



DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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“NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS”

What Services We Provide?



- Service-Connected Disability
- Non-Service-Connected Pension
- Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) (Surviving Spouse)
- Death Benefits (Surviving Spouse)
- Individual Unemployability
- Increase on Service Connection claims
- Aid & Attendance & Housebound
- Temporary 100% compensation on service-connected surgery
- Filing Appeals
- Representation for Veteran at Appeals Hearing Both Locally and at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Front of a Judge in DC
- Outreach-(TAP, VA Claims Clinics, Communities, VFW Districts and Posts)
- Assist Veterans in Need

VFW Membership is Not Required to Receive our Services

Representation - How to Know if Someone is Accredited



A searchable list of accredited VSO representatives, agents, and attorneys is available at the VA Office of General Counsel's website:

<http://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>

JJ's OGC Accreditation #: 45376

Nicole's OGC Accreditation #: 51814

Jerri's OGC Accreditation #: 55015

Representation - Why is Accreditation Important?



- Accredited individuals are professionally trained advocates that have completed extensive training and coursework in veteran's benefits and have access to resources that non-accredited individuals do not
- VA accreditation allows organizations and/or individuals the authority to represent veterans before the Department of Veterans Affairs - if you are not accredited, VA will not disclose any information to you about other veterans
- All Department Service Officers, Assistant Department Service Officers, & Claims Consultants who work for the VFW are accredited/Same Training

Representation - Why is Accreditation Important?



- A **“Claims Shark”** is an individual or company that “assists” or “consults” veterans with VA claims even though they are not accredited with VA
- Many of these companies charge fees for their services, sometimes totaling in the tens of thousands of dollars for services that veterans can receive from an accredited representative **FOR FREE**
- These companies have used the pandemic to their advantage, offering fully remote “assistance” and easy to access “one click away buttons” in order to capitalize on the reduced resources available due to VA closures
- The terms “veteran” and/or “military” does not inherently mean the organization represents the best interests of veterans and their families

- VFW Podium Edition (By-Laws)
- **Sec 216 (b)**- “Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees”
- “ The appointed officers of each Post shall consist of at least an Adjutant, Officer of the Day, *Service Officer*, and Guard to be appointed as prescribed in Section 216 in the Manual of Procedure”

What is a Post Service Officer?



- PSO's are local ambassadors of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; each VFW Post has an appointed PSO.
- Many PSO's deliver information about veterans benefits to those who cannot come to them, whether in community centers, nursing homes, places of worship, Vet Centers, or just around town.
- PSO's must be well versed on state and local benefits.
- The knowledge PSO's carry with them can help veterans and their survivors obtain the help they often desperately need.

Role of the Post Service Officer



- Know the VA eligibility rules established by law.
- Provide veterans and survivors basic knowledge about VA benefits.
- Advise veterans to submit all forms to the **DSO or a VFW accredited representative** for completion.
- Keep Post/Members and survivors aware of events, news, and information relevant to local, state, and federal veterans' services and benefits.

What does all that mean? Do's



DO:

- Provide guidance to claimants and assist them in obtaining state and local benefits
- Provide guidance and refer claimants to the DSO for assistance with obtaining VA benefits
- Conduct yourself in a professional manner
- Attend PSO training

What does all that mean? Don'ts



- Request or accept payment or any other form of compensation for the advice/assistance provided
- Take possession of or release a claimant's personal information to anyone other than the DSO or the claimant
- Identify yourself as an accredited representative-you are **NOT** a VSO
- Initiate or participate in unprofessional conduct in the workplace or in public view
- Attempt to represent claimants before the VA in any capacity such as signing forms on behalf of or representing claimants during VA hearings etc.
- Refuse service to claimants unless the claim is clearly fraudulent or there is unprofessional conduct by the claimant (If Dishonorable Discharge refer to our office)

Guide for Post Service Officers



- National Veterans Service publishes the “**VFW GUIDE FOR POST SERVICE OFFICERS**” which provides a quick reference concerning the duties and responsibilities of the position and VA benefits to Post Service Officers.
- The *VFW Manual of Procedure*, Sec. 218, mandates that each Post Service Officer have the latest edition of the *Guide for Post Service Officers*.
- Each Department Service Officer (DSO) shall ensure that all VFW Post, District, and County Council Service Officers in their Department are aware of how to find the most current edition of the VFW Guide.
- The current edition of the VFW Guide can be found on the VFW website under VA Claims & Separation Benefits

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits>

Three new cancer types in the list of presumed service-connected disabilities due to military environmental exposure under the PACT Act

Through a sub-regulatory policy letter published to the Federal Register, the following three cancer types have been included in the list of presumptive diseases:

- Male breast cancer.
- Urethral cancer.
- Cancer of the paraurethral glands.

QUESTIONS?



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