

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM GUIDE
2026-2027**

Chair:
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OUR MISSION

In the spirit of service, not self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support the American Legion and to honor the sacrifices of those who serve by enhancing their lives of our Veterans, military and their families, both at home and abroad. We advocate for our veterans, educate for our citizens, mentor our youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.

OUR IMPACT

We are one of the nation's most important supporters of Veterans, the military, and their families. We help to advance the mission of the American Legion. From helping to draft the GI Bill in 1944 to advocating for Veterans on Capitol Hill. The nonpartisan American Legion Family is instrumental in advancing legislature that improves the quality of life of our Nation's Veterans and service members.

ACCOMPLISHING OUR GOALS

The VA&R program includes many areas of service, beginning with our hospitals. Michigan has seven hospitals, each supported by Representatives, Deputies, and Directors who help coordinate volunteer programs. These efforts may include service carts, donated items for hospital programs, ice cream socials, bingo, car shows, off-site events, and accompanying Veterans on bus rides to provide companionship during both the trip and the event. If you regularly visit a Veteran, take them on outings, or help them with projects. It is important to report those hours to the individuals in charge of the hospital and to your Unit President so they can be counted.

SERVING OUR VETERANS

Not everyone lives near a VA hospital, but there are many ways to support Veterans in your community. Most Michigan counties have Veterans' services, often located near larger cities. Search your county website for "Veteran Services" and contact them to learn how you can help. They can connect you with Veterans and local programs that need support. Simple efforts, such

as hosting a monthly coffee hour, setting up a booth at a community event, or helping with Veteran food pantries, can make a difference. You may also help connect Veterans with services such as housing, jobs, childcare, lawn care, or meals.

Many community programs allow us to support and honor Veterans, such as Quilts of Honor, Honor Flights, Wreaths Across America, Michigan Wounded Warriors, Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades, family meal programs, lawn care, and branch birthday celebrations. These efforts show appreciation and create opportunities to connect with Veterans. Women Veterans Day, observed each year on June 12th, is especially important. It is a meaningful time to thank women Veterans, learn about their needs, and support safe spaces, including Michigan's sanctuary for women Veterans, where they can rest, seek help, or find privacy.

Each year, Grand Rapids hosts ArtPrize, drawing more than one million visitors. Some areas are dedicated to Veterans, giving them a place to display their art, share their stories, and connect with others. Support can be as simple as bringing bottled water during the two-week event, donating art supplies, or hosting monthly music sessions where Veterans can play guitar or other instruments. Creative outlets such as art and music can be powerful forms of healing, and contributing to these efforts can make a meaningful difference.

HOMELESS VETERANS

Support activities that help homeless Veterans in your community. The following ideas can help members, Units, and Departments organize meaningful service efforts.

Ideas for Members and Units

- Offer support to your Department's American Legion Homeless Veteran Coordinator, including helping to respond to requests from homeless Veterans or homeless Veteran service providers.
- Crochet hats, scarves, or mittens to distribute to homeless Veterans.
- Contact the homeless Veteran Coordinator at the nearest VA health care system to learn how your Unit or individual members can help locally.
- Participate in VA Project CHALENG, organized by your nearest VA health care system. Project CHALENG strengthens care for homeless Veterans through collaboration among the local VA and community service agencies.
- Contact your local American Legion Post Chair and offer assistance when requests come through The American Legion's Family Support Network.
- Raise funds for local American Legion Posts to help Veterans and their families through the Family Support Network, including Veterans at risk of losing housing or homeless Veterans transitioning to permanent housing.
- Help cover overdue rent, utility payments, deposits, or security deposits for eligible Veterans and families.

- Host or volunteer at homeless Veterans' Stand Downs, where Veterans can receive free goods and services such as haircuts, medical exams, clothing, and other support.
- Contact emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and permanent housing programs in your community to identify volunteer and in-kind contribution needs.
- Support local organizations by preparing and serving meals, collecting and distributing clothing, assembling and delivering hygiene kits or buddy baskets, and purchasing or securing household items and furniture.
- Reach out to homeless Veterans in local programs to provide practical, social, and moral support.
- Compile "Blessing Bags" for local police departments or other organizations that work with homeless Veteran populations.
- Create a "Tree of Warmth" by collecting scarves, mittens, and hats and attaching them to a tree in an area frequented by people experiencing homelessness. Add a sign such as "Please Take, if Needed" or "Free if Needed."

Ideas for Departments

- Identify ways to help homeless Veterans in local communities by connecting with VA homeless coordinators, state VA coordinators, or Homeless Roundtables.
- Identify The American Legion's homeless Veteran Coordinator in your department and prepare a resource bulletin for units.
- Contact the homeless Veteran Coordinator at the VA health care system in your state to learn how Units and individual members can support homeless Veterans in their communities.

Share helpful information with units and members throughout the department

AWARDS

Unit Award: Most Outstanding VA&R Program (per division)

- All unit entries must be submitted via electronic form by 5PM (EST) on June 1, 2027.

Note: You will receive confirmation when your award is submitted.

National Awards form link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>

Department Award: Best Department VA&R Program (per division)

- All department entries must be submitted via electronic form by 5PM (EST) on June 1, 2027.

Note: You will receive confirmation when your award is submitted.

National Awards form link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>

PLEASE NOTE – WHEN APPLICABLE, UNIT AND DEPARTMENT DEADLINES DIFFER.

Questions? Contact VA&R@ALAforVeterans.org.

More information is available on the website <https://www.legion-aux.org/>

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

VA & R Chairman:

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Veterans Hospitals and Homes

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Department Committees (Continued)

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Chesterfield Home for Veterans

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Detroit VAMC (Dingell)

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