



COMMUNITY SERVICE GUIDELINES

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service, as defined by the National Community Service Trust Act, encompasses "any human act serving the common good; in the interest of the community". Elsewhere, community service is further defined as " a service that is performed for the benefit of the public or its institutions".

The VFW subscribes to the above, but adds that for the purpose of volunteer recognition, **VFW Community Service must be performed by and as a representative of the VFW for an organization outside of the VFW and its Auxiliaries**, and must be verified by an authorized representative of that organization.

As it is the intent of VFW community service to impact a broad spectrum of the local community, credit will only be given for a maximum of 1,000 hours to any single organization within a 12 month period.

In addition, **efforts performed for the benefit of the Post or Auxiliary should NOT be considered community service**. Examples would be maintenance, upkeep or beautification of the Post home, **cooking or serving a meal for a Post fundraiser**, or working on bingo night. Additionally, efforts that are part of the normal requirements of a Post or Auxiliary would not be considered community service. Examples of this would be providing an honor guard for a member's funeral, flying the American flag, and conducting Flag retirement programs (unless this is performed for the entire community).

Here are just a few examples of valid community service activities:

- hosting a welcome home party for a military unit at the Post and providing a free meal to those attendees.
- driving a fellow veteran to the local VA facility.
- building a handicap ramp for a veteran
- delivering meals to a shut in
- hosting a Quilts of Valor ceremony and providing meals to veterans and family attendees
- serving on a town committee to help plan Memorial and/or Independence Day activities
- Placing flags on graves for Memorial Day

WHAT IS NOT COMMUNITY SERVICE

A particularly controversial area in VFW community service is service to one's church. Generally, these efforts are NOT considered community service for two reasons: 1) they are not performed for the community at large, and 2) they are part of an individual's service to their faith and not to the VFW. The exception to this would be performing the same service for all the churches, etc. in a given community.

Examples of reports that cannot be approved:

- Passing out Buddy Poppies
- Hours working on a fundraiser
- Serving meals at the Post to members or guests when there is a charge for those meals
- Flying the flag at home and at the Post
- Mowing the lawn at the Post
- Putting on a breakfast for Post members.
- Providing Post facilities for a pool tournament

WHY REPORTING IS IMPORTANT

At the end of each reporting year, VFW national reports the number of hours and the monetary value of all of our donated time and money to Congress. These total numbers demonstrate the importance of the VFW to our government, the savings we provide to the government and the Veterans Administration, and why we should continue to maintain our tax exempt status.

WHY REPORTS MUST BE "HONEST AND ACCURATE"

The VFW is always susceptible to an audit by the Internal Revenue Service. Reports that are inflated or are not within report guidelines can jeopardize our tax-exempt status. Your Department Community Service Chairman is the sole approving authority for all reports.

WHAT TO DO AT POST LEVEL

Every Post should have a Community Service (CS) chairman who will be the only comrade designated to complete the Post's CS reports via the vfwsc.org website. Log in at "Members Only", enter your Member ID number and Password, then click on "Program Reporting". The blank report is there for you to complete. **PLEASE PROVIDE A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF EACH ACTIVITY AND EXPLAIN HOW IT MEETS THE CATEGORY THAT YOU HAVE SELECTED. The categories are explained on the website just above the Program Reporting link.**

Keep Individual Community Service Report forms on hand at your Post for your members to complete and leave for your Post Community Service chairman. Some posts maintain a binder with blank forms for comrades to take home and complete. Some posts put the **Community Service Report Form for Individual Comrades** on their post web site. Comrades can then download their report forms directly from the website, complete the report form, and send it electronically or physically return the report to the Post for the chairman to review.

The chairman should consolidate reports at the Post level. He/she **should also gather reports from your Post's Auxiliary President and report Auxiliary hours, miles, money along with the Post's reports on the VFWSC.org website.**

Chairmen should try to send reports in AS THEY OCCUR or, at least, on a monthly basis.

WHAT TO DO:

Think "CUMULATIVE" when you submit reports for your Post. IF 5 comrades worked to install a handicap ramp on a veteran's home and it took 2 hours for EACH of the comrades, the CUMULATIVE TOTAL for your report is 10 HOURS. Enter "10" in the HOURS block.

And don't forget the mileage for EACH comrade to get there and back! Enter that in the MILES block.

SAFETY REPORTS

Every Post should make Safety an agenda item at each meeting. Make sure you report it. If the safety briefing took 3 minutes, just multiply 3 minutes times the 20 members attending to get 1 hour. Enter 1 hour on the report. If it took 4 minutes, 4 times 20 equals 80 minutes. Change to a decimal and enter 1.33 hours. (**think "cumulative"**)

WHAT NOT TO DO

Do not "double report". Don't report the same activity under more than one category and claim the dollars, miles, comrades and hours again and again.

Example: your Post marches in the local parade (which would be **Americanism**) and invites the local Scout organization to participate (which would be **Youth Activities**). You had 10 comrades march in the parade and the parade lasted three hours. Report 30 hours, 10 members, and the mileage for each of the 10 comrades under Americanism.

BUT HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send a different report for the Youth Activity but DO NOT INCLUDE HOURS, COMRADES, MONEY, MILEAGE etc. again. The post will get credit for a Youth Activity. But don't include the hours, money, mileage as That would be double reporting if you claimed those hours again.

Categories of Community Service for Reporting :

- **COMMUNITY SERVICE** includes any activities within your community which help to benefit the community, school, parks, recycling, neighborhood cleanings, etc.
- **AID TO OTHERS** is self-explanatory. Taking a hot meal to a veteran who can't get out is an example.
- **AMERICANISM/CITIZEN EDUCATION** is simply taking the time to teach someone about flag etiquette, the Constitution, military service, etc.
- **YOUTH PROGRAMS** include the annual Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, Scout of the Year Program, etc.
- **YOUTH ACTIVITIES** - Posts and Auxiliaries are encouraged to provide youth programs within the community such as Athletics, Scouting, Contests, Education, Recognition, etc.
- **SAFETY** - Pedestrian, Drug Awareness, Recreational, Highway, Home/Fire, etc.
- **MILITARY SERVICE** - Any support given to a unit, an individual family member, ceremonies, welcome home, upLink, Unmet Needs, USO, etc.