

Ideas for Veteran Benefit Coach Volunteers

We have compiled the following suggestions from library staff and volunteers on how to make the most of the volunteer's time when not assisting veterans in the library. Please feel free to suggest others to add to this list.

Working under the direction of the volunteer supervisor and/or library staff, volunteers may:

- Familiarize yourself with the books/DVDS in your library's collection.
- Order/collect replacements of brochures, flyers from [CalVet](#), [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#), and local offices for Veterans.
- When your Center is open, *and if permitted in your library*, use the library's PA system to announce when your Veteran Resource Center is open and/or when a volunteer with special expertise is available.
- Brainstorm and implement ways to bring Veterans into the library or to reach them at community events.
- Attend regional meetings of agencies serving Veterans (obtain OK and coaching from library staff first).
- Help library staff plan, promote and execute programs for Veterans in the library or outside the library building. Based on Veterans visiting your local Veteran Resource Center, brainstorm what programs you would recommend for Veterans in your library. Examples include Veteran Resource Fairs, participating in community parades, carnivals, farmers markets, senior centers, homeless shelters, etc.
- View continuing education training for volunteers on [Veterans Connect @ the Library](#).
- Review your library's website and check to make sure all links are working to services for Veterans. During the review look for
 - Updated Veteran Resource Center hours
 - New agencies or updated contacts for agencies serving Veterans
 - Maps, directions by bus or car to local facilities for Veterans
 - Local agencies providing specific services such as
 - Food Banks
 - Shelter and other services for homeless Veterans; verify that they are still operating.
 - Transportation such as free bus passes or volunteers who provide rides; see about getting free bus passes to distribute.

- Consider creating a resource sheet or a folder of resources to hand out to those visiting the center.
- Review the [Veterans Connect @ the Library: Webliography](#) for sites to suggest for your library's website. It is a guide to website content enhancement for your library, but also provides insight into essential resources in the four critical areas of
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Health
- Bonus material includes
 - Links to large regional Veterans resources such as [Swords to Plowshares](#) in the Bay Area
 - An overview of various Veteran benefits
 - A list of Statewide Service Organizations for Veterans (be sure to look for your local office.)
- Visit or call services agencies for Veterans in your region and promote the services of your Veteran Resource Center. While visiting, get copies of their flyers and brochures to display in your library. See if you can post a flyer about your library's Veteran Resource Center.
- Visit the Veterans Centers at the colleges in your library's area.
- Get a list of Job Centers in your area and visit them with the intent of discovering services they offer to Veterans.
- Visit the Veterans Connect @ the Library website monthly to stay abreast of changes <https://calibrariesforveterans.org/>.
- Visit the CalVet website at least quarterly to stay abreast of changes <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/>.
- Attend meetings/training sessions for staff and volunteers. Volunteers, staff, your LINC officer, and County Veteran Service Officers should be invited to provide updates and share experience-based interactions with Veterans and family members. Meetings are also important to iron out details, implement new programs, etc. Additional agenda items may include:
 - Set up library specific ways to communicate with everyone involved in the program at the library -- use a technique that works: emails, bulletin board, etc.
 - Suggest Social Media posts and/or press releases to library staff to promote programs to attract Veterans.
 - Ask staff for any other training about the library that would help you: i.e. where to refer Veterans or Veteran family members for questions outside the scope of training already provided, include basics such as library hours, key parts of the library, how many books can be checked out, how to get a library card, etc.
 - Discuss whether or not a "lead volunteer" would benefit the program at your library.
 - Discuss and establish ways for volunteers, work-study Veterans, AmeriCorps, and staff to work together.
 - Besides volunteer name tags, what other tools/techniques might call attention to volunteers and your Veteran Resource Center?
 - Explore the usefulness of answering emails or phone calls from Veterans or family members to save trips to the library.

- Set up a way for volunteers to promote your Veteran Resource Center to family members or friends of Veterans.
 - Would volunteers see value in being a greeter at the entrance of the library (similar to Wal-Mart greeters), or having a temporary desk at the entrance to the library?
 - Are the hours your Veteran Resource Center is open the “right hours?”
 - Always feel free to propose ideas for serving Veterans to library staff.
 - The library values you and your skills. Be willing to say what you want to do and do not want to do as a volunteer.
- Continue to build on this list in your library!