

VAVS Recruitment Strategy 2009

Title

"An Invitation to Service: Serving Those Who Serve" Recruitment Program

Theme

Changing the Face of VAVS—an appeal to the younger generations

Background

Our volunteer force of dedicated volunteers, of approximately 90,000 in 2007, decreased over previous years, is aging with the majority of these volunteers from the World War II and Korea generations. Consequently, total number of volunteers and volunteer hours, both Regularly Scheduled (RS) and Occasional (OCC), continue to slip appreciatively throughout the NAC member organizations. To preserve and restore this force, a true national treasure, an appeal to our younger generations of veterans and families, i.e. Vietnam, Desert Shield/Storm, OEF/OIF, is mandated.

Approach

- **National Advisory Committee**
 - Expand membership through invitation to appropriate service, **civic**, fraternal, organizations
 - Identify and invite emerging Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) unique to recent operations (Desert Shield/Storm, OEF/OIF, e.g. **Veterans for Freedom, OIF/OEF Veterans of America, Soldiers Angels**).

- **Within NAC Member Organizations**
 - At national level and at each VAMC, develop an "invitation" program involving VAVS representatives and volunteers "inviting" potential volunteers from their organization, families, youth groups, friends, co-workers, etc.
 - Age demographic recruiting**
 - One on one, face to face recruiting**
 - Targeted Recruiting**
 - Increase focus on "family" and "youth/teen" volunteering
 - OEF/OIF veterans
 - Recruit recently retired Individuals: Many recently retired individuals are looking for ways to remain active. Some view this as a time to give back.
 - Target Volunteer Growth: Each NAC member organization should target a 10-20% increase in Regularly Scheduled (RS) and Occasional Volunteers at each VAMC; this should result in increased total volunteer hours/member/VAMC
 - Target Average Age Group: NAC member organizations recruiting efforts should seek to lower average/median age to 55-60, (e.g. the "baby boomer" generation age group), at each VAMC

- **Review and Update VAVS Informational Materials**
 - At Director, VAVS level
 - Each VAMC and NAC member organization develops and/or revamps VAVS membership packets, brochures, which should address

- VAVS mission
- Volunteer importance to VHA and VAMC
- Volunteer opportunities
- How to volunteer

- Material should highlight improvements, changes to VHA, VAMC, to include DOD to VA transition, Polytrauma Centers, and long range care and rehab of severely wounded OIF/OEF veterans, unique "Center of Excellence" capabilities
- Pictures, materials should reflect a "youthful" focus in both patients and volunteers
- Include contact date for VAVS office, NAC VAVS representatives

- **At each VAMC and NAC member organizational echelons**
 - Institute and incorporate a VAVS "recruitment committee" with same mission and operating procedures as the NAC Executive Committee Recruitment Subcommittee
 - Develop a "marketing" strategy" that focuses on service to the patients and volunteer "satisfaction" derived from lending "a helping hand" to a Vet who has served his Nation and needed that help
 - Identify/define volunteer service opportunities
 - VAMC VAVS Chief and VAV Committee sponsor a minimum of two recruitment "Open House" programs, information sessions with each volunteer "inviting" at least one potential new volunteer
 - VAMC VAVS identify needed "programs/projects" for NAC organizations to support; "programs generate volunteers"
 - Each VAMC expand or add a "speaker's bureau" comprised of VAVS staff and volunteers to "market" VAVS to member organizations, civic and church groups, corporations/businesses, colleges/high schools, youth groups
 - Each NAC member organization, within its guidelines, should develop a VAVS "recognition" and incentives program (e.g. POV mileage to help defray high fuel costs, "promotional gifts" for service, VIP membership "recruiting club", certificates of achievement, VAVS NAC Volunteer of Year at local, State and/or National levels, etc).
 - At all levels, develop programs that focus on *retention* of volunteers
- **Focus Communications at all levels:** Continually tell the VHA Story
 - From Director, VAVS to Member organizations
 - From National Representatives down through echelons of own organization
 - Highlight, announce new initiatives, programs at VA and within member organizations
 - Maintain high profile with media, e.g. frequent news releases**
 - Network with businesses, community groups, and community leaders**
 - Greater recognition of volunteer's achievements, especially within member organizations, is essential (e.g. in organizational newsletters, magazines regularly publish articles on VAVS volunteer's achievements, success stories, programs sponsored, etc)

Actions

- Each VAMC and NAC member organizations should develop and implement its own unique recruitment strategy derived from and that incorporates the tenets of this "Invitation to Service" recruitment program

- From the strategy, develop a detailed recruiting plan unique to each VAMC and NAC member organization then: *Follow the plan!!*
- VAVS staff and VAVS volunteers “invite” potential new volunteers to “Serve those Who Served”
- Each VAVS NAC member organization develop and implement recognition and incentive programs consistent with organizational policy and guidelines
- Be sincere, focused, innovative, flexible, and courteous.
- Have Passion—*its contagious*

The “Power is in the Ask”

“We shall tend to him or her who has borne the battle, and the families, widows and orphans” (Abraham Lincoln paraphrased)

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