

VA Outreach Toolkit: 10 Outreach Tips

VA needs your help to make sure all Veterans, service members, and their loved ones know about the benefits and services VA has to offer. As you encourage Veterans to explore VA benefits, use these 10 tips to focus your approach and make sure your message is heard.

- 1. Create a plan.** For outreach that is more focused and effective, create and follow a plan. Map out concrete goals, strategies, tactics, and talking points. Measure or evaluate your approach to know what works and build on your successes.
- 2. Remember messaging basics.** Messages should be clear, crisp, and easy to understand (use the talking points on the next page for guidance). Have a clear call to action; for instance, encourage audiences to visit VA.gov to get more details about benefits.
- 3. Understand your audience.** Although Veterans have many common interests, do not assume they have the same backgrounds or concerns. Take time to connect with Veterans, and answer their questions thoughtfully.
- 4. Start online conversations.** Social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter can be effective channels to reach Veterans and encourage them to share your messages among their networks. Always post accurate information; be conversational, authentic, and positive; and attach photos and videos when possible.
- 5. Heighten interest in and attendance at your events.** Consider coordinating events held on location with other community gatherings that Veterans are likely attend (e.g., health, fitness, and career fairs). Consult or partner with community leaders to maximize exposure and marketing opportunities.
- 6. Host a webcast or webinar.** If on-location events are not feasible, use webcasts or webinars to get your message out in a cost-effective manner.
- 7. Leverage traditional media.** Work with VA and other public affairs officials to promote events, activities, and positive stories via print, radio, television, and the Web. To appeal to the broad cross-section of Veterans, work with media outlets that specialize in reaching diverse audiences.
- 8. Engage in strategic partnerships.** Strategic partnerships can expose larger audiences to your program and benefits. National, state, and local Veterans' organizations, federal and state agencies, and community- and faith-based entities are among the many groups that can be partners in planning or hosting events.
- 9. Enlist those who have benefited from VA.** Veterans and their family members who have benefited from VA assistance are often the best people to spread the word. See if they are willing to be involved in outreach and, if so, give them clear guidance on how they can help.
- 10. Explore VA.** When talking with Veterans who may benefit from VA assistance, encourage them to visit **VA.gov** to review available benefits, eligibility rules, and how to apply.

VA Outreach Toolkit: Key Talking Points by Benefit Area

In gratitude for Veterans' service to the nation, VA provides benefits and services to help with life after the military. As you assist Veterans in making important choices about family, finances, education, and careers, let them know about VA benefits. Note that eligibility and application processes vary by benefit and applicant. Some applications can be submitted online; others are completed by mail or in person through the nearest VA facility or regional office. Veterans can explore benefit highlights, eligibility rules, how to apply, and more at [VA.gov](https://www.VA.gov).

Explore VA Benefits

Receive compensation for your disability. If you have a disability caused by or aggravated during active military service—no matter when or where you served—you may be eligible to receive tax-free monthly benefits. Survivors, including spouses, dependent children, and parents, may also receive compensation if a Veteran's death was due to a service-related disability.

Invest in your education. VA education and training benefits can help you prepare for just about any career. These benefits aren't just for traditional four-year colleges—you can become a chef, cosmetologist, first responder, hotel manager, or mechanic or train in another vocation. VA's Yellow Ribbon Program opens up educational opportunities to Veterans who want to attend higher-cost private universities. Benefits provided through the Post-9/11 GI Bill®, Montgomery GI Bill®, and other programs help cover costs of tuition, training, housing, books, and fees.

Jump-start your career. VA offers numerous benefits, resources, and services to help you transition from service to civilian employment and enhance your education, skills, and career. VA provides vocational and employment counseling, job-seeking tools, and other assistance. VA also offers services if you're unable to work due to a service-connected disability.

Care for your health. VA provides world-class health care to eligible Veterans. The Veterans Health Administration is America's largest integrated health care system, with more than 1,200 sites of care, and it is consistently ranked among the nation's top health care providers. VA specializes in providing Veterans with personalized, proactive, and patient-driven care.

Invest in a home. Take stock of your and your family's options on the homefront: With VA's home loan guaranty programs, Veterans of any age can access a low-interest

home loan, reduce their current interest rate, or take cash out by refinancing. This is a benefit that may be reused multiple times. Adapted housing grants can also help Veterans with certain service-connected disabilities live more independently.

Secure your family's future. When your family's finances are more secure, you can rest easier. VA offers a variety of life insurance options that accommodate many circumstances. With Veterans Group Life Insurance, you're provided up to \$400,000 in coverage. Exercise this benefit soon after separating to cover your family. No health questions are asked if you apply for coverage within 240 days of separation.

Supplement your income. Veterans who have served with honor, and their loved ones, have earned the right to live with the dignity that comes with greater economic security. VA pension is tax-free supplemental income for certain low-income wartime Veterans or their surviving spouses or children. Veterans must also meet certain age or disability requirements.

Rest in peace. VA provides burial and memorial services to Veterans at no charge to honor their service to the nation. Spouses and children may receive these services too. Benefits may include burial in one of VA's 135 national cemeteries, including the opening and closing of the gravesite, inscribed headstones or markers, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Explore benefits for loved ones. Spouses, dependents, and survivors of Veterans and service members may be eligible for many types of VA benefits. Loved ones of those who have died or were seriously injured in the line of duty may receive VA assistance. Benefits may be used to advance in a career or get an education, or to provide supplementary income. Surviving spouses may benefit from VA-guaranteed home loans too.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

