

Auxiliary Eligibility is ‘Quite Expansive’

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For more than 100 years, the VFW Auxiliary has strived to improve the lives and wellbeing of veterans, service members and their families.

The Auxiliary’s nearly half a million members work alongside VFW for the betterment of the communities in which they live.

“VFW is thankful for the Auxiliary,” VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz said. “But what so many VFW members do not understand is that membership in the Auxiliary is open to more than spouses.”

VFW National Auxiliary Secretary/Treasurer Ann Panteleakos said it’s a common misconception that only spouses of VFW members are eligible for Auxiliary membership.

“On average, a VFW member has several family members eligible for Auxiliary membership,” said Panteleakos, whose eligibility comes from her dad. “Our eligibility wheel is really quite expansive.”

Another misconception is that to be an Auxiliary member, you have to be related to a VFW member.

Actually, the veteran need only be eligible for the organization, but not necessarily a member.

Panteleakos noted that step and adopted parents, children, siblings, (and halfsiblings), grandparents and grandchildren are considered the same as if they were all biologically related.

Members of the Auxiliary must be at least 16 years old.

Panteleakos said that VFW members have a strong incentive for encouraging eligible family

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members to join the community service-oriented Auxiliary.

“Every year when VFW goes to Capitol Hill to testify,” she said, “the Auxiliary membership number is counted in with the VFW. The larger the count, the more powerful our voice is.”

As a VFW member, if you have someone in your family who would like to join the Auxiliary, there are three ways:

- If your VFW has an Auxiliary, go directly to the Auxiliary and ask for a membership application to fill out. No proof of eligibility is needed in this case.
- If no Auxiliary is available at your Post, go to the Department Auxiliary treasurer. This option would make the individual a Department at-large member. Or the treasurer may suggest another Auxiliary in your area.
- To be a national at-large Auxiliary member, go directly to the Auxiliary’s National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

“I encourage all VFW members to ask their parents, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers and grandchildren to join forces with them by becoming an Auxiliary member,” Schmitz said. “Growing our voice on Capitol Hill also expands our reach to veterans.”

Panteleakos said it’s common for someone to ask to join the Auxiliary, but that their veteran has died and no one knows where the veteran’s discharge papers are.

She added that a good idea as veterans, is to let loved ones know where such important paperwork is kept.

“We so value our partnership with VFW,” Panteleakos said. “We would so love to see our membership grow so that we could continue serving veterans and their families for years to come.”

For more information on the Auxiliary, email info@vfwauxiliary.org, call 816.561.8655 or visit vfwauxiliary.org.

This article is featured in the March 2020 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor of VFW magazine.