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Chapter 1. Outreach Services Program

1. Overview of Outreach Services Program

Introduction This topic provides an outline of the Outreach Services Program, including:

- background on outreach program, and
- requirements for the outreach program

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a. Background on Outreach Program [Title 38 United States Code \(U.S.C\), Chapter 63](#), provides the legal mandate for the Department of Veterans Affairs Outreach Services Program. Chapter 63 authorizes VA to distribute information to eligible Veterans and dependents regarding all benefits and services. It further charges us with seeking out eligible Veterans and dependents; and assisting them in the preparation and presentation of claims for VA benefits. Outreach duties do not have to be limited to Public Contact Team personnel but may be assigned to any qualified person.

Outreach is an important part of each Regional Office’s (RO) service delivery program. It can improve the quality of claims, speed claims processing, and reduce future development. Outreach can help service members and recently separated Veterans achieve a rapid social and economic readjustment to civilian life or obtain a higher standard of living for themselves and their dependents.

b. Requirements for Outreach Program In addition to Chapter 63, outreach requirements are contained in Chapters 3, 5, 29 and 31 of Title 38 U.S.C. VA outreach requirements are also contained in Title 10 and 15 as follows:

| Targeted Group | Legislative Reference |
|--|---|
| Recently Separated or Released from Active Duty; Veterans and Servicemembers | Title 38, Chapter 63, Section 6301 and 6303 |
| Elderly Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 5, Section 523(b) |
| Gulf War Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 17, Section 1702 |

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1. Overview of Outreach Services Program, Continued

b.
Requirements
for Outreach
Program
 (continued)

| Targeted Group | Legislative Reference |
|---|--|
| Former Prisoners of War | Public Law 97-37 |
| Women Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 3, Section 318 |
| Minority Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 3, Section 317 |
| Asian American & Pacific Islanders | Executive Order 13125 |
| Native American Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 37, Section 3762 |
| Homeless Veterans | Title 38, Chapter 63, Section 6303 Title 38, Chapter 20 |
| Eligible Dependents | Title 38, Chapter 63, Section 6307 |
| First Time Applicants (any benefit/service) | Title 38, Chapter 63, Section 6303 |
| Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange | Public Law 102-4 |
| Active Duty Personnel | Title 38, Chapter 63, Section 6303 Title 38, Chapter 30, Section 3034 Title 38, Chapter 43, Section 4333 Title 38, Chapter 31, Section 3116 Title 10, Chapter 58, Section 1142 and 1144 |

2. General Outreach Guidelines

Introduction This topic provides the general guidelines for the outreach program.

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a. Why Outreach is Important Access to VA benefits information and claims assistance is critical to ensuring that potential VA beneficiaries, including the populations targeted in this chapter, receive the benefits they have earned. For certain populations (e.g., homeless and elderly Veterans), physical, psychological, social, economic and environmental factors can make it more difficult for them to access our services.

Employees who perform outreach duties should establish a liaison and work as closely as possible with other agencies and community service providers to obtain referrals and assist potential beneficiaries.

b. Employee Suggestions for Outreach **Employees** involved in outreach should:

- Use telephone contact whenever practical to obtain information and establish liaison with other agencies in fulfilling station outreach responsibilities.
- Cooperate with and use the services of any Federal, State or local department or agency that will assist us in carrying out our outreach responsibilities.
- Make referrals to other agencies or community organizations that offer services, where appropriate.

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2. General Outreach Guidelines, Continued

c. Regional Office Suggestions for Outreach

Regional Offices should:

- Participate in area programs.
 - Speak to civic or professional organizations.
 - Provide benefits information training to such groups as county service officers and congressional offices.
-

d. General Outreach Suggestions

Use local news media and take advantage of special opportunities on both public and commercial stations.

Targeted groups and communities should be encouraged to use toll-free telephone service and electronic information dissemination media such as:

- VA Home Page - <http://www.va.gov>

As well as social media sites such as:

- Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs>
- Twitter - <http://www.twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/>

to obtain information.

Where a significant number of eligible Veterans and eligible dependents speak a language other than English as their principal language, services shall, to the maximum feasible extent, be provided in the principal language of such persons.

3. Annual Review

Introduction This topic provides information on conducting an annual review of the Outreach Program

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a. Required Questions for Annual Review of Outreach Program

The review should provide a response to the following questions:

- What services are being provided to each group identified in M27-1, Part II, Chapter 1, Section 1(b) and other locally targeted groups?
- Where coordinators are indicated in this chapter, have they been designated?
- Is the level of service delivery to each group sufficient to meet our responsibilities?

The following issues may be considered in responding to these questions:

- Local demographics – Veteran population (total, sex, age, race)
- Community needs (socioeconomic characteristics)
- Services provided by other agencies; and/or
- Resources available (FTE, travel funds, etc.)
- What actions have been initiated to correct any noted deficiencies?

Note: Demographic data may be obtained from VA's Office for Policy and Planning, National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics at:
<http://www1.va.gov/vetdata>

4. Special Outreach Target Populations

Introduction This topic identifies the various groups that VA considers in need of additional outreach efforts.

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a. Target Populations for Special Outreach

The current targeted group of Veterans and dependents are:

- Veterans at VHA Facilities
- Homeless Veterans (includes incarcerated Veterans)
- Women Veterans
- Military - Active Duty, Reserves and National Guard
- Survivors of Servicemembers Who Die on Active Duty
- Other Survivors and Dependents
- Minority and Tribal Veterans
- Elderly Veterans
- Former Prisoner Of War
- Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains
- First Time Applicants

A more detailed description of each targeted special outreach program may be found in M27-1, Part II, Chapter 2.

5. Reporting Outreach Activities

Introduction This topic provides instructions for reporting outreach activities.

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a. Reporting Outreach Activities All outreach activities must be reported using the *Outreach Events Submission Form* located at:

<http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/Outreach/default.asp>

b. Frequency of Outreach Activity Reports All regional offices must submit data on a weekly basis.

Data should be submitted for the previous week (Monday-Friday) by the close of business on the following Tuesday.

Using the Outreach Events Submission Form, after updating your weekly report, simply select the “Submit” option at the bottom of the screen.
