

Veterans Services Officer Tompkins County

Department: Veterans Services

Classification: Competitive

Labor Grade: Confidential Grade 60

Approved: 12/2022 by RP

Revised: 8/2024; 1/2025

By: RP, Commissioner of Human Resources

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State (NYS) Board of Regents with a bachelor's degree and one (1) year of experience in Veterans benefits counseling, human services, journalism, labor relations, or public relations, or significantly similar work*; OR
2. Completion of a minimum of sixty (60) credit hours at a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the NYS Board of Regents and three (3) years of experience in Veterans benefits counseling, human services, journalism, labor relations, or public relations, or significantly similar work*; OR
3. High School Diploma or possession of a GED and five (5) years of experience in Veterans benefits counseling, human services, journalism, labor relations, or public relations, or significantly similar work*.

NOTE: Time in military performing similar duties may be substituted for years of experience. Determination of relevancy, nature, and scope of experience is subject to the discretion of the Commissioner of Human Resources.

* **Preferred Qualifications:** It is highly desired that the experience described above shall have directly involved the provision of services to those who have served in the U.S. military.

MILITARY REQUIREMENTS: Must be honorably discharged from military active duty, other than for active duty for training purposes, or released under honorable circumstances. Candidates must submit a copy of their DD214 substantiating that they meet these requirements at the time of application.

Tompkins County is committed to Equity and Inclusion. We encourage those with similar values to apply.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Must meet, successfully, civil service examination requirements for this Competitive position.

Must obtain accreditation as a Veterans Service Officer by the Department of Veterans Affairs within one (1) year of appointment.

Must maintain accreditation for the duration of employment through ongoing training/meeting requirements.

Must be able to pass a background and fingerprint check.

Must be eligible for membership in a National Veterans Organization chartered by the United States Congress, or be a current member in good standing, and retain said membership and standing during appointment. (Verification Required)

Must be able to create, supervise, or facilitate peer-to-peer activities and programs for Military Veterans that combat isolation and promote connectedness with community.

Must possess a valid New York State Driver's License and demonstrate the ability to meet the transportation needs of the job at time of appointment.

Must be able to work occasional evenings and weekends. Advance notice will be given when such hours are necessary.

Preference in appointment may be given to residents of Tompkins County.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:

County Veterans Service Officers (VSO) are recognized under Federal law by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide legal representation for individuals in matters relating to VA law. By virtue of accreditation, the County VSO has access to a nationwide network of Accredited Representatives who can provide expanded assistance including before the Board of Veterans' Appeals in Washington, D.C. The work is carried out in accordance with well-established procedures under the authority of Article 17, Sections 357, 358, and 359 of the NYS Executive Law. This specialized role involves counseling and assisting members of the Armed Forces, Veterans, and their families concerning the rights, benefits, and services to which they are entitled under law. As such, the successful candidate must have excellent interpersonal and networking skills to deploy in serving the diverse clientele seeking service. Work involves responsibility for substantial operation of technology in the performance of difficult and responsible claims filing and performing record keeping associated with Veterans. The work is performed under the general supervision of the Director of the Veterans Services Department. Wide leeway, accompanied by strong accountability, is allowed for the exercise of independent judgment in scheduling and arranging details of work to accomplish assigned duties.

TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:

- Maintains a program consisting of counseling, outreach, informational sessions and other services to Veterans, servicemembers, their dependents and survivors;
- Maintains education of most current laws, regulations, rules, procedures, and directives in order to assist, advise, and advocate for Veterans, members of the Armed Services, and their families and survivors concerning their rights and benefits, including matters pertaining to education, medical, employment, and more;
- Assists Veterans and their dependents in the preparation of their entitled claims for disability, pension, and death benefits; and in accessing eligible benefits and resources through the VA and other national, state, and local service agencies;
- Maintains confidential written or electronic records pertaining to Veterans and their families including psychological, social, medical, financial, and legal matters;
- Counsels Veterans on review and upgrade of discharges;
- Visits clients with serious disabilities at their residence, hospital, or nursing home when necessary to assist them with claims, counseling, or other services related to benefits or other needs;
- May accompany Veterans to appeal hearings, when appropriate;
- Assists the Director with reports, presentations, and liaison responsibilities to various personnel and government bodies, private, fraternal, civic and Veterans' groups;
- Dissemination of Veteran-related public information to media, Veterans groups, community groups, social media, and others in person or in written or video form and through outreach activities;
- Performs a variety of other responsible administrative duties.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Thorough knowledge of the federal, state, and local laws pertaining to Veterans and their families in order to advise them on their eligibility for benefits; to complete the paperwork for application for benefits; and to assist them in the appeal of benefit denials;
- Thorough knowledge of various services available to Veterans and their families in order to advise them of programs and services to which they may be entitled;
- High level of reasoning skills in dealing with many complex issues and ideas, and ability to work well in high-stress situations;
- Good knowledge of interviewing and counseling techniques;
- Ability to work with diverse staff and to understand and respond to people with diverse needs, perspectives, personalities, and levels of familiarity with agency operations;
- Ability to use good judgment to determine legitimacy of client claims/needs;
- Ability to prepare and maintain confidential information;
- Ability to express ideas clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing;
- Ability to use computer-related technology to retrieve records and prepare forms and reports;
- Ability to exercise sound judgement, emotional maturity, resourcefulness, tact, initiative and interest in Veterans' programs;
- Ability to be organized, dependable, and make sound autonomous decisions

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS:

Physical: Work entails considerable visual effort and repetitive hand/finger movements associated with the execution of the tasks delegated with this role. The incumbent must be able to accurately manage and manipulate information, using computer software and hardware systems, with or without reasonable accommodations. Otherwise, the position requires only minimal physical effort which, for the most part, is performed while seated or standing at a desk, but can include some walking, handling light boxes or supplies, and manually transporting equipment for outreach-related activities.

Mental: The employee may experience tight deadlines and frequent exposure to distressing human situations. As a result, considerable interpersonal skills are needed.

Environmental: The work is generally performed indoors, in an office setting, in a temperature-controlled environment. The incumbent is not generally exposed to disagreeable working conditions. Weather permitting, there will be attendance required at occasional outdoors events for outreach purposes.

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