

SERVICE OFFICER

The importance of having a Branch Service Officer in every Legion Branch cannot be over emphasized.

Service Officers are empathetic, compassionate, non-judgmental, patient collaborators with excellent communication skills who treat all Veterans with dignity, respect and objectivity. They accept and understand the importance of the Veterans perspective in a Veteran friendly approach to case planning and are flexible when working with Veterans, families and their community. They are reliable and adapt easily in a continuously changing environment. They recognize the diversity in our veteran community. They work closely with diverse veterans to help them maximize their independence, autonomy and quality of life. This is done by using supportive interviewing and counseling technique and methods. As well assessing a veteran's needs using various strengths-based and solution-focused models and practices and providing case management that incorporates the veteran's motivations for change, commitment, goals and diverse needs. They seek to build mutually beneficial community partnerships which includes the non-profit, business and government communities. They seek and identify veterans who are in need of help but aren't necessarily aware of Legion services. They administer and deliver Legion programs and refer to community programs in support of Veterans. They are sure to follow-up and monitor the progress of Veterans. They are discreet and respect the privacy of Veterans, all while working collaboratively with the Provincial Command. They are the "boots on the ground", best suited to identify and serve the Veterans in an informal manner, while still being careful in all areas of assessments and risk-taking. They provide an important service with regards to Veterans Affairs Canada. They seek to maximize their skills, to continuously learn and to gain experience as they spend more time serving Veterans. Their service is highly valued.

The Branch Service Officer can either be elected or appointed to office. If appointed, they have no vote at Executive meetings, but certainly should be invited to attend all meetings of the full Executive, to act as advisor and counsel on service matters. All members of the Branch should realize that it takes many years of experience to become a good Branch Service Officer

and this is why continuity should receive consideration when electing or appointing the Branch Service Officer. In fact, sometimes the only way to maintain good continuity is by the appointment method.

Far too often the Branch Service Officer is relegated to a position of little responsibility and because of this they will lose interest and fade into the background. How often have you seen the Branch President or Secretary take on the obligation of Branch service work instead of delegating this responsibility to the Branch Service Officer. Unfortunately, it happens too frequently.

The duties of a Branch Service Officer are many and varied. It is not sufficient to say that they will do only this and that – it is only possible to lay down guidelines, broad in scope, with a limited amount of authority subject to ratification of the Branch Executive.

Some of the areas to explore in Legion service work are:

- Disability Pension (widows included)
- Treatment Regulations
- Benevolent Funds
- Legion Poppy Funds
- War Veterans Allowance (WVA)
- Social Services
- Local Shelters, Food Banks, Churches
- Burials (CPC, VAC, and Last Post Fund)
- Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Canada and Quebec Pension Plans
- Housing
- Veterans Independence Program
- Various Local, Provincial, and National Networks

The Branch Service Officer is not expected to know all the details of veteran's legislation, etc. That is why the Legion employs both Provincial and Dominion Command Service Officers to assist in this regard. The Service Officer should let it be known where and when they can be contacted.

The following publications are available online are recommended reading for a Branch Service Officer:

- Service Officer Handbook
- War Veterans Allowance
- Last Post Fund brochure
- Canada and Quebec Pension Plans
- Old Age Security Pension
- Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Spouses Allowance
- Veterans Affairs Services and Benefits
- Each province also has a number of informative pamphlets available on Senior Citizen Benefits

It is vital that the Branch Service Officer keep discussions with persons seeking assistance confidential. If this is not done, the Branch Service Officer will not have any credibility and will be unable to properly carry out the responsibilities of this position.

**LEGION SERVICE WORK IS FREE TO “ALL” VETERANS
AS WELL AS THE WIDOW AND CHILDREN OF VETERANS**