



# Franklin County Honor Flight

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Guardian,

As a potential Guardian for the next trip, it is imperative that you know and commit to all of the things that are required of you as an escort/Guardian because you are the key in making the trip a success for the Veteran(s) for which you are responsible.

Following is a discussion of Guardian duties

1. Depending on the Veterans' mobility, you may take care of one, two or possibly even three Veterans. If only one Veteran requires a wheelchair, then it is practical for you to also have a Veteran that is able to walk. And if the walking Veteran gets tired during the day and needs a wheelchair, that Veteran will be assigned to another Guardian.
2. *Immediately* after the Guardian training you should make an appointment to interview your Veterans as soon as possible--preferably the next day. We expect that you will interview your Veterans in their home or at some other location if more convenient to the Veteran. Ideally, *this should be completed within a week after the training with your paperwork completed and turned in the week following. Also you need to know that you may be required to travel an hour or more to interview your Veteran.* If for some reason you can't meet that schedule, you should advise us immediately and other arrangements will be made to reassign the Veteran to another Guardian.
3. It is important that you stay in touch and keep your Team Leader informed.
4. You will take two pictures of your Veteran from the neck up and email these digital images to one of our volunteers. These pictures are very important as they are used in several forms and become part of the Veterans' permanent record with us. If taking and emailing a digital picture is not possible, talk to your Team Leader.
5. Please advise your Team Leader immediately if there is any sort of glitch in working with your Veteran. We have had Veterans who couldn't be reached due to illness or because they are traveling, changed their mind about going, etc.
6. Even though the Veteran's family may not reveal it, they may be concerned for their loved one's safety. They are depending on you. This is why we do the advance interview process so you will learn the Veteran's ability to walk, if he or she tires easily, etc.

7. Here's a tip: Age often is not the best judge of a Veteran's stamina and mental capability. Get to know your Veteran and take note of any changes during the day.
8. Please be aware that background checks are made on all Veterans, Guardians, and leaders being considered for a trip.
9. When selected, Veterans and Guardians are all notified at the same time. Once a Veteran has been notified, he will be anxious to learn the details and to meet you, get his cap, shirt, book, and paperwork. We know you won't disappoint him.
10. *Please thoroughly read and study the attached Guardian Duties and Responsibilities.* These guidelines will help you be a great Guardian as they have been developed over the last eight years of our experience in making nearly 40 trips with over 1300 smiling Veterans visiting Washington, D.C. to see their memorials.
11. If you are selected, your Team Leader will be \_\_\_\_\_ and can be reached at \_\_\_\_\_.

*Note: Guardians, as part of your travel expenses for the upcoming flight a \$500.00 assessment will be necessary. Please make your check payable to Franklin County Honor Flight (FCHF) on or before the Guardian training session. This fee may or may not be tax deductible for you—talk to your tax consultant.*

I understand and agree to the above conditions found in this letter and in the attached Guardian Duties and Responsibilities.

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please print carefully:

Last name \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone used on trip \_\_\_\_\_

### **GUARDIAN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. This is your primary job -- You are to care for the Veterans as if you were their family member. In fact, you *are* their family member for the day.

Honor Flight gets multiple anxious calls from wives, daughters, sons, and grand kids wanting to accompany the Veteran so they can be sure they will be well cared for. We assure them all that our Guardians will care for them like family. Ratios vary depending on conditions, but normally one Guardian

is responsible for two Veterans, and usually one Guardian for one Veteran if he or she is in a wheelchair, requires oxygen, or has some other special need. Guardians are divided into groups and each group has a Team Leader. To help with the process of building bonding relationships for the trip and afterward, Guardians and Veterans should get to know each other as much as possible before the trip.

2. Safety is our major concern. Our worst nightmare would be for a Veteran to fall on our watch and fracture a hip. Be alert for any Veteran who is having difficulty walking and have them sit down immediately. Get them a wheelchair as soon as possible. Assist the Veterans in getting around the airports, on and off the bus, and around the memorials. You will have to watch some Veterans closer than others. Be particularly alert for this toward the end of the day as fatigue increases.
3. Inform your Team Captain immediately if any Veteran is complaining of fatigue, chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or seems confused. It is suggested that you identify in advance the guardians who are most knowledgeable on medical issues.
4. Check the bus, the airplane, the waiting areas, wherever the Veterans sit, to make sure that they do not accidentally leave their wallet, glasses, cell phone, camera, etc. behind.
5. You may come in contact with news media who want an interview. Please identify those articulate, talkative Veterans in your group that would be at ease during an interview, and steer the media to those individuals.
6. Be a focal point to stir conversation within a group of Veterans. You can spark a conversation by asking who served in the Pacific, Europe, in the United States and elsewhere; who was in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines. Ask the Veterans if they brought any mementos or photographs with them. A great conversation starter is, "How was the food in the service?" The Veterans will usually take over the conversation from there. (In the preparation stages of the trip, along with reminding them what to bring like a photo ID, and what not to bring like a pocket knife, you can suggest they bring along a few photos from the war. In addition to sharing them with their reconnected buddies, they can show them to the media people who like to take pictures of their photos and use them in their articles. (It's imperative to **bring copies** and **leave the originals back home** as they can get lost or damaged.)
7. We have contacted many Veterans who have previously taken the trip with us. When we ask them what was the most memorable part of their entire trip, the answer is most frequently the same - it was the appreciation, admiration and sincere gratitude shown to them for their service by complete strangers, youngsters, tourists and others with whom they came into contact during the day. That memory will remain with them for the rest of their lives and be passed on to family members. You can help foster that recognition by recognizing them for their service in front of others who happen to be within earshot of your conversation.
8. During the trip, do not accept any donations to our program by any Veterans, other passengers or tourists. Politely inform the Veterans that they can never make a donation to Honor Flight because we feel that they have given enough. Any non-Veteran who would like to make a contribution can do so by visiting our web site at [www.fchonorflight.org](http://www.fchonorflight.org) or simply Google "Franklin County Honor Flight." A good idea is to carry at least two of our brochures to hand out to those inquiring about us.
9. Perform a headcount of your Veterans at requested times; and always prior to the departure from any location. You cannot always depend on Veterans to know their whereabouts.
10. Do not permit the Veterans to pay for anything during the trip, except for souvenirs they want to take home. If you see a Veteran trying to pay for food or drink, or to tip a sky cap or bus driver, please stop them and you purchase the item. Neither you nor the veteran need tip anyone like a bus driver because we take care of that. Let your Team Captain know how much you spent and you will be reimbursed.
11. Encourage the Veterans to take LOTS of photographs during the trip, in the waiting areas, on the plane, on the bus, and of course at the memorials. Offer to take their photograph with their cameras so that they are included in the picture. At the end of the day, there should not be

any film left in the camera. If you notice a Veteran does NOT have a camera, notify your Team Leader and we will provide them a disposable one.

12. Should the Veteran pass away, these photographs will likely be some of the most treasured pictures for the surviving family members. Take lots of pictures with your own camera, if possible, and pass copies of the digital pictures to your Team Leader so they can be considered for inclusion in the disc of pictures both you and your Veteran will receive soon after the trip.
13. Make sure that every Veteran in our care gets something to eat. Meal time is also a great time to remind Veterans to take their medication/s as needed. Identify those Veterans on your team who did not get breakfast or dinner. Honor Flight will pay for their meals. Box lunches will be provided for everyone.
14. Older people do not like to drink when they travel because of the inconvenience of finding a bathroom or possibly bladder control problems. You MUST encourage them to drink plenty of fluids throughout the day and inform them that bathrooms are available on the airplane, on the tour bus, at the memorials and throughout the airports. Personal hygiene items (wipes, Depends) are also available to the Veterans and Guardians. It is a good idea to mention the availability of these personal items up front so the Veteran is not embarrassed later by not knowing and not wanting to ask.
15. Listen, provide a sympathetic ear. During the tour, you might hear the Veterans talking about their combat experience or friends they have lost. For some of the Veterans, this might be the first time they have ever talked about the bad experiences that they may be trying to forget. If this happens, don't feel that you have to make a comment - just listen and thank them for sharing their stories with you. You might ask them if they have shared their combat experience with their family. If not, encourage them to pass down their stories to their loved ones as a legacy—an oral history—of their service.
16. Keep a journal as the notes will be especially meaningful later to you and the Veterans. Every Veteran has a story to tell. And this may be the first time they've opened up to anyone. Veterans will feed memories to each other and remind each other of things long forgotten and unspoken. Two Veterans who have never talked about the past may well confide in each other and turn into chatter-boxes when together!
17. All Guardians are asked to be aware of the cell phone numbers of other Guardians, Team Leaders, and Flight Captain so they can contact each other during the day as the need arises.
18. Also, several Guardians need to get off of the bus first to get the wheelchairs ready and to help the Veterans get off the bus safely. Shaking the Veteran's hand as he or she gets off and welcoming him to wherever you are is a good way to help those who don't think they need any help. Similarly, a few Guardians need to board the bus first and a Guardian must be behind every vet as they board the bus (soft landing if they fall).