



**BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC.**

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Effective AUGUST 2021**

**BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC  
CODE OF CONDUCT**

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## ARTICLE I - ORGANIZATION AND MEMBER RIGHTS

**Section 1.** The Corporation itself has rights. These rights are exercised by the decision of a majority of its Members. Some of the fundamental rights of the Corporation are:

- a) To carry out its purposes and to exercise any of the rights or authority granted it by law;
- b) To change its purposes, if permitted by law and its Charter;
- c) To merge with another organization or to dissolve;
- d) To establish procedures governing the admission of Members, and to grant or refuse membership according to the law and the Corporation's Governing Documents;
- e) To establish and to amend, through changes in its Governing Documents, the rights, privileges, and obligations of its Members either by extension or by limitation;
- f) To delegate authority, to the extent permitted by law and the Governing Documents, to officers, boards, committees, and employees;
- g) To elect its officers and appoint committee Members in accordance with the Governing Documents;
- h) To discipline or expel any Member or Associate Member in accordance with Article 1, Section 2 of the organization's By Laws and with the procedures outlined in Article XV (Disciplinary Procedure) of the Code of Conduct; and
- i) To hold property and to defend or enter into litigation in its own name.

This list is not inclusive of all rights belonging to the Corporation.

**Section 2.** In addition to the rights a Member has as a person, there are also associational rights, property rights, and parliamentary rights, all of which are protected by law. A Member's associational rights stem from Membership in the organization. For example, a Member has the right to fair and equitable treatment from the other Members of the Corporation.

**Section 3.** A Member also has the following fundamental rights under common parliamentary law, subject only to any specific limitations contained in the Corporation's Governing Documents:

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- a) To be sent notices as commonly distributed to the general membership;
- b) To attend meetings;
- c) To present motions;
- d) To speak on debatable questions;
- e) To vote;
- f) To nominate;
- g) To be a candidate for office;
- h) To inspect official records of the organization;
- i) To ensure the enforcement of the rules of the Corporation and of parliamentary law;
- j) To resign from an office or from the Corporation itself;
- k) To be afforded all rights outlined in Article XV (Disciplinary Procedure) of the Code of Conduct;
- l) To receive and have the right to inspect a current copy of the Corporation's Governing Documents and minutes of the Corporation; and
- m) To exercise any other rights or privileges given to the Members by law and/or the Corporations' Governing Documents.

**Section 4.** The rights of Membership may vary depending on whether the person is a Regular Member, an Associate Member, or some other type of Member.

**Section 5.** If any of the associational, property, or parliamentary rights of a Member are violated, legal action may be taken against the Corporation. As a general rule, however, courts will not adjudicate such actions until the Member has exhausted the means provided for enforcing such rights under the rules of parliamentary procedures and the Bylaws of the Corporation.

### **ARTICLE II. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1.** The dues amount is set forth annually at the preceding National Convention and is payable by August 31st.

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**Section 2.** Pins are available to Members, Dads and Associates Members. Members, Dads, and Associates Members may contact the Chapter Financial Secretary to purchase one.

**Section 3.** All Members shall renew their Membership dues before the end of August each year.

- a) For Members joining between June 1 and August 31, the Membership fee will be effective through the following August.

**Section 4.** Membership cards will be issued by the Chapter Membership Chair. The Chapter Membership Chair will issue membership cards to all Members in good standing and upon payment.

**Section 5.** Members with twenty-five (25) years of continuous service will receive a Certificate of Service and a chain with "25" years to be attached to their membership pin.

**Section 6.** An honorary Membership may be conferred upon submittal of a letter of recommendation from a Chapter through Department (if formed) to the NEB. An Honorary Membership is conferred to an individual who does not meet Corporation's eligibility requirements who has proven through deeds and actions to have an outstanding and continued commitment to the United States Armed Forces, its Veterans, and their families.

- a) If approved, the N1stVP will issue an honorary membership card. Honorary members do not have voting rights or eligibility to be an elected or appointed officer.

**Section 7.** Lifetime Membership may be awarded to the outgoing National President upon completion of her term of office and approval of the NEB. She will continue to renew her membership annually with no payment of dues required.

### **ARTICLE III. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

**Section 1.** Any individual who does not qualify as a Member under Article IV (Eligibility) of the Constitution is eligible to be an Associate Member. Associate Members shall renew their membership annually.

#### **Section 2. Blue Star Dads**

- a) Until the Blue Star Dad's Association is reorganized and recognized by the Corporation, Members of the Blue Star Dads' Association shall apply to the Corporation as Associate Members.

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**ARTICLE IV. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1.** The Chapter Financial Secretary shall receive all Membership applications and dues; shall keep record of the Chapter's membership on the Roster Form; and shall deposit all funds received and notify the NT.

- a) If the Chapter is part of a Department, the Chapter Financial Secretary must also submit a copy of the Roster Form, a copy of any new membership applications that have not previously been sent to the N1stVP and the applicable portion of the dues to the Department Financial Secretary.

**Section 2.** The Department Financial Secretary shall receive a copy of the Roster Form from all Chapters, a copy of new Membership Applications and applicable portion of the dues per Member; shall deposit all funds; and shall submit a copy of the Roster Form, a copy of new Membership applications and the applicable National portion of dues to the N1<sup>st</sup>VP.

**ARTICLE V. TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER CHAPTER**

**Section 1.** If the transfer is to a Chapter that is not part of a Department, then the transferring Member shall complete a transfer application and submit it to the Chapter Financial Secretary of the Chapter from which she wishes to transfer. The Chapter Financial Secretary will then verify that the applicant has paid her Membership fees or has attached a check to the copy of the transfer and forward it to the Chapter from which the applicant is transferring.

**Section 2.** If the transfer is to a Chapter that is part of a Department, then the Chapter Financial Secretary shall submit the above-described paperwork to the Department Financial Secretary overseeing the Chapter to which the applicant wishes to transfer. The Department Financial Secretary shall then send the information to the Chapter to which the applicant is transferring.

**ARTICLE VI. CHARTERING A CHAPTER**

**Section 1.** A group wishing to create a Chapter may obtain a Charter application from the N4thVP.

- a) If the newly forming Chapter is in a state with a Department, the Department President shall serve as a liaison between the members of the newly forming Chapter and the National Membership Chair/Chartering Chair. The newly forming Chapter shall work closely with and through the Department President.
- b) The charter application requires original/verified signatures of at least five (5) different persons eligible to be Members. The new chapter must hold an Organizing Meeting where the members will sign the Charter

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Application, establish a meeting place, day and time and elect officers.

**Section 3.** If the new Chapter is not part of a Department, then the newly elected Chapter President will receive the approved Charter for presentation to the Chapter at the next meeting. If a Member of the NEB or a Past National Officer cannot attend the meeting, new Members may be sworn in by phone.

**CURRENT: Section 4.** If the new Chapter is part of a Department, then the N4thVP shall forward the approved charter to the Department President to present to the new Chapter at the next Chapter meeting. If she is unable to attend, she may designate another Department Officer to attend, who will swear in Members and present the Charter and install the Chapter Officers.

**Section 5.** Chapters must fill out a Roster Form upon formation and thereafter continue to keep the database updated.

**Section 6.** Chapter meetings shall be scheduled to occur on a routine schedule. This permits members to be able to arrange their calendars in advance to allow participation.

### **ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS**

**Section 1.** Most Chapter meetings will be held in person. However, sometimes a Chapter may have a special need for an online meeting or conference call.

**Section 2.** The gavel is a symbol of authority and should always be used wisely and in the following manner:

One Rap Brings meeting to order and seats the Assembly;

Two Raps Officers rise; and

Three Raps Assembly rises.

**Section 3.** The Agenda for a meeting should include the following:

- a) Order of Business;
- b) Calling Meeting to Order;
- c) Prayer;
- d) Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag;
- e) Blue Star Mothers Preamble;
- f) Roll Call of Officers;
- g) Reading and Approval of Minutes;
- h) Introduction of Guests;

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- i) Officer and Committee Reports;
- j) Initiation of new Members;
- k) Communications;
- l) Reading and Approval of Financial Report;
- m) Presentation and approval of expenses and bills;
- n) Unfinished Business;
- o) New Business (Election is the first order of New Business);
- p) Announcements;
- q) Remarks;
- r) Prayer; and
- s) Adjournment.

**Section 4.** On-line meetings held through a chat room (virtual platform) must follow the same rules as an in-person meeting. While the Recording Secretary is responsible for taking the minutes, her individual connection may be disrupted. Therefore, it is a good idea for several of the Members to save the conversation periodically and print it at the end of the meeting.

**ARTICLE VIII. CHARTERING A DEPARTMENT**

**Section 1.** If at least three (3) Chartered Chapters within one State wish to form a Department, a meeting should be called to discuss the issue, with a representative present from each of the three (3) Chapters. The meeting should be centrally located in the State and provide adequate time for the Chapters to discuss forming a Department.

**Section 2.** A group wishing to charter a Department must obtain a Department Charter Application from the N4thVP. The Department Charter Application requires the original signatures of the Presidents of three (3) chartered Chapters.

**Section 3.** Once a Department is formed, all Chapters within the State will have the option to join but will not be required to join the newly organized Department.

**Section 4.** Once the Department Charter application has been completed, the group must hold an Organizing Meeting. At this meeting, the Chapter Presidents shall sign the Department Charter Application citing name of Chapter and number; the Chapter Presidents shall elect officers; and the Department shall establish periodic meetings and a tentative Convention dates between September 1 and December 31. The name shall be



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the "Department of (Name of State)".

**Section 5.** After the Organizing Meeting, the Department must register with the appropriate State authorities; follow the legal procedures for obtaining an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and file the necessary paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), as described by the Corporation's legal counsel; obtain a checking account, the signatories of which must be the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer; rent a Department Post Office Box; and order the Department President's Pin through the NFS.

**Section 6.** In order to have the Department Charter approved, the Department must submit a copy of the following to the N4thVP: a list of all Chapters within the Department and their Membership numbers; a list of the Elected Officers; and a Department check for \$25.00 the chartering fee made out to Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

**Section 7.** The newly elected Department President will be informed when the charter has been approved. If at all possible, the NP or a Member of the NEB will be present at the first official meeting to present the charter and swear in the Officers. If this is not possible, the swearing in may be done by telephone.

### **ARTICLE IX. DEPARTMENT CONVENTIONS**

**Section 1.** The Department Conventions are to be held yearly between September 1 and December 31 in order to conduct business and to:

- a) Receive reports from Department Officers, Chairpersons, and Chapter Presidents;
- b) Transact business, receive training, review Financial Rules, set goals for the upcoming year; and
- c) Elect officers.

Representation shall be in accordance with the Corporation's Constitution.

**Section 2.** All business must be approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the Body. The only exception to this rule is the election of Officers, which requires only a plurality of the vote of the Body.

**Section 3.** All Members of the Department shall have the opportunity to express an opinion on the floor in accordance with the rules adopted by the Department for the conduct of the Convention.

**Section 4.** In order to attend a Department Convention, Members must be in good

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standing.

**Section 5.** A convention call (which shall include Agenda, special requirements, Governing Document Changes, etc.) shall be sent to each Member not less than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the Convention.

**Section 6.** A registration fee set by the Convention Committee may include, but is not limited to, fees for meeting rooms, the opening luncheon, and the banquet.

**Section 7.** Travel and hotel rooms are the responsibility of the attendee of the Chapters, according to each Chapter decision by vote if it so chooses.

**Section 8.** Expenses to attend and participate in Department Conventions may be covered to the degree the Chapter is financially able to assist its voting Delegates.

- a) Participation in Department and National Convention is a part of the Mission and Purpose of the Corporation and is determined by legal counsel and financial advisors to be a Program Expense. Failure to participate in these vital business decision functions is detrimental to the well-being of the Chapter Members and those it serves.

### **ARTICLE X: ANNUAL YEARBOOK**

**Section 1.** The Corporation shall publish an annual yearbook in conjunction with the National Convention. This yearbook is a composite of National, Department, and Chapter histories and present year activities.

**Section 2.** Departments and Chapters are asked to assist in procuring advertisements to offset the cost of the yearbook. Any profit revenue is presented to the Chaplain's Emergency Fund for distribution to the VA Hospitals in areas without any Chapters.

### **ARTICLE XI. EMBLEMS**

**Section 1.** The Official Pin of the organization shall be a five-pointed blue star in the center of a white circle bound in red with the words, "Blue Star Mother".

**Section 2.** The Official Flag shall be a white flag with the official logo on a blue star under the words: "Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.". Gold fringe shall surround the National Flag. Blue fringe shall surround Department and Chapter Flags.

**Section 3.** The Official Window Banner shall be a white rectangle bordered in red with a blue star in the middle for each child as defined in the Corporation's Constitution.

**Section 4.** The official flower shall be the Blue Painted Daisy.

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**ARTICLE XII. OFFICIAL UNIFORM**

**Section 1.** The uniform for Members for Conventions, formal events, memorials, and presentation is:

- a) White Blouse, navy blue skirt, or dress pants;
- b) Shoes, navy, black, or white;
- c) The Corporation Pin (placed over your heart), American Flag (placed over your heart), Child's Service Pin, VAVS, Volunteer hours pin;
- d) Minimal jewelry; and
- e) White gloves (formal ceremonies only).

**Section 2.** For the events described in the above Section 1, the following is optional:

- a) Navy blue jacket;
- b) Garrison hat with patch (may be embroidered (navy blue) with Chapter name, number, state); and
- c) Navy blue cape (Chapter/Department Presidents only).

**Section 3.** Members also have the option of wearing a white nurse dress uniform to the events listed in Section 1.

**Section 4.** National Elected Officers and Past NPs shall wear the following uniform to the events listed in Section 1:

- a) White blouse, white or blue skirt, or dress pants; white jacket, white suit, or white dress;
- b) White shoes when wearing all white, navy, or black with navy skirt or Pants;
- c) The Corporation Pin, (placed over your heart), American Flag (placed over your heart), Child's Service Pin, VAVS Volunteer Hours Pin;
- d) Minimal jewelry;
- e) Garrison hat with BSMA patch and title of office embroidered in blue. Former Past National Officers at any level may list highest office held and years of service listed;

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- f) White gloves (formal ceremonies); and
- g) White cape (optional).

**Section 5.** The informal uniform for all Members and Officers for fundraising, rallies, parades, etc., is a logo T-Shirt and the Corporation's Pin.

### **ARTICLE XIII. BLUE TO GOLD PROGRAM**

**Section 1.** Service Flags, Inc. is a family-owned company located in Nevada (a strong supporter and donor to the Corporation since early 2002). All banners are donated or purchased through Service Flags, Inc., because the Corporation has entered into an Agreement with Service Flags, Inc., that permits the Corporation to purchase banners at a lower price than it would otherwise be able to do.

**Section 2.** A Department of Defense official banner for a Fallen Warrior should be ordered through the N3rdVP and should be presented to the parents and spouse of military personnel killed while serving his or her country. If the parents are not married, a separate banner should be presented to each. Banners for additional family Members may be purchased by the Department or Chapter. The N3rdVP shall oversee and administer this Program.

### **ARTICLE XIV. CORPORATE LOGO**

**Section 1.** It is the responsibility of the NEB to assure that the logo is being used in a manner that safeguards the integrity of the Corporation.

**Section 2.** The following is the procedure to request use of the Corporation's logo:

- a) The Chapter or Department President should submit, in writing, a request to the NP specifying in detail how the logo will be used, what it will be used for and if this is an on-going Chapter/Department project (example: Fundraising items, banner, sign, rally, etc.);
- b) Permission must be received from the NP before the logo is placed on any Article;
- c) In fundraising, if any item is sold that has the logo on it, a financial report with twenty-five percent (25%) of the total profit must be forwarded to the NFS to be placed in the General Fund;
- d) Use of the logo on the following items do not need the NEB's approval:
  - i) Chapter/Department forms;

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- ii) Letterhead, notices, brochures, note cards, donation receipts;
  - iii) Certificates of Appreciation;
  - iv) Business cards; and
  - v) Memorial Books.
- e) Convention Logo – If the NP designates a convention logo, that logo can be used by the Chapters and Departments for fundraising purposes of attending that Convention without paying the 25% surcharge for logo use. Chapters and Departments shall be encouraged to use the logo on merchandise that can be sold to raise funds for their respective delegates to attend the Convention.

**Section 3.** If items with the logo are sold directly through the National Office of the Corporation to Chapters, Departments, and/or Members, these items may not be altered. However, items that do not contain the logo that are sold to Chapters and Departments to be used for fundraising projects may be altered and any profit kept by the Chapter or Department.

### **ARTICLE XV. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

#### **Section 1.**

##### **A. Member and Associate Behavior Code**

1. Purpose. The purpose of the member Behavior Code is to ensure the Corporation carries out its mission productively in an atmosphere of democracy and cooperation and that members' experience as volunteers' and the public's experience with whom we interact and those we serve through our mission is respectful, honorable, safe, and secure as well as enjoyable. It is intended to define generally accepted behavior as further described.
  - 1.1 Behavior code shall apply to all Members and Associate Members and all terms and conditions of the Disciplinary Procedures in Article XV shall apply to Members and Associate members alike.
2. Responsibility. Each Chapter, Department or NP together with their Executive Boards shall ensure that the procedure set forth in this policy is followed by the membership in a consistent manner. Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of all Corporation Members.
3. General Member Behavior
  - a) Members shall treat other members in the spirit of our Ritual that

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contains our Corporation's core value oaths. Members shall treat one another, public officials, our Military, and those in our neighboring communities with courtesy and goodwill at all times. This includes communications by telephone, email, online blogs or forums, meetings, activities, and events. Hard work through volunteer hours, one's title at any level of the organization, educational background or skill level does not give a member license to mistreat or cause petty grievances toward others.

- b) All contributions of time and talent shall be encouraged. Highly active members shall not criticize or denigrate the contributions of less active members.
- c) Abusive behavior from profane or threatening language to physical violence in any dealings with our volunteers or those we serve, as well as those who support us, is prohibited.
- d) Harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, national origin religion, political affiliation, physical disability or for any other reason will not be tolerated.
- e) Personal disputes have no place at Chapter, Department or National meetings or at any Corporation event. Disputes between members during any activities or events will not be resolved through argument but shall be referred to the Chapter or DEB for resolution.
- f) Members shall not personally accept tips, gratuities, or monetary rewards from the public or to grant favor. Any funds received as such will be the property of the Chapter, Department, or the National Organization where applicable.
- g) Announcements, discussion or remarks regarding politics, political parties, or persons holding a particular public office will not be part of discussions that may be overheard by the public who supports the organization or those we serve, (our military and veterans) or the membership at large at any Corporation activities, meetings, events, etc. disparaging any political party or person holding public office at any level of government. We are a non-partisan organization.
- h) Members who hold public office at City, County, State or National levels will not use the Corporation in any way to further any of their political activities or agendas which include running for a public election.

#### 4. Corporation Business, Mission, and Lines of Authority

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- a) In every organization, operations must have a chain of command. Chapter, Department and National activities shall have a person assigned as an oversight, a member or officer who has been elected or appointed to serve as oversight of an officially recognized Chapter, Department or National area of responsibility. While all members are encouraged to suggest projects, events and activities, their volunteer efforts shall be coordinated by the assigned or elected individual recognized as the oversight officiator of an area of responsibility. Communication and cooperation with those assigned to a particular area of responsibility is essential to the success of any Chapter, Department or National effort for carrying out our mission and administrative responsibilities. Members shall recognize the chain of command at the Chapter, Department and National levels.
  
- b) Members are prohibited from making false claims, false representations, or allegations aimed at individuals as members, or regarding our mission or regarding any aspects of the Corporation through any means or method to include but not limited to the utilization of any type of distributed hard copy or electronic copy material, public announcements service, or publicly broadcasted means of communication, including television, radio, email, internet blogs or public electronic message boards.
  
- c) Members shall not represent themselves as the authorized agent of the Corporation, with the exception of the President. The President at her level of oversight is the Corporation's authorized agent that may enter into legal contract of any kind with an outside entity representing her Chapter, Department or National. The President may assign this duty to an Executive Board Member, preferably a Vice President, as recorded in the minutes of an Executive Board or Chapter meeting should she be unavailable to sign a contract.
  
- d) All Corporation members are to avoid words or deeds that are arrogant, insensitive, belittling, cruel, or disrespectful. They should set an example of good conduct for others to follow.
  
- e) The NP will not be involved in chapter disciplinary issues, except to give minimal solicited advice to chapter leadership – she must remain neutral and cannot take "sides" on such matters. All grievances that are received by the National President that pertain to interpersonal relationships shall first go to a Conflict Resolution Committee<sup>1</sup> for arbitration. If arbitration

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fails, the grievance will then go to the grievance committee for investigation and recommendations.

### 5. Treatment of Blue Star Mothers of America Inc., Property

- a) Members are the trustees of Corporation property. It must be treated with reasonable care.
  - b) Members serving through an elected or appointed position at all levels of the organization are required to transition all property, financial files, minutes, and records, entrusted to them for their term to their successor immediately upon retirement from office according to Article VII, Section 10 of our Bylaws.
  - c) An inventory list shall be used to account for property at all levels and is signed by the retiring member trustee and their successor trustee upon transfer of property.
  - d) All Corporation property is under the managing control of the respective Chapter, Department, or NEBs. All property is to be used only for its intended purpose. No one individual may dictate how it is to be used. This also applies to members who have invested time or money toward the procurement, replacement, restoration or operation of any equipment or property. The contribution of time, money or services conveys ownership to the organization and not to the contributor.
  - e) Theft of Corporation property from a member's home or vehicle requires filing a police report.
  - f) Members who lose replaceable Corporation property are responsible for the cost of the replacement.
6. Disciplinary Action. Members who violate the Behavior Code will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in subsection B, Member Discipline, in this policy. An Executive Board may immediately suspend members for cause pending further review and disciplinary action as described in subsection B.

### B. Member Discipline.

- 1. Purpose. To establish a clear, uniform, impartial and equitable policy on handling alleged or suspected violations of the behavior code, governing documents, operating rules procedures and all other policies that govern the



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management, administration, operations, and Mission of the Corporation will be handled.

2. Automatic Termination of Membership. Intentional refusal to acknowledge and comply with official communications to or from the NEB or Corporation Governing Documents, or abusive behavior from profane or threatening language to physical violence toward a member in the presence of other members.
  - A. Authority.
    - i) The National Executive Board of Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc, has the authority to terminate the membership of a Member or Associate Member to the organization, if the Member or Associate Member is involved in activity deemed harmful to the organization, through their actions, speech, affiliation, or social media and website postings.
    - ii) A Chapter or Department officiator as oversight of an activity has the authority to immediately dismiss a member if the actions and/ or behavior of the member casts an unfavorable light on the organization, involving verbal or physical abuse, appears to be unlawful or illegal, acts in willful disregard of the purpose of the established meetings, activity, event, program or assignment, or demonstrates willful disregard of our behavior code, Governing Documents, operating rules, procedures, and all other policies.
    - iii) The designated officiator may have to take immediate action at a Corporation activity such as meetings, events, etc.
    - iv) Executive Boards will be the first line of authority to discuss final discipline decisions regarding a member's removal from a meeting, event or activity within their respective Chapters and Departments. The final decision on any action to be taken resulting from a substantiated violation of the behavior code, Governing Documents, operating rules, procedures, and all other policies of the Corporation rests with the Executive Boards and the decision administered by the President at their respective levels.
    - v) If a member is removed from an activity, the designated authority with oversight of the activity, meeting, event, etc., will inform the Chapter or Department President as soon as the Corporation activity is over. The designated authority of the event will then write a report describing the behavior or actions that led to the removal of the member and forward the report to the President as

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soon as practicable.

vi) After the official report is received, and further examination and investigation is made (if necessary), the respective Executive Board will determine if disciplinary action is needed according to item 2.3 of the disciplinary procedure in this policy. The President will inform the member in writing of the board's decision within a reasonable amount of time.

vii) Suspension decisions made by the Chapter Executive Boards may be appealed to the Department or NEBs through their respective chain of command. Department decisions made are appealed to the NEB. Chapters without Departments' decisions are appealed to the NEB.

B. Disciplinary Action Procedure. Corrective Action is progressive, and the following is the order in which steps for members will normally occur. It should be recognized that one or more of these steps could be omitted according to the circumstances of each individual case.

C. Informal Discussion. Every attempt will be made involving informal discussion before proceeding to stronger disciplinary action. A record of the discussion will be written and maintained.

D. Written Warning. This action involves a discussion with the president regarding the rule, policy, behavioral code, Governing Documents, policy, or procedures with emphasis on correcting the behavior. During the discussion, the length of time allowing the member to correct an action or improve on behavior shall be specified. The member should be certain that she understands the reason(s) the warning for correcting an action or improve behavior and the terms for avoidance of further action. This warning shall be presented in writing and the member will be asked to sign and date the document as indication that she has seen and understands the document. The document shall be signed and dated by the President. If the member refuses to sign the document, the President shall insert "Member refused to sign" with his or her own signature and date. As long as no other disciplinary action has taken place, the written warning will expire at the end of six (6) months.

E. Disciplinary Probation. If both informal discussion and a written warning fail to correct the problem(s) or resolve the dispute, the member will be placed on probation. Probation is the testing or trial period of a member who has violated or has caused offense. Probation allows the member to participate under supervision and only under conditional circumstances. The onset, duration and conditions of the probationary period shall be set by the respective Executive Boards and the President based on the

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particular offending circumstances. It may occur after one or more informal discussions or written warnings or simultaneously without warning.

- F. Discretionary Suspension. For the welfare and good of the Corporation and of the member, suspension may be required. Suspension includes the suspension of membership privileges, excluding the member from use of Corporation property, meetings, activities, events, etc. A suspension allows the opportunity to review the circumstances and hold discussions with all parties involved before further action is taken. Depending on the results of the review process, all or part of the suspension may be revoked.
  
- G. Automatic Suspension-Under the Influence. The President shall suspend the operating and volunteering privileges of any member of the Corporation, who is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance such that the member's safety and those of others, as well as their generally accepted behavior cannot be assured and until such time that the President is assured that the member will safely behave appropriately in participation of such activities.
  
- H. Automatic Suspension-Assault or Intentional Property Damage. The President shall suspend the operating and volunteering privileges of any member who commits bodily injury or assault on any person or causes willful damage or destruction of Corporation property.
  
- I. Automatic Suspension-Failure to return Corporation Property. Any member who has been contacted through Corporation official means of communication more than once after the timeframe for return of property is exceeded, shall be immediately suspended.
  
- J. Automatic Termination of Membership. Failure to return Corporation critical files, records to include financial records essential to perpetuating Chapter, Department, or National Operations.
  
- K. Automatic Termination of Membership-Insubordination. Intentional refusal to acknowledge and comply with official communication from the NEB, intentional refusal to comply with a directive order, or written policies and Governing Documents; abusive behavior from profane or threatening language to physical violence toward a member in the presence of other members.

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L. Termination of Membership. Members may be expelled from the Corporation through final actions of the NEB after a full investigation has taken place.

M. Documentation.

- i. Warnings, probations, and suspensions, along with references to any previous verbal or written counseling shall be documented by the Executive Boards and administered by the President at their respective levels. This documentation shall specify the member's alleged deficiency, time frame for expected improvement, and those actions that will ensue if the member does not correct the problem. The member is required to sign any such documentation indicating that he/she has seen and understood it. Said signature does not indicate agreement with the statements in the document. The document shall also be signed and dated by the respective President.
- ii. If the member refuses to sign the document, the respective President shall enter the words "Member refused to sign" to the document along with his/her own signature and date. All such documentation regarding discipline of members shall be maintained in a secure file, with the same level of security and access as membership files and finance files.
- iii. Corporate Official disciplinary communication shall be sent both USPS Certified Mail-Return Receipt and USPS regular mail.

**Section 2.** The following steps must be taken before a trial can take place:

- A. A Committee must be established to investigate the validity of the reports of misconduct and determine if the charges should merit a trial.
- B. The Committee should be chosen for their integrity and good judgment. Such a Committee can be convened only if a resolution moving to establish the Committee is made, seconded, discussed and voted on by the Chapter, Department, Convention Body, or the NEB. This resolution should include as little detail as is possible to protect the Accused.
- C. The Committee should quietly conduct an investigation and make a sincere effort to get the facts. All information collected is confidential.
- D. The Committee should speak with the Accused to hear her side of the

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story. If the committee members determine that the reports of misconduct are untrue, they should prepare a report and resolution for clearing the Accused. If they find substantial evidence that the report of misconduct is true, a report on the findings, and prefer charges must be made.

- E. The Committee shall then prepare a resolution that sets a date and time for the trial meeting; states the specific charges; requires the Accused to appear to defend the charges; and recommends who should serve on the Trial Committee (which should be different from the investigation committee).
- F. Upon adoption of the resolution, the Recording Secretary immediately sends a letter by registered mail notifying the Accused of the time, date and place of the trial, and a copy of the exact charges. The Recording Secretary should retain a copy of the letter and proof of service to the Accused.
- G. It shall be incumbent upon the accused to pay all expenses related to the trial for her and any witnesses who attend on her behalf. She may not seek reimbursement for any of those expenses regardless of the outcome of the trial.

**Section 3.** A membership termination hearing is held when the alleged offense(s) have run the course of the progressive disciplinary procedure(s). A member has a right to be notified of pending termination, given time to prepare a defense, and allowed the right to be heard and defend the reasons for pending termination. The decisions to terminate or exonerate rests with the NEB and are final.

**Section 4.** The trial is a hearing. Members are appointed as “managers” to present the evidence against the Accused. The intent is to get at the truth to assure the outcome is correct. The Accused has the right to be represented by counsel, to speak, and present witnesses in her defense. The defense counsel may be an attorney but must be a Member. The Corporation may agree, by a vote, to allow a non-Member to represent the Accused.

**Section 5.** The trial will be conducted in the following manner:

- A. Charges are read and a plea is taken. If a “Guilty” plea is submitted, then there is no trial. If the accused submits a “Not Guilty” plea, then the trial shall begin;
- B. The Managers make an opening statement, and then the Accused makes an opening statement;
- C. The Managers present witnesses. The Accused is permitted to cross

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examine the Manager's witnesses;

- D. The Accused presents witnesses, and once she is finished questioning them, the Manager may cross-examine these witnesses; and
- E. The Managers present their closing arguments, followed by the Accused.

**Section 6.** Once the trial is complete, then the Accused leaves the room. Each charge is read, discussed, and voted on. If the Defendant is determined "guilty", the Managers propose, by motion, the penalty. The Members can debate and amend the motion. At the request of at least one (1) Member, the vote can be taken by ballot. Revoking the Membership of the Accused requires a two-thirds vote. The Accused is then brought back into the assembly and informed of the results. The decision of the NEB shall be final and non-debatable.

**ARTICLE XVI. GENERAL FUNDRAISING**

**Section 1.** Chapters and Departments may conduct public fundraisers to add to the General Treasury for projects, administration, etc. Certain procedures should be followed:

- A. Be mindful that other Chapters within the area may also be raising funds for the same reason. Many problems can be avoided by simply contacting other Chapters in the area before the event. As a courtesy, stay within the local area and State (exception: County/State Fair, music festival, car show, parade, rally, etc.)
- B. Display a sign with Chapter information and the purpose for which the funds will be used. Donations received for a specific purpose is restricted to be used SOLELY for that purpose and nothing else. It is prudent to state that the donations shall be used to promote the mission and purpose of the Chapter/Department/National, which include, but are not limited to, assisting the troops, the wounded, the families of the fallen, veterans and military/veteran families.
- C. Have a copy of all tax and other paperwork available to prove that the Chapter or Department is part of a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation.
- D. Have written information regarding the Corporation and the Chapter or Department available, such as a list of recent projects, a book of thank you notes from troops and veterans, a poster board of pictures, a copy of the current yearbook, a battery candle with "Until They All Come Home", etc.
- E. If planning a raffle, check with local/state officials for rules and regulations regarding the conduct of such an activity.

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- F. Keep detailed records of inventory and financial transactions.
- G. Publicize the event through community paper, local TV, signs, etc.
- H. Provide a special basket or box for cards and items to be sent to our military.
- I. Be familiar with the Chapter/Department/National's responsibility as an IRC tax-exempt organization, in the event a donor, or potential donor, asks for financial statements. Failure to provide the requested financial statements jeopardizes the entire organization. Refusal to follow the IRS guidelines could be grounds for the revocation of the Charter.

**ARTICLE XVII. VAVS FUND**

**Section 1.** At the 1950 Convention in Columbus, Ohio, the National Convention Body approved to contribute money twice yearly to those VA Hospitals that do not have a Chapter or Department representation. Funds would be placed in the VAVS discretionary account to assist veterans and their families with transportation, phone calls, food, etc.

**Section 2.** Each Chapter and Department is to send an annual payment of \$25.00 towards the VAVS Fund. All payments are due to the NEB by December 1st of each year.

**ARTICLE XVIII. BLUE DAISY PROJECT (TAG DAY)**

**Section 1.** At the 1948 National Convention in Detroit, Michigan, the Blue Daisy was adopted as the Blue Star Mothers' National Flower. The NEB adopted the Blue Daisy Project proposed by Ann Fetting in 1949. The project was set up as a project between the NEB and Chapters. As part of the project, the NEB sells daisies to Chapters, and the Chapters solicited donations for the daisies. Over time, the price of real daisies became too expensive, and so a Blue Daisy Tag was designed. Many Chapters still use fresh daisies that have been sprayed lightly blue or artificial ones. Many businesses or individuals donate the daisies.

**Section 2.** The revenue from this Project is to be divided as follows:

- A. Twenty-five (25%) of funds after expenses, are to be sent into Department. If not part of a Department, then the money should be sent to the NEB.
- B. Seventy-five (75%) of funds remain in the Chapter's treasury.

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## ARTICLE XIX. VETERANS ASSOCIATION VOLUNTARY SERVICES (VAVS)

**Section 1.** The Department of Veterans Affairs (DAV) oversees the VAVS Program. Veterans' hospitals are funded through the Congressional Budget and have limited resources for extras such as televisions, bedside phones, comfort items, etc. Various veterans' organizations have joined together to volunteer their time and resources to assure that those who served America receive the benefits and care they so richly earned. The Corporation is proud to support VAVS goals through being a Representative or Deputy to the VA Hospital Advisory Committee.

**Section 2.** Departments (and Chapters that are not part of a Department) go through the National VAVS Representative to set up Representatives and the five (5) Deputies for States. Representatives and Deputies work with Chapters to set up parties for patients or take donated items to patients.

**Section 3.** Chapters and Departments should keep records of all volunteer hours and the value of donated items such as clothes, coupon books, etc.

**Section 4.** The duties of the Representative are as follows: to attend Quarterly committee meetings with voting rights; to assist in completion of Annual Joint Review; to report back to the Department or Chapter; to be knowledgeable of VA policies, requirements, and guidelines; to assist and train Member volunteers; to organize special events (such as picnics, Bingo, ceremonies, etc.); and to recruit volunteers.

**Section 5.** The duties of the Deputy are as follows: to assist the Representative and, in the absence of the Representative, perform her duties.

**Section 6.** Representatives who fail to communicate and report to the Department/Chapter and VAVS National Representative on a Quarterly basis shall be removed from the position if failure to communicate continues for a three (3) month period of time. A letter will be written by the National VAVS Representative to the hospital or clinic the non-compliant Representative was assigned notifying them that the Representative had been removed from office.

## ARTICLE XX. AMENDMENTS

**Section 1.** The Code of Conduct may be amended every three (3) years at the annual National Convention by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the eligible voting Delegates present and voting.

**Section 2.** Any proposed amendment shall be circulated to the delegates attending Convention at least thirty (30) days before the National Convention, so that representatives may consult with their constituents.

**Section 3.** Any amendment passed shall be reviewed by the NEB and the Corporation's



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legal counsel to ensure it complies with the Corporation's Federal Charter and Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 2008, as amended by the IRC and the Corporation's Governing Documents.

**Section 4.** Amendments to the Code of Conduct shall take effect at the close of the National Convention at which they are adopted. With a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote, a specific amendment may take effective immediately.

### **XXI. WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY**

If any member reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of BSMOA is in violation of law, a written complaint may be filed by that member with the National President. It is the intent of BSMOA to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the organization, and the underlying purpose of this Policy is to support the organization's goal of legal compliance. The support of all members is necessary to achieving compliance with various laws and regulations.

A member is protected from retaliation only if the member brings the alleged unlawful activity, policy, or practice to the attention of the NEB and provides the NEB with a reasonable opportunity to investigate and correct the alleged unlawful activity. The protection described below is only available to members that comply with this requirement.

BSMOA will not retaliate against any member who, in good faith, has made a protest or raised a complaint against some practice of BSMOA or of another individual or entity with whom BSMOA had a business relationship, on the basis of a reasonable belief that the practice is in violation of law or a clear mandate of public policy.

BSMOA will not retaliate against a member who discloses or threatens to disclose to the Chapter Executive Board (CEB), Department Executive Board (DEB) or NEB, or a public body any activity, policy, or practice of BSMOA that the member reasonably believes is in violation of a law, or a rule, or regulation mandated pursuant to law or is in violation of a clear mandate.

### **ARTICLE XXII - ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Corporation encourages and promotes participation in electronic communications, social media and Internet representation of our Chapters, Departments and Auxiliaries in an ethical manner that increases awareness about and positively represents the Corporation.

These guidelines are for the protection of the members, entities, name, emblem and trademark of Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

**Section 1.** Electronic communications, social media, and Internet use guidelines.

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- A. Content utilizing the Corporate trademark in any type of electronic social media platform must be proper and relevant, upholding to the Corporation's purposes and policies.
- B. Content shared via electronic social media/platform must be considered relevant, which includes proper and suitable postings on or about: Corporate meetings, events, and members.
- C. Content communicated via electronic social media platforms must not divulge private information about an individual. It needs to follow Operations Security rules, aka OPSEC, as to not do so would be a criminal offense.
- D. Content communicated by Corporate members about Corporation matters via electronic devices and/or use of any social media understands that once submitted, the content is public and considered permanently available for others.
- E. Content about any political candidate and/or promoting of political interests are forbidden.
- F. Meetings should be conducted in person, within a group setting; however, when a meeting must be held through teleconference, chat room or social media, the meeting must follow the same rules as a face-to-face meeting and must be inclusive of all members.