



# **Elks Voluntary Service Guide**

**2021-22**



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The Elks National Veterans Service Commission's (ENVSC) mission is one of direct service to our nation's veterans and military members, with a special focus on service to those in need.

ENVSC-funded projects should focus on one of these five areas of increased need:



**Employment**



**Homelessness and housing**



**Military families**



**Health and independent living**



**Educational support**

While admirable, memorials and appreciation ceremonies do not qualify. Lodges are free to use local, state or other funds to hold these events.

## Section One:

# Welcome

Thank you for joining us as a volunteer!

## Voluntary Service Program Overview

Run by the ENVSC, the Voluntary Service program stations volunteers in facilities across the country to provide friendship, support, and individual attention to veterans in need. Modeled off the VA Voluntary Service program, the Elks Voluntary Service Program includes support at non-VA facilities as well.

Volunteers are assigned to assist veterans at a specific facility and must be actively involved in serving these veterans.

Each facility has one Representative, and 2-3 Deputy Representatives. Volunteers should be aware that they are representing their Lodge and the Elks organization. As such, they should follow all local guidelines, and always treat VA and facility staff respectfully.



Representatives take the lead in planning activities and organizing events. Representatives also:

- Visit at least once a month
- Represent the Elks at the facility
- Recruit volunteers to help
- Share regular updates with State Veterans Chair
- File monthly reports online
- Handle the monthly allocation and the corresponding bank account
- Save all program receipts for 3 full years

## Deputy Representatives are assigned to facilities to assist the Representative. Deputy Representatives:

- Visit at least every other month, or 6 times a year
- Represent the Elks at the facility
- Help with activities and programs
- Recruit volunteers to help

## How it works

### ENVSC sends funds to each state

(direct deposit available)



### State divides funds into individual allocations



Representative receives monthly allocation in account

## What's the difference between an Elks Voluntary Service Representative and a Lodge Veterans Chair?

- Elks Voluntary Service Representatives receive funding from the ENVSC office each month and are accountable to their State Veterans Chairs and to the ENVSC. This funding is intended to serve veterans at the facility where the Representative is assigned.
- Lodge Veterans Chairs handle funding from the Lodge and report to their Lodge leadership.
- Some people hold both positions at the same time. When you contact us with questions about your activities as a Voluntary Service Representative, we may not be familiar with the work you do on the District or Lodge level, so be sure to let us know which facility you visit as a volunteer.



## Section Two:

# Getting Started

## I. Set Up a Bank Account

- A** Obtain records from the previous Representative, including all remaining funds in the facility account, details of ongoing programs, and names and contact information for people to work with at the facility.
- B** You must have a bank account for the facility that you represent. If you are a Representative at more than 1 facility, you will have multiple bank accounts.
- C** We recommend linking your bank account to the Lodge ID, with your Lodge's permission. However, keep in mind that ENVSC funds can never be mixed with other Lodge funds. Your ENVSC allocation is meant to specifically serve veterans at your designated facility. It must be kept separate and in its own account.

- D** You may open an account under your own name. This is a good option if you spend the majority of your allocation each month. Ensure that at least one other person has access to your ENVSC bank account. We recommend that it be a Deputy Representative or Lodge member.
- E** Bank fees may be paid with ENVSC allocations. When you establish your account, be sure to ask about fees and try to select a bank with minimal ones. Please note that the ENVSC cannot provide its tax ID to use for this account.
- F** If you do not receive your monthly allocation, it is most likely because you did not file your required monthly report on time. Please contact your State Veterans Chair with questions.



# Jumping In

## II. Local Volunteer Orientation

- A** Contact the Voluntary Service department at your facility and introduce yourself as the certified Elks Representative. Staff members will take you through orientation. This process will vary depending on facility policies and your volunteer duties and may include health screenings or a background check.
- B** Talk with the staff to determine the greatest needs at the facility and what type of supplies or activities would be most appreciated by the veterans there.
- C** Your monthly allocation is intended to fund your activities with veterans at the facility and cannot be used as a donation.
- D** Especially at VA facilities, ensure you are listed as a BPOE Representative, record attendance at volunteer meetings, and track all volunteer hours.

## I. Your Monthly Allocation

- A** You will receive your monthly allocation from your State Veterans Chair or other State Association Official every month. Your Lodge or state may contribute additional funds to your account.
- B** Use your allocation to fund activities, buy supplies, and plan outings at your assigned facility. Use this monthly allocation only to serve veterans at your assigned facility.
- C** Allocations cannot be used for direct donations. Instead of giving cash prizes for games, try gift cards or canteen books.
- D** While memorials are a worthy cause, ENVSC allocations are intended to be used only for increasing the health and well-being of living veterans at your assigned facility.



## II. Planning Your Visits

- A** Visit your facility at least once a month to see veterans or host activities. Enlist your Deputy Representatives or Lodge members to participate.
- B** Get creative! Meals and bingo are popular, but you can also host a monthly birthday party, ice cream social, or movie night.
- C** Off-site trips are a great way to add excitement for veterans who are living in hospitals or nursing homes. Plan outings to museums, sports events, or the zoo.
- D** Bring people together. Ask local students or a scouting group to create cards for veterans. Invite musicians, singers, or magicians to perform at your facility.
- E** When games or entertainment supplies are requested, consider activities that may help veterans work on skills like memory or dexterity. The staff at your facility may have tips on what would be appreciated most by the veterans there.

- F** Sometimes there are many holiday activities for veterans but few events in between. Consider making extra visits during slower times of the year so that veterans will always have something to look forward to.
- G** Read the booklet “More than 140 Ways to Serve Veterans” for more ways to serve veterans at your facility.



### Attention volunteers at VA facilities!

As the Elks Representative, attendance at quarterly VA Voluntary Service Committee meetings is required. If you miss three consecutive meetings, the VA will revoke your official status as a Representative. If you are unable to attend in person, there is often a way to call or video conference into these meetings.

Don't forget to contact the Voluntary Service office in April to complete your Annual Joint Review. This is a time to check in with your facility and talk about accomplishments, possible improvements, and goals for next year.

## Section Four:

# Keeping a Record

## Voluntary Service Reports

- A** Each report should be submitted by the 15th of the following calendar month. After one full month, they are considered late. For example, a January report should be complete by February 15th and is late on March 1.
- B** If you are more than 1 month delinquent in submitting your report, you will not receive any future allocations until all reports are complete.
- C** If you are sick or planning to be out of town when a report is due, ask a Deputy Representative to step in for that month. Deputies have access to the online system and can easily assist.
- D** If you need to make a correction to a report, you will be able to make the change if you request to do so before the report is approved. Once a report is approved, the correction can usually be added to the following month's report. Some updates can also be made from our office by request.
- E** Please notify the ENVSC office if you or your Deputy Representative have a change of address or other contact information, or if you can no longer serve.
- F** Don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions about your reports. We're here to help and will be happy to walk you through the reporting process or answer any questions.
- G** Representatives are required to save all Voluntary Service program receipts for 3 full years in the blue folder that you received in your welcome packet. Continue to send any receipt copies your state asks of you, and simply keep an extra copy in the blue folder.

You can appoint a friend, family, or Lodge member as an Online Assistant to submit your reports for you. Please contact the ENVSC office to set this up. Or, contact your State Veterans Chair for online assistance.



## Section Five:

# Step-by-Step Instructions for Submitting a Monthly Report

**1** Go to [www.elks.org/vets/vavs/report.cfm](http://www.elks.org/vets/vavs/report.cfm).

**2** Log in with your regular elks.org username and password.

**A** If you do not have an elks.org username and password, you must register for one. Go to elks.org and click on “Register” in the top right corner of the page, right above the stripes on the American flag. Be sure to enter your name, Lodge number, and member number.

**B** If you are currently registered as a Representative or Deputy Representative, you will be able to submit a report for your assigned facility (or facilities).

**3** At the top of the report, there will be a yellow box with basic instructions. Beneath that, you have the option to choose your facility. You will only be allowed to submit reports for facilities at which you are the designated Representative or Deputy Representative. Choose the correct facility.

**4** Choose the correct month and year from the drop-down fields. Please note that the system will not let you skip reports. If you did not visit your facility or spend any funds during a certain month, you will be required to submit a blank form for that month before the system will allow you to move forward. For example, you cannot submit a report for August 2021 until a report for July 2021 is submitted. You are also unable to combine months or facilities.

**5** Click “Create Report.” (At any point during this report, you can scroll down to the bottom to click “save report”. This is especially useful if you would like to complete the report at another time.) If you are returning to complete a report, all reports in progress will be available on the dashboard.

6 Verify that the facility address and name are correct, along with the bank information we have on file. If this is incorrect, email Vets@elks.org with changes.

7 Enter the income you received. After your first report, your existing balance will automatically load the ending balance from your last report. This information cannot be edited, so please double check all math before submitting a report.

8 Complete the “Description of Programs” section of the report. All required fields are marked with a red asterisk. You cannot skip these fields. For example, if no Deputy Representatives assisted that month, you must type No in the answer field.

9 Submit the numbers for your monthly data. Estimate any information you are unsure of. Please note that these fields will not accept ranges. For example, you will not be able to type “25-35 veterans attended.” You must estimate that 30 veterans attended.

10 Enter each expense for the month. Be clear. Do not use generic terms like “supplies” or “miscellaneous,” and do not enter check numbers with no description. Make sure you enter all funds spent this month, so that your ending balance is correct. For each expense, estimate how many veterans were served.

11 If everything is correct, click “submit report to ENVSC.”

12 You will receive an email confirming that we received your report.

13 Once our office has reviewed your report and found it acceptable, you will receive a second email verifying that the report was approved.

14 If our staff has questions about the report, you will receive an email asking you to edit or clarify the report. This will open your report up for editing. You will then be able to go back to the report and change only the specific thing you were asked about. When you are finished, click “submit report to ENVSC.”

Please contact your State Veterans Chair  
with questions. You can also contact the  
ENVSC office anytime with questions!

You can reach us at

**773.755.4736**

or at

**Vets@elks.org**



Elks National Veterans Service Commission



@ElksVetsService



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**elks.org/vets**