



KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO  
**AMERICA'S VETERANS**

# DAV New Member Orientation Mentoring Guide

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## The Importance of New Member Orientation

The importance of new member orientation cannot be emphasized enough. Imagine belonging to an organization and having only a vague idea of its goals, programs, history or traditions. Would you feel like you belonged? Would you be motivated and committed to help the Chapter reach its goals? Of course not! You would likely be wondering why you joined DAV at all.

Some Chapters do not have a new member orientation program, but all should. The information presented during orientation provides a foundation for new members. It helps them understand how the Chapter functions, what their role will be and gives them the big picture of their Chapter, Department and national organization.

When new members are properly informed, they are more likely to feel comfortable with the organization and become actively involved in Chapter activities right away. A properly oriented member is also one who is most likely to remain in DAV for years.

## New Member Orientation and the Mentoring Program

We would like to suggest that new members complete a Basic Mentoring Program within their first three months of membership, which is also when new member orientation should be conducted.

The Interim Membership Committee developed this Basic Mentoring Program for starters. If you have any additional ideas, please send them to us.

## Successful Orientation

Successful new member orientation does more than inform the member, it inspires and motivates them to be the best DAV member/volunteer they can be. This pamphlet is intended to help the orientation trainer conduct new member orientation successfully. The Interim Membership Committee has designed a sample curriculum, which will be outlined in the New Member Orientation Guide and includes “Trainer Tips” along the way.

The following steps can help you conduct a successful new member orientation:

### **Decide who will conduct new member orientation.**

This person will be referred to as the orientation trainer and should be an experienced and respected Chapter member who is able and willing to train and guide new members. Depending on what works best for your Chapter, the following people should be considered to conduct new member orientation:

**New Member Sponsor:** Many Chapters rely on sponsors to train new members. Have the sponsors follow the format of this program to ensure the same material is covered during every orientation, even if the sponsor changes for each new member. A checklist of items to cover during orientation is provided at the end of this guide.

**Mentor:** If you are conducting orientation in conjunction with the Basic Mentoring Program, the mentor could be the one also conducting new member orientation. Have mentors follow the format of this guide to ensure the same material is covered during every orientation, even if the mentor changes for each new member. A checklist of items to cover during orientation, which also qualifies the new member for completion, is also provided at the end of this guide.

**Designated Orientation Trainer:** Your Chapter may wish to designate one person in the Chapter to do all orientations for new members; this ensures all members receive consistent information.

**Orientation Trainer Team:** Rather than one designated orientation trainer, your Chapter can develop a team of people to handle different portions of the orientation based on their area of expertise. For example, the membership chairperson, Chapter commander and adjutant would each cover their respective offices.

### **Decide how orientation will be conducted.**

Depending on what works best for your Chapter and the new member, there are different ways new member orientation can be conducted:

**One Session:** Cover everything in the New Member Orientation Program Guide in one day. This works well if you have multiple new members completing the orientation process at one time.

**Multiple sessions:** Conducting orientation in two to three sessions helps break up the material into shorter, more manageable sections such as: your Chapter, Department and the national organization.

In addition to the number of sessions you are going to have, you will need to decide the best way to present information to new members.

- Consider using a New Member Orientation PowerPoint when conducting your orientation sessions. We hope to create the slides for you to follow along with the DAV New Member Orientation Guide. Some of the slides will be Chapter-specific and will need to be filled in by the trainer.
- Consider having a computer available to review the sections of the DAV website, along with Chapter and Department websites so the new member will know where to find information once their orientation is over.
- Consider using parts of the new member orientation curriculum in Chapter meetings as a refresher course for all members.

## Prepare a new member packet.

Assembling a comprehensive packet of essential material for new members is a very important step. These materials should be used as learning tools during orientation and will be essential for reference if new members have questions once orientation is completed.

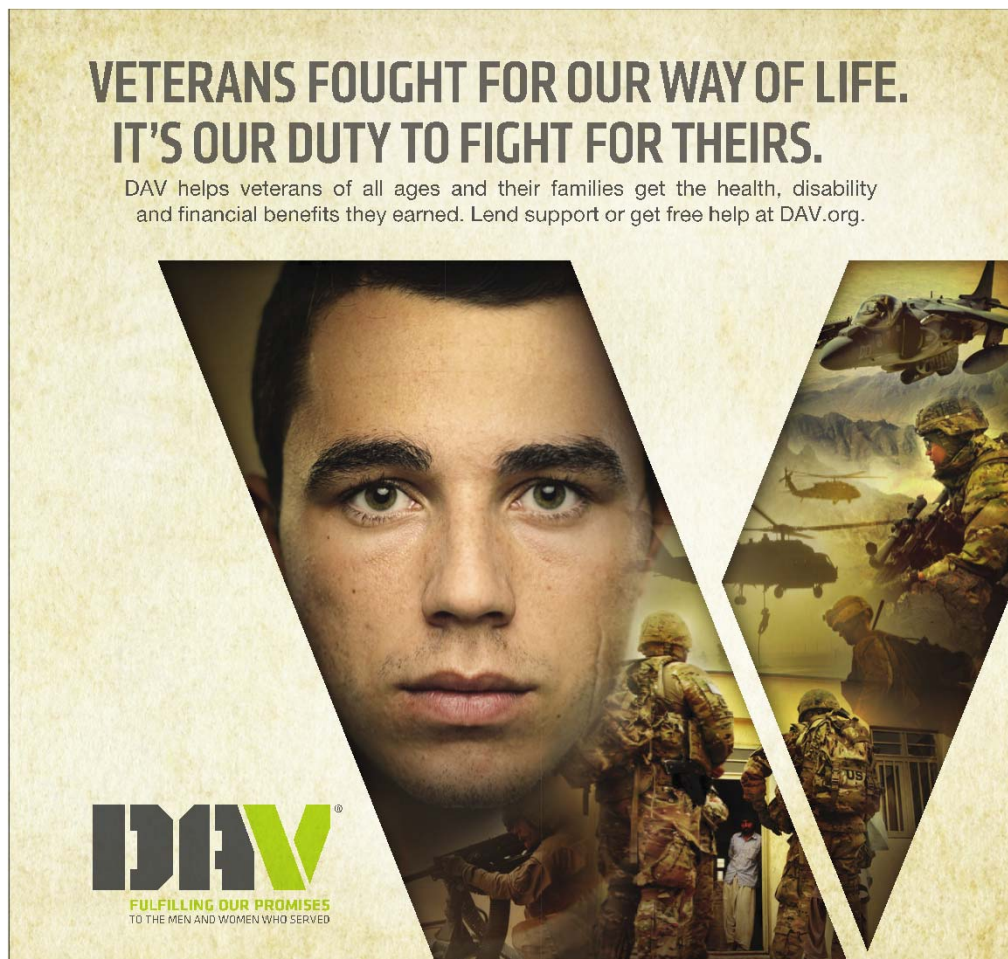
Here is a list of materials that should be included in the new member packet:

- **New Member Orientation Guide:** The New Member Orientation Guide will be very similar to the New Member Orientation Trainer Guide, excluding instructions on how to conduct orientation and tips for the orientation trainer.
- **New Member Induction Kit:** This kit could be something you order from the Chapter Supplies list distributed from national headquarters. It could include a National Constitution and Bylaws, Certificate of Appreciation, information about the Member Advantages Program, as well as a DAV lapel pin and decal.
- **Contact Information:** Create a reference sheet with Chapter Officer contact information, meeting location information and Chapter, Department and National websites. Also consider providing a copy of the Chapter and Department directories.
- **Your Chapter's Newsletter:** Your Chapter newsletter will demonstrate the types of activities your Chapter is involved in and upcoming events.
- **Fact Sheets:** Fact sheets about your Chapter, Department and national headquarters should be given to the new member.
- **DAV Magazine:** By providing a copy of *DAV Magazine*, the new member can read stories of national activities.
- **DAV Website:** Visit [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org) for publications/resources.
- **Supplemental Materials:** Supplemental materials are suggested throughout the curriculum to provide the new member with additional information.

## New Member Orientation Curriculum

### What does DAV do?

1. Helps returning veterans transition back to civilian life by linking them with services that address their physical, emotional and financial needs.
2. Provides free, professional assistance to veterans of all generations in obtaining VA and other government benefits earned through service.
3. Fights for veterans' rights on Capitol Hill.
4. Connects veterans and their spouses to meaningful employment opportunities.
5. Funds rehabilitation programs for veterans with severe disabilities, such as blindness or amputation.





**Note to mentor:** The following information is contained in the DAV New Member Orientation Guide.

## Your Chapter

### History

As a new member, it is important to be aware of the history of your Chapter in order to feel like you truly belong. The orientation trainer should provide new members with some background on your Chapter.

If you happen to be a charter member of your Chapter, you and your fellow members will have a chance to form the history of your Chapter.

**Trainer Tip:** Review the complete history of your Chapter, including the year it was chartered, significant achievements and awards, noteworthy service projects and any other information from the Chapter's history that may be important to the new member. Consider creating a document.

## Chapter Officers

The officers of your Chapter include the commander, immediate past commander, junior vice commanders, adjutant and committee appointees.

Each Chapter elects annually a commander, a senior vice commander and one or more junior vice commanders and can elect or appoint an adjutant and a treasurer. It may elect or appoint other officers as necessary to operate the Chapter. Appointed officers serve at the pleasure of the appointing power. Neither a Chapter commander nor any vice commander may serve as Chapter adjutant or treasurer.

Duties of each office can be found in your Chapter's bylaws.



## **Purpose**

To uphold and maintain the Constitution and the laws of the United States; to realize the true American ideals and aims for which those eligible for membership fought; to advance the interests and work for the betterment of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans; to cooperate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and all other public and private agencies devoted to the cause of improving and advancing the condition, health and interest of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans; to stimulate a feeling of mutual devotion, helpfulness and comradeship among all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans; to serve our comrades, our communities and our country; and to encourage in all people that spirit of understanding which will guard against future wars.

## **Governing Bodies**

The governing bodies of the organization include the national convention, the National Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, the state Departments and Chapters.

## **Nonpartisanship**

DAV is non-political and non-sectarian and the name of the organization or name of any subdivision can not be used in representing the desires or wishes of its membership in any political, sectarian or labor dispute.

## Mission Statement

### Fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

This mission is carried forward by:

- Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government.
- Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people generally, and to disabled veterans and their families specifically.
- Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses and their orphans before Congress, the White House and the Judicial Branch, as well as state and local government.
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live through a network of state-level Departments and local chapters.
- Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs.

**DAV EMPOWERS VETERANS**

RESPECT

ADVOCACY

**HONOR**

SUPPORT

**COMMITMENT**