Implementing and Managing Virtual Volunteers & Programs: A Step-by-Step Handbook
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## Keeping the Conversation Alive

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Since the time of libraries closing across the state, we have heard your concerns about how to move forward with a strong Veterans Connect @ the Library program. We heard your concerns about losing volunteers due to their vulnerability to the virus. We heard your uncertainty about work schedules, job replacements and the loss of part time support staff.

This handbook is our attempt to set aside the uncertainty and find ways to move forward given what we know today. We are grateful for all of the library staff and volunteers that participated in our numerous Zoom meetings. As one participant summed up: "We have a lot of willingness to get it done! Spirits are willing. We just can't solve all of the constraints right now."

Our hope is that this handbook will assist you in your efforts to restore a strong Veterans Connect @ the Library presence in your library and in your community.

Please feel free to make a copy of this handbook for distribution to your supervisors and director or volunteers as appropriate.

This publication is supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.
Volunteering While Social Distancing

According to recent research, it would seem that our volunteers might be particularly impacted by the social isolation of the pandemic. Many of our library volunteers are retired and may have a higher age-related risk. As some of you are just beginning to reach out to past in-library volunteers, it might be helpful to keep some of the benefits they may experience in returning to Veterans Connect service. As we will discuss later, this service might take the shape of virtual volunteering through online meetings or one-on-one benefits coaching or something more simple such as assembling Grab & Go Activity Kits from the safety of their own homes. Whatever the options your library provides, here are some of the reasons that they might want to consider it:

- volunteering will help them stay connected to the outside world and alleviate loneliness
- they will be able to make a difference in someone’s life
- they might learn new skills, which keeps the brain active and mood elevated
- it will boost their confidence which might have suffered through these turbulent, isolated times
- it may assuage some of the grief that they may be experiencing through the loss of social contact with friends and family, and through any personal loss that they may have be suffering alone
- it helps them reconnect with the wonderful resource that is your public library
- and it helps them express gratitude which is known to elevate mood

"Preliminary surveys suggest that within the first month of COVID-19, loneliness increased by 20 to 30 percent, and emotional distress tripled. While several surveys are still ongoing to capture the full extent of the problem, current evidence suggests the pre-existing public health crisis of social isolation and loneliness may be far more widespread than previously estimated."

https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hblog20200609.53823
Now more than ever it is important to partner with volunteer-related agencies to assist with the recruitment of virtual volunteers. Part of this strategy would be to reassess the volunteer classifications and rewrite the volunteer positions.

Ensure that these updated descriptions are posted wherever you recruit including Volunteer Match, your city, your military collaboratives, your curbside offerings, and other partner organizations.

Tip: Have you checked your Volunteer Match posted positions? Are they still indicating that you are recruiting for in-person volunteers?
Virtual Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteer Match remains a popular website for the recruitment of volunteers. Since the pandemic, they have restructured their website to allow prospective volunteers to choose virtual or in-person options. While they currently indicate more than one million virtual volunteer positions, there are only five positions when you filter for California/Veterans/Library. There are 63 in-person volunteer positions with the same filters.

Learning Webinars

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<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Accurate and Useful Volunteer Position Descriptions</td>
<td>Core Components</td>
<td>9/9 11:00 PT / 2:00 ET</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<td>Managing Difficult Volunteer Transitions</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Introductory Approaches</td>
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<td>Social Media and Volunteer Engagement</td>
<td>Introductory Approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practices for Recruiting Online</td>
<td>Introductory Approaches</td>
<td>9/23 11:00 PT / 2:00 ET</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a Comprehensive and Engaging Volunteer Training Program</td>
<td>Core Components</td>
<td>10/6 11:00 PT / 2:00 ET</td>
<td>Free</td>
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</table>
Virtual Volunteer Recruitment

Learning Webinars con't

Learning Center

Best Practices for Recruiting Online

Attend this live webinar!

Duration: 60 minutes
Topic: Introductory Approaches
Facilitator(s): Jennifer Bennett, CVA
Hosted By: VolunteerMatch
Cost: Free

Learn how to make the most of your VolunteerMatch account by creating your volunteer opportunities using best practices. This webinar will cover the eight simple steps to making opportunities stand out on VolunteerMatch.

What You’ll Learn:
- Tips on recruiting and managing great volunteers through VolunteerMatch.

Upcoming Dates
Wednesday, September 23, 2020
11am - 12pm Pacific / 2pm - 3pm Eastern
Click Here To Register
These are just a small sample of recent free webinars. Unfortunately they are not archived for later viewing. If you are interested, we highly recommend that you check their Learning Webinar section regularly, here: https://learn.volunteermatch.org/training-topics
Sample Recruitment Invitation Email to Local Partners:

Subject:
[Library Name] Veterans Connect Volunteer Program during COVID-19

Body:
COVID-19 has undoubtedly created a challenging and uncertain time for your organizations. As one of our partners serving veterans, we're reaching out today to ask for your assistance getting the word out that we are recruiting for volunteers. While in-person volunteering isn’t possible right now, virtual volunteering is!

So, we want to get creative and help from a distance, however we can.

[Information about how your volunteer program is changing in light of COVID-19, if applicable]

Here’s how you can help:
Let your people know that we are currently recruiting for volunteers. We have [in person], and virtual volunteer opportunities.
Interested people can find us on VolunteerMatch.org [or provide link] or call us at [phone number]
Opportunities include [list here including Benefits Coach and/or Grab & Go Kit Assembly].

Thank you for all that you do!

List of possible partners

- County Veterans Service Officer- CVSO
- Local Interagency Network Coordinator (LINC) -
  https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/LINC%20Map.pdf#search=linc%20map
- VA Outreach Specialists
- Local veterans' providers, organization and agencies which support veterans
- Local veteran’s collaborative
- American Legion
- American Legion Women Auxiliary
- Sons of the American Legion
- Legion Riders
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
- Community newspaper
- Chamber of Commerce
- Service Clubs (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Elks, AAUW)
- Local elected officials

(with thanks to Veterans Connect Zoom participants)
Virtual Volunteer Retention

Remember why your volunteers joined

Keep them engaged:
- Host a virtual volunteer orientation meeting
- Consider weekly or monthly group meetings via Zoom or some other technology
- Use their most comfortable technology - regular texts, calls, or even a Facebook group just for volunteers

Keep the human touch:
- In addition to email, consider a quick handwritten thank you note or just-staying-in-touch note by mail
- Start your weekly meetings with a personal check-in and let all your virtual volunteers get to know one another
- Ask for their ideas and feedback

Things to remember:
- Remember how difficult it was for you to get used to doing your job from home (if this applies)
- It may take longer to bring your volunteers up to speed on the various technologies you are expecting them to use
- Keep in mind the need for fulfillment required by the volunteer. According to our research the large majority of volunteers want to feel that they are making a difference. You will need to redesign your virtual tasks with this in mind as well as reminding them of how what you are asking them to do has an effect in the real world. For example, assembling Grab & Go Activity Kits has several outcomes including reconnecting patrons and families with the library
### VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Suggested Answers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you own a smartphone?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you own a laptop or computer connected to the internet?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your internet connection stable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you willing to download apps that may be recommended in order to connect with veterans, library staff and veteran support organizations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which communications apps are you familiar with? For example, Google Meetup, Zoom, Facebook? Other:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you able to have a private space to have a phone session with a veteran in need of information?</td>
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1. Please describe your qualifications for this volunteer position.

   Suggested Answers:
   - Patience, empathy, good listening skills
   - Familiarity with military life/veterans issues
   - Understand need for confidentiality and respecting personal boundaries
   - At least basic computer and internet skills
   - Previous volunteer or other appropriate work experience

2. What do you think would make a good volunteer in this position?

   Suggested Answers:
   - Good listener
   - Being dependable
   - Want to assist veterans and their families
3. Describe a project or activity for which you had total responsibility from beginning to end.

   Suggested Answers:
   - Give an outline of events
   - Expectations of you and how they were handled
   - Was it successful, not successful, reasons?
   - How you learned from the experience and made the outcome better

4. Describe a time when you were involved in a crisis situation with another individual or group. How did you handle the situation?

   Suggested Answers:
   - Be sure there is a plan in place for handling these situations before you start
   - Speak to the supervisor--ask for help
   - Move with another staff member to a quiet place
   - Make a referral to an outside resource

5. How would you handle a situation in which someone you are serving asks you for money, for a ride, or other special favor that is not within your job description?

   Suggested Answers
   - Speak to the supervisor regarding the request
   - Discuss “boundaries”
   - Make a referral to an outside resource

6. What is important to you about volunteering in this position?

7. How many hours a week and on what days are you able to assist us?

8. Is there anything else you would like to add, or ask us?
A volunteer handbook can help you retain volunteers by staying focused and ensure that everyone is on the same page. Virtual volunteers should have access to a copy. If your library has a Volunteer Coordinator, meet with them to find out if you can adapt their handbook for your needs. If no handbook currently exists, consider creating one. You can add any of the suggestions from below. If you don't have time to develop a volunteer handbook, consider delegating the task to a group of veteran volunteers or willing Friend’s board members. Meet with your supervisor to confirm that all of the policies and procedures have been decided before proceeding.

Here is a list of things you might include:

A Heartfelt Thank You — a letter of gratitude from your library director, Friend’s board chair, or City Manager.
Info about your library and the Veterans Connect @ the Library program.
Philosophy of the Volunteer Program — volunteers need to know why they are important to your operations, the value & impact of volunteers, volunteer scope of work and roles, paid staff vs. volunteer tasks.
Training — responsibilities of the organization, expectations for volunteers, training modules, schedule, continuing education, train-the-trainer opportunities
Supervision and Support — staff roles, attendance, timesheets, leave of absence, resignation, dismissal, reasons for immediate dismissal.
Resources — helpful web sites, marketing materials, how to order, office supplies, how to use office equipment. Virtual binder of local information available for all volunteers.
Contact list for key staff, sample marketing materials, etc.

A more extensive handbook could also include the following:
Ethics Guidelines — multiculturalism/anti-racism, sexual harassment, alcohol and drugs, maintaining professional boundaries, volunteer-client relationships, volunteer-paid staff relationships, client service, conflict of interest, prohibition on affiliations, accepting gifts or compensation.
Working Conditions — info about workplace safety, reporting accidents and injuries, Covid-19 guidelines, procedures for working off-site, tips for emotional and physical self-care, how to request special accommodations, virtual home office requirements.
Customer Service — service standards, client referrals, serving limited-English speaking, serving people with mental challenges and disabilities, serving friends and relatives, crisis management.
Required Paperwork and Reporting — the use of approved materials, websites and service providers, confidentiality, client records.
Perks — volunteer recognition, awards and celebrations, library privileges.
Volunteer Feedback — exit interview, grievance and complaint procedure, program evaluation.
Volunteer Protections — if applicable, insurance coverage.
Checklists for Volunteers

Volunteering in the library:

1. Has your volunteer supervisor shared the Covid-19 safety procedures for working in the library?
2. Are you experiencing any flu-like symptoms?

Volunteering as an at-home Grab & Go kit assembler:

1. Has your volunteer supervisor shared the Covid-19 safety procedures for assembling Grab & Go Kits?

Volunteering as a Virtual Benefits Coach:

1. Has the library told you what information the veteran or family member you will be speaking with requires? If so, do you have the applicable contacts and information readily available while you talk including local resources for veterans?
2. Has your library given you a sample script and/or disclaimer to use while speaking with a veteran on the phone? For example we are unable to give medical advice, help fill out forms and so on.
3. Do you have the contact information for your local CVSO and CalVet LINC handy?
4. Do you have a copy of the CalVet Resource Handbook? Or a link to the online pdf version of the handbook?
5. Do you have a quiet, confidential space to speak with a veteran so that the call will not be overheard?
6. Hide your phone number before you make a benefits call. Open your phone's keypad and dial *67, (star 6 7) followed by the number you're trying to call. Your number, which will show up on the other end as “Private” or “Blocked” when reading on caller ID. You will have to dial *67 each time you want your number blocked. This works on cell phones and land line phones.
Sample Waiver of Liability for Volunteer Services

Date:
Waiver of Liability for Providing Volunteer Services

I, ____________________________, wishing to volunteer my time and services for [Name of Library] hereby acknowledge that the library is doing everything they can to protect the public as well myself as a volunteer. To this extent, I agree to follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local health district guidelines and [Name of Library] policies and procedures for social distancing. This will require me to maintain six (6) feet of distance between myself, fellow volunteers, and patrons of the organization as much as possible. This procedure will be required for visitor-to-visitor contact as well to limit exposure.

I agree to utilize a mask to reduce the risk of exposure to myself and others. I agree to wash or sanitize my hands after using the restroom, sneezing, and coughing, and before eating or preparing meals or sundries for distribution, and will properly wear and utilize sterile gloves.

I understand that I may be informed of or encounter sensitive Personal Health Information (PHI) for those that [Name of Library] serves. I agree to hold this information in confidence and will not disseminate any PHI except as allowed by law and/or per the policy and procedures of said organization which I am volunteering for.

I understand that there is no direct medical health coverage afforded to me during my relationship with [Name of Library]. [Name of Library] is not responsible for any potential exposure to COVID-19, which is not a direct result of negligence on the part of their employees, volunteers, or the organization.

By signing below, I agree to comply with the written instructions above. Failure to comply with these written instructions or verbal instructions from staff may result in my volunteer privileges being removed.

_______________________________________
Printed Name

_____________________________________
Signature

_______________________________________
Director or Designated Alternative Name and Title

_______________________________________
Authorized Signature

_______________________________________
Date

This document is provided as a sample only and should be reviewed by your supervisors before use.

Reworked from https://washingtonnonprofits.org/sample-forms-for-volunteers-and-clients-during-covid-19/
Tutorials & Instructions for Volunteers

How to Zoom

Easy-to-follow guide for seniors:

Zoom tutorials:
https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials?mobile_site=true

How to Skype

Easy-to-follow guide for seniors:
https://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/blog/september-2016/a-stepbystep-guide-on-how-to-use-skype.aspx

YouTube Skype beginners tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRcb3uB3Jac

Consider asking your more tech savvy volunteers to host an informational tutorial session for new volunteers. Remember that your volunteers are talented! You don’t need to do everything yourself.
If you haven’t already received an email inviting you to a Zoom meeting, you probably will soon. In this age of social distancing, many groups are choosing to meet virtually, and Zoom is one of the most popular ways to do this. It might be your book club, your volunteer group, or your Sunday school class, but chances are you’re going to be part of a Zoom meeting.

Zoom is a computer program used to hold online virtual meetings. You can use Zoom on a smartphone, a tablet, a laptop, or a desktop computer (as long as you have a camera, speakers, and a microphone). It uses your computer’s or phone’s camera to show live video of all attendees (if you don’t want to be on camera, that’s fine, too. You can just display your name). Zoom uses your computer’s or phone’s microphone to let you talk to other meeting participants. If you do not have access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone, you can use a phone to dial into a meeting.

This article only covers joining and participating in a Zoom meeting that you’ve been invited to. If you want to know more about more advanced Zoom features like changing your background, raising your hand in a meeting, sharing your screen, and hosting your own meeting go to Zoom’s Support Center support.zoom.us/hc/en-us

**DOWNLOAD ZOOM**

Zoom is a program that runs on your computer, phone, or tablet. You must download this program from the Zoom website. The free version of Zoom should meet all of your needs.

If you’ve received an email invitation to a Zoom meeting, click the link that says, “Join Zoom Meeting.” If this is the first time you’ve used Zoom, this link will take you to a website where you can download the Zoom program or app, depending on what device you’re using.

**On an iPhone or iPad:** Go to the Apple App Store and search for “ZOOM Cloud Meetings.” Click “Get” to download and install the Zoom app.

**The Zoom app in the App Store**

**On an Android phone or tablet:** Go to the Google Play App Store and search for “Zoom Cloud Meetings.” Click “Install.”

**On a computer:** On the Download Center website zoom.us/download, click “Download” in the “Zoom Client for Meetings” section.

**Click the blue Download button to download Zoom from the website zoom.us/download**

After Zoom is downloaded, you must install it onto your computer.

**If you have an Apple computer, like a MacBook:** Double-click the file called Zoom.pkg, which is typically saved to your Downloads folder. The installer program opens and guides you through the process.

**If you have a PC:** Double-click the file called ZoomInstaller.exe to install the program.
JOIN A MEETING
After you install Zoom, there are a few different ways to join a Zoom meeting. You can click the link in your invitation email, go to the Zoom website and enter the meeting ID, or dial into the meeting on a phone.

Click the link in an invitation email: If you have an email invitation, click “Join Zoom Meeting” in that email. This takes you to the Zoom website.

Go to the Zoom website: Go to zoom.us/join, and enter the 9-digit meeting ID from your invitation email. If the meeting requires a password, that will be in your email, too.

PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING
Once you’ve joined the meeting, you can see and hear other participants. Each participant is represented by a square that displays their face (if they’ve chosen to join with video) or just their name.

If you’re in a large meeting, make sure your microphone is muted. Your computer microphone is pretty sensitive, and if you’re unmuted, it can pick up a lot of background noise. The mute button, which looks like a microphone, is in the bottom left corner of the Zoom screen. If the microphone has a red line through it, you’re muted, and no one in the meeting can hear you.

Join a Meeting

![Unmute](image)

Click the button again to unmute yourself if you want to talk in the meeting.

![Mute](image)

Only one person in the meeting can talk at a time. Zoom indicates who is speaking by highlighting their image with a yellow square.

There is also a chat feature in Zoom, where you can type messages to other participants. Participants can send messages to everyone in the meeting, or just certain participants. However, after the meeting, the host can view the transcript of all chats, so it’s not entirely private. If there is a message for you in the chat, a notification appears on the Chat button, which looks like a speech bubble. Click that button to open the chat window.

Dial into the meeting on a phone: If you don’t have access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone, you can use a phone to dial into the meeting. The phone number to use will be in your invitation email, or you can find the number to use in the Zoom International Dial-in Numbers list zoom.us/zoomconference.

LEAVE A ZOOM MEETING
Click “Leave Meeting” on the bottom right corner to leave the meeting.
Keeping the Conversations Alive

**CalVet LINC and CVSOs**

Even if your library is unable to accept virtual volunteers as benefits coaches at this time, it is important to stay connected to the Veterans community by meeting regularly with your local area CVSO (County Veterans Service Officer) and your area LINC (Local Interagency Network Coordinator).

CVSOs are veteran advocates that help veterans gather the necessary paperwork to support claims, file claims and assist in appealing claims that have been denied. Your local area CVSO can be located here: [http://www.cacvso.org/county-contacts/](http://www.cacvso.org/county-contacts/)

From this link you can find the name, email address, phone number and hours of your local contact person.

LINC s are CalVet staff that bridge the gap between CalVet and the federal, state, county, and non-governmental agencies that provide services to our state's nearly 2 million veterans. They are also advocates for veterans, military service members, and supplement and support the CVSOs and regional partners.

You should feel free to contact your regional LINC whenever you have questions about benefits (how to qualify, where to get further information, where to go to fill out paperwork, which online resources are proven effective, etc.) for the veteran or their family members.

A regional list of LINC s is provided or find them online here: [https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/Regional-Outreach.aspx](https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/Regional-Outreach.aspx)

Ways to engage with your volunteers and service providers:

- Consider a weekly or bi-monthly online Zoom call to find out what's new, and how they are providing service. This will keep both you and your volunteers up-to-date and engaged with the Veterans Connect program. Use this time to establish and strengthen relationships.
- Consider a public online event where veterans and family members can ask questions of the LINC or CVSO, or ask if they can deliver a brief presentation about their services. Be sure to market this event online, in your curbside offerings and to your other veteran service providers. If you have a tech savvy volunteer, perhaps you can ask them to facilitate or host the meeting.
- Reach out to your LINC to find out about veteran and military coalitions and collaborative meetings in your area. Many of these should be offered online in the current climate. Be sure to have your volunteers attend as well if possible. These have always been good meetings for learning, sharing, and networking. You can also put out the call for volunteers as well as keep your current volunteers engaged.
LINC & CVSO

For those of you that have been to a Veterans Connect conference, you will have heard a LINC from CalVet speak. Consider your area LINC your go-to for assistance and information. Several libraries have regularly scheduled online meetings with their LINC and their volunteers in order to stay up-to-date. If you have not spoken with your LINC lately, consider reaching out today!

Sacramento Valley and North State:
LINC: Cole Wagenaar, NVLINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Glenn, ColusaYolo, Sutter, Yuba, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Alpine, Siskiyou, Modoc, Trinity, Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Sierra, and Butte counties.

Bay Area and North Coast:
LINC: Kevin Graves, BALINC@calvet.ca.gov

Inland Empire:
LINC: Merlene Steinbeck, IELINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: San Bernardino, Riverside, Inyo and Mono counties.

Central Valley:
LINC: Annette Wholaver, CVLINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: Stanislaus, Mariposa, Madera, Merced, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties.

Central Coast:
LINC: Calvin Angel, CCLINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties.

Los Angeles:
LINC: Anthony Rodriguez, LALINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

Orange:
LINC: Ben Gales, OCLINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: Orange and Southwest LA counties.

San Diego:
LINC: Lance Iunker, SDLINC@calvet.ca.gov
Counties Serviced: San Diego and Imperial counties.
Local Interagency Network Coordinators (LINCs)

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How to create a Curbside Grab 'n Go Info Kit for Veterans & their families

Use your orange Veterans Connect @ the Library bag or a ziplock food bag for your inserts.

Ideas for kit inserts:
- CalVet flyers
- A flyer with the name, phone number, website, and address of your local County Veteran Service Officer
- Flyers about virtual programs your library has for veterans
- Flyers of local Veteran Service Organizations
- Instructions on how to contact a staff member or volunteer with questions about benefits
- CalVet Resource Books are currently being reprinted. Order copies for your library here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5KJMP8G

[If you create printed material, please include “This [publication/project] was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.”]

How to use the bag:
- Remind folks at the table to ask “Have you served?” or “Do you have a family member who served?” This question usually elicits more yes responses than “Are you a veteran?” If the answer is yes, offer them a bag and talk about your services. These are meant to be educational packages

Curbside marketing:
- Call attention to this service by using your VRC pull up banner, cardboard soldiers, windsocks, or orange table cloth
Description

Easy-to-make paracord bracelets are an activity packet that your volunteers can assemble from the safety of their own homes. Later, send the completed bracelets to Operation Gratitude for inclusion in their veteran care packages. Or include them in your information packets to veterans. Uses for Paracord Bracelets include boot laces, belts and suspenders, and tourniquet. Tie up a shelter & much more!
Six minute how-to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy3TjineDjw&feature=youtu.be

“Many people don’t understand how important a paracord bracelet is, and it’s not just about how they are used in an emergency. “Most commanders allow our troops to wear our bracelets with their uniforms, and that’s a rare exception to the uniform code. Troops tell us that every time they look at their bracelets they have a feeling of home. They smile a bit longer, breathe a bit easier, and they know in that moment, that they are not forgotten.” Operation Gratitude

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<tr>
<th>Staff Time</th>
<th>Partners/Audience</th>
<th>Materials/Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Minimal - order stock; mail to OG</td>
<td>Operation Gratitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Curbside</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>EASY</td>
<td>Audience: ALL</td>
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Tips: Must be 550lb strength to be of military grade use. https://www.paracordplanet.com
Level Up: You can also have your teens do this as a craft & earn community service hours. Add a label to the activity kit with important phone numbers for veterans. Ask your book clubs to get involved in making, even if they are meeting virtually. Bonus: Keeps the Veteren’s Connect program in the community conscience and could serve as a possible source of volunteer recruitment. This is a project to educate veterans and their families about benefits; it is not just a giveaway or a craft program. Kits should be distributed with information for veterans. Samples for you to customize are included in the Virtual Volunteer Handbook.
LEVEL: EASY
Curbside Activity Packet: Letters to Veterans

Description
Families can stay connected to the Veterans Connect program by participating in the greeting card programs run by several national nonprofits that send care packages to veterans. Your patrons can write letters & make cards from a library-supplied simple Card Making Bag. Have your volunteers stuff ziplock bags with supplies to make cards including card stock. (Check your art supplies in the children’s section!) Patrons love being able to express their gratitude, stay connected with the library and have activities that their whole family can participate in. This project can aid in the education of veterans and their families and the benefits that they are entitled to. https://www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks-virtual/write-letters-virtual/
Operation Gratitude is a California based 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Low/Medium/High depending on local providers</td>
<td>Bring a stack of blank cards to collaborative meetings/Rotary Club etc</td>
<td>Paper, coloring pencils, crayons, box for cards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Curbside pickup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>Audience: ALL</td>
<td>$</td>
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Tips: Have a large decorated box curbside for letter writers and card makers to drop their cards into when they return their library books. Do not supply envelopes - the organizations vet each card and letter for appropriateness before sending off to veterans. Consider reaching out to your local VA Hospital or homeless shelter to see if they would distribute encouraging messages on handmade cards.
Basic Information Postcard to Personalize for your Library

Veterans Connect @ the Library

We may be closed, however we can still assist Veterans and their family members with questions and claims. Please call the library at the number below, and we will either connect you with a Veterans Connect Volunteer or provide you with the number to our local County Veterans Service Officer.

(123) 456-7890

This project was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.
Volunteering while social distancing
YOU ARE INVITED
...to explore Volunteer Opportunities with Veterans Connect @ the Library
We have both virtual and at-home volunteer assignments!
Call (123) 456-7890

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Veteran Benefit Contacts Postcard to Personalize for your Library

Veterans Connect @ the Library is still here to serve you!

Important links for Veterans:
- Employment - https://www.calcareers.ca.gov/
- Education - https://www.calvet.ca.gov/veteran-services-benefits/education
- Housing - https://www.calvet.ca.gov/veteran-services-benefits/housing

Important links for Family Members of Veterans:
- Employment - http://jobs.ca.gov/CalHRPublic/Landing/Jobs/VeteransInformation.aspx (for spouses & veterans)

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Several templates are available via Canva.com for you to personalize to your own library needs and requirements. It's easy to ask for access: simply email Karen Bosch Cobb boschcobb@plpinfo.org with Canva Access in the subject heading or watch for a bulk email with an access link.

Remember that the Veterans Connect @ the Library website is filled with resources for you and your volunteers. For example, the Mission Critical Programming Duffel Bag has more ideas that could be moved to a virtual world, such as Veteran Book Clubs (perhaps hosted by one of your virtual volunteers!).

The PR toolkit on the Veterans Connect @ the Library website has promotional images, including the Veterans Connect @ the Library logo, and required Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) language.

The website is available here: https://calibrariesforveterans.org/

Resources for library staff is available here: https://calibrariesforveterans.org/librarians/index.html

Program ideas are available here: https://calibrariesforveterans.org/files/duffelbag/
How to Use Canva Templates

In order to personalize the templates to your own library needs and requirements, we have made the raw templates editable. Please follow the instructions closely in order to edit your own template in Canva.

If you do not already have a Canva account, you will need to sign up for one. The basic account is free. You can sign up here: https://www.canva.com

You need to request edit access to the Canva template files. You can do this by emailing wolfe@plpinfo.org as soon as possible.

Next, use the link you receive via my email to connect with the shared Veterans Connect Volunteer Handbook templates folder in Canva.

Open the template you want to use and use the Duplicate Page button to create a second copy of the template beneath the original.

Veterans Connect Volunteer Templates

Now work with your duplicate page to add or change text and photos. You will find it fairly easy to work with once you take a few minutes to see how the features work. Help is always available here: https://designschool.canva.com/tutorials/getting-started/

Once you have completed your design, you can download it, choosing only the page that you wish to save. You can leave your design or delete it. Just be sure to leave the original design intact and in place!

Remember also that your volunteers are talented! Consider asked one of your creative volunteers to create your marketing materials with Canva, or post it as a volunteer position on Volunteer Match!
The current pandemic has challenged us to adapt. To adapt our current volunteers to a new way of working. To recruit new volunteers that might not have had the opportunity to serve previously, including those now working from home, those with disabilities that were not able to attend at the library and those students with more time to spend online. It has also challenged us to be more creative envisioning possible new virtual roles for our volunteers.

The challenge continues and we hope this handbook serves as a beginning point to guide you forward. You represent the front lines of our mission to reach California veterans and their families in order to ensure that they receive all of the benefits that they have earned through their service. Thank you for all that you do for our volunteers, veterans and their families. Have fun and go make a difference!