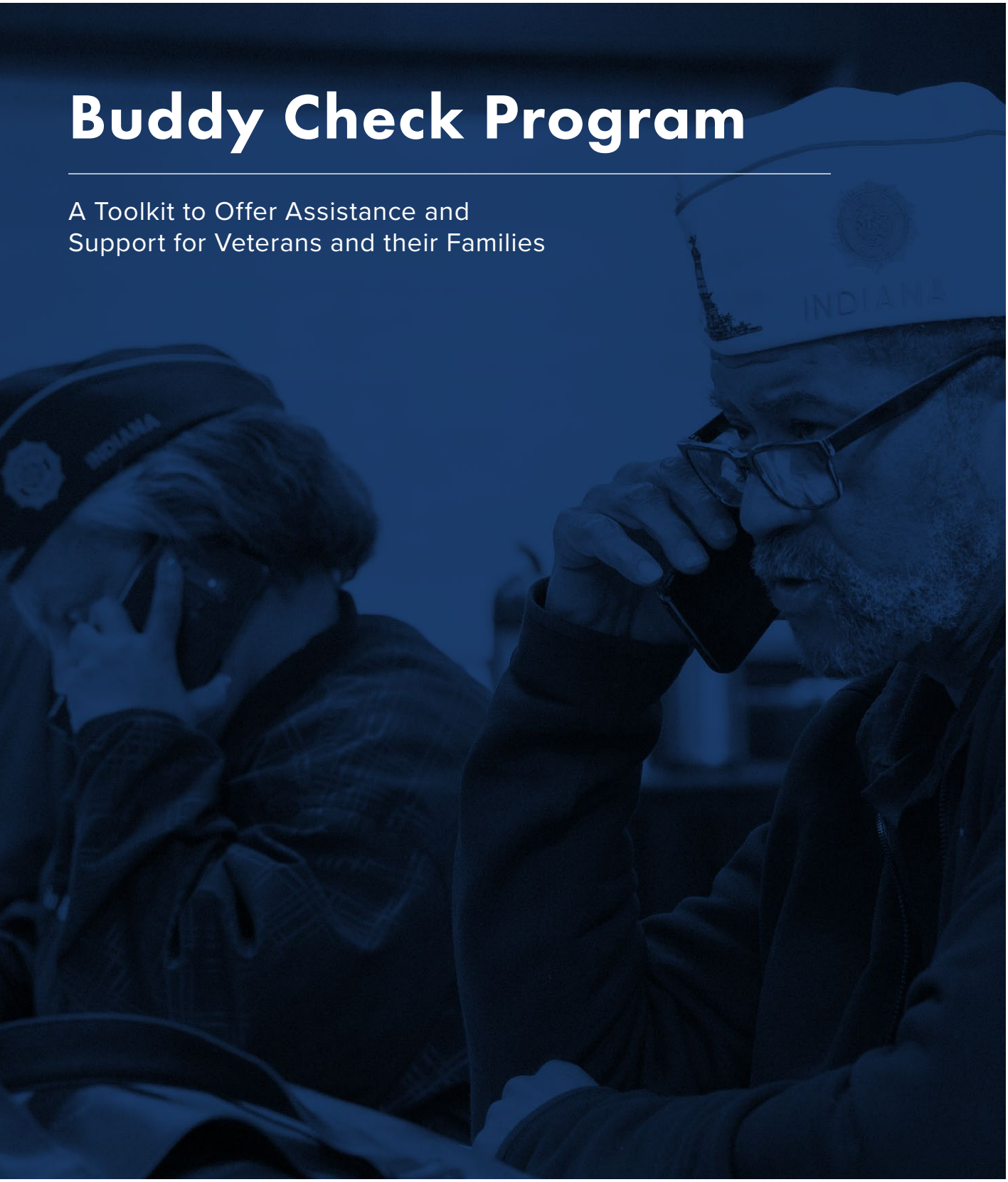
AMERICAN LEGION

Buddy Check Program

A Toolkit to Offer Assistance and
Support for Veterans and their Families



legion.org/buddycheck

Preamble

to The American Legion Constitution

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

to maintain law and order;

to foster and perpetuate a 100-percent Americanism;

to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;

to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

to make right the master of might;

to promote peace and goodwill on earth;

to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The American Legion Buddy Check Program ..... page 2

Buddy Checks: How to get started ..... page 3

American Legion Buddy Check Sample Scripts ..... page 4

How to support a veteran in crisis ..... page 6

Door hanger for in-person Buddy Checks ..... page 7

Sample phone call spreadsheet ..... page 8

What The American Legion does: Quick guide ..... page 9

Best practices and the why for Buddy Checks ..... page 10

Sample media advisory ..... page 12

Sample press release ..... page 13



The American Legion Buddy Check Program

As American Legion members, our most sacred responsibility is to look out for each other, fellow veterans and their families. The American Legion's Buddy Check program has a mission to do just that – check on the well-being of members and veterans in the community by engaging in conversation, assessing needs and risks, and showing we care. These are not membership or fundraising calls.

In its most basic form a Buddy Check is outreach by phone, text, email or in person to simply ask a veteran, "Is there anything The American Legion can do for you or your family?"

The American Legion launched the Buddy Check program in 2019, which has expanded since with more than 2 million veterans reached through this initiative. More than 4,500 Legion posts indicate on the annual Consolidated Post Report that they make Buddy Checks.

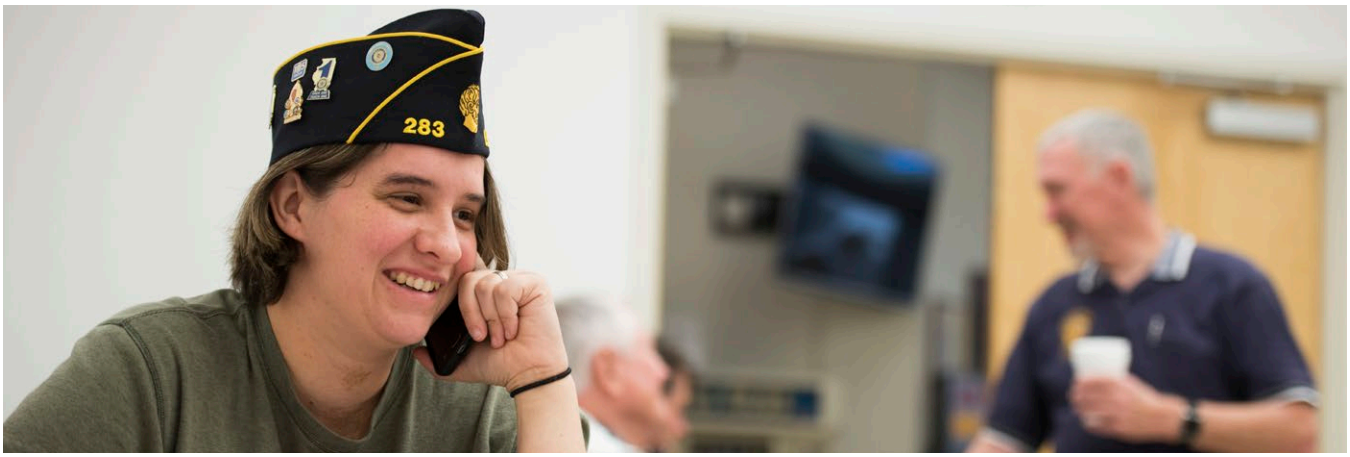
Buddy Checks have led to veterans getting transported to doctors' appointments, receiving grocery deliveries, getting assistance with VA benefits claims, or just have someone to talk to when they are lonely. This critical assistance is why the Buddy Check program aligns with The American Legion's Be the One mission to reduce veteran suicide. Suicide prevention happens by reaching out to veterans to close the isolation gap, ask if they are OK, and deliver immediate resources and assistance. Buddy Checks save lives.

The National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 18 that calls for Buddy Checks to be conducted Legion-wide during the weeks of The American Legion's birthday, March 15, and Veterans Day, Nov. 11. But Buddy Checks can be conducted any day of the year.

In fact, the success of the Buddy Check program illustrates thousands of American Legion members and posts conduct them weekly, monthly or quarterly.

"The response from our veterans was well received. Most of them were surprised to get the call. They had a chance to talk about what they are doing, how they are feeling, and what we could do for them. It was surely well worth it for sure."

– Dayna Beyer, Auxiliary Unit 535 in Bellville, Ohio



BUDDY CHECKS: HOW TO GET STARTED

Create a team to make the calls. Identify American Legion Family members who want to connect with members and veterans. If 10 Legion Family members call 10 Legionnaires or veterans, that's 100 veterans reached in one sitting who had not been contacted before. Calls can be made from the post's active and expired membership list.

> **TIP:** American Legion Post 159 in Venice, Fla., matches its membership Buddy Check call list with post members of the same war era to help create relationship building and understanding during the phone conversation.

Print a list of contact information for current and expired post members from MyLegion.org. Save the list in a spreadsheet or copy and paste into a Word file and distribute among team members making calls.

Post adjutants and commanders can access the current post roster and expired list. Start by:

1. Logging into MyLegion.org.
2. Select post group and under MY VIEWS in the lefthand menu select Reports/Labels.
3. Select "Post/Squadron Current" roster report and enter data parameters.
4. Enter data filters. Begin by selecting your post from "Group" menu.
5. Enter "Last Paid Year." To view current membership, select the membership year and all years greater to capture members who have purchased a multi-year renewal.
6. Set "Status" filter to Active.
7. Click "Membership Type." Select All for a full roster.
8. Click "View Report" to generate.
9. Export the report to an Excel spreadsheet or PDF document.
10. Print copies.

Make a list of local resources and phone numbers that include local services like food pantries, housing, employment, and mental health to include the 988 Veterans Crisis Line. Having resources on hand will give the caller confidence to address the needs of veterans, whatever they may be.

Start calling from a quiet place inside the post home or from your own residence. Ask the veteran how they are doing and if there is anything they need that the Legion post can help with. This is a great opportunity to bring members into the fold for camaraderie by inviting them to an upcoming post meeting, event or meal.

Use a spreadsheet to document Buddy Check calls. The spreadsheet can outline what assistance is needed, who may need to be followed up with, if the veteran is now deceased but the spouse has needs, if a phone number is not valid, or if no one answered and a voicemail was left.

AMERICAN LEGION BUDDY CHECK SAMPLE SCRIPTS

The following scripts are a guide to help you and your American Legion Family members make Buddy Checks on current and former members, and veterans in the community. Each phone call will be unique, so the scripts are to be used as a starting point and can be modified. The most important part of the call is to see if the veteran and the family are OK, if the Legion post can assist, and to invite them to an upcoming post meeting, event or meal.

Buddy Check script for members

Hi, **[MEMBER'S NAME]**. This is **[YOUR NAME]** with your American Legion Post **[POST NUMBER]**. I want to thank you for your service to this great nation, and your membership in The American Legion.

I'm also reaching out to see how you and your family are doing. Is there anything that your American Legion Family can assist you or your family with, or are there any resources that you need that I can help you with?

***[PAUSE AND LISTEN]**. If they say YES, ask them to share more details. If you do not have an answer to their immediate need, let them know you will call back once you identify a resource, person or program that could assist them.*

If they say NO.

That's great to hear you and your family are OK. If there is anything in the future that your American Legion post family can help you with, please reach out. **[PROVIDE A CONTACT NUMBER WHETHER IT'S YOU OR THE POST NUMBER]**. We want you to know that your fellow Legionnaires are here for you.

Thank you again for your service and membership in The American Legion.

Tips when making calls:

- Ask for an email address if the member doesn't have one on file. This is an opportunity to keep the member engaged if your post communicates through a post newsletter or emails.
- Invite the member to an upcoming event, celebration, post meeting or dinner.
- Offer the assistance of an American Legion service officer if the post has one to help file benefits claims.
- Ask if they have any children or grandchildren who are of age for a youth program the post supports like Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contest, Boys State, etc.
- Keep in mind The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program when speaking with a member who has minor children in the home and may be facing a financial hardship. TFA meets the needs of eligible active-duty servicemembers and American Legion members with minor children in the home who are facing financial difficulties by providing one-time non-repayable cash grants of up to $2,500. The program helps provide for the basic needs of children such as housing, food, utilities and clothing. Visit **legion.org/TFA** for more information.

"When Buddy Check calls are made, normally the first response is 'Why are you calling?' And we tell them, 'We're calling to check up on you. This is something new that we're doing because we want you involved in what's going on. We want to see you.' I tell them what we've got coming up and what we're thinking about doing, and if they're able to come to a meeting, please do. And if they need a ride, I'm happy to run a bus service to bring our members into the meeting so they can be involved."

– Charles Holt, Post 38 in Fair Grove, Mo.

Buddy Check script for non-members

Hi, [VETERAN'S NAME]. This is [YOUR NAME], and I'm calling from the local American Legion Post [POST NUMBER]. I am reaching out to see if there is anything that The American Legion can assist you or your family with. Your fellow veterans are always here for you.

[PAUSE AND LISTEN. If they say YES, ask them to share more details. If you do not have an answer to their immediate need, let them know you will call back once you identify a resource, person or program that could assist them.]

If they say NO.

That's great to hear you and your family are OK. If there is anything in the future that American Legion Post [POST NUMBER] can help you with, please reach out. [PROVIDE A CONTACT NUMBER WHETHER IT'S YOU OR THE POST NUMBER].

And I would like to invite you to our upcoming post [MEETING OR NAME OF EVENT]. This is a great opportunity to meet fellow veterans, enjoy some camaraderie and see the programs and services American Legion Post [POST NUMBER] offers. *[If the post has an accredited American Legion service officer, provide this information as a valuable resource.]*

Thank you for your service and know that American Legion Post [POST NUMBER] is here for you.

Buddy Check script for expired members

Hi, [VETERAN'S NAME]. This is [YOUR NAME] with the local American Legion Post [POST NUMBER]. I'm reaching out to see if there anything that The American Legion can assist you or your family with, or are there any resources that you need that I can help you with?

[PAUSE AND LISTEN. If they say YES, ask them to share more details. If you do not have an answer to their immediate need, let them know you will call back once you identify a resource, person or program that could assist them.]

If they say NO.

That's great to hear you and your family are OK. If there is anything in the future that American Legion Post [POST NUMBER] can help you with, please reach out. [PROVIDE A CONTACT NUMBER WHETHER IT'S YOU OR THE POST NUMBER].

I understand you were once a member of The American Legion, and I would like to invite you to our upcoming post [MEETING OR NAME OF EVENT]. We'd love to welcome you back and show you how we are continuing to serve and how you be a part of it.

Thank you for your service and know that American Legion Post [POST NUMBER] is here for you.

Tips when calling non-members and expired.

- **This is a check-in, not a recruitment or renewal call.** Expired members have reasons for letting their membership lapse, or they may not know it did, and often appreciate the phone call and being asked how they're doing.
- **Talk about value.** If the veteran wants to learn more about joining or renewing, share what being part of the Legion means: connection, service, purpose and community. Discuss the programs your post supports that the veteran may have interest in like youth programs, Legion Riders or honor guard.
- **Share the priorities of The American Legion.** For example, The American Legion's primary mission of Be the One that is aimed at ending veteran suicide. Tell them about the program and how they can be the one to save a life of a fellow veteran.

HOW TO SUPPORT A VETERAN IN CRISIS

The American Legion's Buddy Check program goes together with the organization's Be the One suicide prevention mission. Learn more at **betheone.org**. During a Buddy Check, you may find a veteran who is in a mental health crisis or needs mental health assistance. Prior to making Buddy Checks it is important to have local mental health resources available.

Stay on the line with the veteran and connect them to the Veterans Crisis Line by:

- Dialing **988** then Press 1.
- Chatting online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**, or
- Texting **838255**

Let the veteran know the Veterans Crisis Line is a free, anonymous, confidential resource that's available to any veteran, even if they are not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care. The services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Or, stay on the line with the veteran until a Legion post member can visit their home and check on their well-being.



Six suicide prevention questions to ask

The American Legion and Columbia University Lighthouse Project provide free suicide prevention training by using the Columbia Protocol, the leading evidence-based tool for suicide risk screening. The Columbia Protocol is a 90-minute session on Zoom that provides a simple, clear framework to identify suicidal thoughts and behaviors, enabling anyone to confidently ask the right questions and take action. Sign up for a class at **betheone.org**.

The six Columbia Protocol questions to ask a veteran to identify their risk factor and provide help if needed are:

1. Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?
2. Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?
   If YES to 2, answer questions 3, 4, 5 and 6. If NO to 2, go directly to question 6.
3. Have you been thinking about how you might do this?
4. Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?
5. Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?
   Always ask question 6
6. Have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?

If someone is in immediate crisis, call 988, get help immediately and:

- Stay with the person on the phone
- Talk about reasons for living
- Make a warm hand off
- Follow up, if possible

AMERICAN LEGION

Buddy Check



Your friends from The American Legion Family dropped by to say hello and see how you are doing.

If you need any help, supplies, transportation or just someone to talk to, let us know. We are here for you.

Contact:
Post No.
Address:
Phone number:
Email:

Reach out to us anytime!



DOOR HANGER FOR IN-PERSON BUDDY CHECKS

American Legion Buddy Checks extend beyond phone calls. Many Legion Family members go door-to-door, or veteran nursing homes, to visit post members and veterans. When someone is not home, a customizable Buddy Check door hanger can be left behind. Download the Buddy Check door hanger at **legion.org/buddycheck** under *More Downloadable Resources*.

SAMPLE PHONE CALL SPREADSHEET

Quick codes to reference:

CB = Call Back (make sure you indicate WHEN to call back)

LVM = Left voice message

NA = No answer/No voicemail recording

WN = Wrong Number (cross out number on list)

DEC=Deceased

Name	
Email Address	Phone Number
Assistance Needed?	Follow up
Notes (CB, NA, LVM, etc.)	If deceased, does spouse need assistance?
Name	
Email Address	Phone Number
Assistance Needed?	Follow up
Notes (CB, NA, LVM, etc.)	If deceased, does spouse need assistance?
Name	
Email Address	Phone Number
Assistance Needed?	Follow up
Notes (CB, NA, LVM, etc.)	If deceased, does spouse need assistance?
Name	
Email Address	Phone Number
Assistance Needed?	Follow up
Notes (CB, NA, LVM, etc.)	If deceased, does spouse need assistance?

WHAT DOES THE AMERICAN LEGION DO: QUICK GUIDE

Oftentimes, veterans will ask about what The American Legion does. Here are some talking points when this question arises during a Buddy Check, or any time. Before doing a Buddy Check, review these talking points and have them available when doing a check over the phone.

NATIONAL

1. **Advocating for you:** The American Legion fights for veterans on Capitol Hill, testifying for effective VA healthcare, improved disability benefits, GI Bill education, suicide prevention efforts and more.
2. **Securing benefits:** There are more than 3,000 American Legion service officers who handle over 750,000 veterans' cases at any one time, free of charge, securing billions in claims assistance each year.
3. **Saving lives:** The Legion is saving lives through its Be the One suicide prevention mission.
4. **Mentoring youth:** American Legion members mentor thousands of children and youth each year through healthy, educational, competitive and patriotic programs, including Boys State and Boys Nation, Oratorical Contest, American Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports, flag education, Scouting, Junior ROTC and more.
5. **Supporting our military:** The American Legion supports our nation's troops, their families and a strong Department of Defense through programs and services for active-duty, National Guard and reserve components to ensure quality of life, like the Base Assessment and Servicemember Experience (BASE) program.

DEPARTMENT

Before the call, research and makes notes on your department's top programs, initiatives, etc.

1. What department programs support veterans
2. What department programs support children and youth
3. What department programs support troops/ national security

POST

Before the call, research and makes notes on your post's top programs, initiatves, etc.

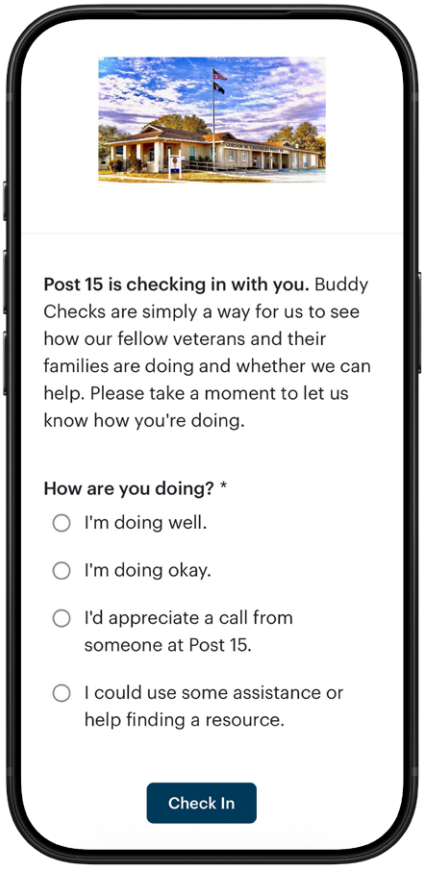
1. What post programs support veterans
2. What post programs support children and youth
3. What post programs support troops/national security

Jim Kott of American Legion Post 690 in Palatine, Ill., put together a list of the post's accomplishments during 2025 and provided it to the callers in case anyone asked about what the post does. Included in the list was:

- Providing $50,000 to veteran and community organizations, including Fisher House; the Chicago USO; and the Palatine Township Senior Center;
- Providing short-term financial assistance for veterans in need;
- Continuing a longtime tradition of hosting dozens of Navy recruits from Naval Station Great Lakes for Thanksgiving;
- Hosting blind veterans from Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital for bingo and visiting with disabled veterans at the facility;
- Organizing Palatine's Memorial Day parade and ceremony, and its Veterans Day ceremony; and
- Visiting with local students and presenting American Legion School Awards.

"A couple members asked for some help, so we provided that help. But 95 percent of it was, 'Thanks for the call. I appreciate it. I'm going to try to get into the post sometime.'"

BEST PRACTICES AND THE WHY FOR BUDDY CHECKS



American Legion Post 15 in Dade City, Fla., makes Buddy Checks by sending out an email survey through Mailchimp that asks if the member is doing OK, would like a call from the post, or needs help locating resources or support.

Be the One is "part of why we're doing this. One of the (survey) questions is, 'Hey, do you need somebody to reach out?' That's the intent of that question. We know that veterans will self-isolate. Let's weed down to the ones who have withdrawn and make sure they're doing OK." – Rob McGregor, Post 15, Dade City, Fla.

Past Department of Oklahoma Commander Brett Martin sent an email to members department-wide encouraging Buddy Checks to Be the One to save the life of a veteran. In the body of the email was the image of a heart with the Legion Family brand marks. Martin wrote: "Team Oklahoma, I am asking every Veteran to make one phone call and check on one Veteran. The call you make could be life-changing! Do it today."

Martin said he sent the email to members because, "When we served on active duty it was the unspoken that you knew the person to your right or left of you always had your back, truly a band of brother and sisters. It should be the same now as veterans and the Buddy Check is the way we can and must play this forward and show our love and support by doing Buddy Checks."



Vic "Doc" Moss of Post 149 in Las Vegas said Buddy Checks have assisted several members with benefits claims and financial hardships. And the Buddy Checks allowed the post to clean up its membership roster with correct mailing addresses and email addresses. Moss shares a message from one of Post 149's Buddy Checks:

"Yesterday I received a wonderful phone call from a young lady representing your post. She asked me if I needed anything or if the post could be of any help personally. I was pleasantly shocked. I have been associated with the VFW and The American Legion for well over 40 years now. I have never in those years ever received a reach-out for any assistance.

"Again, please thank the young lady for her efforts and listening to the ramblings of a 73-year-old Vietnam vet."



The Buddy Check team at Post 519 in Palm Springs, Calif., meets every week at 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and spends an hour calling veterans. "Most people, they're just thankful for the call. But we have run into people who are homebound, and for those we've committed to calling them more frequently. We offer that if they want to come to the post, we can get transportation and bring them to an event at the post. We're the lifeline for them. We are the connection to the community. We are the connection to healthcare. The connection for transportation. The connection for social services. Whatever it is, they know that they can talk to us. – Andrea Kline, Post 519 in Palm Springs, Calif.

"Sometimes just a phone call is all that is needed to let our veterans know that we are there for them." – Danny Muth, Post 593 in Converse, Texas



American Legion Post #
123 Main Street
Anytown, Any State Zip code
Phone Number

MEDIA ADVISORY

American Legion Post (#) Makes Buddy Checks to Assist Veterans in Need

Who:	American Legion Post (#), Post Contact (NAME)
What:	American Legion Buddy Check phone calls will be made to let our veterans know that we care about them and are available to help if needed. Previous Legion American Buddy Checks have resulted in food delivery, transportation to appointments, connection to mental health resources, a voice to listen when a veteran is lonely and more. The media can call (POST CONTACT PERSON AT PHONE NUMBER) or email (EMAIL ADDRESS) to arrange coverage and interviews.
When:	Date & Time
Where:	American Legion Post (#) Street address
Why:	American Legion Buddy Checks have proven vital for veterans and their families, especially during difficult times, assisting with household tasks, transportation, camaraderie and more. Since The American Legion launched the Buddy Check program in 2019, more than 2 million veterans have received offers of assistance.
Media Contacts:	Name, title, cell phone, email address

The American Legion is dedicated to the motto of “Veterans Strengthening America” and calls on all Americans to “Be the One” to stop veteran suicide. Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is committed to mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. Legionnaires in more than 11,500 posts across the nation and regions overseas serve their communities with a devotion to mutual helpfulness.

American Legion Post #
123 Main Street
Anytown, Any State Zip code
Phone Number

PRESS RELEASE

American Legion Post (#) reaches out to veterans through Buddy Checks

CITY (State), DATE – American Legion Post (#) in (CITY) is making Buddy Check calls to veterans on (DATE) to check on their well-being, provide a friendly voice and give any assistance they or their family may need.

American Legion Post (#) has a team of volunteer members who perform such outreach to let our veterans know we care.

"Veterans need to know they are not alone," Post (#) Commander (NAME OF COMMANDER) said. "American Legion Buddy Checks have been used in communities large and small throughout the country to help more than 2.1 million veterans get groceries, medication, transportation and fulfill other needs since the program launched in 2019. Veterans who receive Buddy Check calls often say the most important thing about them is a friendly voice at a time when friends and family are unavailable to them. Buddy Checks can help veterans facing mental health and well-being struggles, no matter the reason."

Those who know of veterans who would appreciate a Buddy Check call from American Legion Post (#) are encouraged to call (PHONE NUMBER OF POST) or email (COMMANDER/BUDDY CHECK TEAM LEADER EMAIL ADDRESS).

American Legion Post (#), founded in (YEAR), has abided by the organization's national mission of service – for (YEARS, DECADES, OVER A CENTURY) through programs and services that support veterans, military personnel, youth and patriotic activities.

The American Legion is dedicated to the motto of "Veterans Strengthening America" and calls on all Americans to "Be the One" to stop veteran suicide. Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is committed to mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. Legionnaires in more than 11,500 posts across the nation and regions overseas serve their communities with a devotion to mutual helpfulness.

AMERICAN LEGION

P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206
1-800-433-3318

legion.org

Connect with The American Legion

Scan the QR code to learn more about Buddy Checks.

Artwork# 57MEM1026