

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Service Officer

Branch Service Officers are responsible for three main tasks:

- 1) Assist eligible persons with the completion of the Legion Claim Form (the first step in obtaining disability benefits through Veterans Affairs Canada)
- 2) Investigate and consider Poppy fund applications and
- 3) Advise and refer persons in need to available community resources.

Often, particularly in the large branches, the Branch Secretary is also the Service Officer. In others the Service Officer is appointed. The manner in which a branch arranges for the position of Service Officer is contained in the individual Branch Bylaws.

Any benefits problem, and all cases of distress or sickness of Veterans and their dependants, should be directed to the Service Officer. With respect to the processing of disability benefits claims, Branch Service Officers are encouraged to make direct use of the professional Command Service Officers. If you think that a Veteran may be entitled to a disability pension or benefits under Veterans Affairs Canada, have them fill out a Claim Application form and send it to the relevant Command Officer, along with a copy of the applicant's government - issued photo ID. After receiving this form, the Command Service Officer will work directly with the client to process any disability benefits. Submission of a Legion Claim Form should be done in a timely manner and should not be held up for any reason.

If there is a Veteran within the community who is homebound and needs assistance in home care by all means, contact VAC immediately. Keep in touch with the client about the services provided as a result of the visit, and if there are problems in getting benefits in place, don't hesitate to contact a Command Service Officer for further information and direction. If financial need is a problem, don't forget the availability of your own Poppy fund to assist needy Veterans and their dependents. For information about assistance from the Poppy fund refer to the section under Poppy Chair. Also, there are benevolent funds available. Application forms are available through the Command office by visiting www.legionbcyukon.ca. Every situation is different and the Command Service Officers work together with branches to get the Veteran the required assistance.

Please note: The Dominion Executive Council (DEC) approved mission for Branch Service Officers is to act as referrals for Command Service Officers. One of their primary roles should be to assist Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, RCMP, Veterans and their dependents to fill out the Legion Claim Form and forward this form to the appropriate Command Service Officer. In dealing with individuals who appear to be exhibiting symptoms of Operational Stress Injury/PTSD, the Branch Service Officer should do an immediate referral to a Command Service Officer (see separate listing under Service or at Dominion Command Toll Free 1-888-435-4466), a Peer Support Coordinator with the Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program (go to www.osiss.ca. under Peer Support Coordinator or Family Support Coordinator), a VAC representative (ideally the Resource Case Manager) at 1-866-522-2122 (English) or 1-866-522-2022 (French), or the Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program at 1-800-268-7708.

New Service Officers are encouraged to contact the Command for a Service Officers kit, which includes all of the resource material available with respect to services and benefits available to Veterans. Many of these resources are also available on the website.

We offer the following suggestions to help with support to local seniors and Veterans.

The Chair and the committee, if applicable, should:

- Find out what services and programs are available for seniors within your community.
- Find ways in your community to cooperate with other voluntary organizations to establish and/or support.
- Find out what day care facilities, day hospitals, boarding home, low rent housing and other community projects directly related to housing.
- Find programs to enhance the quality of life of seniors and to help them remain independent, living in their own homes with assistance of programs such as Meals on Wheels, handyman maintenance, telephone assistance, transportation to services (doctors and dental appointments, etc.). Recreational day programs such as darts, shuffleboard, cards, carpet bowling etc.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of seniors' issues and to report to the Zone Coordinator any issues that should be forwarded to the Chair, Veterans and Seniors Services Program, BC/Yukon Command. Forward to the Zone Commander monthly reports including suggestions that will then be condensed and sent to the Chair, VSS, and BC/Yukon Command.
- Identify and promote community projects that will be useful for all senior citizens. Make seniors aware of Provincial and Federal programs and benefits.

Terms of Reference for Zone Seniors Chair (if applicable-check zone regulations)

- Meet with Branch Coordinators within your zone.
- Familiarize yourself with seniors' programs in each branch.
- Familiarize yourself with a variety of programs that could be successfully conducted at branch level. Assist branches, if requested, in instituting and operating any program(s) they select.
- Impress upon the branches the need for some viable seniors' programs in their branch, stressing that a branch program should not compete with any existing Senior Citizens group or organization in their community. However, cooperation and involvement with others should be encouraged if mutually acceptable.
- Attend and submit a report to zone Council meetings on activities reported to you by Branch Seniors Chair.
- Report the progress of branch programs to the Chair, Veterans and Seniors Services Committee, BC/Yukon Command regularly.
- Organize seminars that will assist branches in initiating new seniors' programs.

Privacy Policy for Service Officers and Poppy Chairpersons: Who gives assistance to Veterans/Dependents in Financial Need?

The March 2011 PEC meeting approved the following policy to govern at each level within the Command:

- Each branch is free to establish the procedure on how assistance is provided to Veterans/dependents in need within their respective communities. Authorities for providing poppy fund assistance is contained in section 1104a of the *General By-laws*.

- The by-laws of the branch determine who the signatories will be for all accounts and in order to keep the confidence of the client's it is suggested that at least one of the decision makers be a signatory for the branch account.
- Decisions on providing direct assistance do not go to an Executive meeting or to a General meeting. Clients would not come to the Legion for financial help if they thought their personal circumstances were going to be discussed at a meeting.
- If a report is required for an Executive or General meeting, the person given the responsibility of reporting – merely indicates that assistance “this month was provided to one or two families” but remember no details are offered and no amount is mentioned.
- Any and all information that is deemed personal is protected from unauthorized disclosure by the *Privacy Act*. The access to any and all client information must be considered confidential and/or privileged information.
- Any Service Officer or Poppy Chairperson who assists a client must maintain the confidentiality of that Client and cannot disclose or otherwise use the information for any purpose other than in the assistance of the Client.

Remember, special use expenditures as outlined in the 1105 through 1115 require the approval of the general body before submitting the request to BC/Yukon Command for final approval.

Eulogy

As members of The Royal Canadian Legion some will be called upon to give eulogies upon the death of a fellow comrade. This can be particularly difficult if the deceased was a close personal friend. An appropriate eulogy should be delivered between eight and ten minutes. To begin with, pay tribute to the person's life by citing their valuable qualities. Then show how these qualities contributed to the lives of others. The focus should be on the person's personality, not on cold facts such as the various levels of achievement within the Legion.

Refrain from expressing your own religious opinions and don't try to offer reasons to justify the person's death. Speak slowly and clearly with vocal variety, voice control and good body language. Your words will undoubtedly project heightened emotions within the congregation so be sure to control your own emotions. Remember that you want to keep the audience focused on your words rather than on you.

Keeping emotions under control as the presenter is probably the biggest challenge. The following tips were included in an edition of the Toastmaster magazine. We pass them along to you with the hopes that they will help:

- **Speak as you always speak.** If you normally use a microphone, then use one - if not, don't. The idea is to get into your normal speaking comfort zone as best as you can.
- **Don't take any drugs** such as tranquillisers, anti-depressants or alcohol to help stay calm. During an emotional encounter such as this, you need to call upon all the speaking skills you have available.
- **Elevate your eye contact and look a little bit above the audience.** Don't look at any familiar faces in the audience; this may elicit an uncontrolled emotional response in you. The audience will not notice if your eye contact is slightly elevated.

- **Have an escape route.** You may not be able to continue or even start, and someone should be there to relieve you. (You could ask the minister to stand by. If you take an exceptionally long pause, nod to them to come and take over).
- **Begin by talking about someone or something** other than **the deceased** - perhaps quote a poem. This will allow you to **'warm-up'** and get going before addressing the specifics.
- **Prepare a short introduction** to be read by the padre or person in charge of the meeting.

Although the occasion is solemn, there may be an opportunity to include humorous tales or events. This is perfectly acceptable as long as they reflect the personality of the departed and respect the feelings of grieving family and friends.

Finally, keep in mind that the purpose of the eulogy is not only to pay tribute to the departed, but also to comfort, console and offer solace to those who attend the service.

References:

- Branch Bylaws
- Poppy Manual
- Service Officer Handbook