

Veterans Services Officer Tompkins County

Department: Veterans Services

Classification: Competitive

Labor Grade: Confidential Grade 60

Approved: 12/2022 by RP

By: RP, Commissioner of Human Resources

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the 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. Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the NYS Board of Regents with an associate degree and three (3) years of experience as described in (A) above; OR
3. Sixty (60) credit hours from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the NYS Board of Regents and four (4) years of experience as described in (A) above.

NOTE:

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

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 are able to 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 keyboarding equipment and related technology in the performance of difficult and responsible claim filing and performing record keeping associated with Veterans. The Work is performed under the general supervision of the Director of the Veterans Service Department. Wide leeway 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 programming and other services to veterans, servicemen/women, their dependents and survivors;
- Assists, advises, and advocates for veterans, members of the armed services and their families and survivors concerning their rights and benefits, including matters pertaining to educational training, military law, employment and reemployment, health, transportation, medical and rehabilitation services and facilities, and the provisions of laws relating to veterans' rights and privileges;
- Assists veterans and their dependents in the preparation of their entitled claims for disability, pension, and death benefits;
- 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 seriously disabled clients at their residence, hospital, or nursing home when necessary to assist them;
- May accompany veterans to appeal hearings, when appropriate;
- Cooperates with other County departments to assist veterans and their dependents;
- Contacts other Veterans Service Agencies, officials of the US Department of Veterans Affairs, national Veterans Service Organizations and various other federal, state, and local governmental agencies or individuals;
- Contacts private and public social service agencies in investigating claims and status of veteran clients;
- Assists the Director in providing advice and updates to the County Administrator and Legislature regarding important veterans' related issues, events and information;
- Assists with providing input on required reports for the County Administrator, County Legislature, and NYS Division of Veterans Services;
- Interprets and explains current and new laws, regulations, rules, procedures and directives to staff, clients, veteran or civic organizations, or others seeking such information;
- Assists with preparation of news releases for the dissemination of information relating to veterans' benefits, or other veterans-related information;
- Ability to appear on radio and television or before community groups to discuss issues concerning veterans and their benefits;
- Assists with maintaining liaison with governmental, private, fraternal, civic and veterans' groups and agencies;
- Participate in outreach activities representing the Department of Veterans Services;
- 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 possible programs and services to which they may be entitled;

- High level of reasoning skills in dealing with many complex issues and ideas, including the ability to understand and interpret laws, legal opinions, court decisions, medical text, medical records and opinions, financial records and statements, procedural regulations, current events, military regulations and military records;
- Good knowledge of interviewing and counseling techniques in order to assist veterans and their families with a variety of problems related to disability, death, economics, and legal conditions, etc.;
- Good knowledge of techniques used to interact effectively with individuals or community groups to promote the needs of veterans, to secure provision of services, and to represent one's program while maintaining good public relations; Familiarity with medical and psychiatric conditions associated with the veteran population and related resources;
- Ability to learn, interpret, and explain changes in rules and regulations pertaining to benefit eligibility;
- Ability to understand and respond to people with diverse needs, perspectives, personalities, and levels of familiarity with agency operations;
- Ability to work effectively with representatives of Federal and State Veterans' agencies, veterans' organizations, and the general public;
- 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 software programs to retrieve records and prepare forms and reports;
- Sound judgement, emotional maturity, resourcefulness, interest in veterans' programs, tact and initiative;
- The employee's physical and mental condition shall be commensurate with the demands of the position, either with or without reasonable accommodation.

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 and/or handling light boxes or supplies. The employee must possess the knowledge and ability needed to utilize office equipment, including computer systems, inclusive of necessary software and operating systems, with or without reasonable accommodations. Operation of such machinery requires considerable precision, manual dexterity, knowledge and skill.

Mental:

The employee's ability to communicate (verbally and in writing) must be such that they are able to understand and carry out complex detailed instructions and/or share information to ensure adequate delivery of services. The employee may experience tight deadlines and frequent exposure to distressing human situations. As a result, considerable interpersonal skills are needed to advise and guide clients on the best use of their benefits and/or to plan and coordinate inter-group cooperation when it comes to coordinating with third-party providers.

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.