



WE HONOR VETERANS

Partner Networking Call 03/18/2015 Call Summary

Jennifer Kennedy, Director of Regulatory and Compliance

- There are currently no updates to the [Medicare Federal Hospice Regulations](#). The conditions of participation for hospices were updated as a whole in 2008 but there weren't any significant changes to the volunteer requirements. You can find the volunteer COPs at 418.78 in the COPs.

Linzey Laughunn of Calvert Hospice: Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer best practices

- Calvert Hospice recently complete Level Three in the WHV program and as a part of that was required to begin a Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer program. They looked at the full volunteer hospice training and felt that the three day program would be too much of a commitment and a requirement for Veterans looking to become active in their We Honor Veterans program. They decided to break out the volunteer training into two parts. They continued to offer a hospice volunteer training 2-3 times a year for those individuals who were looking to be full hospice volunteers and be assigned to specific patients, and they also separated out a three hour block for the Veteran-specific volunteer training. The Veteran portion covered educational materials found on the WHV website and Cindy Dresser from the Baltimore VA spoke about Veteran-specific needs. The first Veteran block training was a huge success with 10 participants! The folks who participate in the Veteran block training are invited, if they choose, to go on and take the full volunteer training in order to be assigned to patients. If they decide not to take the rest of the volunteer training, they can still be put on a list to participate in Salute ceremonies. Whenever the volunteer coordinator identifies a patient who would like a recognition ceremony, he invites (with the family's permission) those individuals who have been through the Veteran block training to come and participate in the Salute ceremony. By allowing volunteers the option of completing the full volunteer training, the Veteran-specific training or both, Calvert has overcome some of the barriers to volunteer participation such as geographical distance and other time requirements.
- To recruit people to come to volunteer trainings Calvert Hospice has gone out to the local colleges, senior centers and Veteran service organizations. It can sometimes be difficult to get into the doors at these places due to hurdles or pre-conceived notions, so they have started offering to show films such as *Honor Flight*; at the end of the film screening they give a brief presentation about their WHV program including pictures and stories of patients and families.
 - Another shorter video to use in your community presentations can be found at www.momentsoflife.org and is called [Don's Honor Flight](#).
- When showing *Honor Flight* to Veteran service organizations, they have also invited the community in order to reach a wider audience.

Q&A

- **Q:** What topics were covered in the three hour Veteran training block?
A: The way they designed the program, was in three blocks. They invited their VA liaison, Cynthia Dresser, to talk about the unique needs of Veterans related to their period of service. Block two was on how their program assists Veterans in their hospice and how and what benefits the Veteran would be eligible for through the VA. The final block discussed specific WHV ceremonies and how volunteers could participate in those.
- **Q:** What kind of success have you had for those Veterans who want to do both trainings?
A: Three of the ten recent volunteers elected to take the full volunteer training. Currently they have 4 Veteran volunteers that have been trained in both the volunteer training and the WHV training.
- **Q:** Where can organizations get *Honor Flight* the movie?
A: You can get *Honor Flight* the movie through their website www.honorflightthemovie.com, Amazon, or Netflix.
- **Q:** Regarding the volunteers who did the specific WHV training only, how often were you able to utilize those volunteers in pinning ceremonies?
A: The training only happened recently but since then they have had 3 ceremonies and hope for more shortly.
- **Q:** Our hospice was under the impression that the Veteran volunteers had to go through the entire hospice volunteer training to participate in pinning ceremonies. Is that not required? If not, what are the requirements for the Veterans to just do the ceremonies?
A: In what they have read, seen and heard from their Veteran liaison at the VA, there weren't any specific requirements to participate in the pinning ceremonies. If the Veteran wants to volunteer with patients, they need the full training which includes topics such as HIPPA regulations and the mission of hospice. However, as long as the family has agreed to have the Veteran participate in the ceremony, then volunteers have no further requirements other than that 3 hour block training. They make sure to get the basic HIPPA signature requirement when the Veterans are volunteering, even in the most basic sense. They also recommend getting the family's signature for releasing photos and video from the recognition ceremony.

Diana Spanger of Hospice Compassus: Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer best practices

- Education is a key component of their We Honor Veterans program; all staff and volunteers are given a WHV orientation and receive periodic updates through a newsletter and ongoing Veteran-specific presentations. New staff and all volunteers receive the WHV training and are aware from the beginning that the organization is committed to this program.
- Even before they got into the WHV program, they found the best places to recruit volunteers are at senior centers, VFWs and American Legions. They had been planting seeds in the Veteran community for about three years before they even began looking for Veteran volunteers and believe that this is why they have had such success in recruiting Veteran volunteers. When they began the We Honor Veterans program they looked for Veterans already in their volunteer pool.

Volunteer referrals also come through their staff, WHV committee, other volunteers and their website.

- The training is based on the state and Medicare volunteer requirements and all volunteers (Veterans or not) that come through the organization get the same training, which includes information about We Honor Veterans and their Veteran program. They have a wide variety of volunteers with different backgrounds, age ranges and educational levels, so the training is personalized based on each volunteer. Hospice Compassus found that one-on-one trainings work the best because of their large geographic area of coverage and varied volunteer pool.
- Veteran volunteers are used in pinning ceremonies and any other activities they are needed for.
- They also do refresher trainings for their staff and volunteers and these refresher courses include information about the WHV program.

Q&A

- **Q:** Do you know of any specific ideas or roles that the American Legion, auxiliary or other groups can participate in?
A: Currently, we are doing a presentation to the American Legion and service departments in our community. We are coming in with the perspective that we are here to assist them, not the other way around. Veteran service organizations in our community are active in school programs and in the libraries; we think we can volunteer and offer them something but also know that we will be the benefactor of their knowledge and experience.

Scott Shreve from the Department of Veterans Affairs: Updates from VA

- The VA is working on a resource document related to the *No Veteran Dies Alone* program. We hope that this Veteran training manual will be released by the end of the year.

Q &A

- **Q:** Is there any human help to navigating the We Honor Veterans website and completing the Level Four Activity Report?
A: Yes, you can email any questions to Veterans@nhpco.org or call 800-646-6460 and ask for the WHV team. WHV staff would be happy to help you with your reports.
- **Q:** I was reviewing the Hospice Veteran Volunteers Outreach and Support PowerPoint regarding recruitment of volunteers. One of the slides mentioned screening and interviewing Veteran Volunteers, and some of the questions that are posed are extremely personal: “Do you experience post traumatic symptoms or are you in active treatment for PTSD?” Are people asking these questions when interviewing these volunteers?
A: Since that is a personal question, you could phrase it to be less brash. An example for phrasing could be: “Are there aspects from your military or combat experience that you think could impact and or enrich your ability to volunteer with our organization?” The question phrased this way is open ended and allows the Veteran to share any impactful experience.

- **Q:** Regarding the *No Veteran Dies Alone* program, where would we find information on specific training for that? Also, is that a 24 hour vigil done in a facility? Is the training any different from what we do for regular volunteers?
A: The VA is working on getting a resource manual in place but currently there are about 12 VA facilities that are offering a variation of the *No Veteran Dies Alone* training.
A: The *No Veteran Dies Alone* program is a program through the VA, but WHV will post the resource manual once it comes out. In the meantime, NHPCO has a volunteer manual available and the WHV website has Veteran volunteer materials that are available.
- **Q:** Our hospice is struggling with connecting to the VA in our area, are there any ideas available on how best to grow that relationship?
A: This issue is complex, currently Scott is working with VA staff to become more willing to collaborate with the community. If you think that you have the right person and they are still not assisting you, please e-mail veterans@nhpco.org and WHV will forward the message to Scott.

Partner Networking/Success Stories

- One of the things that our organization does is [Cell Phone for Soldiers](#). This program is a great inroad to getting Veteran Volunteers.
- I am an administrative volunteer and am also a Vietnam Veteran and have Agent Orange. We are a Level Four partner and I was also named as the volunteer of the year for all Caris offices in South Carolina. I am a member of the VFW and DAV and was approached at one of our meetings last year by Caris' volunteer coordinator about becoming a hospice volunteer. I have now been volunteering for a year and one of the things we do is put flags in the cemetery for Memorial Day. Currently we are working with a half-way house for Veterans who are looking to integrate back into society. We supply them with paper goods and are hoping that these Veterans will volunteer for the hospice in the future. I also visit the VA to share with other Veterans information about what VA benefits they are eligible for.
- One organization recommends creating a pining ceremony and certificate specifically for a caregiver. Families of Veterans sacrifice so much, so it can be touching to them to be recognized in conjunction with the Veteran.
- The [Homeless Veteran Burial Program](#) is a cherished program throughout Dignity Memorial and could dovetail nicely with *No Veteran Dies Alone*. The mission is that no Veteran be buried in a paupers' grave.
- Another resource that we found that assisted us is with burial benefits is the [Veteran Funeral Care Program](#); this is a national program that is specifically focused on family owned funeral homes. The funeral home staff goes away for training to learn about Veteran burial benefits and how to get burials with full military honors.

Wrap Up and Next Meeting

- WHV will be distributing outreach resources ahead of Memorial Day
- The next call will be in June and will be announced in May