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# How to Support the Troops and Their Families on Military Installations

## Background Information

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) issued a historic policy emphasizing the importance of nonprofit organizations, military service organizations (MSOs) and veterans service organizations (VSOs) in providing additional support to servicemembers and their families on military installations. Prior to this policy, it was extraordinarily difficult for non-governmental organizations to obtain access to military installations. American Legion Auxiliary units are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity, independently, or with their Legion posts, to bring our mission outreach programs to servicemembers and their families on military installations.

Please note: In addition to “receiving access onto military installations,” Auxiliary members may also hear “base access” used. Both have the same meaning.

## How to Locate a Military Installation

1. Determine whether a military installation (active duty, Guard and Reserve) is near you using MilitaryINSTALLATIONS ([www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil)). You will find detailed profiles of installations, including general contact information.
2. If you are searching by a state:
  - a. Once you type in your state, or a neighboring state if you are close, a new page will open, showing an overview of the state.
  - b. Click on “State Installations” located at the top in the middle.
  - c. Military installations of any branch will be listed.
  - d. If an installation is located close to you, click on the installation name for more information.
  - e. Contact information for that installation will be provided on the upper lefthand side of the page. Each installation’s process may be different, so contact the general number to ask for the appropriate way to submit a request. When calling, ask how a local nonprofit non-federal entity submits a military installation access application.
3. If you are searching by a military installation:
  - a. Type in the name of an installation near you, select it from the dropdown that appears, and click “Go.” A new page will open, showing the fast facts of that installation.
  - b. Contact information for that installation will be provided on the upper lefthand side of the page. Each installation’s process may be different, so contact the general number to ask for the appropriate way to submit a request. When calling, ask how a local nonprofit non-federal entity submits a military installation access application.

## How to Submit a Request for Access onto Military Installations

1. The American Legion Auxiliary is considered a nonprofit organization for purposes of access to military installations. The American Legion is a VSO.
  - a. If you are working with your Legion post, and they would like more information on requesting access as a VSO, direct them to the “Access Granted: Assisting Troops with Transition and Benefits” on the Legion’s website (<http://www.legion.org/publications/229409/access-granted>). Additionally, they can



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- contact The American Legion's National Security Division at [nsfr@legion.org](mailto:nsfr@legion.org) or (202) 263-5765.
2. The installation commander responds as their schedule permits, so submit your information no less than two months ahead of your first requested event. It is better to start the process sooner rather than later. After you have spoken with your local military installation (see previous section), you will need to submit the following documents to the installation commander when requesting installation access:
    - a. With a few exceptions, units fall under the ALA's group IRS exemption determination letter. This letter is available on the ALA national website at [www.ALForVeterans.org](http://www.ALForVeterans.org), or you can contact your department headquarters for a copy.
    - b. Your unit's most recent Form 990, Form 990-EZ or Form 990-N (e-Postcard).
    - c. Written request that includes date(s), alternate date(s), time(s), specific event(s) and the purpose of event(s) for your request. You may request for multiple or recurring events in a single letter. A sample letter that you can customize follows the additional resources section at the end of this how-to.
    - d. Formal documentation of the nature, function and objectives of your unit. A copy of your unit's constitution and bylaws will suffice.
    - e. If you will be interacting with military children under the age of 18 in DoD-operated, DoD-contracted or community-based programs, you will need to provide background checks for all employees and volunteers who will be a part of that service.
      - i. Nationally, The American Legion holds an agreement with Protect Youth Sports (PYS), that extends to Auxiliary volunteers and employees, to get background checks at a reduced rate. Contact your department headquarters for more information to utilize this option to complete any necessary background checks.
  3. In order for your request to be granted, the services proposed should improve the morale and readiness of servicemembers and their families, as well as support the military. Installation commanders will be checking for this, so make sure that it is clear in your request.
  4. Suggested ideas for mission outreach program delivery on installations:
    - a. camp support and services for the needs of military children, such as through promoting ALA Girls State
    - b. physical fitness and recreation activities, such as using tools like the Arts Deployed Guide and webinars to set up your own arts program (see the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program page)
    - c. scholarships, such as through promoting scholarships offered by your unit, department and/or National Headquarters
    - d. life skills training, such as using tools like the Welcome To Our Hometown Action Guide to welcome new military families to your community (see the National Security program page)
    - e. career opportunities for transitioning servicemembers, such as through bringing job fairs to the installation and using tools like the "How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military and Veteran Spouses" (see the National Security program page)
    - f. troop and family member recognition, such as through organizing activities like Welcome To Our Hometown, Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2, Star Spangled Kids or a ceremony for Youth Hero and Good Deed Award recipients (see the National Security and Children & Youth program pages)



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5. After you submit the necessary documents, the military installation's commander will respond with a letter allowing or denying access. The installation commander will use consistent, fair and standard procedures to process requests for installation access and space.

### Once a Request is Granted

1. Installation commanders are authorized to inform servicemembers and their families about the availability of services and support provided by nonprofits at their installations.
2. Remember the following do's and don'ts while on a military installation:
  - a. Carry the ALA brand with you when hosting an activity or event at the installation. Be sure to wear a shirt with the ALA emblem or some other identifier. Please do feel free to mention why you value association with The American Legion Family as appropriate.
  - b. DoD policy does not allow any organization, including the Legion and Auxiliary, to recruit or push membership while on the installation. However, if a servicemember or family member directly asks about becoming a member, you should take their contact information and promptly follow up after the event is over with further details.
  - c. Remember that servicemembers may not be compelled to participate.
  - d. ALA may not offer services that require a fee of any kind.
  - e. Fundraising for ALA is not allowed on military installations.
  - f. ALA members will not be granted access to installation services such as the Post Exchange (PX) or Commissary.
  - g. Space on the military installation is made available as is. Installation commanders retain the authority to revoke access or withdraw the approval of available space and associated services when warranted.
3. Run the program!
4. For additional events not covered in your unit's submitted/approved request, you will need to submit additional information.
  - a. If it has been less than a year, and none of the documents submitted to request access have changed, simply submit a new written request that includes date(s), time(s), specific event(s) and purpose of the event(s).
  - b. If it has been less than a year, but some or all of the documents submitted to request access have changed, resubmit only the documents that need to be updated with your new written request that includes date(s), time(s), specific event(s) and purpose of the event(s).
  - c. If it has been more than a year, resubmit all the necessary documents outlined in *How to Submit a Request for Access onto Military Installations #1* above.
  - d. Annually, your unit will need to resubmit all paperwork required when initially requesting access. (See *How to Submit a Request for Access onto Military Installations #1* above.)

### Report Your Impact

Please be sure to report your volunteer activities and hours to your unit's National Security chairman.

This is a fairly new policy, so we want to know your feedback about this how-to as well! Let the National Security national committee know if this was helpful, as well as any additional tools or clarification that would have been beneficial as you made your request(s). Email [NationalSecurity@ALAforVeterans.org](mailto:NationalSecurity@ALAforVeterans.org).



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### Resources

- The ALA national website ([www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)) for resources like the *ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide*, *Welcome To Our Hometown Action Guide* and How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military and Veteran Spouses (on the National Security page); Arts Deployed Guide and webinars (on the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation page); scholarship information; and various Children & Youth program how-tos.
- U.S. Secretary of Defense's Publication on Installation Access and Support Services for Nonprofit Non-Federal Entities: <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.dcuc.org/resource/resmgr/Memos/SECDEF-Memo-23-Dec-14-Instal.pdf>



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**Example Request Letter for a One-Time Event**



**American Legion Auxiliary Unit [#]**

[Postal/Street Address]

[City, ST, ZIP Code]

Website: [URL (if applicable)] | Phone: [(###) ###-####]  
f/[Facebook page (if applicable)] | t/[Twitter handle (if applicable)]

[Today's Date]

[Recipient Name (Installation Commander's Point of Contact)]

[Postal/Street Address]

[City, ST, ZIP Code]

Dear [Recipient],

I am writing to request that American Legion Auxiliary Unit [#] be granted access to [installation name] at [Month day, year] on [time (including am/pm)] for the purpose of [specific event information]. An alternative date would be [Month day, year] on [time (including am/pm)].

Since 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) has dedicated itself to our nation's veterans, servicemembers and their families. Nationally, the ALA presents programs such as ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation, which is an opportunity for young women to take part and learn about American government; offers life skills training through our Welcome to Our Hometown events; and awards scholarships for military children. American Legion Auxiliary Unit [#] is one of 8,600 chapters across the world. We [enter a sentence or two about your unit's programs and /or services, with emphasis, if applicable, on any programs you already offer for military families].

This event will provide servicemembers and their families with much needed assistance by [explain how the event benefits the troops and their families].

We request that [installation name] provide [explain what you'd like the installation to provide based on what's needed for your event; for instance, if your event needs a room that accommodates 30 people and chairs and a request to have the event promoted to military families through available communications].

I have included copies of our organization's IRS exemption determination letter, [Form 990, Form 990-EZ or Form 990-N (e-Postcard)] and [add other documents you've attached that are needed, such as your unit's constitution and bylaws, and, when necessary, background checks].

Thank you for your consideration in the approval of our request. We look forward to providing our support and services to the servicemembers and families at [installation name].

Very respectfully,

[Your name]

[Your ALA title, such as National Security chairman or president]

[Your contact phone number (if different from above) and email address]