



# VIRTUAL CHAPTER STARTER KIT

Compiled by MUSNAVC

MOAA Army Nurse Advocacy Virtual Chapter was the very first Virtual Chapter to obtain affiliation with MOAA. The Chapter transitioned to the MOAA Uniformed Services Nurse Advocates Virtual Chapter (MUSNAVC). There were few tools available, at the time, to guide development of the Chapter.

MUSNAVC blazed the trail, working with national MOAA, on the path forward and developed tools for use in the starting of new Virtual Chapters. While this is not an all-inclusive toolbox, it will provide an outline, and tools, to make the process simpler.

**Start up  
Considerations**

**Petition for  
Affiliation**

**By-Laws and  
Organization**

**Tax Exemption**

**Communications  
and Meetings**

**MOAA UNIFORMED  
SERVICES NURSE  
ADVOCATES VIRTUAL  
CHAPTER**

[www.musnavc.org](http://www.musnavc.org)



# VIRTUAL CHAPTERS

Starting a new MOAA Virtual Chapter has many similarities with starting a new geographic or satellite Chapter. There are also *special considerations* when starting a Virtual Chapter.

The first thing to remember is that there is a difference between a Virtual Chapter and using virtual means or tools to conduct a meeting within a geographic chapter.

We hope that you find the information and tools useful in your considerations of starting a MOAA Virtual Chapter.

## VIRTUAL CHAPTERS

National MOAA provides an alternative way to structure a chapter, recognizing that modern technology has offered a means for individual national MOAA members to interact and work together. While this is unlikely to replace traditional geographically defined chapter organizations, there is the potential to expand our chapter system in this new area.

Like most other veterans' organizations, MOAA's chapters are organized following the traditional model — geographically. This template for organizing affiliates has worked well in the past when the only option for people to socialize and interact was through personal contact. Now, technology has provided many alternatives to face-to-face interaction. Some members and their peers frequently prefer regular interaction through social media and the internet rather than frequent face-to-face meetings.

### Virtual Chapter Defined

- A core group of national MOAA members who already are bound together in some common purpose or ongoing activity.
- Virtual chapters are devoted to advocacy activities.

### Concept of Growing Virtual Chapters

- Virtual chapters will be formally chartered by the national MOAA board of directors.

### Benefits of Growing Virtual Chapters

- Increase chapter membership.
- Increase national MOAA membership participation in chapters.
- Contribute to MOAA's goal of having influence in each congressional district.
- Enhance MOAA's legislative reach.

## How to Become a Virtual Chapter

- Have at least 10 national MOAA members, two of whom are willing to serve in virtual chapter leadership positions;
- agree to comply with MOAA community standards;
- produce written bylaws and comply with memorandum of understanding/standard operating procedures as defined by national MOAA;
- provide a modified chapter membership roster with name, rank, national MOAA member number, and valid email address; and
- petition through the Council and Chapter Affairs Committee, to become a virtual chapter.



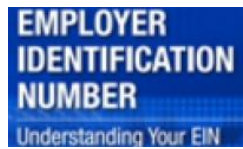
Download the MOAA Council and Chapter Policies and Procedures Guide [HERE](#)

The above MOAA guide will provide sample by-laws, structural organization, considerations for “not for profit” status and incorporation. Special consideration when deciding on your by-laws should include Board membership, voting guidelines, conducting meetings, dues, and general membership.

## Examples of Documents

- A sample of the required **Petition Letter** is found [HERE](#).
- A copy of MUSNAVC’s **By-Laws** are found [HERE](#).
- Our **Organizational Chart** and sample **Duties** are included [HERE](#).
- A blank **Administrative Membership Roster** is located [HERE](#).

## Internal Revenue Service and Regulations



### ***Employer Identification Number (EIN)***

You will need to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) before you start the incorporation, Tax exempt status, banking, and direct deposit process. This is a simple step and there is no cost involved. Click [HERE](#) for the link to apply for EIN.

### ***INCORPORATION and State Requirements***

MOAA recommends every chapter become incorporated as a nonprofit organization. This is not a legal requirement, and many MOAA chapters have existed for years without incorporating. Nonetheless, an incorporated chapter is recognized as a legal entity that may enter into and enforce contracts; acquire, own, and dispose of property; and make investments. Corporate status provides for the legal continuity of the chapter, and it generally, though not always, protects officers, directors, and members from financial liability for a chapter's acts. You will file for incorporation with your State listed as home of record for your Chapter.

Most States also require Solicitation and Charitable Organization filing. Check your State government website for instructions and forms.



### ***Internal Revenue Service Tax Exempt Status***

National MOAA recommends every chapter seek exemption from federal corporate income taxes. IRS Publication 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization, sets forth procedures for obtaining exemption recognition, annual filing requirements, and other information. Download [publication HERE](#).

A chapter should seek recognition of exemption under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(19) as a veterans' organization. For a chapter to qualify, at least 75 percent of its members must be past or present members of the U.S. armed forces. Many of the questions on this lengthy form will not apply to chapters. When providing financial data, best estimates are perfectly acceptable.

This may be a long and tedious process, lasting several months, before being granted the Tax-Exempt status. There is a non-refundable fee associated with this filing, so attention to detail and accuracy is recommended. Repeating, Don't let the length of the form discourage you, as many sections do not apply. Follow directions and ask questions, if you need to.

## Communication and Virtual Tools

There are many considerations and decisions to be made regarding how your Chapter is going to communicate, different platforms to use, and how you will conduct your meetings. Each chapter will be different depending on your purpose, level of technical skills, members' virtual abilities, cost, and other considerations.

MUSNAVC has explored several options and listed what works for us, at this time.

**E-Mail:** Just about all members have an e-mail account which is used for routine communications and notifications. We recommend that you use *personal e-mail accounts* rather than work, military or government addresses, as many of these will block your chapter messages or are prohibited use. If you have active duty personnel, their .mil address will change upon PCS, ETS or deployments.

MUSNAVC also has an *organization e-mail account* for all official messages. This allows for creation of mail groups for members, recognition of chapter business, and provides for e-mail messages to be sent to chapter leadership.

**FACEBOOK:** MUSNAVC has a public access Facebook account used for notifications of meetings, special events, and postings of interest. Your chapter may decide to use any of the social media platforms that work best for you.



### **ZOOM SCREEN SHARING:**

As with social media, there are many options available for you to consider. Most Virtual Chapters subscribe to Zoom to hold meetings.



## **CHAPTER WEBSITE**

Before developing your website, look at some of the different Chapter website that are already out there. See what others contain and how they are laid out. Make a list of what you want to include in your website and start from there. MOAA has a few “TIPS” for design and content [HERE](#)

It can be costly to hire a professional to develop and maintain your website. Since most Virtual Chapters do not have dues and are cost conscious, you may want to do-it-yourself. There are “host sites” available for a reasonable cost. We started [musnavc.org](http://musnavc.org) with two technically challenged, very limited IT experienced individuals. We are now proud of and able to manage the site fairly well. We would be happy to share our experience and recommendations with you upon request. If you have a member with some IT experience, encourage them to become your webmaster.

Consider having a “Members Only” or restricted access section on your website. Some information or presentations may not be for public access or use. A template of our Web Member Roster is found [HERE](#). Another consideration is to have a new membership application form available on your site and a contact form. You may view our membership application and contact form [HERE](#). Both of these forms are linked directly to our Chapter g-mail account.

## ***e-Newsletter***

Developing an e-newsletter will let you stay engaged with your members and keep them updated on items of interest within your affinity group. It is important to understand the difference between an e-newsletter and a newsletter sent electronically. Read these “Tips from MOAA” [HERE](#) .

MUSNAVC attempts to send an e-Newsletter monthly. Since our members are all Nurses, we focus on health and healthcare issues mostly. Advocacy and other MOAA issues are included in each publication. An example of our e-newsletter is included [HERE](#). We will gladly share a copy of our template with you upon request.

## **NEWSLETTER**

MUSNAVC had decided that we would not publish an actual newsletter and that our website would serve in its’ place. We felt that everything could be incorporated into our website, we would keep it simple, less time consuming, and keep e-mails to a minimum for our membership. The combination of website and e-newsletters meet our expectations.

## Recruiting

***Recruiting members begins at home.*** Start by talking with and contacting people you know within your affinity group who meet your membership criteria. Let them know about the Chapter you are starting and would welcome them to become a part of the organization. Word of mouth and personal contact has proven to be our best advertisement tool. E-mail potential members and ask them to share with their contacts.

***Don't do it alone.*** MOAA Council and Chapters will be able to assist with getting the word out through The Military Officer magazine, MOAA Newsletters and updates, and other communications. Let your Professional organizations and other groups, that you belong to, become aware of your Chapter and how they can become a member.

MUSNAVC developed an Outreach letter and application to send and share. A sample of MUSNAVC's **Outreach letter** and **Application** can be found **HERE**. We have also developed a recruiting **Tri-fold tool**, found **HERE**.

Remember to keep members informed and updated on Chapter activities and initiatives. Seek their comments, suggestions, input and participation. Timely response and contact is important.

## The First Virtual Chapter

COL. Jeri Graham, USA (Ret) discusses the virtues of a virtual MOAA chapter. As President of MOAA's Uniformed Services Nurse Advocates Virtual Chapter, Jeri talks about starting the virtual chapter, how it works, how it brings together people outside of geographical locations and fosters the growth of localized chapters. The Chapter focuses on health care issues relating to legislative concerns. This is the Military Officers Association of America's first virtual chapter.



### The Virtues of Starting a MOAA Virtual Chapter.



LTC Joe Gollasch, USA (Ret), Co-founder and Vice President of MUSNAVC, offers a few simple recommendations. Start with a few founding members who will be dedicated to the success of your organization. Share the work, while keeping it simple, and remember that your Chapter will develop and grow over time. There are very few 'rules' to follow, so feel free to explore and think outside of the box for inventive ways to make your organization work. New initiatives and exciting times await. Blaze new Trails, Lead the Way, Explore new Frontiers, and "Never Stop Serving".

For further specific information or questions on any topic in this tool kit contact [virtualcouncil2022@gmail.com](mailto:virtualcouncil2022@gmail.com)