



# CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INC.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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## 2023 – 2024 Welfare Officer Program

Point of Contact

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**From: Ann Maire Puck, National Welfare Officer**

**To: Commanders and Welfare Officers; ALL ECHELONS**

When our founder Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Higgins of Astoria, NY, formed the Post 1 of the Catholic War Veterans and sought the blessing of Pope Pius XI, his first order for the organization was to actively support the good and welfare of our nation. Second, as a WWI veteran he wanted to ensure that the primary focus of our efforts was to put into action the famous words of President Abraham Lincoln:

***"To care for those who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."***

It is the responsibility of all Catholic War Veterans Welfare Officers to organize and provide service to all veterans and, their families. This is to be done, without regard to a veteran's faith affiliation, whether that veteran is on Active duty, Retired, or in a Reserve or National Guard unit. A Welfare Officer should use resources available from the Post, Chapter, or Department Service Officer, the Veterans Administration, and other agencies when and wherever appropriate. Welfare Officers should find their inspiration and calling through various teachings in the Catholic Church, the Gospel, and the lives of Saints.

Today, the CWV keeps faith with this mandate of our Founder through the free services of our National and Local VA Service Officers to our members and other veterans who request assistance in preparing and defending claims for VA benefits. As a Welfare Officer there are many ways that you can help fulfill our Founder's vision such as providing volunteers for VA Medical Centers, transportation, hosting parties, provide food and clothing to the less fortunate, prayers and Masses.

Understanding that the calling and responsibility of the Welfare Officer is forever changing, so too, are the need for different kinds of care necessary for each veteran and family member. The Welfare Officer should be open to the different ways and graces received from various resources mentioned above and encouraged by the faith of many blessed persons and Saints who have ministered to the military and veterans, their family and others surrounding the veteran and his or her family within their community.

## **I. VOLUNTEER AND ASSISTANCE**

### **• VA Medical Center**

The Gospel reminds us “*...whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me....*” Assist in the everyday welfare of our veterans, and veteran family members at VA Medical Centers. Volunteer at an Information desk to welcome and provide assistance/directions to clinics and other offices; Volunteer to distribute coffee, popcorn, other snack items; Volunteer to take patients by wheelchair to clinics; Provide (purchase, donate) items on the VA Medical Centers “Wish List”; Provide transportation to and from the Medical Center for patients.

### **• VAVS-Outpatient Clinic**

Assist veterans that frequent VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics by providing transportation to and from the clinic; help the veteran, and/or family member navigate the appointment process; Assist veterans and family members to use the electronic kiosks to sign in; Help with forms and give pamphlets to veterans or their family members; Donate magazines.

### **• VA Parties for Patients, Residents, Military Welcoming Home Activities**

We are prayerfully reminded of President Lincoln’s admonition “*to care for those who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan*” in service to their country. Participate in welcoming veterans home after deployments; Provide activities to help them adjust in their communities; Work with the VAVS Director for opportunities to host parties at VA hospitals, nursing homes or hospices, especially during holidays, birthdays and other events in their lives; Make refreshments, cards, games for these parties.

### **• Care Packages**

Celebrate military, National, Catholic holidays, birthdays, and other family events by making or purchasing items for parish military and others stationed overseas (for example - work with “Operation Gratitude” or “Adopt-a-Platoon”). Items such as: cooling towels and scarfs, batteries, chap sticks, gum, candy, cell phones, batteries. Other suggestions can be found on our National website.

- **Greeting/Sympathy Cards**

Participating in activities such as thanking veterans and their families for their service by obtaining cards and posters that convey our appreciation; Making, purchasing, mailing cards to deployed military, those in military schools, sympathy cards for the sick, deceased. In times of sickness, or when a member or military family loses someone to death, offer our hearts and prayers in a timely manner to that veteran or family member by sending a message of hope and healing.

- **Vet Fairs/Stand Downs, Homeless**

We are called to assist veterans by volunteering in activities that provide veteran and community resources at functions where veterans and their families can feel welcomed, honored, respected, and encouraged. Gather VA materials, CWV materials, other resource materials for Vet Fairs, Stand-Downs; Attend, help and/or be a participating organization at Veteran Fairs, Stand downs or other projects for homeless veterans. Refer veterans and/or family members to VSO's (CWV and/or other veteran organizations at Fairs and Stand-downs). Provide a welcoming environment such as a Catholic War Veterans' Post or other veterans community.

- **Referrals to Service**

Officers Welfare Officers should ensure that the best care is given to the veteran or family member asking for help filing a VA Claim and negotiating the VA Health System by referrals to an accredited Service Officer. We have many available within the CWV. These Service Officers keep current on the ever-changing laws, regulations, guidelines of the Veterans Administration (VA), and other agencies that serve the veteran and his or her family.

## **II. SPIRITUAL AND HONORS**

- **Parish Veteran Ministry**

Veterans, their family members, widows of veterans, as well as surviving children, can be served by a Post, or a Post Welfare Officer within a parish. As overall service to veterans and families of the military grows in communities across America, many Dioceses and parishes have undertaken a 'Military Outreach Ministry'. Such ministries have several established outreach veteran services and spiritual ministries beyond existing services in the community veterans, but with important components such as helping the spiritual and mental needs of veterans and their families. Other Veteran Ministry activities can include participating in military ceremonies, Masses, belonging to a Post/Military Honor Guard, in your parish, showing of docudrama of Fr. Capodanno, Military Chaplains Novenas, and fundraising activities; Work with other parishioners and veterans to formulate a parish military veteran ministry, if none exists with other parishioners.

- **Hospice, Nursing Homes/Veteran Homes, Visiting the Sick at Home, & Shut-ins**

Welfare Officers are encouraged to provide necessary volunteer training for Post members to visit veterans, or family members in a VA care facility, a nursing home or Hospice, which could include a veteran's home.

- **Assist Hospital Catholic Chaplains**

Welfare Officers are encouraged to assist the VA and other hospital Catholic Chaplains in the sacramental life of a veteran and their family. This can include taking the veteran to Mass at the VA Hospital, praying with the veteran and family, and if trained, administer Holy Communion. Also serving as ushers, greeters, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and any other assistance that may be required to assist Chaplains in their service to veterans and veteran families.

- **Honor Guard**

Welfare Officers can assist in a Post's Honor Guards presentations - at a deceased veteran's Honor Guard at a funeral or memorial service, a holiday parades or other event. This can be by way of welcoming those in attendance at these events and communicating our gratitude and appreciation to all attending community and Post events.

- **Blue / Gold / Silver Ceremony**

Welfare Officers can assist veterans and their families by recognizing veteran families whose loved ones are serving in the Armed Forces (Blue Star), who are killed in combat (Gold Star) or are combat wounded, ill or injured veterans (Silver). A Post committee formed and/or assisted by a Welfare Officer can accomplish these services by participating in/or being a presenter of a Blue Star or Gold Star Ceremony in your community or parish. CWV members could also be responsible in the acquiring Blue Star, Gold Star Banners, Certificates, and other items associated with this ceremony and recognition.

- **Decorate Graves**

Honor our fellow veterans that have gone before us by decorating graves of veterans and their spouses at Catholic, Veterans, or other secular cemeteries during special times of the year with U.S. Flags and other items deemed appropriate.

### **III. OTHER WELFARE ACTIVITIES**

- **Family / Military / Veterans Support Group**

Welfare Officers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with various community agencies, organizations, and Veteran Administration (VA) support groups available to all veterans and their families, such as: VA peer groups, parish and retreat centers, Catholic Charities, Hidden Heroes.

- **Support for Needy Families**

Catholic War Veterans are encouraged to follow its mission, Gospel message of hope [Mt. 25:32 - following], and by following the lives of Saints by such acts of charity already established in Posts, parishes, and other veteran organizations. Provide materials, have a fund-raiser for (example: Temporary Finance Assistance {TFA}); other VA and/or other Veteran Organization Family Assistance Programs.

- **Community Service**

Welfare Officers should ensure our members are volunteering to provide assistance to a parish, VSO, or other community organization (senior services, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Foodbanks, Meals-on-Wheels, Hot Meal programs, etc.) efforts to provide services for veterans and their families, and the community at large when and wherever necessary with a grateful heart and a Catholic spirit.

The above instructions and guidance for implementing your Welfare Program and filling out the Welfare Report Form are a listing of some examples of assistance in the various areas. It is by no means all-inclusive. Please feel free to include a sheet detailing the activities of your echelon with an explanation of how they relate to Veterans Welfare. We cannot ever do enough in taking care of our veterans and their families. How we do so and the ways we do so vary. Be creative in implementing this program!

Veterans Welfare activity should be monitored and reported. The following pages contain how Veterans Welfare should be reported to higher echelons.

## **REPORTS**

Posts are responsible for submitting two (2) Semi-Annual Post Activities reports. The Welfare Officer should assist in filling out **Section 4 – Veterans Welfare**. Posts wishing to augment their reports with additional detail may do so. The Semi-Annual Report Form can be filled out online through your Post's Admin Website.

**Department and National echelons can view lower echelon reports on their respective Admin website**, but if so desired, a printed hard copy of these Reports may be sent directly to the higher echelon - one copy each to Chapter, one to Department and one to National for each Reporting Period. Reports can be sent as an e-mail attachment.

Please time your reports to arrive at each higher Echelon as follows:

- First Report (covers July 1 - December 31)
  - Post Report to all applicable upper Echelons (Chapter, Dept and National)
  - DUE NO LATER than January 20
- Second Report (Covers January 1- June 30)
  - Post Report to all applicable upper Echelons (Chapter, Dept and National)
  - DUE NO LATER than July 20

Department and Chapter Welfare Officers should also forward a copy of their Annual Welfare Report rendered to delegates at their Convention, immediately thereafter, to the National Welfare Officer.

Questions and direct comments from all echelons are most welcome about the Welfare Officer Program and Report Form. Together we can make a difference!

National Welfare Officer's point of contact information is found at the top of this document.

### † *Servant of God Fr. Vincent R. Capodanno Award*

This award recognizes the exemplary service in the area under *Spiritual & Honors* categories of + activities.

### † *St. Oscar Romero Voice of the Voiceless Award*

This award recognizes the exemplary service in the area under the *Volunteer & Assistance* and the *Other Welfare Activities* categories of activities