



DAV AND AUXILIARY

PUBLICITY GUIDE



Crucial to delivering DAV's message to the American people is good publicity that originates in our chapters and departments, Auxiliary units and departments, and national service offices. We thank you in advance for helping us raise the awareness of DAV across the country and keeping the American people informed about our important services.

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1

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA RELATIONS



Select a media relations representative

We recommend each chapter, department and unit select an individual to serve as media representative. This is a crucial role for raising awareness of DAV and communicating the right messages about our programs and services. The ideal candidate is someone who is well-spoken and connected to all aspects of your department or chapter.

Welcome to an important job

To be an informed spokesperson, it's important to be aware of everything going on in your chapter, department or Auxiliary unit. It is also important that you are familiar with DAV's key messaging guidelines to ensure we are delivering correct and consistent messaging to the public.

As a spokesperson for DAV, you will:

- Help the public understand DAV's mission of service and hope.
- Educate the public on what's important to disabled veterans and why those concerns are important to them.
- Share our message with people who can make a difference: legislators, community leaders, media personnel, opinion makers, stakeholders, and Department of Veterans Affairs officials who control the services and programs veterans need.
- Show other veterans how satisfying and rewarding it is to become part of the DAV team.

Your efforts also bolster the outreach efforts of the national organization, just as your and other members' letters contribute to an impressive grassroots lobbying campaign. When you focus your outreach efforts on issues or events highlighted by DAV's communications department, you multiply the impact of that campaign.

You have an important job, and it is also one that is rewarding and can be very enjoyable. Remember, communicating through the media is a learned skill, not a talent. Anyone can answer a reporter's question, but it takes a specialist to answer a question and deliver a deliberate and targeted message. This guide will provide you with ideas and information to help you develop that skill. DAV's communications department is committed to providing you with the tools, training and support you need to be successful.

Identify your audience

Consider DAV's target audiences. Who do we want to receive our messages? Who is our audience? Is it enough to tell our community about DAV and what the local chapter or department does, or do we want to elicit a response from the public?

Knowing which target audience a particular message is intended for will help you tailor your messaging campaign. Plus, it's important to know the goal of your messaging. Consider, do you want to:

- Provide general information to the public?
- Change an attitude or behavior? Change a perception?
- Increase local membership and/or participation?
- Encourage the audience to behave a certain way or do a particular thing?

Keep in mind the media is NOT a target audience. It is a vehicle to help us reach our audience.

The importance of talking to the media

Despite periodic attacks, ostensibly in the name of fiscal austerity, the American public has continued to endorse and expect the long-standing commitment to care for those who have served—especially those whose lives have changed as a result of their service. Combatting the gradual erosion of support for veterans requires an ongoing commitment to educating lawmakers and voters about veterans' issues.

History has shown us time and again that as the memory of war fades, people tend to forget about issues affecting veterans. The American public needs to be constantly reminded of the sacrifices veterans have made to preserve our democratic way of life.



DAV's major target audiences

- Veterans
- Families of veterans
- Community leaders
- General public
- Social networks

Good reasons to talk to the media

- To publicize DAV's purpose, services, activities and achievements.
- To establish DAV as a leader and trusted source on veteran-related issues.
- To generate awareness and self-determination among disabled veterans so they may actively campaign, both individually and collectively, for their own betterment.
- To establish channels of communication that will help ensure balanced, accurate coverage of important veteran-related issues.
- To enlist support and cooperation from government agencies, the private sector, civic organizations and community groups.
- To articulate the needs of injured and ill veterans and their families so they may be better reflected in legislation and public policy. Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill is famous for using the phrase "All politics is local." On any national issue, your local media will be looking for a local tie.
- To combat misconceptions and negative portrayals and stereotypes in media coverage of disabled veterans.



How does the media work?

We often think of “the media” as an all-powerful, massive force like “the government,” and this is often our biggest mistake. Reporters, editors and producers, after all, are people. They come from a variety of backgrounds and hold diverse political opinions and interests.

Reporters, like many other professionals in today’s economic times, are being asked to do more with less and work on ever-tightening deadlines while being short-staffed. And they are often viewed as people who enjoy reporting nothing but the bad news. The days of having a “beat reporter,” especially in smaller communities, are over. Reporters are now often asked to cover a variety of highly specialized and sometimes technical topics in one day.

Reporters often envision their profession as the “Fourth Estate.” This is a concept that adds a fourth pillar to the three estates of our government, the executive, legislative and judiciary, which are designed to operate within a system of checks and balances. Many members of the media regard themselves as the fourth estate of our system, meaning they report to the people what the government is doing, therefore allowing the people to have their own check and balance on the government.

News is both a product and point of view: a “product” because it’s gathered, processed, packaged and sold; a “point of view” because it’s also what a reporter, editor, reader or source considers interesting, exciting, important and timely. A reporter’s main task is to find something of importance to their audience and share it with the greatest possible number of people at the earliest possible moment.

Many communications theorists and practitioners are fond of saying the media can’t tell you what to think, but it can certainly tell you what to think about. With this in mind, what or who decides what makes “the news” news?

What makes the news?

Your story is likely to be newsworthy if it answers one or more of the following questions:

- Is it urgent, unusual or unexpected?
- How much impact does it have?
- Does it involve injustice to a person or group?
- Does it serve a purpose in the community and touch the lives of many or a unique few?
- How close it is? (It's more likely to be news when it happens nearby.)
- Is there emotion? Is there conflict? Does it evoke laughter, tears or outrage?
- Are there good visuals? Quite often, the photograph or video is itself the news and outweighs the spoken or written word.
- Do competitors have the story? (A story's value rises when competitors don't have it.)
- Keep in mind, "news" is, at the end of the day, what the reporter or assignment editor says it is—it is really personal and subjective.

For our purposes we are going to define news as having the following characteristics, called the "big five."

1. **Consequence.** It educates and informs, is important to our lifestyle or ability to cope, has a moral or social importance, or is "should know" information. Examples: The events of 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. **Interest.** It is unusual or entertaining, has human interest that arouses emotions, or causes people to talk about it. Examples: DAV transportation drivers ensuring disabled veterans get to and from their medical appointments.
3. **Timeliness.** It is a current event, a new angle on events or a new trend. Example: A change in policy to veteran benefits—is there a backlog in processing veterans benefits or is there a gap in care where veterans are not being cared for?
4. **Proximity.** It pertains to local issues, trends or events. Examples: Are property taxes, homelessness or health care issues important to your local community? What about a family from your community who lost a loved one or home in recent severe weather close to your city? Did a DAV service in your area change a veteran's life in a unique way?
5. **Prominence.** It concerns famous people or well-known events—stories that have received extensive media coverage. Example: How about the president of the United States or a celebrity talking about veteran stories or issues?

Always make the local connection when possible.

- **Gather your contacts.** Make lists of local media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio stations and websites. DAV's communications department can send you a report of all media in your area. Email feedback@dav.org to request a list. You can also build your lists through the publications' website (they typically list staff titles and bios) or by reviewing article bylines.
- **Look for connections.** Keep your eyes open for media personnel in your area with a personal connection to the military. Was the reporter a Marine? Did the anchor's father serve? Reading media bios will help shed some light on their personal backgrounds and indicate if they may be more receptive to your story.
- **Build relationships.** When it comes to getting your story covered, there's nothing more beneficial than having a professional relationship with media contacts. Occasionally invite them to your organization for coffee or call in advance and ask what type of stories they cover. Call them to personally discuss the story or thank them for coverage. If you're hosting a Homeless Veterans Stand Down or special event, would a local station be interested in being a partner?
- **Don't wait.** Pitch a reporter early to see if they have the capacity to cover the story.



Tips for good media relations

Here are some tips to increase your chances of getting your story covered:

- **Make a local connection.** Think of yourself as a community representative for local veterans to your local reporter, editor, news director or producer. Now put yourself in their shoes. Local journalists—particularly those at suburban or weekly papers—need a local connection to a national story. What's happening in their own backyard resonates with readers, listeners and viewers.
- **Know the language.** Consistent messaging and word choices must be strategically used. Read up on your DAV Language Guide and use "words that work." See "Glossary of media terms" on Page 19.
- **Get to the point.** The first sentence or two should answer the key questions of who, what, when, where and why. A press release should never go beyond one page. Use short, punchy sentences with active verbs. Make sure spelling and grammar are 100% correct.
- **Time your distribution.** Remember, news is time sensitive. When sending out information before your event, it's important to not send it too early or too late. Consider whether the publication is daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly. For daily papers, send information 4–5 days in advance; weekly publications, 8–10 days in advance. Also, try to send your release as early in the day as possible. Use DAV's letterhead and your local chapter information at the top of the release to make it stand out.
- **Learn what the reporter needs.** If you are queried for a story or receive responses, ask the reporters some key questions. Know who they are and what media outlet they represent. Ask them about their deadlines and what information is most important to them. You don't have to have all the answers, but you have to be willing to get back to them in time for them to meet their deadlines.
- **Write an interesting subject line.** A catchy, localized subject line may keep your email out of the trash bin. Try to use sentences that tell journalists something they didn't know before.
- **Be available.** Media personnel work on tight timelines. If you receive a call back, it's important to respond promptly to provide whatever additional information is needed. Be prepared to receive calls after hours, as reporters often work outside normal business hours, and include instructions for how media can reach you after hours on your voicemail.

“Put it before them **briefly** so that they will read it, **clearly** so that they will understand it, **forcibly** so that they will appreciate it, **picturesquely** so that they will remember it, and, above all, **accurately** so that they may be wisely guided by its light.”

—Joseph Pulitzer, American publisher, 1847–1911

- **Fax is dead.** Editors want to receive the release in a format that makes it as easy as possible to use—so remember to email your information so that writers can cut and paste the information.
- **Be creative.** Think of unique ways to get a reporter’s attention. Personalize your content. Mention a story the reporter has produced recently that you appreciate or may in some way be connected to your story. Consider hand-delivering your release.
- **Follow up.** If you’ve sent a release and haven’t heard back within a day or two, make a follow-up call. This can help set your information apart from the multitude of other story ideas news organizations receive each day.
- **Check social media.** Check to see if the reporters or writers you are targeting is on X (formerly known as Twitter) or Threads. Instead of sending a release, try sending them a direct message or tag them in a post about your story.
- **Acknowledge coverage.** If you receive coverage, send a quick thank-you note to the reporter who handled the story. This will help you develop a relationship for the future and build goodwill.
- **Know your stance.** If you’re wearing DAV attire or mentioning your membership, you are representing the views of DAV. It is important, in that case, that you represent the opinions, best interests and official stance of the organization. DAV does not endorse candidates for office and must remain fiercely nonpartisan. Your personal feelings on a political issue should be put aside. If you state a personal opinion that could be divisive or put DAV in a negative light, you are doing your fellow veterans a tremendous disservice.
- **Spread the word.** Once the story is available via broadcast, print or web, make sure you share it on social media. Also, share it with your local chapter, department and national headquarters as well. We love sharing all the good work you are doing for veterans and their families in your local communities.

Examples of successful DAV chapter, department or Auxiliary stories

- DAV hosts event to honor veterans
- Disaster aid helps veteran families
- Overcoming the odds: Wounded hero turns despair into hope with the help of DAV
- DAV works to end veteran homelessness
- Young volunteers win DAV Scholarships
- DAV members share war stories with local students
- Putting veterans to work: DAV advocates for veteran-hiring programs
- DAV Transportation Network driver wins volunteer of the year award
- 10 ways you can help veterans in your local community
- DAV members send kids to camp: Donations ensure children of disabled vets experience the magic of camp
- DAV reacts to new veteran legislation—what this means for local veterans
- [Name of DAV Member]’s story of service and sacrifice
- DAV chapter donates flags to local school system
- May we never forget: DAV honors our fallen soldiers

What makes a good story?

Originality/novelty/uniqueness

- A topic only DAV can speak on
- A new idea or innovative chapter or department service program

Personal achievement

- A veteran’s story of success
- Your new department or chapter leadership
- An award you are giving to a local veteran
- Awards for your volunteers or chapters
- A long-overdue medal received by a member

Piggybacking

- One of the best ways of getting the media interested in your story is to “piggyback” on something that is already attracting media attention. For example, if national media are talking about cuts to veterans benefits, talk to the local media about how this may affect your area’s veterans. If local media is talking about state or local laws or benefits that affect veterans, you become a valuable resource to a reporter—you are a subject matter expert.
- Look for a positive connection. If national headlines talk about support for veterans being down, introduce a local volunteer group that is committed to helping our wounded heroes in your area.

Anniversaries, landmarks, dates and numbers

- Is there a milestone you can exploit? Maybe you reached your 100,000th member. Or a DAV volunteer reached a 200,000-mile landmark through the transportation program.
- Anniversaries of your chapter’s initiation. Can you celebrate 10, 25 or 50 years of work helping veterans?

Holidays and awareness days

- During military-service-related holidays such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Military Appreciation Day and Independence Day, media are already looking for stories that relate to these important national holidays. This is a great time to pitch a story about the great work DAV is doing to support and empower veterans and invite media to attend your veteran-honoring events.

Vital need

- Are you meeting a vital need at a local domiciliary or hospital? Are you in desperate need of volunteer drivers? Do you have a Local Veterans Assistance Program volunteer who is a lifeline to veterans in your community? If you have a topic that media can help you address as a clear public service, they may be willing to make your cause their own.

Types of media

There is a wide variety of media outlets, some of which have been around forever and some that are new. All are evolving. They each have certain qualities, advantages and disadvantages. It is important to think about all of these outlets when pitching a story.

Newspaper

- **Pros:** Trusted source of news, can be passed from person to person, message has staying power, now easier to make submissions through “community calendars” and local news sections online.
- **Cons:** Static medium, losing its appeal, errors can be difficult to get corrected, our story may get cut to sell more ad space, can get “scooped” by internet and TV.

Magazine

- **Pros:** Usually credible source of news, caters to a specific audience we can tailor our messages to, very dedicated readers, very in depth.
- **Cons:** Slow production time, message or facts may have changed while in creation, requires more prep and lead time for us.

Radio/podcast

- **Pros:** Rapid medium and has immediate human connection, most mobile of all sources and easily connects at local level.
- **Cons:** Usually has narrow audience, competition for public service announcement airtime, fleeting, must usually go to them, often overlooked by communicators.

TV

- **Pros:** Reaches largest audience, trusted source, has visual appeal, can “reset” the sound bite if not live, 24-hour news cycle.
- **Cons:** Usually uses small sound bites, visual aspect outweighs spoken word, requires more coordination, may need more support (power requirements, backdrop).

Social media and livestreaming

- **Pros:** Easily accessible, virtual clearinghouse of information and news, users can find specific stories tailored to their interests, information can be easily transmitted from one person to another, can (in theory) be effortlessly changed if errors are found or message/policies change.
- **Cons:** Easily manipulated, some sources may not be credible, users bombarded by information and may have trouble discerning what is factual and what is merely opinion, some audiences use social media as only source of information, no “do-overs.”

Newsletters

Newsletters are inexpensive and effective and will draw attention to your programs, services and events. Digital newsletters are the most cost-effective outreach at your disposal for members in your community. By sending out a short newsletter about what is happening within your chapter on a regular basis, you can build relationships with individuals and potential supporters.

Newsletters can be emailed or printed, but an email format is the most cost-effective solution.

A newsletter template is included in this kit to help you get started.

Media advisory template

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Chapter [number] of [city, state], is [describe event] at [time, date] at [location].

This event/meeting is designed to [describe goal].

For more information, please contact [name] at [phone number].

Note: If reporters are being invited to an interview opportunity, include the following paragraph, in bold format.

A media opportunity will be available at [time] at [location]. DAV Chapter [number] spokesperson [name] will be available to answer questions about [event]. RSVP by calling [phone number] or sending an email to [email address].

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: keeping our promise to America's veterans. DAV does 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, providing employment resources to veterans and their families, and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a nonprofit organization with more than 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at dav.org.

What's the difference between a media advisory and a news release?

A **media advisory** is used to publicize events to the press ahead of time. It serves as an invitation to an event, encourages reporters to attend and gives sufficient notice for reporters to schedule attendance.

Media advisories must answer the questions who, what, when, where and why. If possible, add the "how" as well. These questions can be used to frame the entire advisory. Only give the basics; reporters don't have time to read more.

A simple rule to writing a media advisory is to cover the five "Ws" and "H," if possible, in the first paragraph:

- What is happening?
- Who is doing it?
- Where is it happening?
- When is it happening?
- Why is it happening?
- How is it happening?

A **news release**, or press release, is more comprehensive than a media advisory. Think of press releases as a way for you to write the article for a reporter. Reporters may pull content directly from press releases for their articles, making them extremely important.

Press releases answer the "W" questions, too, but they are more comprehensive. Press releases need to be in AP (Associated Press) style, meaning they begin with the most important aspect of an event, and end with the least important. This style of writing is known as "the inverted pyramid." Include quotes from speakers at an event, or from a member of the chapter about the event.

For more information on AP style, please visit apstylebook.com.

Use DAV letterhead, which lists your local address. Always include the contact information of one person from your chapter or department. Reporters will often follow up on advisories and releases, and it's important that they have a go-to person. Give names, phone numbers and email addresses.



Photography and video guidelines

Following an event, you may increase the likelihood of coverage if you can provide strong visual images. You should not forget about the value of making submissions to your local publication after the fact. You should include *DAV Magazine* as a source for submissions. Chances are you will reach many inactive members in your community who receive the magazine but do not attend meetings. You will also be contributing to the success of the organization by informing other chapters and departments about events that are particularly effective. If it works in your community, it may work in others.

But that all starts with the ability to provide images that meet publication standards. If you have someone in your local DAV chapter or department who likes to take photos, this may be an excellent opportunity for them to contribute. Taking photos should not be intimidating. The ability to take high-quality images is no longer reserved exclusively to professional photographers. The clarity and resolution of digital cameras have improved dramatically over the years. Meanwhile, and this is not an excuse for bad photography, there are so many more places where images are used and the standards for images have changed—especially in the case of online use, where resolution is usually lowered intentionally to make smaller files to upload on pages. In a digital world, film is not an issue. Because of that, you should feel free to take multiple photos at any shoot and pool your images with other photographers in your chapter to get the best possible images to submit.

Tips for producing effective images

- Choose one photographer instead of having multiple people taking photos. This helps avoid confusion and/or distracting the person(s) being photographed.
- Get close-ups to capture facial expressions and emotions of participants.
- Find out the names of all individuals in your photos so you can provide captions when submitting the photos.
- Be sure to feature celebrity guests or VIPs in photos.
- Wear DAV logo apparel. For those who may be attending or participating in the media event, be sure to wear a DAV shirt to add another exposure opportunity for our brand.
- Know that you and those you choose to photograph are representing all veterans when you wear DAV attire, so do so with the utmost honor and dignity.

Sample interview responses

- Q: What initiatives does DAV have in place for veterans?
- A: *(Useless response)*
“We have a lot.”
- A: *(Better but not great)*
“We navigate the VA claims world so veterans don’t have to.”
- A: *(Effective response)*
“Last year, we helped more than 285,000 veterans secure more than \$26.4 billion in earned benefits throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico.”
(Targeted response)
“No other organization has empowered veterans to lead high-quality lives with dignity and respect after service more than ours.”

For more examples of targeted messages, take a look at “Key messaging” on Page 21.

Tips on giving an interview

Interviews are the basic tool of news-gathering. The key to a good interview is preparation. Before talking to a reporter or going on air, think about what message you want to convey. What are the two or three most important points that you want to make? Practice making these points clearly, using short sentences, beforehand. Use the DAV Language Guide as a resource for how to describe DAV services and word and phrasing choices for your interview.

Here are some basic tips:

- Take control of the interview. If you have a good story to tell and if you have enthusiasm for it, you’ll naturally want to take control from the start and begin to tell a story.
- Give the news first and then the background information.
- Use quotable language. All reporters look for concise language, rich in meaning, that sums up an issue. The best “sound bites” are analogies, metaphors, comparisons and contrasts. Keep it positive and keep it short.
- Anticipate tough, negative or surprise questions. Develop a strategy in advance about how you will answer and defuse each one. Never meet hostility with hostility. When you do, it’s easy to be taken out of context.
- Always tell the truth. A half-truth is a half-lie. Don’t risk losing your credibility and the credibility of DAV.
- Never say “no comment.” In communications, “no comment” is the same as saying “we’re guilty” or “We want to cover something up.”
- Use “targeted messaging.” This is a powerful technique when used correctly. The formula is “Answer to Question” + “Targeted Message” = “Effective Response.” Ensure the targeted message is relevant to the question.
- Keep in mind you are “on the record,” meaning everything you say can be used by the journalist and attributed to you even if it appears the formal phase of your interview is over.



Public service announcement guidelines

A public service announcement (PSA) is often an unpaid advertisement for an organization, usually a government entity or nonprofit organization. Radio and TV stations are required by the Federal Communications Commission to set aside a certain amount of their airtime for PSAs. The purpose is to promote a cause, an idea, the mission of an organization or an event. DAV creates and releases PSAs nationally. However, it is possible for chapters and departments to encourage local stations to air national messages. It is also possible to identify a media partner who may be willing to assist you in producing PSAs for special events.

Sample outreach language

DAV is helping more than 1 million veterans in life-changing ways each year—connecting them to the health care, employment, education and financial benefits they’ve earned.

The message below presents real veterans who’ve overcome challenges and found victory for themselves and their families. These true stories are just a few of the victories that DAV helps make possible every year. With greater public awareness, these positive stories can inspire greater support for our veterans.

Thank you in advance for sharing these stories of victory. And thank you for supporting America’s most deserving heroes. You can download our PSA in the link below.

davpsa.org

Should you experience any technical issues at all, please do not hesitate to email our webmaster at webmaster@dav.org or call our communications staff at 859-442-2086 or 859-442-1019.

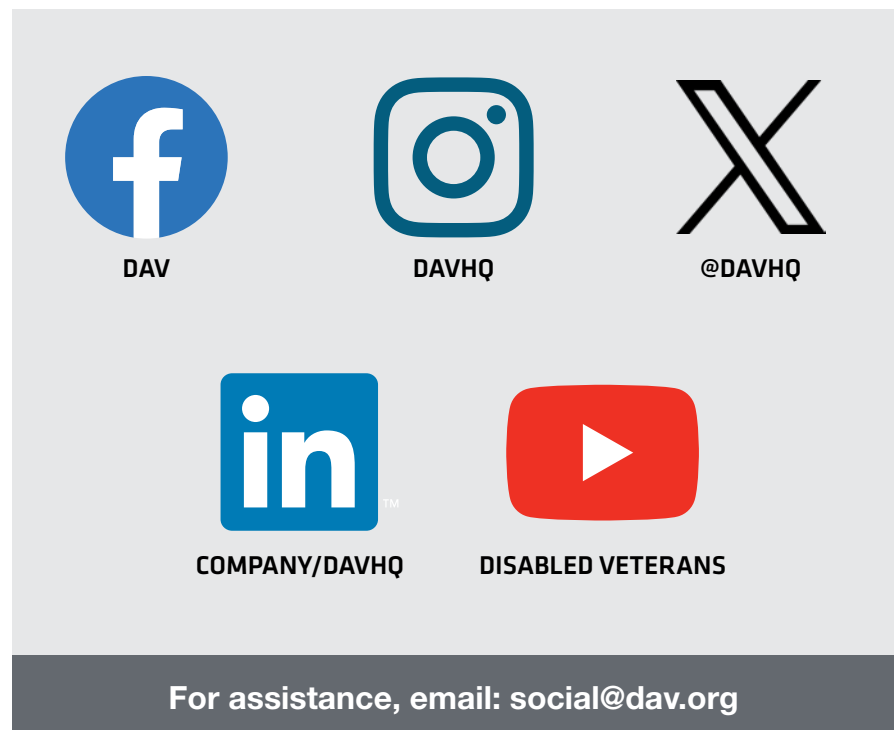
Thank you for helping us to address the needs of our nation’s ill or injured veterans and their families. By airing this PSA, you are serving those who sacrificed in our defense.

Tips for effective PSAs

- Generally, radio PSAs must be 15, 30 or 60 seconds long. Allow 25 words for each 10 seconds of airtime. Use simple words that draw a mental picture.
- Find out the PSA requirements of your stations by calling the public service director at each.
- Most TV stations prefer to air PSAs that are pre-produced in a digital format to which they can add a local name and contact information after the piece is broadcast.
- Radio stations will most likely want their PSA scripts written in broadcast format. Don’t forget to include AM and “talk-only” radio stations in your directory of radio stations that receive your PSAs. A radio broadcast-style PSA can be found on this page.
- All PSAs must conclude with a “call to action,” or what you want the audience to do after hearing your message. That call to action must present a clear service to the community. You can ask people to volunteer or make them aware of our free services. They may also bring awareness to an important issue such as employment, homelessness, suicide or other important issues.

Social media guidelines

- Every post is like a press release. There is no taking it back once it has been posted. But don't fear social media. It is a tremendously effective, cost-efficient tool.
- Social media should not be seen as a way to merely broadcast information. Rather, it is tool we use to build relationships with stakeholders (members, donors, partners). It really is only worth doing if you are willing and able to engage in two-way communication.
- With social media we bring our message to our target audiences in a nonintrusive manner. They do not have to go looking for it, but we are not pushing anything on them. We simply provide valued content where they already are communicating with friends and family, doing business and being entertained.
- The secret to successful social media engagement is to provide value without asking for anything in return. People do not want to be solicited or marketed to. Inform them, entertain them and fill them with pride. But do not directly ask for anything in return. They will appreciate you and pay you back through greater loyalty, by telling their acquaintances about you, as well as through traditional means such as joining the organization and donating.



DEVELOPING AN OUTREACH PROGRAM

2



Keys to developing a successful outreach program for your chapter or department

Develop an outreach plan

An outreach plan is a set of specific measurable goals, timelines and actions required to successfully implement an outreach strategy. Setting aside the time at the beginning of each year to develop a plan will ensure that you establish goals and provide a mechanism for tracking these goals to help keep you on track.

- What type of messaging are you considering (newspaper, magazine, television, online)?
- What public relations (PR) or outreach opportunities do you anticipate throughout the year?
- Do you plan to do a newsletter, e-blasts or regular mail?
- How do your various marketing initiatives work together and support each other?

Outline annual events

As part of your planning process, think through the types of events you host each year. Develop a PR plan for how to publicize each event.

- What type of marketing support will each event need (press releases, photographer)?
- How can you increase attention and awareness about your event throughout the community?
- What creative ideas do you have for new events that can bring increased attention to DAV in your community?

Brainstorm PR opportunities and story angles

Take the time to think through your department's or chapter's various programs and services. What are some story ideas you can pitch to the media this year?

- Will your chapter hit a milestone this year (25th anniversary, 100,000 miles of van transportation)?
- What new or innovative programs or events does your department or chapter offer veterans? Would the public want to know about it? How can you tell your story?
- Do any of your members have a compelling story to share about how they have overcome obstacles? What challenges did they face, and how did DAV help them overcome them?
- Are you watching for local tie-ins to national stories? Keep aware of national news stories and look for local angles that relate. News outlets look for local stories that tie in to topics that are getting national attention.
- How does your chapter respond to a national issue or trend affecting veterans?
- Is there something you need? You can highlight a program if you have a good callout for volunteers or some way the public can interact with DAV.



Optimize outreach efforts

What are you doing to communicate to your members and supporters? How are you spreading the word about your programs and services?

- Do you have a chapter newsletter? Newsletters are a great and easy way to keep your friends informed about DAV news and events.
- Have you distributed a local public service announcement?
- Do you send e-blasts? Make sure you are capturing emails of supporters at all opportunities. Email is a cost-effective and easy way to quickly communicate about upcoming programs and news.
- Are your website and calendar of events up to date? It is critical that your website features the most recent information to keep supporters coming back.
- What social media platforms are your chapter on? Are you posting regularly and asking members to “follow” or “like” your account?
- Have you considered reaching out to local student veterans organizations? Colleges campuses are great places to find new members or look for interns or classes to help with your marketing efforts.



Guidelines for submitting information to *DAV Magazine*

Because *DAV Magazine* receives more submissions than it can hope to publish in each issue, the editorial staff has established guidelines to ensure readers are best served by the information selected for publication. We ask that you please keep these guidelines in mind when you submit information to *DAV Magazine*.

- Is the information of interest to the majority of the magazine's readers? The size of a donation or the number of volunteer hours involved are often not the most important considerations. What really matters is whether or not the activity serves as a good example of a useful DAV service (especially if it can be adopted by other departments and chapters).
- Does the article or photograph contain all of the necessary information? Often submissions cannot be used because they fail to provide names or an explanation of an activity's significance. Make sure to answer all of the following questions in anything you submit (including photos): who, what, when, where, why and how (the 5 Ws and H).
- Does the submission include good-quality photographs? Photographs enhance the opportunity for publication. They must be sharp and clear, and preferably in color, 3 by 5 inches or larger, and 300 dpi (dots per inch) resolution. Try to not have more than five people in a standard photo. (There are a few exceptions to this.) If at all possible, email digital images. *DAV Magazine* will consider printed images, but the process of scanning them often degrades the quality of the images significantly. This is especially true of images printed on paper. It is best to submit the original image files taken with your digital camera.
- DAV does not publish:
 - Articles not relevant to the DAV and Auxiliary mission of service to injured and ill veterans, their families and survivors.
 - News of chapter, unit or department election of officers or other routine activities.

Tips for taking strong photos

- Whenever you plan a photograph, study the subject in detail. Then analyze what you see. Decide on the strongest point of interest, the aspect of the scene that first caught your attention. How can you make this feature prominent? Which other elements support the main feature, and where should they be placed to balance or add drama to the picture as a whole?
- Fewer people and more action make most photos more interesting and usable. Pictures of people performing a service or doing work are preferred. Complete captions are essential. (Make sure the caption answers the 5Ws and H.)
- Remember the “rule of thirds” for photography. Dividing the screen into thirds both vertically and horizontally, like a tic-tac-toe board, is a way to improve the composition of individual scenes. Placing the subject slightly off-center, where two of the lines intersect, makes the composition less static and more interesting.

- Articles that endorse or oppose candidates for public office. Remember, DAV is nonpartisan.
- Articles that promote the products or services of for-profit companies or concerns, as well as organizations not otherwise formally recognized and supported by DAV. (This includes books.)
- Articles that are libelous (libel is the injury to reputation—it applies to organizations as well as individuals), deemed to be in poor taste or otherwise inappropriate for a magazine read by family members.

The magazine staff is ready to help see that your DAV activities are published in future issues. The important thing to remember is that you’ve included all the facts, spelled the names correctly and submitted the material in legible form. Include a daytime phone number in case the staff has questions. Because of the volume of submissions, the staff cannot acknowledge each submission or return all materials. Please see “Photography and video guidelines” on Page 11 for more information on producing effective images.

You can email magazine staff with your submission or questions at feedback@dav.org.

Photography’s “rule of thirds”



Glossary of media terms

Television stations

- **News director:** Hires and fires news personnel, can assign stories but at larger station may not be hands-on executive in daily news coverage
- **Assignment editor/assignment desk staff:** The “traffic cops” who decide minute-by-minute what is newsworthy and what isn’t, assigns crews and reporters
- **anchors:** Read copy often written by others, sometimes report and conduct interviews
- **Reporters:** Cover newsworthy events as assigned, work hand-in-hand with producers to develop stories
- **Producers:** Plan public affairs shows or special segments of news, choose and book guests

Radio stations

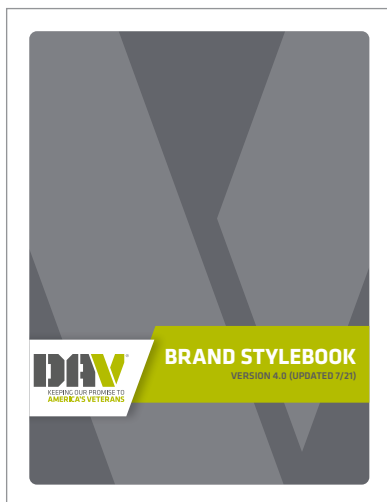
- **Public service or community relations director:** Decides who among the many public interest or nonprofit groups will receive free or public service time on the station
- **Program director:** At most stations assigns reporters, at small stations may report and read the news as well
- **Reporters:** Cover newsworthy events as assigned, may read wire copy on the air

Newspapers and magazines

- **Executive or managing editor:** Makes business as well as news decisions for the newspaper, may become involved on major stories or with major problems
- **Editors (editorial page, national, city or metro, lifestyle or features, Sunday, health, TV, sports):** Assign reporters who are on their staffs, try to coordinate coverage at the newspaper, may do some reporting
- **Columnist:** Writes personal, sometimes first-person opinion pieces
- **Reporters:** Cover stories as assigned, often suggest topics for coverage

Social media and online outlets

- **Blogger:** Writes for a blog (an online journal) and frequently posts content to the internet
- **Podcaster:** Hosts a podcast and frequently posts content to the internet



DAV brand and logo

Over the past few years, DAV has focused on ways to solidify our foundation and growth of our membership base.

In keeping with DAV's commitment to veterans, we continually look for new ways to generate awareness of the free services we offer to veterans and their families.

In addition to expanding our digital outreach, we have continued to augment our direct mail efforts by customizing messages to prospective members based on their individual service eras and tailoring our messages based on their experiences.

The look of our materials and use of our language guide have developed consistency and have had a significantly positive impact in our membership efforts.

We continue to receive positive feedback from veterans who have joined through our campaign, and we seem to be attracting new members who have previously been reluctant to join.

DAV logo options



Key messaging

- DAV serves all injured or ill veterans, whether their injury is visible or not. Any assistance we can give to our veterans is important.
- DAV is dedicated to the service of our nation's injured heroes, the men and women who live with illnesses and injuries related to their military service. Some injuries are visible and some, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are not. We're here to help all veterans, regardless of the severity or degree of their injuries.
- I'm a member of DAV Chapter [number] in [city, state]. I think being more involved with my community has given me more confidence in myself. There's a reason for me to be here.
- We help hundreds of thousands of veterans each year obtain needed benefits throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. We are veterans helping veterans because we don't leave a fellow service member behind. No one should have to go it alone.
- The decision to serve is the greatest commitment to our country and community one person can make.
- We help returning veterans transition back to civilian life by linking them with services that address their physical, emotional and financial needs.
- DAV provides free, professional assistance to veterans of all generations in obtaining Department of Veterans Affairs and other government benefits earned through service to our nation.
- DAV provides free transportation to veterans who need help getting to and from medical appointments.
- We help veterans experiencing homelessness by providing food and shelter while connecting veterans to medical care, benefits counseling and job training.
- Keeping our promises to the men and women who have served our country is the right thing to do. Regardless of your politics and whether you agree with our government's foreign policy decisions, our servicemen and women voluntarily put their lives on the line to ensure our safety, to protect the basic freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States.

Tips for effective PSAs

- Generally, radio PSAs must be 15, 30 or 60 seconds long. Allow 25 words for each 10 seconds of airtime. Use simple words that draw a mental picture.
- Find out the PSA requirements of your stations by calling the public service director at each.
- Most TV stations prefer to air PSAs that are pre-produced in a digital format to which they can add a local name and contact information after the piece is broadcast.
- Radio stations will most likely want their PSA scripts written in broadcast format. Don't forget to include AM and "talk-only" radio stations in your directory of radio stations that receive your PSAs. A radio broadcast-style PSA can be found on Page 13.
- All PSAs must conclude with a "call to action," or what you want the audience to do after hearing your message. That call to action must present a clear service to the community. You can ask people to volunteer or make them aware of our free services. They may also bring awareness to an important issue such as employment, homelessness, suicide or other important issues.

Creating effective public service announcements

There are six basic rules for building broadcast copy, commonly known as the "six Cs."

1. **Clear** copy is easily understood the first time it's heard, as the listener may not have a second chance to hear the information. It also limits sentences to one main thought. Test copy for these traits by reading it aloud for someone else.
2. **Concise** copy is tightly written; each word must add to the story/report. It consists of simple sentences and gets right to the main point.
3. **Conversational** copy is written the way people speak. It uses common language and syntax and avoids military and technical jargon. Remember, not everyone in your audience is in the military or a veteran. A term in one branch of service may have no meaning whatsoever to a member of another.
4. **Complete** copy answers the five Ws. You must be able to complete your story in a shorter time (usually 30 seconds). Good broadcast copy doesn't raise questions or leave questions unanswered.
5. **Current** copy is today's news only. It conveys a sense of immediacy through verb tense. You should use whatever tense is most natural and appropriate, although you should use the present tense whenever possible.
6. **Correct** copy must be free of factual errors—your department's or chapter's credibility is at stake! Double-check copy for correct names and dates, as well as correct use of punctuation and grammar.

Broadcast copy generally uses seven punctuation marks: commas, periods, ellipses, dashes, hyphens, quotation marks and parentheses.

For a radio public service announcement (PSA), copy length should not exceed 30 seconds. To determine the length of a piece of radio copy, we use the rule of seven to eight lines of text with 60 characters per line using a 12-point font. This is approximately 30 seconds of copy. You can also count the words. A good rule of thumb is 75-80 words per 30 seconds. The best test of this rule is to read the copy and time it to see what the total length is. Reading telephone numbers and dates could add time to your script.

For 30 seconds of television copy, use 14–16 lines of text with 35 characters per line using a 12-point font. When formatting copy for television, the video is on the left side of the page and the script is written on the right side of the page. It is formatted this way so the person reading the script can match up the words with the video that is being shown.

PSA style rules

- Use 20 words or fewer per sentence (25 words in the lead sentence).
- Use character names instead of announcer when appropriate.
- Use repetition to stress essential information or the main theme.
- When a phone number is used, say it twice toward the end of the spot.
- Double-space your copy.

Letters to the editor

There are several different ideas and approaches to writing a letter to the editor. Some may comment on a specific charge or allegation in a piece. Others may take issue with a policy or position in a story. Others may simply be a reader's observations about a story. A letter to the editor should not be written every time a minor error, misquote or suspected bias appears in the publication. A letter to the editor to correct a serious inaccuracy is welcome—most journalists are committed to accuracy and professionalism.

Your letter should state the situation, give the background and offer a solution to the problem. It should be short, focusing on only one issue. Generally, letters to the editor are not the place for the public to demand corrections or to complain. Regardless, if you send a letter to the editor, remember most newspapers get more letters than they can print. So keep yours short (generally one to three paragraphs). Consult the publication for specific guidance. Even the shortest letter will be subject to editing for space or content. Finally, letters to the editor must be signed before being considered for publication. As email and web-based correspondence has become more frequent, some editors no longer insist on hard copies. Editors do, however, want full contact information for the writer for verification and clarification purposes.

Letter to the editor sample

Dear editor:

Your article, No Hope for VA Backlogs (Sept. 10), contains a false assumption. Yes, while there's certainly no denying there is a large backlog within the VA system, and VA officials have unequivocally stated so, as you pointed out, there are actually several things being done to address the issue.

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) has worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs to expedite the claims process. Veterans and their qualifying family members or survivors can make an appointment with any DAV chapter and discuss their case with the local chapter service officer. Our VA-accredited benefits advocates are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and they are empowered to act as the veterans' advocates and attorneys-in-fact while navigating the VA system for the benefits veterans have earned through service.

Anyone can learn more about how DAV is working on behalf of veterans or how anyone can volunteer to assist veterans in their community by visiting dav.org.

Name, Location

Signature

DAV's communications department is always ready and pleased to assist you in your outreach efforts. If you have questions about anything in this manual or need guidance on your local communications plan, please don't hesitate to contact us. Our goal is to ensure we are getting DAV's name in the news through high-quality, positive publicity. Here are some of the other things we can assist you with:

- Provide you with a listing of local media outlets in your area.
- Review and/or proofread your press release or media advisory.
- Provide suggestions on how to handle your publicity initiative.
- Provide you with updated public service announcement copy and productions.
- Accept submissions to *DAV Magazine*.

**Contact DAV's communication department:
859-441-7300 or feedback@dav.org**



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