

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE



National VAVS Program Manual

Guidelines for Marine Corps League

Local VA Hospital Representatives and

Volunteers

INTRODUCTION

Semper Fidelis: Always Faithful

It is not a simple motto, but a symbol of the lifelong commitment held by every Marine, regardless of when we are still in uniforms or when we take them off. Marines always take care of one another.

By participating in the Department of Veterans Affairs' Volunteer Service (VAVS) program, administered under the Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE), Marine Corps League (MCL) members can continue to serve fellow Marines and other veterans across the country at VA medical centers and facilities.

This manual provides clear guidance and structure for any MCL member who accepts the role and responsibilities of serving as a MCL VAVS/CDCE Representative at their local VA medical centers. By serving in this role, you will be expected to go extra **MILE**- Motivate others through your selfless actions, Inspire spirit of volunteerism for next generation, Lead with integrity, and Engage every veteran, staff, and other volunteers with respect and professionalism as a proud United States Marine.

Same Team, New Mission.

Bob Borka
National Executive Director

1. CDCE/VAVS PROGRAM

Since 1946, the Marine Corps League has participated in the VAVS program and has donated over 100,000 hours every year. Based on the federal value of volunteer hour at \$34.79 (2024), MCL volunteers are making an impact of more than \$3.4 million every year at local VA healthcare facilities.

To continue this momentum, MCL needs collaboration between the Department and Detachment and ensure MCL has representation in as many VA facilities as possible. We must continue to recruit new volunteers, motivate current volunteers and empower all volunteers to live the values of Honor, Courage and Commitment, serving with the same pride, discipline and selflessness that etched in every Marine. When public at the VA hospitals sees our volunteers, they should see the presence of proud Marines and they will be more interested in knowing our missions of preserving the Marine Corps values and traditions and eventually decided to join our ranks.

Therefore, it is crucial for each Department and Detachment to ensure MCL is represented at every local VA facility. It not only allows us to serve fellow veterans but also strengthens our reputation as a trusted partner within the community.

A. MCL CDCE/VAVS PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Detachment Level

The Detachment Commandant shall recruit and recommend volunteers to serve as VAVS Representatives in their local VA healthcare facilities. The Commandant is also responsible for coordinating and producing volunteers to participate in events and activities at the local VA healthcare facilities to ensure visibility and brand awareness of MCL at the local veterans community.

Department Level

The Department Commandant shall appoint a Department VAVS Program Liaison to serve as the link between Detachments and the Division. This Liaison coordinates volunteer efforts, assists VAVS Representatives within the Departments with reporting of volunteer hours, distributes VAVS information throughout the Department, and facilitate state-level event participation.

Division Level

National Vice Commandants of each Division shall appoint a Division VAVS Representative to ensure cooperation among the volunteers, local VAVS Representatives, Detachments and MCL members. Division VAVS Representatives should work with Department Program Liaisons to urge each Detachment to participate in the VAVS Program and serve as MCL VAVS Representative at their local VA facilities.

Division VAVS Representative shall also work with Departments and Detachments to solicit VAVS Representative nomination and transmit to National Certifying Official for approval.

National Level

National Director of Veterans Service (NDVS) is employed by the National Office of the MCL. The NDVS is responsible for overseeing all Department of Veterans Affairs activities of the MCL. The NDVS is also the certifying official of all VAVS Representatives for CDCE.

National Certifying Official is responsible for certifying to the VA medical center Directors the names of VAVS Representatives, selected by Detachment and recommended by Division, to serve as medical center VAVS Representative.

National VAVS Representative is responsible for maintaining ongoing communication with VA CDCE staff to stay current on changes in policies and procedures related to the program. They shall promote the objectives of the VAVS program and encourage participation among constituent departments, detachments, and subsidiary units within their local VA facilities.

The Representative receives recommendations from Detachments and Departments regarding members willing to serve and submits requests for VAVS certification for required representatives and deputies as appropriate. They provide written guidance and instructions to Division, Department and Detachment VAVS Representatives and volunteers, establish standards for required reports, and compile comprehensive VAVS activity reports from participating units for submission to the National Board of Trustees (BOT) and VA.

Each Division will be asked to assign a VAVS representative to serve as liaison to its departments and detachments, and the National VAVS Representative will supply training materials, track and follow up on each Division's volunteer hours prior to Convention, and work with division liaisons and the CDCE/VAVS Committee Chair to select recipients of the MCL VAVS awards in accordance with Enclosure 4 of the *National Administrative Procedures*. An annual report shall be submitted to the National BOT for each National Convention. The Representative shall also attend the VA's annual VAVS National Advisory Committee meetings for participating in organizations' representatives and deputies, within the approved budget.

B. Donation

All gifts and donations to VA facilities are received and recorded through VA Voluntary Service Office. To ensure proper documentation and acknowledgment, each contribution should include the donor's name, address, and organizational affiliation.

Monetary donations are deposited into the appropriate General Post Fund (GPF) accounts, which support patient activities and needs not covered by the VA budget. If a donor does not specify a purpose, Voluntary Service staff will distribute the funds at their discretion among accounts that best support patient needs.

A list of needed items is available from Voluntary Service upon request. National Headquarters cannot provide monetary benefits for participation in the VAVS program or reimburse expenses incurred while performing representative duties. Departments or Detachments may allocate funds from their own budgets or fundraising efforts for use within VAVS. Ideally, the VAVS representative should remain aware of the level of financial support the Marine Corps League can commit while carrying out their duties.

C. VAVS Advisory Committee

The MCL is a member of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC), which provides strategic guidance to the VA on volunteer program operations.

NAC responsibilities include:

- Promoting the VAVS Program at national and local levels.
- Communicating VA policy updates to member organizations.
- Advising VA on volunteerism and improving veteran support.

The NAC includes:

- One National MCL Representative
- Up to two National Deputy Representatives
- Additional deputies when justified

Each VA facility convenes a VAVS Committee composed of certified Representatives and Deputies from all affiliated organizations.

The committee:

- Advises on volunteer program coordination.
- Shares policy updates.
- Supports the planning of VA activities and volunteer needs.
- Reviews facility-level volunteer statistics and operational issues.

2. MCL VOLUNTEERS

A. General Roles for Volunteers

Volunteers provide veteran patients with meaningful, healthy interactions that help support recovery. MCL Volunteers deliver a personal service that paid VA staff cannot fully provide. MCL volunteers can contribute in many important ways throughout VA health care facilities, including:

- Escorting patients to and from clinics or labs

- Assisting with preparation and motivation activities in physical therapy
- Serving as activity leaders, assistants, instructors, or guest presenters in recreation programs
- Supporting patient socialization and therapeutic activities
- Coordinating MCL volunteer participation for special events
- Leading or assisting with educational therapy discussions
- Helping with magazine carts, library circulation, and materials processing
- Serving as receptionists at information desks
- Supporting chapel services as escorts, ushers, organists, or vocalists
- Preparing displays and helping patients select menus in nutrition and food services
- Providing resources or social interaction for patients in occupational therapy

MCL members interested in volunteering should contact the local Department Commandant or, if applicable, the MCL VAVS Representative at the nearest VA health care facility to learn more about available opportunities.

B. Types of Volunteers

Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers are individuals who in a regularly scheduled assignment under VA Staff supervision. The services of VAVS volunteers are to supplement the work and duties of a VA staff member, and MAY NOT replace a compensated VA employee.

To officially become an RS volunteer, an application should first contact local MCL Detachment or MCL VAVS Representative at the VA hospital for opportunities of participation at the local VA facility. They can also contact the CDCE/Voluntary Service Office at the local VA Medical Center. The volunteer must keep in mind to inform the local VA CDCE/Volunteer Service Office to credit their time to MCL in order to be considered as MCL Volunteer.

The volunteer will then have a VA-led orientation, which includes an interview and, in some cases, a medical examination (at no expense to the volunteer). The MCL VAVS Representative will discuss with the volunteer to assess their interest and skills in order to properly identify the best placement and work with VA CDCE/Volunteer Service program manager to find the best fit for the volunteer.

Upon completion of the orientation, the volunteer will be officially recognized as a MCL Volunteer.

Occasional volunteers are those individuals serving under the VAVS Program who do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers. Other than copies of the very

necessary “Occasional Volunteer” Time Sheets, no individual records will be maintained on occasional volunteers.

C. Volunteer Benefits

Marine Corps League volunteers serving through the VAVS Program are considered “without compensation” (WOC) employees of the VA for the purposes described below. The following benefits and services may be provided to Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers in accordance with VA policy.

Meals: RS volunteers may receive meals at no cost when their scheduled assignment is **at least four (4) hours**, and/or the value of the volunteer service is commensurate with the value of the meal.

Meals for non-RS volunteers may be provided at the discretion of the VA Facility Director when the service rendered benefits VA operations or patient care.

Parking: Some VA facilities provide **free parking** for RS volunteers.

Medical Treatment and Health Services: As WOC employees, volunteers are eligible for certain health services as outlined in VA Handbook 5019:

- *Physical Examinations:*
New volunteers who normally do not require a physical may receive one at no cost if necessary for patient or volunteer safety, or if required for the volunteer position.
- *Injury Treatment:*
Emergency outpatient treatment will be provided at no cost for injuries sustained while performing assigned volunteer duties.
- *Tuberculosis Screening / Infection Control:*
TB testing, chest X-rays, and other infection control procedures will be provided at no cost to RS volunteers when required.
- *Preventive Health Services:*
Volunteers may receive locally authorized employee wellness services such as cholesterol checks, blood pressure screenings, and flu vaccinations.

Injury Compensation: All volunteers are considered employees for purposes of federal injury compensation laws (5 U.S.C., Chapter 81). Volunteers injured in the performance of assigned duties are eligible for medical services authorized by the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (OWCP), additional employee-authorized facilities and services as permitted locally

Volunteer ID Card: All VA facilities will issue official identification to RS volunteers. Facilities are encouraged to provide smocks, vests, or jackets to clearly identify volunteers while serving.

D. Uniforms and Apparel

MCL volunteers are *encouraged* to wear MCL polos or any other appropriate uniform authorized under National Administrative Procedures Enclosure 3, if they do not interfere with any required uniforms such as the Red Vest.

Volunteers are expected to keep themselves neat, clean, and well-groomed while working and should display their volunteer ID badges must be worn at all times. MCL volunteers should comply with local VA policies including footwear and clothing. Clothes should be conservative in nature.

Clothes should not present a provocative image or exposure of one's body that can be considered distasteful or create an unpleasant atmosphere for the patients, volunteers, or hospital staff. No article of clothing shall include inappropriate illustrations or inappropriate advertising. At no time MCL volunteers are allowed to wear accessories with political slogan along with their MCL polos or uniforms. Examples of inappropriate slogans, illustrations and advertising include clothing that promotes or displays a political figure's face or campaign slogan, use of alcohol, tobacco products, illegal drugs, or might be degrading to individuals based on sex, age, race, national origin, or sexual orientation.

3. VAVS Representatives

A. Role & Responsibilities of the VAVS Representative

The VAVS Representative is the official liaison between the Marine Corps League and the VA facility. This role carries significant responsibility and requires professionalism, proactive communication, and consistent engagement.

The Representative shall:

- Complete initial orientation with the local CDCE/VAVS Program Manager within 30 days upon appointment and ensure official registration to receive all notices, minutes, and program updates.
- Maintain accurate contact information by immediately reporting any changes in address, phone number, or email to both the CDCE/VAVS Office and the MCL National VAVS Representative.
- Serve as the primary point of contact between the VA facility and all MCL Detachments within a reasonable geographic radius, ensuring timely distribution of all VAVS information, announcements, needs, and policy updates.
- Attend all quarterly VAVS Committee meetings. If unable to attend, the Representative must designate a certified Deputy Representative to attend on behalf of the Marine Corps League. A Representative who misses **three (3)** consecutive VAVS meetings without Deputy coverage may risk losing certification.
- Participate annually in the VA's Annual Joint Review (AJR) with the CDCE/VAVS Program Manager and ensure all MCL activity is accurately reflected.

- Identify and communicate facility needs including volunteers, patient support, and resource requirements to nearby Detachments and work with Detachments to actively recruit volunteers to meet those needs.
- Monitor MCL volunteer participation, including:
 - Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers
 - Occasional volunteers
 - Monthly and quarterly volunteer hour totals
 - Donations, gifts, and other contributions
- Review and verify the accuracy of volunteer hour reports provided by the VA facility and ensure volunteers are correctly recording their hours.
- Recommend volunteers for recognition at the Detachment, Department, Division, and National levels based on service hours, VA awards, and exceptional contributions.
- Maintain organized records of volunteer hours, donations, and all MCL VAVS activity for accurate reporting and annual review. Deputies should be utilized to support these responsibilities as needed.

B. Role & Responsibilities of the Deputy Representative

Deputy Representatives are partners to the Representative, not assistants. They must maintain the same level of readiness and knowledge as the Representative.

Deputies shall:

- Attend all VAVS quarterly meetings when possible.
- Assist in completing the Annual Joint Review.
- Support volunteer recruitment and coordination.
- Learn and be capable of performing all Representative duties.
- Cover meetings and responsibilities in the Representative's absence.

Each newly appointed Deputy must meet with the local CDCE/VAVS Program Manager for orientation and be officially registered in the VA's volunteer management system within 30 days of appointment.

C. Becoming a MCL VAVS Representative

Serving as a VAVS Representative on VA facility's advisory committee is a highly visible and demanding role. Thus, it is essential to ensure individuals seeking to become a Representative or Deputy represent the Marine Corps League and the United States Marines as well. Specifically, VAVS Representatives and Deputies are expected to have following basic qualifications:

- Be available to attend the VAVS committee meetings regularly, participate in VAVS committee activities, and a genuine interest in the welfare of veterans.

- Be able to represent and support the local veteran community and the members of the MCL Detachment.
- Knowledge of the policies, organizational structure, operational procedures of VAVS/CDCE and MCL National Organization.
- Ability to comprehend and explain to the members of the Detachment on VAVS program, the need for volunteers and the role of MCL in aiding and carrying out the purposes and attaining the objectives of the VAVS program.
- Be able to engage energetically in all aspects of participation in the VAVS program.
- Have the character and reputation to act as MCL representative on VA the medical center VAVS committee.

Detachment Commandant should arrange a meeting with the interested individuals and local CDCE/VAVS Program Manager to review details of the responsibilities serving on the VAVS committee and as Representatives/Deputies.

To recommend the individual, Detachment Commandant must fill out National VAVS Representatives Certification Form, available under the “member library” section of the MCL Website at www.MCLeague.org. This form may also be used to add, change or update contact information for the VAVS Representative.

Once MCL National Certifying Official has approved, a letter of certification will be sent to the Chief of the local CDCE/VAVS office and copy the newly appointed VAVS Representative/Deputy, Detachment Commandant, Department Commandant and Division VAVS Representative.

D. Termination of Representative/Deputy Status

All VAVS Representatives are appointed on a two(2)- years term. Renewal of certification is not automatic. During the term, the Representative may be terminated for unsatisfactory performance, including but not limited to:

- Poor attendance at VAVS meetings
- Accepted employment from VA
- Failure to complete AJR
- Lack of engagement with VA staff and/or veteran
- Discredit the Marine Corps League or the Marine Corps
- Failure to comply, or refusal to perform, any duties or responsibilities as defined by MCL National HQ.

E. Annual Joint Review (AJR)

The AJR is an annual performance review between the VAVS Representative/Deputy and the CDCE/VAVS Program Manager.

The purpose of AJR is to conduct an annual inventory of MCL's participation in the VAVS program and to develop goals for the next fiscal year. Once the AJR is completed, it will be sent to the MCL National Representative for record. It is part of the responsibility of VAVS Representatives to collaborate with the VA leadership to ensure the AJR is done in a timely manner.

4. Recognition & Awards

Recognition of volunteers is a vital part of the MCL's commitment to service. Both VA and MCL have programs recognizing volunteers participating in the VAVS program.

A. Department of Veterans Affairs Awards

The Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) annually presents the **NAC Volunteer of the Year Award** to one (1) outstanding volunteer whose service has made a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of Veterans. This prestigious recognition honors an individual who has demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and compassion through an approved VA volunteer assignment providing service that goes above and beyond in support of those who have served our nation.

MCL National Representative nominates candidate for this award on behalf of MCL. To be nominated, eligible individuals must be regularly scheduled (RS) volunteers and must meet *at least one* of the following requirements:

- Volunteering with hospitalized Veterans
- Supporting Veterans at outpatient clinics
- Assisting Veterans in Community Living Centers or inpatient residential units
- Volunteering with Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Working with Veterans or Veteran groups in community settings
- Hosting VAVS-approved Veteran functions at a Detachment, Department, Lodge, Post, or Chapter
- Hosting Veteran events in the community (fishing trips, sporting events, outings, etc.) approved as VAVS assignments
- Visiting homebound Veterans as a VAVS assignment
- Participating in or facilitating Adopt-A-Veteran programs

At the local level, VA medical centers also host an **annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony** (typically April/May) to honor volunteers based on their cumulative service hours.

B. Marine Corps League National Awards

Each year, **the MCL National VAVS Award** is presented to (1) outstanding MCL Volunteer who donated most volunteer hours in previous Fiscal Year and made an impact on the lives of ill and injured veterans through the VAVS program. This award is given based on the VA healthcare facility Volunteer Service program manager recommendation and the total hours volunteered according to the CDCE National Volunteer Report. The recipient will be notified by the end of the year, and the award will be presented in the following year. *The recipient will also be recommended by National VAVS Representative for NAC Volunteer of the Year Award.*

Additionally, National/Division/Department/Detachment Commandants can award **CDCE Service Ribbon** to VAVS Representatives and Deputies, provided the VAVS Representatives and Deputies have met the criteria set forth in the National Administrative Procedures.

The National VAVS Committee may also issue **Certificate of Merit** to honor and express appreciation for volunteers whose dedication, performance, and contributions to veterans and VA facilities are of great significance that formal acknowledgment is appropriate, while they do not meet the other established award criteria.

Acronym	Meaning
VAVS	Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service
CDCE	Center for Development and Civic Engagement
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VAMC	VA Medical Center
CBOC	Community Based Outpatient Clinic
VISN	Veterans Integrated Service Network
RS	Regularly Scheduled Volunteer
AJR	Annual Joint Review
NAC	National Advisory Committee