

MONTHLY MUSTER

NEWSLETTER



Event that took place in the month

VACCC Volunteer Corps

Coffee and Conversation



<https://vaccookcounty.org>

VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION OF
COOK COUNTY
JULY 2026 RECAP

Outreach Program

Bring Services to Veteran

Over the past two and a half years, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County's Outreach Program has undergone a significant transformation in how we connect Veterans with services. What began as a traditional outreach model - averaging around seven events per month, often attending the same resource fairs - has developed into a proactive, community-based program. Previously, outreach largely consisted of distributing materials, providing basic guidance, and encouraging Veterans to contact the VACCC afterward. Today, our focus is on bringing the VACCC directly into the communities where Veterans live, work, and study and creating an immediate pathway to assistance.

Through partnerships with elected officials, universities, nonprofits, government agencies, Veteran organizations, and community leaders, the VACCC now conducts office hours, Vet Talks, claims clinics, resource events, and other direct-service opportunities throughout Cook County. With just two outreach staff members, the program has grown to approximately 42 events each month, frequently covering multiple locations in a single day. On a typical outreach day, 30 or more Veterans interact with our staff, with approximately 5-10 receiving direct assistance - meaning they are connected directly with a Veteran Service Officer (VSO), Emergency Financial Services (EFS) caseworker, or community partner based on their individual needs. This has transformed outreach from primarily providing information into an extension of the VACCC's service-delivery system.

The results have been substantial. Increased outreach has helped consistently fill VSO appointment schedules, bring more Veterans through our doors, and drive significant growth in the use of our Emergency Financial Services. Demand for EFS has grown quickly enough that the VACCC is working to shift additional funding within its budget to keep pace. At the same time, the VACCC has become a more active, visible, and recognized organization across Cook County, continuing to break records for outreach events and Veterans assisted. Most importantly, we are no longer simply waiting for Veterans to find us - we are meeting them in their communities with the assistance they need.



VACCC Team in the Field

VACCC Volunteer Corps

Building Our Community



Jim Parker, First Volunteer for our Program

The VACCC Volunteer Corps officially began transitioning into field operations this July, marking an exciting step forward for the program. Newly trained volunteers joined VACCC staff at three community events, including the Blue Star Families Chicagoland event, Congressman Delia Ramirez's Veterans Resource Event, and the Guardian Corps of America Veterans Stand Down Event. Volunteers received training from VACCC staff on our services and available resources, preparing them to engage with Veterans and provide information and assistance in the community.

The Volunteer Corps has already helped expand VACCC's outreach capabilities while providing additional support to staff during larger community events. As the program continues to grow, we look forward to welcoming more volunteers who are willing to complete the training and give their time to helping Veterans and their families throughout Cook County.



Coffee and Conversation

July 31st | American Legion Post 208 | 9AM - 11AM

On July 31, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County hosted a Coffee & Conversation event, providing an opportunity for Veterans to connect directly with VACCC leadership and learn more about the services and resources available to them.

Superintendent Elizabeth Soto and Deputy Superintendent Grant Jacobson spoke with Veterans about VACCC's mission, the assistance our office provides, and how we continue working to support Veterans and their families throughout Cook County.

VACCC would also like to thank Commissioner Maggie Trevor, State Senator Mark Walker, and VACCC Board 2nd Vice President Dutch DeGroot for attending and contributing to the conversation. Their participation provided Veterans with additional information and perspectives on services, programs, and resources available throughout the community. Events like Coffee & Conversation give us an important opportunity not only to share information, but to hear directly from the Veterans we serve and strengthen the relationships between Veterans, VACCC, and our community partners.



VACCC Internship Program

Expanding the Workforce



Nekohl Johnson, our Newest Intern!

As the VACCC continues to grow, our Internship Program is helping develop a new pool of professionals interested in serving Veterans and their communities. Through university partnerships, contracted placements, and programs such as VRNE, interns gain hands-on experience in outreach, VSO services, Emergency Financial Services, administration, finance, casework, and communications. The program gives participants an opportunity to develop practical skills while learning the operations of a growing Veteran service organization.

Following a successful start with our first intern, Nicolle Velasquez, the VACCC is excited to welcome Nekohl Johnson this August. A longtime VACCC Commission member and active member of the South Side Veteran community, Nekohl will temporarily step away as a representative within the Commission while completing an internship through her master's program. She will focus on casework and outreach while gaining a deeper understanding of VACCC services and operations!

SPOTLIGHT



Nicolle Velasquez

As one of the first interns to participate in the VAOCC Internship Program, Nicolle Velasquez quickly became a valued member of our team. Nicolle is an ROTC student at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), where she is pursuing a degree in Marketing with a concentration in Digital Marketing and Promotions, along with a minor in Business Analytics. During her internship, Nicolle supported VAOCC's Communications and Outreach efforts through digital engagement, content development, and marketing. Her work helped revitalize our public-facing brand, improve our marketing materials, streamline communications, and strengthen how we share information about our services with Veterans and their families throughout Cook County.

While we are sad to see Nicolle leave VAOCC, we are incredibly grateful for everything she contributed during her time with us. As an ROTC Cadet preparing to commission into the Illinois National Guard, Nicolle will continue her commitment to service while pursuing her education and professional career. We wish her tremendous success in everything ahead and hope to see her back at VAOCC again in the future!

CONNECT WITH US!

Contact Us

-  (312) 433-6010
-  vaccc@cookcountyil.gov
-  <https://vacccookcounty.org>

Our Locations

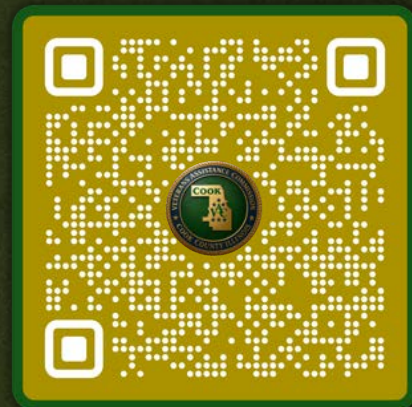
Headquarters	Chicago
Office	Regional Office
1100 S. Hamilton Ave, C-O11 LL Chicago, IL 60612	69 W. Washington St., Suite 1420, Chicago, IL 60602

Hours Of Operations

Monday - Friday

8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Benefits window closes by
3:00 p.m. (Headquarters Office)



Follow us on social media



Intake Form

