

**National Veterans Service
Accredited Service Officer Skill Level Training Conference
September 21 -25
Annapolis, MD**

Welcome to the 2025 Accredited Service Officer Skill Level Training Conference presented by the VFW National Veterans Service (NVS). The goal of our training is to ensure that you have the knowledge and skills to represent veterans, their families, and survivors with their claims before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We strive to bring you the best instructors to help you learn the programs administered by VA, prepare claims, develop evidence, review VA decisions, and assist with appeals. In order to do this effectively, we expect your cooperation in complying with the rules shown below.

GUIDELINES FOR LIVE ATTENDEES

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class. Review your agenda to know the time and place for your class. If you arrive late or do not attend a class, your supervisor and/or Department Commander may be notified.

Notify a member of the NVS leadership if you experience a health problem or personal issue that results in you missing a class or needing to leave early.

Never change your flight reservation without speaking with a member of the NVS leadership. If you change the ticket on your own, you may have to pay the difference.

The NVS Director or Deputy Director are the only ones who can excuse you if you must leave before the end of the conference.

Dress

The dress code for this conference is business casual during class sessions. Acceptable attire consists of slacks, skirts, or pressed khakis, a collared shirt or blouse, polo shirt, or golf shirt, dress sweater or cardigan, and dress shoes. Please note, we have many guests and sponsors attending this conference therefore we ask that you adhere to the dress code.

Casual clothes, to include jeans, may be worn during your workgroup's travel day and during after-hours social events, to include the welcome reception. VFW branded clothing such as polo shirts, hats etc. are encouraged during these events.

Health Related

The Veterans of Foreign Wars takes the health and safety of all attendees seriously. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. If you have a non-emergent health problem, refer to the Annapolis Clinics list that you received in your welcome folder for a list of local facilities.

If you require medications, ensure you bring enough to last for the duration of the conference.

Please contact Katherine Cassell, Assistant Director for Health Care Policy at (202) 304-9840 if you need to leave the conference for medical care.



Computers and Devices

If you were issued a laptop computer by the VFW or your employer for the purposes of claims assistance, you are required to bring this to the conference even if it is imaged by VA.

If you were not issued a VFW laptop, you may bring your personal computer to class, however, it is not required for you to bring personally owned equipment to class. If you were not issued such equipment, please contact Keith Garrison KGarrison@vfw.org prior to the start of the conference and he will arrange for copies of the materials for you.

We will provide extension cords and surge protectors in each of the classrooms, however, please be careful when placing your charger to ensure that others will not trip on the cord. The hotel provides free Wi-Fi service; we have requested that the hotel amplify the Wi-Fi signal during our conference.

Please show respect to the instructor when using electronic devices. While you may view the presentation, eCFR, or other relevant websites on the topic at hand, if your attention is distracted, we do not know if learning is taking place.

Do not complete claims or office work on your computer during class. Though it may be tempting to multitask, both the classroom and your clients require your full attention; they cannot be done simultaneously.

Course Materials

Copies of the course materials will be available in the Resources section of the VFW OLP by Thursday September 18, 2025. Refer to the “Accessing the Course Materials” document that you received with these guidelines for instructions on how to access the course materials.

Throughout your classes, instructors will reference material from Title 38 of the CFR. You must bring the most recent copy available of the complete title 38 CFR (two volumes) with you to class or have access to the electronic Code of Federal Regulations (www.ecfr.gov).

Classroom Behavior

Each classroom has an NVS employee assigned as a facilitator. Please follow their directions during class as they are there to help ensure that the class runs smoothly.

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be silenced during class. If you know you will need to take a call, schedule it for during a break.

People sometimes get tired, stiff, or sore when sitting in a classroom. If that happens, feel free to stand at the back of the room. If you need to leave the room, please do so quietly but return as soon as possible.

Be respectful to instructors and other students – wait your turn to talk. Don’t dominate the class by telling stories as this will likely cause your class to get off track and there will not be enough time to cover all of the required material.

Questions are encouraged. However, please refrain from asking advice about a personal issue or specific case unless you are speaking with the instructor or NVS Staff member during a break or after class. A detailed conversation is usually needed to provide correct advice.

Please take your belongings with you at the end of each day and dispose of any trash.

Testing

Testing is a critical element of our training; therefore we require all students (both live and virtual attendees) to complete an end of conference test on the VFW Online Learning Portal.

This test will be administered online during the conference; there is no take home testing option for this conference. All attendees, both live and virtual, are required to complete the test online during the conference on Thursday, September 25, 2025.

If you do not take the end of conference test during the testing period, you will receive a 0% and your supervisor and/or Department Commander will be notified.

For more information regarding the end of conference test, refer to the “Accessing the Test” document that you received with these guidelines.

Although the test is open reference, it must be your own independent work: do not consult with anyone while taking your test. Test scores are used in deciding which service officers should be recertified for accreditation with the VA every 5 years. Those who fail tests or fail to take tests may not be recertified.

Hotel

If you have any problems with your accommodations at the training, please discuss those problems with Theresa Aldana. If your room needs repair, contact the hotel front desk. Instructors or Facilitators cannot fix problems related to your stay.

As guests of the Doubletree hotel, we must treat the area with respect and have been asked to limit smoking to the designated smoking areas. Though cannabis use is legal in Maryland, it is not authorized on hotel property. Please be courteous to other hotel guests and ensure all cigarette butts are policed and disposed of properly.

Food

Continental snack items are available every morning before class starts. These items are not substantive enough to affect your breakfast per diem.

A full lunch is provided on Monday and Tuesday. Refer to the agenda for the lunch menu. This will affect your meal per diem for the days on which lunch is provided. Snacks are provided every day during breaks. If you didn't request arrangements for special food before arriving at training, we cannot change the lunch or snack menu at the last minute. If you would like different food options, you are welcome to visit any restaurant you'd like. There are many fine restaurants in the area; ask the hotel staff for local restaurant options.

Miscellaneous

All attendees are perceived as representatives of our great organization and must act accordingly while attending training. The NVS views harassment of any type (racial, religious, age-related, sexual, or ethnic) as unacceptable and has a zero tolerance policy. Attendees will conduct themselves in a professional manner and refrain from any kinds of harassing behavior. All reported complaints and instances will be fully investigated and may result in the offending party being removed from the training environment and referred to their supervisors or Departments for further action.