



Expertise of veterans claims help varies

A well-trained veterans service officer (VSO) is crucial for many veterans applying for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. How VA-accredited VSOs vary in training and oversight, according to a Knight Ridder survey of 14 veterans groups:

Group	VSOs*	Accreditation training required	Accreditation test required	Continuing education required	Later testing
American Ex-Prisoners of War (817) 649-2979 www.axpow.org	531	No minimum requirement; provides 8-10 hours voluntary training annually	No	No	No
American Legion (317) 630-1200 www.legion.org	1,341	Standards vary by local branch; offers 48 hours of optional training at national schools	No	One VSO per state must attend national training twice yearly	No
AMVETS (301) 459-9600 www.amvets.org	456	40 hours one-on-one training for new VSOs	No	Yes 26 hours annually	No
Blinded Veterans Association (202) 371-8880 www.bva.org	198	70-80 hours of training	Yes	Yes 70-80 hours annually	No
Catholic War Veterans USA (703) 549-3622 www.cwv.org	107	No minimum requirement	No**	No	No
Disabled American Veterans (859) 441-7300 www.dav.org	941	National VSOs: 16 months on-the-job training; computer-based training course qualifies for 10 college credit hours from American Council on Education State VSOs: Training varies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fleet Reserve Association (800) 372-1924 www.fra.org	407	Varies; VSOs receive training through other veterans groups	No	No	No
Jewish War Veterans of the USA (202) 265-6280 www.jwv.org	222	32 hours of training through the VA	Yes	Yes	No
Marine Corps League (703) 207-9588 www.mcleague.org	352	No response	No response	No response	No response
Military Order of the Purple Heart (703) 642-5360 www.purpleheart.org	617	64 hours of training	Yes	Yes	No
Non-Commissioned Officers Assn. (703) 549-0311 www.ncoausa.org	367	Training varies; most VSOs employed by state or county agencies	No	Varies; VSOs working directly with group must have 11 hours annually	No
Paralyzed Veterans of America (800) 424-8200 www.pva.org	129	16 months on-the-job training	No	Yes 32-36 hours annually	No
Veterans of Foreign Wars (816) 756-3390 www.vfw.org	719	72 hours of training during first year of accreditation	No	Yes	No***
Vietnam Veterans of America (800) 882-1316 www.vva.org	555	Requires 40 hours training for new VSOs, varies for others	Yes	One advanced course every two years	No