



# Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Volunteer Expectations

*“Over 140,000 volunteers gave more than 11 million hours in service to America's veterans. It is impossible to calculate the amount of caring and sharing that these VAVS volunteers provide to veteran patients. VAVS volunteers are a priceless asset to the nation's veterans and to the Department of Veterans Affairs.”*

— Laura B. Balun, Director of VAVS

As a VAVS volunteer, you should expect to:

- **Serve veterans** who have served you.
- Participate in a program that is **mission-critical** to Veterans Affairs (VA).
- Make a **commitment**. The VAVS system is not generally set up for one-time volunteer opportunities.
- Find a volunteer opportunity to match your **talents and interests**. Times and opportunities vary by facility.
- Participate in a thorough **screening process and orientation** for the safety of VA patients, volunteers and staff. Each VA facility has a unique orientation which must be completed before starting to volunteer. Orientation often includes touring the facility and learning information on patient relations and safety. The full orientation may take a full day, or be split up over multiple days. While orientations differ by facility, you should expect:

**Registration:** VAVS volunteers are registered in the Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package so that they may sign in and out once they start volunteering. The system records volunteer hours for many reasons including crediting organizations for their volunteer's service. Signing in and out also provides protection from lawsuits should something happen during the course of your assignment. Volunteers who are acting under the scope of their assignment are protected by the Federal Tort Claims Act.

**A background check:** This could be as simple as a fingerprint check or as detailed as a full background check. The volunteer's assignment will determine the extent of the process.

**Training on the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPPA):** HIPPA protects veterans' personal information under Federal law, whether that information deals with benefits, health care, etc.

**Health screenings:** To ensure that the veterans, volunteers and staff are safe, each potential volunteer must receive a health screening. The type of screening varies depending on the type of volunteering you are doing and in which VA facility you volunteer, but everyone will receive a tuberculosis test. Check with your local VAVS program for specific requirements.

**Please see the American Legion Auxiliary's *How to Volunteer with Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)* or visit [www.va.gov/volunteer](http://www.va.gov/volunteer) for information on how to volunteer.**