



Tips for Reaching Out to Active Military, Reserves and PA Guard Units

By reaching out to those in uniform, VFW Posts of all sizes can show their support for troops while expanding their membership. Following these tips will help your Post connect with today's troops:

- **Open the lines of communication with local military organizations by contacting the unit's public affairs office, a Sergeant Major or senior officers.** Ask for opportunities to speak to troops about the VFW's Military Assistance Program, the Unmet Needs program and other ways that your Post can support them. Use this link to locate PA Guard units: http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Military_Affairs/DMVA/600.htm
- **Stay in touch with your military contacts to learn about deployment ceremonies or when deployed troops will return.** Express the Post's interest in sponsoring military appreciation events, deployment/return programs, handing out free phone cards and supporting military families during deployments.
- **Before deployments, ask the unit for a point-of-contact who the Post can communicate with when the troops are overseas.** This person can be the one who accepts care packages or other items sent by the Post. This person will also keep your Post informed about when the unit will return. Use the contact person to facilitate the unit sending the Post a flag, certificates or other items of appreciation for display in the Post.
- **If you attend a deployment or return ceremony try to have cell phones available for use by the troops who do not have family members with them.** Wear your VFW hats, warmly greet them, pass out phone cards and consider giving them free memberships to your Post for the first year or as long as they are in uniform.
- **Contact your local unit's Family Assistance Center to learn about how your Post can support military families.** Offer to make a presentation about how the VFW can support military families and stress that your Post is a family focused organization. You can work with FACs to plan troop welcome home events and other programs that create membership opportunities. These offices may have details about deployments and returns that might not be available through other channels. Use this Internet link to locate PA Guard FACs: <http://www.dmva.state.pa.us/paarnng/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=444517>. You can find information about other regional military units in the yellow pages or through your closest chamber of commerce.
- **Visit your local military recruiters' offices to establish a working partnership with them.** The recruiters will appreciate having the VFW to rely on for displays at family days, explanations on how the VFW assists military personnel and families, and other demonstrations of support for the troops. Create a relationship with the recruiting offices' "Ambassadors" to maximize exposure for your Post.
- **Contact the Pennsylvania Department of VFW for membership materials for use in displays at military units, as handouts during presentations to troops or military family groups, and for Post display tables/booths.** The Department also has copies of VFW Magazine that focus on issues of interest to active military personnel. When sending membership information to deployed units make sure you get permission from the unit's main point-of-contact.
- **Consider paying for the first year of a full membership since deployed military personnel will appreciate your Post's show of support.** Offering "gift" memberships may motivate troops to join who might otherwise have declined. Plus, providing free memberships may open the door to long relationships between troops and your Post, which will provide leadership and support for the future of your Post.