

STARTING A NEW VFW POST

A guide to forming and chartering new Posts



the organizer

You must be thoroughly familiar with the background, accomplishments and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, as well as the obligations of each Post Officer.

You must carefully read and understand the VFW Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual.

You must conduct yourself in a manner that commands respect for yourself and for the VFW which you represent.

You must make sure that prospective VFW members are given a wholesome impression of the organization. Remember that first impressions are lasting ones.

If you do not know the correct answer to a question, do not guess. Instead, reply that you will get the answer and give it to the person later.

You must recognize that the VFW can only build its strength through personal contact. There is no satisfactory substitute for doorbell ringing and hand-shaking. No remote, impersonal approach will work as well.

You must resolve that you will not abandon a Post once you have organized it. You must continue to help new Posts get solidly on the ground. This can be accomplished by making yourself available to advise and help Post Officers and Committees.

how to **organize** a VFW Post

There are many ways to make contacts, such as through VFW members who live in communities without Posts, as well as business professionals, personal friends and advertising.

Do not let the first veteran you talk with discourage you from your goal. Somewhere in every community is a veteran who is interested in the VFW. Maybe he or she is concerned about veterans rights. Perhaps the needs of the community are first in his or her mind. The secret is to find the person, then identify his or her basic interests. Remember whenever you go into a community to be positive, speak positive and act positive.



**New Post Starter Kits are available in the VFW Store!
Order one today by calling 1-800-821-2606,
or by going online to www.vfwstore.org.**

how to get leads

In nearly every community there are VFW members who belong or have belonged to a VFW Post in another area. These VFW members may have been active in the VFW previously but have moved to a new community without a Post. These people might be interested in helping you organize a Post in your community. Any veteran who has maintained membership, even after moving away from a Post, is a good prospect to help you organize a new one. Also, a VFW member who belonged to a VFW Post that has gone defunct may be helpful in establishing a new Post.

Go to city officials or the Chamber of Commerce. They have the interests of the community at heart and will help. They are aware that the VFW will be an asset to their community. Many officials are veterans and they may be able to suggest the names of overseas veterans who might be interested.

County service officer programs need the support of veterans organizations. These service officers can assist in the development of a new Post.

Go to the county courthouse and ask for recorded service discharges if available. These are public records in many counties; contact your county courthouse to confirm that you can access these records. From those you can compile a list of eligible veterans.

Contact these veterans personally or by mail. If by mail, enclose a self-addressed postcard the veteran can mail back to you if he or she is interested.

Some newspapers, radio and TV stations will announce news of your organizational meeting for free if it is presented to them as a news release. You may also need to use paid advertising such as posters, circulars or advertisements on broadcasting stations or in newspapers.

Any veteran who comes to your meeting is interested. Whether one person or ten people attend, this is the nucleus for your new Post. Do not be discouraged by a low turnout. These veterans will work with you in contacting others. After the first veteran signs up, see if they can provide the names of other veterans who might be eligible. This has a chain-reaction effect. Before you know it, you will have the required number (35) for a charter application.

HAVE YOU HEARD about the **Shotgun List Program?**

If your Post is trying to find new members in an area, the VFW Membership Department can help. If you provide us with a list of ZIP codes that you are trying to cover, we can provide a list of names and addresses for potentially-eligible veterans in your area at a minimal cost of \$75.00 per 1,000 prospects.

The Shotgun List Program is a great tool for building a Post's membership at any stage of Post development. For more information, contact the VFW Membership Department at membership@vfw.org.

how to get a **charter application**

Personal Contacts – After signing up that first veteran, obtain a list of prospective members. If possible, ask the person to introduce you to other veterans in the community. If not, he or she may have a friend who can help contact prospective members. It is much better to have at least two people than to go alone. First, try to get applications from prominent veterans in the community and use them to influence others. While you must convince each prospective member individually, this method is very effective. VFW-eligible veterans are easier to find in small communities. In larger communities, evening and weekend calls are usually more successful.

When talking to prospective members, be positive in your approach. Have no doubt that a Post will be established. Fill out membership applications for the prospective members, otherwise they may look at it and say, “Come back and see me later.” These callbacks waste your time, so try to avoid them. Collect enough dues to cover the National and Department per capita amounts and a little more to begin a Post fund. (No transaction is complete until you have a completed membership application with the new member’s signature and dues.) The Post can change its dues amount at its first meeting if desired.

Once you have the first member signed up, do not stop until you reach the minimum of thirty-five applications from new or reinstated members required to complete the charter application.

Formation - A Post may be formed by completing a charter application consisting of thirty-five eligible veterans, of which at least twenty-five must be new members, submitted through proper channels to the Commander-in-Chief.

Institution - Each new Post shall be instituted within sixty days of the date the charter application is approved by the Commander-in-Chief. If not instituted within sixty days from the date of approval, said approval may be rescinded.

Chartering - The charter of an instituted Post shall include the name, date of muster, location and list of members. The charter shall remain open for ninety days from the date of institution of the Post. After forwarding the charter application to the Department Headquarters, call an organizational meeting. Urge the new members to bring other veterans who may be eligible for membership to the meeting. Suggest that they bring their discharge papers as proof of eligibility.

Organizational Meetings – Get the names, addresses and e-mail addresses of as many eligible veterans as possible. Set a date and location for a meeting that will suit the convenience of the prospective members. Advertise by any media available. Do not be disappointed if your attendance is low — many will wait to see what happens at this meeting before committing. Explain the functions of the VFW and its programs as briefly as possible to those in attendance. Let them select a temporary Commander and Quartermaster to head the new Post until it is instituted. Explain the dues structure and let them suggest the amount of dues to charge. Remember to consider that the dues must include the combined National and Department per capita amounts. They should also have some money left for the Post treasury.

Explain the membership application. Have those present complete membership applications and collect their dues. Encourage them to recruit more members and go with you to make personal contacts in the immediate future. Continue until you have secured a total of 35 eligible veterans.

putting the post into operation

Within sixty days following approval of the application for charter by the VFW Commander-in-Chief, members of the new Post should set a date and a location for instituting the Post.

The institutional meeting should be publicized. If desired, the public may be invited along with prominent officials and people in the community. Consider the size of the meeting place so the room can be arranged according to the VFW Ritual. Again, the first impression is the lasting one. It is essential that the Post be instituted in a very serious and proper manner. If the Department has a Ritual team, it is suggested that it be used to assist the Instituting Officer in the performance of his or her duty.

The Department and District Commanders and their staffs should make every effort to attend the ceremony with as many VFW members from the Department as possible. This will give members of the new Post confidence in the District and Department, and make them feel that they are part of the organization.

After the Post is in good working order and officers installed, an instructor should be assigned to each chair officer to explain his or her duties in detail. Special attention should be given to the Quartermaster. The instructor should explain the procedure for bonding the elected Post Quartermaster. Advise the members that the Post Quartermaster is to be the treasurer of all Post committees that handle funds. (This applies to any club activities.)

The Instituting Officer will complete the institution report and send it, along with the Quartermaster bond, through channels to the Adjutant General.

Posts should retain copies of original applications and maintain accurate Post records as National Headquarters does not keep records for awards, anniversaries, etc.

following up with a new post

The Department should have the District Commander assign at least one VFW member who is well acquainted with the organization to attend each meeting of the new Post for at least six months, or longer if it seems necessary.

The VFW member(s) should be able to help the new Post in all aspects of VFW work. It is also important that the VFW member(s) be diplomatic with their assistance.

The new Post members must be made to feel that we are there to assist them—not dictate to them.

Promotional and informative materials are available upon request from National Headquarters.

HAVE YOU HEARD about the **Online Membership System?**

The Online Membership System (OMS) allows VFW members to manage their membership details via the Internet; dues renewals, address changes, upgrading to Life Membership - all with the click of a link through our secure online portal.

Post officers can also use the OMS system to manage Post business. A Quartermaster can view the Post's roster, pay members' dues, transmit a member's application, and find out how your Post's membership compares to other Posts in your area or nationwide.

For more information about the OMS system, log on to www.vfw.org and visit the MY VFW tab.

general information

Naming of Posts - VFW Posts usually bear the name of their community or the name of a deceased VFW member whom fellow members want to memorialize. No Post may be named for a living person, other than a living Medal of Honor recipient. After the name has been selected and voted upon, public notice should be withheld until permission to use that name has been given by the next of kin or the living Medal of Honor recipient.

Selecting Qualified Officers - The utmost thought should be given to the selection of Officers qualified to serve effectively and who are willing to do full justice to their offices. Do not fill a Post office simply for the sake of filling it. Be sure every Officer selected has the qualifications to fulfill the office's responsibilities. At the first meeting of prospective members, the Organizer should read a list of offices to be filled by election, so members can think about their votes before the election takes place.

Instituting Officers - The selection of Instituting and Installing Officers is up to the Department Commander. Usually the VFW member selected as Instituting Officer should be a Department Officer. The VFW member designated as Installing Officer should be at least a Post Commander.

Initial Organization - The By-Laws state that there shall be at least 35 new or reinstated members on the charter application. This figure is not a maximum. In many communities it may be possible to obtain 50 or more charter members on the application.

Organizer's Responsibility - It is the responsibility of the Organizer to check every application with applicants' proof of eligibility, then attest by their signatures as to the eligibility of the applicants concerned.

What Department Gets - The items to be sent to Department Headquarters are:

1. Report of Institution in duplicate. This can be found in the Post Charter Kit.
2. A check made payable to the Department for dues covering National and Department per capita amounts for all members being reported.
3. Any other forms and reports the Instituting Officer shall require.

Where To Now? It is the responsibility of the Department, District and County Council (where one exists) to provide assistance to the new Post. Do not organize a new VFW Post and then feel that your job is done. Several months of follow-up work with the Post are needed to ensure that it will prosper and grow.



For additional membership materials to assist with
Post development, retention, and recruiting,
contact the VFW Membership Department.

1-888-JOIN-VFW
membership@vfw.org



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