specific hour milestones are reached. 50, 100, 300, 500 and 1000. After 1000, bars are earned in 1000-hour increments.

- C. After 30,000 hours, the volunteer is awarded a lifetime bar. Course and/or studying the Guide for Volunteers, is entered in the “first date” space.
- D. Representatives will submit cards requesting “Hour Certificates.” A copy of this information shall be sent to the Department VA&R Chairman, giving names and number of hours each Volunteer is eligible to receive.
- E. The Department of Texas will purchase Hour Bar Pins if funds are available.

Orientation Courses

- A. Each VA facility requires regularly scheduled VAVS Representatives and Deputies to complete an orientation program. Fingerprints, background check and tb test may also be required. This does not apply to Occasional Volunteers.
- B. The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas, requires all appointed VAVS Representatives and Deputies to attend training every other year. Any rep and/or dep, which has not attended training in more than two years, may be removed as an appointee. **This is mandatory.**

VAVS Quarterly Meetings

- A. The Representative and/or Deputy shall attend the quarterly meetings on a regular basis. If the Representative is unable to attend, she shall notify her Deputy to be in attendance. **This is a mandatory meeting.** Failure of the ALA Representative to attend these meetings will force the hospital to remove the volunteer.
- B. Copies of the VAVS minutes are sent to, Department Headquarters and the Department VA&R Chairman
- C. The Annual Joint Review form is to be completed with the Director of Volunteer Services each November or other month designated by the hospital.

Annual Reports

- A. Each Hospital and Clinic Representative will need to prepare a written narrative report for the yearend report. Check the Program Engagement Plan for due dates.
- B. Each Representative must also write a narrative for publication in the Department Book of Reports, outlining the activities that took place from April 1 of the prior year to March 31 of the current year. Check the Program Engagement Plan for due dates and instructions.

Injuries

- A. Any injury occurring during volunteer hours at the facility (hospital/clinic) must be reported immediately to the VAVS Chief.
- B. The ALA Representative shall make certain that all volunteers are instructed to report any injuries they might receive while volunteering at a VAMC/CBOC, BEFORE they leave the facility.
- C. If an injury is not previously reported, no claim may be made, even though complication(s) may develop.

Locker/ Storage Access

- A. The Representative, one Deputy, and the Hospital Chief of Volunteer Services shall have a key to the ALA locker.
- B. The Deputy shall have access to all ALA records, donated or purchased items, etc., for her to function effectively on her days at the VAMC/Clinic.

Miscellaneous

- A. **The Representative is expected to train her Deputy** so the Deputy may perform in her absence.
- B. The VA&R Guidelines/Policies should always be kept on hospital/clinic premises and available for the Reps and/or Dep's use, so proper paperwork and procedures are followed.

Discipline

- A. Volunteers must report any incidents of inappropriate behavior by another American Legion Auxiliary volunteer to the VAVS Chief **and** the VA&R Chairman immediately.
- B. All allegations of bad behavior and/or incidents should be documented and mailed or emailed to the VAVS Chief **and** the VA&R Chairman, so there is a written record of the allegations. If it is mailed, a return receipt is suggested.
- C. At no time, should an American Legion Auxiliary volunteer attempt to supersede the authority of the VA&R Chairman by contacting the Department President first.
- D. At no time should an American Legion Auxiliary volunteer attempt to supersede the authority of the Chief of Volunteer Services by contacting their supervisor or the Hospital Director.
- E. At no time, should an American Legion Auxiliary volunteer contact the National organization.

- F. Failure to follow this reporting policy will result in a written reprimand or possible removal.
- G. The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas, cannot and will not tolerate unprofessional behavior from our volunteers. We are guests in these facilities and must maintain and protect the reputation of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Dress and Attitude

- A. It is expected that volunteers, will dress appropriately, always. Reps and/or Deps should try to be “branded” if possible, this means wearing American Legion Auxiliary attire, when appropriate.
- B. Appointed VAVS Representatives and Deputies will adhere to the code of that facility. It is further expected that when “on duty”, volunteers will be pleasant, cordial, helpful and positive.

Professional Behavior

- A. ***Following rules and assignments:*** As a volunteer, you are required to follow instructions and rules given by the authority of the facility. If a Rep and/or Dep is asked to do something they do not agree with, they have a right to refuse the assignment. This action should be documented.
- B. ***Working with veterans/patients, families, VA staff and other volunteers:*** VAVS Appointed Representatives and Deputies, should not publicly criticize the facility in which they volunteer. If there is a reason for criticism, it must be brought to the attention of the appropriate person, privately.
- C. ***Compensation discussion:*** It is never appropriate to discuss pension or compensation issues with a veteran/patient. That individual should be referred to the appropriate resource personnel, who is trained to respond to those types of questions. American Legion service officers are trained to assist veterans with these types of issues.

American Legion Auxiliary Veterans' Affairs & Rehabilitation Code of Ethics

The ALA has adopted a code of ethics to guide the VAVS while serving in their communities. This code is meant not only to protect veterans and their families, but also to protect volunteers and the integrity of the service programs.

Compassion, Dignity, and Respect: As a volunteer, your main purpose is to make sure that all veterans and service members are treated with compassion, dignity, and respect they have earned and deserved. This includes but is not limited to engaging in thoughtful conversations as well as listening without judgement.

Engaging in thoughtful conversation: Do not bring up topics related to a veteran or service member's experiences during war (i.e., shootings, missions, or loss of other service members). These topics will surface after you have

had time to build trust and should come only from the veteran or service member initiating the conversation. No veteran or service member should ever be put on the spot to discuss details of his or her military service.

Listen without judgement: As a volunteer, it is important that you listen without judgement. Sometimes, these conversations can be difficult to understand. Listen with an open heart and allow the veteran or service member to talk for as long as he or she wishes.

Remember: As a volunteer, it is not your job to counsel or offer advice to the service member, veteran, or family member.

Confidentiality: All information concerning a veteran, patient, staff person or other volunteer and the record of treatment or service is to be kept confidential and shared with no one. Consider familiarizing yourself with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), which protects the rights of individuals in a healthcare setting.

Revised September 2019 – Candy Zavala Chairman

Revised September 2022 – Beverly Sloan Chairman

No Revise September 2023 – Robbi Scott

No Revise September 2024 – MaryAnn Paul

Revised September 2025 – Brenda Towers