

POST OFFICERS



POST OFFICERS

I just got elected - what do I do next.

So many times we find Legionnaires reluctantly taking office because nobody else will do it. That means they are unprepared for the job. Today we are going to talk about how to prepare ourselves and others on what to do and where to find the answers to that question - "I just got elected - What do I do next"

Fortunately, we have a great manual published by our National Headquarters that answers almost every question you might have. The manual titled Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies was revised in 2013 and is very easy to use.

How is it organized?

Section 1 – Post Operations - Complete instruction's for all post officers

Section 2 – Manual of Ceremonies - Examples for most any ceremony at the post

Section 3 - Appendix - A great list of other subjects in the manual

While our focus today will be on section 1 I want to call your attention to a few items in Section 2 and 3.

Let's start with Section 2 - Manual of Ceremonies

Turn to page:

Regular Meetings – Page 43

Installation of Officers – Page 55

Dedications – Page 61

Patriotic Holidays – Page 78

Now let's look at Section 3 - Appendix

New Posts – Page 108

Parliamentary Procedure – Page 120

Surplus Military Equipment – Page 137

Publications & Other Materials – Page 156

Meaning of our Preamble

As an officer of The American Legion it is important to not only know the words to our Preamble but to understand that it is our mission. Take each section and break it down so that you understand why we do the things we do in our communities.

The post

The American Legion is incorporated by act of Congress and is organized into local posts, which, for purposes of coordination and administration, are grouped into departments. The post is the combat unit of The American Legion. Depending upon its ability to realize American Legion policies and properly interpret them to others, and to successfully carry out unselfish activities for the community, the state and the nation, our organization will stand or fall. The post is The American Legion. Its duties are beautifully spelled out in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion. Membership is by post only. Programs are effective to the degree the post adopts and puts them into operation.

Kinds of posts, goals Each Legionnaire sees The American Legion through his or her personal experiences or desires. The organization is big enough and broad enough to accommodate everyone, but the post will reflect the composite personality of its members. There are country club--type posts and community posts. There are posts of ethnic groups and all women. There are business and professional posts, company posts, and posts formed by fraternal groups. Some posts have several thousand members, while others are successful with fewer than a hundred. All are doing the work of The American Legion.

Developing leaders The American Legion requires a terrific amount of manpower. More than 13,000 new post commanders are needed each year. This number tops 100,000 when other post officers are elected. Some hold the same office year after year, but there is always a need for fresh volunteer leaders. Where are they found? First, a veteran becomes a member.

Elections The post constitution and bylaws will spell out the dates for nomination and election of officers. If these do not agree with the department constitution and bylaws, the post's election dates should be changed.

Installation The installation of a new group of officers is the first occasion of the new Legion year for an impressive ceremony and one of the top social events on the post's calendar. If new officers are casually installed, their attitude toward their obligation will be casual. If the installation is accompanied by a banquet, visits from department and district officers, and entertainment that draws a crowd, the new officers are going to be fully aware of the responsibilities they have assumed.

District/county Departments have the authority to create intermediate bodies between the post and department to assist as a liaison between such organizations, and for the purpose of promoting the programs of The American Legion.

Department The American Legion is organized into departments and these, in turn, into posts. There is one department in each state and the District of Columbia, and there may be one in each territory and insular possession of the United States (Puerto Rico). Each department may prescribe the constitution of its posts, and the department has supervision of the posts within its boundaries and the posts assigned to it by the National Executive Committee. There are also foreign departments in the Philippines, France and Mexico. In all, there are 55 departments.

National Headquarters The top legislative body of The American Legion is the national convention. The National Executive Committee is vested with administrative authority between

national conventions. Through the offices of National Headquarters in Indianapolis and Washington, D.C., the policies of the Legion are clarified and its activities are centered and directed. Thus, the influence of nearly 14,000 posts is coordinated and directed along the lines of Legion policy.

Post officers

Commander That you have ability is recognized by your election to the office of post commander. Now you must draw on your ability and past experience while developing new skills so that you will succeed in helping the post prosper. The charge you have accepted, commander, is broad and difficult. How you respond will determine to a large degree the standing of The American Legion among your associates and within the community.

Adjutant The adjutant has the same position in the post as the secretary of any other organized body, and a bit more. Like the first sergeant of a company, post activities revolve around the adjutant. Most posts find it wise to retain a good adjutant in office over a period of years.

First vice commander In the majority of posts, a first and second vice commander are elected, with membership the primary concern of the first vice commander. Frequently, the success or failure of the membership record during his or her year determines the chances of advancing to the office of commander the next year.

Second vice commander The second vice commander is responsible for building an "I like my post because ..." atmosphere in which Legionnaires have fun while doing the work of the Legion. The commander depends on the second vice commander to help run the programs that spice up meetings and attract attendance.

Finance officer/treasurer The finance officer/treasurer must be a person of proven integrity and experience in handling financial affairs. The post depends on finance, just as any other organization, and will do well to accept expert advice in formulating and administering its financial policy.

Service officer A good service officer should be retained. The value of a post service officer increases with length of service. As the service officer's reputation grows, so will the prestige of the organization in your community. The job calls for a competent and dedicated person, preferably one who lives and works nearby and is readily available to those needing assistance.

Chaplain The chaplain need not necessarily be a clergyman, but must be a person capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office.

Sergeant-at-arms The sergeant-at-arms knows how to arrange the meeting hall and assists the post commander and adjutant in preliminary arrangements for meetings, including leading the color detail during presentation and retirement ceremonies.

Historian The work of post historian is cumulative. It is wise to leave it in the hands of one person as long as it's being handled well. The office is a suitable position for a past post commander.

Judge advocate The primary duty of the judge advocate is to supply professional advice in the conduct of post business or to procure proper counsel. He is the guardian of the constitutional form of post government.

Executive committee In the suggested post constitution and by-laws (**see pages 106---111**), the government and management of the post is entrusted to the executive committee. It should meet regularly or as often as the commander deems necessary.

Post Committees

Standing committees Listed below are committees found in most American Legion posts, with brief descriptions of their duties. Your post constitution and/or department constitution may require additional committees or have other names for some committees, so do not consider the list to be mandatory or complete for every American Legion post. New programs are often needed, while old programs should be changed, revitalized or, in some cases, dropped. Officers should take time to review the post's long standing programs and activities and consider changes or additions.

Americanism This committee seeks to inspire love of country and good citizenship through patriotic observances, flag etiquette, civic instruction in schools, the Americanization of immigrants, community service, and youth activities such as Boys State, Boy Scouts, Oratorical Contest, School Award Medals and American Legion Baseball.

Children and Youth This committee is charged with ensuring that any child of a veteran in need of care and protection shall receive proper and timely service and aid, strengthening the family unit, extending support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth, and maintaining a well rounded program that meets the needs of the young people in the community.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation This committee assists veterans in pursuing claims, understanding their rights and obtaining their benefits. Committee members also visit comrades who are sick or disabled, and provide comfort to members' families in illness and bereavement. The head of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee may be the post service officer. In addition, the post chaplain may serve as chair of a visiting committee.

National Security This committee urges post members to assist in community emergency preparedness, and to support local and national civilian defense projects.

Membership & Post Activities This committee is responsible for obtaining, retaining and increasing post membership – specifically, renewals, enrollment of new members, transfers and reinstatements. The first vice commander often chairs the membership committee.

Public Relations This committee elevates awareness in the veterans community and the community at large of the Legion's advocacy of veterans issues, national security, Americanism, and children and youth. The American Legion is defined in the public eye by the values for which it stands.

Legislative This committee promotes the Legion's official legislative mandates, disseminates monthly legislative updates, organizes and promotes proactive grassroots lobbying activities, and establishes and maintains liaisons with elected officials and their staffs. All activities must be in compliance with Section 2, Article II of the Constitution of The American Legion, which forbids the dissemination of partisan principles and the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office.

Finance This committee supervises the receiving, disbursement and accounting of all post funds, prepares annual budget recommendations, and advises the post on all financial policies. The post finance officer usually chairs the finance committee.

Economic This committee assists veterans in meeting and overcoming problems such as employment, veterans preference, housing, civil service appeals, and employment of handicapped and older workers.

House This committee supervises the operation of the post's physical facilities, such as a clubroom, American Legion center, meeting room, etc. Responsibilities include administration, equipment, and the hiring and direction of employees, as authorized by the post executive committee and general rules applicable to the conduct of members while on the post's premises.

Service This committee is key to every successful post, assisting returning veterans in their transition to civilian life. Other concerns include employment, on the job training, and educating veterans on their rights and benefits. The committee should also maintain contact with any members of the armed forces from the post's community.

Sons of The American Legion This committee supervises the Sons of The American Legion squadron in its organization, activities, and recreational and educational programs.

American Legion Riders This committee mentors and supervises the post's American Legion Riders chapter for proper organizational structure, reporting requirements at monthly post meetings, and to record activities, fundraising, and recreational and scholarship programs.

Graves Registration and Memorials This committee records, marks and decorates graves of deceased veterans, renders service and comfort to bereaved families, and provides American Legion military funeral honors when requested.

Uniformed Groups This committee organizes, trains, promotes and supervises uniformed groups, such as a burial detail, color guard, chorus or firing squad.

Visiting or VAVS Members of this committee give comfort and assistance to members and their families during illness or bereavement, and visit hospitalized veterans. It is recommended the post chaplain chair this committee, and all post members share in its work by taking turns as committee members.

Uniformed groups

The American Legion pioneered the modern drum corps through post level amateur musical drill units, and has been adding to the beauty, excitement and precision of the modern parade since 1921. Uniformed groups are The American Legion's "display cases," so to speak. At parades, funerals and special events, they advertise the Legion's size, scope and substance to the public at large; they are one of the finest opportunities for post public relations. They afford those involved a sense of accomplishment, and a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment. Any post that wants to participate in uniformed group activities is encouraged to do so. There are many options from which to choose: an ensemble or band, a color guard or firing squad, a chorus or quartet. If the natural bent of your post is toward youth activities, sponsor a junior unit of some type. Every year, the national convention puts on color guard and band contests, in the following classes:

Color Guard

Military

Military Open

Open Advancing and Retiring Colors

Band

Concert Band

Exhibition Concert Band

Analysis of Post Operation

President Abraham Lincoln is said to have remarked, "A man's legs need to be long enough to reach the ground." In the same way, a post's membership needs to be large enough to carry on the work of the post – and it will be, for a post's activities cannot exceed what its membership can support. But before discussing a post's membership and how big the post ought to be, consider these questions:

What does the post do that would make a veteran want to belong?

Is the post looking to the future?

What further activities could the post reasonably expect to carry out?

How many members can the post expect to handle?

How many members does the post actually want, and how many could it be expected to handle?

Is it satisfied with its current membership?

What kind of post is it or does it want to be?

What is the reason for the post's existence?

The answers for every post will be different, revealing which posts are capable of membership growth and which must improve and modernize their programs before healthy membership growth can be supported.

In any given post, there is a reliable group of members who do most of the work. Nearly all posts build their programs around this manpower pool. Even so, this percentage of active members does not need to hover at the same mark. Pick up department and national planning manuals for ideas on how to increase the number and contributions of active Legionnaires, and use this material as a base for your own presentation to make your post more effective.

Post Responsibility Audit (PRA)

A post responsibility audit, or PRA, anticipates that a post participates, through its members, in meaningful activities within the community where its members reside. The PRA is a helpful way to measure the results of these activities.

Over the decades, The American Legion and its posts have developed programs largely in response to pressure. These pressures can take many forms: a drop in membership, acceptance by the wider community, changing economic factors, or the return of a new generation of veterans from war. All these challenges, and others, must be faced head-on by the Legion.

Unfortunately, some posts respond by reacting rather than acting. As individuals, and in our personal lives, we know the value of planning ahead. But when a person has been active in a post for a long time, “blindness” or “tunnel vision” can set in. You’ll hear statements like, “Be active” or “Promote community service,” but members may choose to react instead of act ahead of any emergency.

There are no precise standards developed to provide both a qualitative and quantitative post analysis, but one must start somewhere, and the accompanying PRA form can be used as a barometer to help measure a post’s effectiveness.

The intent of the PRA is not necessarily to indicate how you can quickly rate your posts, although this could be a valuable tool. The primary purpose is to indicate how, by evaluating what the post is doing, you can see if it is fulfilling a useful function, attracting veterans and benefiting the community.

If you honestly evaluate your posts, you are going to be surprised. More important, such evaluations will indicate where improvement is most needed.

Perhaps the social aspects have been underplayed, although it would be easy to cover all such activities under the fifth item, “Post is a community center” or the eighth item, “Is a friendly place to be.” If the PRA is used, there may need to be increased emphasis on planned social or recreational programs. In the meantime, do not lose sight of the fundamental question, “Is this post doing the things that justify its continued existence in the community or for your veterans?”

A score of 24 usually reflects a post that’s doing a respectable job of hanging on to old members. But it’s doubtful many are coming out to meetings, and it’s more doubtful it would be attracting the necessary new blood to make the post grow.

Most average posts, with a bit of effort, can become outstanding posts. By improving in each area listed on the PRA, that can happen. One area in which a better performance is most visibly observed is in post meeting attendance. Others are members’ enthusiasm and a brightening of the membership outlook.

Evaluate what the post is doing by using the following PRA form to audit post activities. Run a beginning audit with periodic follow-ups for comparison – perhaps quarterly – to see whether or not the post has made any improvements in specifically identified areas.

Steps to a better post

Many times, new post officers are eager to do a job but lack the background or organization skills to complete their year. The following outline is a proven plan that can help organize a post, useful at all levels:

Step I Obtain post records and get new material from department headquarters to become familiar with the policies and traditions of the post, district, department and National Headquarters.

Step II Call an early meeting of your newly elected officers. Invite the outgoing commander and adjutant and other influential Legionnaires to meet with you. A suggested agenda should include:

- a. Budget
 1. Old, and possibly new, sources of income
 2. Estimated expenditures
 3. Possible methods of financing selected programs with other than post funds
- b. Assignments and outline of duties of elected officers
- c. Discussion of individual programs and committees to determine the following:
 1. Qualifications and suggestions for committee chairs and members
 2. Established programs
 3. Possible new programs (use available handbooks and department material as guides)
 4. Program schedule
- d. Discussion programs unique to your post
- e. Initiate study of the post and community for new programs, conduct post analysis

Step III Activate committees.

- a. Select chairperson and members
- b. Make personal contact with each chair to determine willingness to serve
- c. Arrange meeting of committees to formulate program
- d. Instruct chairmen on programs, available materials, post reports and more
- e. Build timetable for each committee to fit into the overall post calendar

Step IV Coordinate with the post's Auxiliary unit. Many programs depend on Auxiliary support to be successful.

Step V Conduct a post meeting

- a. The first post meeting tends to set a pattern for the entire year.
- b. Work closely with the adjutant, officers and committee heads.
- c. Run a formal meeting, following the ritual in the Manual of Ceremonies.
- d. Post business should be attended to as briefly as possible.
- e. Know department and national material in advance and report items of interest to the membership.
- f. Committee reports should be brief and to the point.
- g. Consider qualified speakers at some or all meetings for briefings on some phase of Legion programs.
- h. Don't neglect the social side.
- i. Announce the main business of the next meeting.
- j. Have the welcome committee established.

Step VI Conduct a Public Relations Committee meeting.

- a. Discuss ways and means.
- b. Formulate instruction to post officers and committee chairs on standard procedure for keeping the Public Relations chair and editor of your newspaper or bulletin informed.

Step VII Plan for a more informed membership.

- a. Talks at post meetings

- b. Give everyone a job.
- c. Encourage enrollment and completion of The American Legion Extension Institute online.
- d. Pass on information.
- e. Publish a monthly post newspaper or bulletin.
- f. Acquaint active members with veteran benefits.

Step VIII Appoint a coordinating committee for patriotic observances.

- a. Work with standing committees, including younger members.
- b. Work with the entire community to recognize local active military personnel and all veterans.
- c. Include uniformed groups if available.

Step IX Give proper credit.

- a. Awards and citations
- b. Thank---you notes
- c. Recognition at meetings

Step X The voice of the Legionnaire and the post is only heard by active participation in meetings, whether district, department or national.

- a. Plan election of delegates as part of the post timetable.
- b. Attend district, department and national conventions and conferences.
- c. Present sound resolutions of concern to The American Legion.
- d. Report back to the post.

Step XI Follow standard procedures and schedule all year round. Plan post meetings three months ahead, and social activities six months ahead.

Step XII It is never too early to evaluate possible post officers for next year.

Post charters

Application forms for chartering a new American Legion post may be obtained from department headquarters. A temporary charter is issued first, and when the post's founders have demonstrated their ability to maintain a post over a period of no fewer than 90 days and have developed an efficient organization for furthering the Legion's work and ideals, they are eligible to receive a permanent post charter. Application forms for permanent charter may be obtained from department headquarters. A post name must be adopted before a new post is issued a charter. Many posts choose to adopt the name of a departed comrade – a fitting memorial. If members do not wish to decide on a permanent name at the time the post is organized, it is recommended that a temporary name be adopted (for instance, the name of the town or county). This can be changed by resolution of the post membership when applying for permanent charter. A copy of the resolution, attested by the post commander and the post adjutant, should be attached to each copy of the application for permanent charter. When a post with a permanent charter adopts a new name, a new permanent charter bearing the new name may be obtained upon written request through department headquarters. Such requests should be accompanied by duly attested copies of the resolution adopting the new name and by surrender of the old charter. If a post loses its permanent charter through fire or other damage, a new one may be obtained by a written request to the department headquarters. The request should include an explanation of the facts surrounding the loss, signed by the post commander and attested by the post adjutant.

New posts

When the department-prescribed minimum number of eligible veterans has decided to form a new post, and they have the go-ahead from the county or district and department officers, set a time and place for an organizational meeting. Spread the word via local newspapers, email, websites, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Establishing a new post or reviving a dormant one is not difficult if a group follows certain steps. Determine first that The American Legion is not serving a particular community or neighborhood where there are sufficient veterans to support an active and growing post. Someone of stature from the district or the department must visit the area and find out where the community's and veterans' needs. This may take the form of a survey, asking where The American Legion might serve in connection with local schools and school programs, drug abuse and teen suicide prevention, Scouting, care for disabled or aging veterans, or the community's need for volunteer groups such as the American Legion Auxiliary.

Project Stay Active

Project Stay Active helps local posts maintain contact with members who move into your area. National Headquarters prints a summary of the veteran's membership on a 3x5 card, including both new and old addresses, the member's department, the post number, the number of continuous years, and the date the card was printed. If the member is a life member, it is noted. The card is printed in ZIP code order and mailed to department adjutants for distribution to the post most accessible to the member. This post is then asked to contact and welcome the member to the area. This is an ideal time to offer assistance and to invite the member to visit your post. In many cases, the Legionnaire may wish to transfer membership to a post in the community. As may be expected, some of these Legionnaires are involved in temporary moves, some may have a life membership "back home," and others may have sentimental feelings toward their hometown post. However, many of them will be receptive to an offer to transfer to your post when asked. Departments actively participating in Project Stay Active generally distribute the cards each month through district or county commanders.

Direct Renewal Notices

Beginning in July, National Headquarters mails direct dues renewal notices to current members. The member pays dues directly to the post. Each year, department headquarters mails a post data card to the post asking for the post's dues amount and the address to which the member is to mail dues. As much as possible, posts should use a permanent mailing address – either a post office box or the address of the post home. Some posts have members who should not receive renewal notices. In these cases, send a letter to department headquarters listing those members' names, addresses and card numbers, signed by a post official and giving the post number, and they will not receive another renewal notice. Thereafter, the code letter "c" will appear in a column after the member's ZIP code in the post membership register. Only one amount for post dues can be printed for each post. For example, National Headquarters cannot print "\$30 until January 1, \$35 after January 1." Posts that do not participate in the department program may be included in the

next billing by filling out a post data card and sending it to department headquarters. Through department participation, additional notices are available. Scheduled renewal mailings are usually at no cost to departments or posts. All delinquent members will receive renewal notices in March; if still delinquent in May, an additional renewal may be sent.

Paid up for Life

These members pay a one-time fee or can utilize a time payment plan option to gain lifetime membership in The American Legion. These Legionnaires have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the national plan. A Legionnaire must be in good standing to become a PUFL member. To be in good standing, the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion year. Obtain PUFL application forms from department headquarters, National Headquarters or online at www.legion.org/join/pufl.

Consolidated Post Reports

Post adjutants are the key to how well The American Legion as a whole will be able to report to the American people its actual accomplishments for the past year. Each post receives a three-part, snap-out CPR report form as the reporting year comes to a close. The first two copies go to department headquarters, and the third copy is to be retained by the post. All reports from a district's posts should be sent to department headquarters on or before the June 15 deadline, or sooner if the department has set an earlier date. The CPR form covers participation in the Legion's basic programs: Americanism, Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Economic and National Security. Other requested items are the number of funeral honors provided for deceased members, and whether the post sponsors a uniformed group or distributes a regular publication to members. Don't be discouraged if the post doesn't have something to report in every blank on the CPR. Very few posts have every Legion program. Many outstanding posts devote their energies and resources to just two or three programs or activities, more than justifying their existence. Information from CPR forms is frequently shared with members of Congress, giving them a snapshot of the valuable community service provided by American Legion, Auxiliary and SAL members.

Mylegion.org

National Headquarters has a secure website to assist post officers in their day-to-day membership processing duties. To register, the post adjutant must first complete and submit an authorization form at www.mylegion.org. View member information for post and squadron data. Track members who have renewed online. Submit Member Data Form changes electronically, with the exception of adding new members, processing renewals and transferring members. Those three processes must continue to be transmitted to the department. All member data changes submitted electronically through myLegion.org are submitted to department headquarters in a weekly file from National Headquarters, eliminating the need to complete or mail paper forms for address changes, phone number updates, deceased notifications, etc. Generate rosters for current, expired, deceased and undeliverable members. Data is also available in CSV file format allowing users to work with the data in other applications. Submit Consolidated Post Report (CPR)

electronically. Search for headquarters post and expired members in a specified area to help grow your post membership.

Child Welfare Foundation

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) was created in 1954 to:

- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs designed to benefit youth.
- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

CWF's primary source of revenue is members of the Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Eight & Forty. It also receives support from all levels of the organization – local, state and national.

To provide an incentive for giving on an annual basis, CWF has the Cornerstone Gift Club, which offers awards to individuals for their cumulative donations made during the current contribution year (June 1-May 31):

	Cumulative donations	Award
Century Club	\$100	Gold pin with amethyst
Foundation Partner	\$250	Gold pin with blue sapphire
President's Circle	\$500	Gold pin with one diamond
Foundation Ambassadors	\$1,000	Gold pin with five diamonds

The "Children First" Gift Club recognizes posts for their cumulative donations:

Caretaker	\$500	Bronze plaque
Advocate	\$750	Silver plaque
Guardian	\$1,000	Gold plaque

Contributions

All contributions are tax-deductible. Every check or money order (\$5 or more) received is acknowledged by official receipt, which should be held for tax purposes.

- All contributions go directly into CWF. All overhead expenses are covered by separate funding.
- All cash contributions are acknowledged regardless of amount. Do not send cash through the mail. Contributions can be made directly to CWF. They do not have to go through department headquarters.
- Accurate records are kept of states, organizations and individuals sending in contributions. Correspondence is kept on file for one year, but computer records are maintained.
- Your department gets credit for your support on CWF's national report to Congress.

Suggestions

- When a member of the post or unit passes away, suggest that contributions be sent to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation in their memory to provide meaningful grants that will help children.
- Make CWF a regular part of annual post activities by conducting a fundraiser.
- Mention CWF at post and unit meetings to make others aware of what it is and how it helps children. Start a collection of plaques to display in the post home.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)

Temporary Financial Assistance is the landmark program of the Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth. Started in 1925 as a form of direct aid to children, TFA is still unique in the field of social work today.

Through TFA, a post can call upon the national organization to provide cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children when it is evident there are no other resources available to provide the required assistance. These payments, as indicated by the program's name, are temporary, and this cash assistance is in the form of a grant.

The post and department are expected to make every effort to secure assistance for needy veterans' children from its own resources, or those of other organizations or agencies within the community whose purpose it is to meet the need. Payments from the program may be made to, or on behalf of, the family for a variety of expenses necessary to maintain the health and welfare of the children involved.

A maintenance grant may be used for food, shelter (rent or mortgage payment, utilities and educational expense. It cannot be used for debts incurred prior to the date of application for TFA. Credit--card payments, bank notes (other than home mortgage loans), auto loans and other installment--type payments are considered to be "prior debts." The only exceptions to this policy are utilities and shelter payments.

A medical grant requires a written statement from a doctor outlining the program, the treatment and the estimated costs. It may be used for medical care, surgery, dental care, pharmaceuticals, dietary needs, hospitalization, nursing and convalescent care, and other needs as specified.

A medical grant cannot cover previous expenses or care. A family must meet two criteria to be eligible:

- The veteran must have served a portion of active duty during one of these periods: August 2, 1990, to present (or the cessation of hostilities as determined by the U.S. government); December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; or December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946.
- There must be children in the home younger than 18 (younger than 21 if still in high school or physically handicapped). These children may be legitimate, stepchildren, legally adopted or illegitimate with necessary proof of relationship provided.

Note: The veteran does not need to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance.

Requests for assistance must be submitted on an official application form, available from department headquarters. Each application has instructions to guide the local investigator through the procedure of filing. For more information about TFA, request a brochure from your department adjutant or the National Americanism and Children & Youth Division by calling **(317) 630-1203** or sending an email to **acy@legion.org**.

National Emergency Fund

The National Emergency Fund program is one of the best examples of “veterans helping veterans” through The American Legion. Since the NEF was reestablished in 1989, the no-strings- attached disaster relief program has provided more than \$9 million in direct financial assistance to thousands of Legionnaires and their families recovering from declared natural disasters. Every post officer should understand how to prepare for disasters so that your post can provide immediate and responsive care to members affected.

Eligibility There are no premiums to pay into the NEF program. Rather, grants are made to Legionnaires, SAL members and posts in need. The only requirements on their behalf are:

- Must be a current--year paid member of The American Legion or SAL
- Must be a member in good standing with their post or squadron
- Must have been a current member prior to the date of disaster

Only one grant per household can be considered. The NEF does not cover damages to automobiles, outbuildings (such as sheds and barns), and apartments or businesses. Nor are NEF grants to take the place of, or supplement, insurance compensation. They are intended solely to assist members if they lose, or are displaced from, their primary homes due to a declared natural disaster. Subsequently, incidents stemming from accidental fires in the home or faulty structural damages do not fall within the confines of the NEF.

Posts are eligible to receive grants from this fund, if damaged by declared natural disaster. The application must be supported by substantiating documentation that the post will cease to perform programs and activities in the community due to losses sustained.

How to apply

NEF grant applications may be obtained from department headquarters or National Headquarters at **(317) 630-1205**, or online at **www.legion.org/emergency**. The turnaround time for a grant depends on how soon the completed application is received at National Headquarters in Indianapolis.

At the very minimum, the NEF application should include:

- Copies of lodging, food, gas, clothing receipts
- Copies of estimates of damage □ Photographs of the damage
- Description of loss
- List of out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of displacement from primary residence

Failure to include this information could delay the grant. Supporting documentation cannot be returned.

Once the grant application is completed, it must be forwarded to department headquarters, where it is reviewed and damages are assessed. The department commander and adjutant determine the grant amount, which is not to exceed \$1,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for posts. They sign the application and forward it to National Headquarters, which makes final approval. National Headquarters issues a check to the member or post and forwards it to department headquarters for distribution.

All contributions made to the NEF are distributed directly to the Legionnaire or SAL member in need. There are no administrative or fulfillment costs. To learn how to donate, visit www.legion.org/emergency.

Sons of The American Legion

All male descendants, adopted sons and stepsons of members of The American Legion, along with male descendants of veterans who died in service during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Lebanon/Grenada, Panama, the Gulf War or the war on terrorism during the delimiting periods set forth in Article IV, Section 1, of the National Constitution of The American Legion, or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, are eligible for membership in Sons of The American Legion. Since SAL eligibility begins at date of birth, a squadron's activities and programs should be determined by age groupings of eligible members, the apparent needs of young eligible's, the community's need for programs and activities that could be provided by SAL, and the capabilities of those serving as SAL leaders and advisers. New members should be initiated with full ceremony. A member's first impression is often the most lasting. Also, distribute copies of the SAL Squadron Handbook available when initiating new candidates. Two copies per squadron – one for the squadron commander, one for the squadron adjutant – are available from the department. Purchase additional copies from Emblem Sales at **888-453-4466** or online at emblem.legion.org.

American Legion Auxiliary

The mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of veterans, the military and their families. Through various programs, the Auxiliary also educates citizens, mentors youth, and promotes patriotism, citizenship, peace and security. Membership is open to wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, granddaughters and great-granddaughters of veterans who served during wartime; some Auxiliary members are veterans themselves.

- If an applicant is joining on her own service record, the Auxiliary unit to which she is applying for membership will be responsible for verification of her eligibility for membership.
- If applicant is joining on the basis of her relationship to a member of The American Legion, an officer of the post to which that relative belongs must certify the Legionnaire's membership in that post.
- If an applicant wishes to join a unit or a post other than the one to which her Legionnaire relative belongs, the unit to which she is applying for membership should check the eligibility with the post of her relative.

- Under no circumstances, when eligibility is to be based on relationship to a deceased veteran, should an adjutant certify an application for membership without checking the veteran's discharge papers to determine that the dates of service fall within the Legion's eligibility time periods. The deceased veteran need not have been a Legionnaire for the applicant to qualify for Auxiliary membership.

Resources

- ✓ Americanism Manual
- ✓ Blue Star Salute Guide
- ✓ Chaplains Ho To Manual
- ✓ Children & Youth Manual
- ✓ Disaster Preparedness Manual
- ✓ Adjutant's Manual
- ✓ Officers Guide
- ✓ Post Operations Manual
- ✓ Membership Training Guide
- ✓ Public Relation Manual
- ✓ Service Office Guide
- ✓ IRS Laws & Publications (Pub 3386)
- ✓ Godwin Report

