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## How to Become and Stay a VA Accredited Attorney

*MAJ (R) Matthew W. Donald, LL.M., Esq*

**So you decided you want to help Veterans and their families and you aren't quite sure where or how to begin.**

Good news! You're in the right place. During your search you might have stumbled across this concept called "accreditation." You're not quite sure what it means, but you are sure that you don't have it yet.

Filing claims for Veterans and their families often includes the need to access sensitive personal information such as social security numbers, dates of birth, marriages and deaths certificates, and financial information. In the wrong hands, the misuse of this information could be devastating to a claimant.

The VA is governed by a strict set of rules under US Code and Federal Regulations. Those codes and regulations set specific time requirements and process for filing claims and appeals. If a claimant fails to follow those codes or rules, the financial consequences could be irreversible.

**Sounds a bit intimidating right? Don't worry; LWP is here to show you how it works.**

Accreditation is the process the VA uses to make sure that those people assisting Veterans and their families have the proper screening and education to be able to adequately represent a claimant before the VA.

The process to become a VA accredited attorney is actually quite simple. All you have to do is file a completed VA Form 21a with the VA Office of General Counsel. The VA states that the turnaround time from submission to approval for an attorney is 60 to 120 days.

**The VA approved my request to be an accredited attorney. Now what?**

Getting accredited is the easy part, the ongoing challenge is maintaining the accreditation. Within the first 12 months of being approved as an accredited attorney with the VA, you must complete 3 hours of qualifying continuing legal education (CLE). You must also complete an additional 3 hours no later than three years from your accreditation approval and 3 credit hours every two years thereafter ("biennial reporting").

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## How to Become and Stay a VA Accredited Attorney (Cont.)

Proof of that training must be provided to the VA Office of General Counsel along with an annual certification of good standing from your State bar.

### Wait a minute, could you say that again?

- Step 1.** Submit your VA Form 21a
- Step 2.** Complete 3 hours of qualifying CLE within the first 12 months of being accredited.
- Step 3.** Provide proof of that CLE along with a certification of good standing.
- Step 4.** Complete an additional 3 hours of qualifying CLE within three years of being accredited.
- Step 5.** Submit a certification of good standing every year before the anniversary of your accreditation.
- Step 6.** Complete an additional 3 hours of qualifying CLE every two years thereafter and provide proof of that training along with your certification of good standing.

### What exactly do you mean “qualifying” CLE?

It depends on the time frame when the qualifying CLE required. The initial qualifying CLE requirements, within the first 12 months after accreditation, can be found here: CFR 38 § 14.629 (b)(1)(iii):

“To qualify under this subsection, a CLE course must be approved for a minimum of 3 hours of CLE credit by any State bar association and, at a minimum, must cover the following topics:

representation before VA, claims procedures, basic eligibility for VA benefits, right to appeal, disability compensation ( 38 U.S.C. Chapter 11), dependency and indemnity compensation ( 38 U.S.C. Chapter 13), and pension ( 38 U.S.C. Chapter 15). Upon completion of the initial CLE requirement, agents and attorneys shall certify to the Office of the General Counsel in writing that they have completed qualifying CLE. Such certification shall include the title of the CLE, date and time of the CLE, and identification of the CLE provider, and shall be submitted to VA as part of the annual certification prescribed by § 14.629(b)(4).

Thereafter, “qualifying” CLE for biennial reporting purposes means anything related to Veterans benefits law and procedures that has been approved by any State bar association.

### Where can I find these “qualifying” CLEs?

As I said in the beginning, good news, you’re in the right place! This October, I will be presenting a VA Bootcamp LIVE at TAPER. This session will meet the initial qualifying CLE requirements if you have received your approval notice from the VA Office of General Counsel prior to October 18, 2018. It will also meet the qualifying CLE requirements for the ongoing biennial reporting.

You can also find information on our members website. We offer a complete guide on everything from how to become accredited, qualifying CLEs, and VA Tech School training webinars to get you up to speed with all things VA.

<http://www.lwpmembers.com/posts/how-to-become-va-accredited>

In addition, you can check out the VA’s fact sheet on accreditation at the link below.

<https://www.va.gov/OGC/docs/Accred/HowtoApplyforAccreditation.pdf>



*Lawyers With Purpose would like  
to recognize **Lydia York** as  
**JULY 2018** Member of the Month*

**What is the greatest success  
you've had since joining LWP?**

The greatest success Lydia has had has been starting her own practice and using Actionstep for her drafting and accounting.

**What is your favorite LWP tool?**

Lydia's most useful LWP tools are the time focusers which help keep her on track.

**How has being part of LWP impacted your team  
and your practice?**

Being a part of LWP has impacted Lydia's practice by providing a reliable way to draft documents. The software makes it possible for her to do last minute drafting and provides a way to get back to the clients in a more timely manner. The software makes everything more manageable.



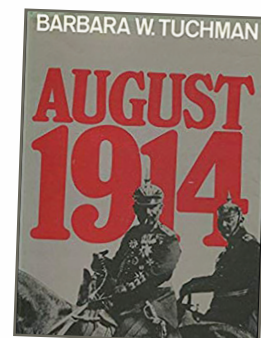
**Share something about yourself that  
most people don't know about you.**

Lydia is a black belt in Judo!

**What is your favorite book and how did  
it impact your life?**

This was a difficult question for Lydia, because her mother was a librarian and she read constantly so every book she read was impactful to her life. One of the more recent books she has read- **August 1914**

by Barbara Tuchman- changed her appreciation for historians and the stories they tell. This book is a work of non-fiction about the events prior to the start of World War 1 and Lydia said that it was so enthralling, it read like fiction.



**Congratulations to you on your continued success!**

*Save* <sup>THE</sup> *Date*  
**October 15-19, 2018**  
Marriott Syracuse Downtown  
800-228-9290

**TAPER**  
Twice-Annual Practice Enhancement Retreat  
**SYRACUSE, NY**

**CULTIVATING OUR ROOTS: HOW PEOPLE AND PROCESS WILL HELP YOU BUILD A BOUNTIFUL 2019**



**Enroll Today: [Retreat.lawyerswithpurpose.com](http://Retreat.lawyerswithpurpose.com)**



# If We Missed You in Tampa, We Hope to See You in Syracuse!

*Briana Moriarty*

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Our most favorite thing to do here at LWP is planning our Twice Annual Practice Enhancement Retreats (TAPER) and the hard work paid off when we got to see all of you in Tampa. This retreat kicked off our new twice-a-year program schedule and had breakout sessions for the attorneys and team members to attend based on their role in the firm. Here's a quick trip down memory lane!

We hit the ground running with new and veteran members attending the Practice with Purpose program which is three and a half days of comprehensive mastery training on the Lawyers with Purpose systems and processes on Medicaid, lead generation and conversion, trust drafting, and cloud-based workflows. This program serves as an introduction to our systems and processes for our new members and a refresher for our veteran members. It was awesome to see team members attend this program and we know they will take the education back to their offices and create new possibilities. We love seeing members in the room together working through their struggles and celebrating their accomplishments.

Wednesday morning was the kick off to TAPER. The theme was all about practice proficiency and how each person in the firm plays an integral part in the business. We began with morning breakout sessions focusing on the LWP Client Centered Software, Advanced Actionstep, and Delegate the Workshop: Train a Team Member. Each session brought members together to learn new strategies to bring back to their firms and gave them time to bounce ideas off each other.

Our afternoon keynote speaker brought together those in the Practice with Purpose program and the morning breakouts to listen to the amazing, Scott Burrows.

Scott was a star athlete who was involved in a life altering car accident that left him a quadriplegic. Scott's vision, mindset, and grit helped him overcome all the odds and his story moved the audience to tears, as he stood up out of his wheelchair. He spoke to the group about how with vision, mindset, and grit, the challenges we face aren't tough to overcome, it's all about perspective.

Thursday was a powerful day that began with a morning full of marketing conversations. It was a coaching day to get the audience to understand that everything they do is marketing and branding. The afternoon brought us all together to put pen to paper and plan out the next four months. This was a powerful session with too many "aha" moments to mention.

We wrapped the week up with an invigorating WHY Day with Irina Barnov, an executive business coach who trained us on how to have more meaningful conversations with one another and how important it is to pay attention to those who you're interacting with. It was all about how to have a coaching conversation versus a management conversation. The feedback throughout the day was inspiring.

Here at Lawyers with Purpose, we understand, it can seem like a big undertaking to shut your offices down for a week, but consider the possibility that by making the investment to attend our Twice Annual Practice Enhancement Retreats you and your team will see growth, both personally and professionally. Being in the room gets you around like-minded individuals who share the same struggles and successes you have.

Do us a favor, now that you're done reading this, go to your calendar and block out the dates for our October program. **October 16th thru 20th in Syracuse, New York** and email [memberservices@lawyerswithpurpose.com](mailto:memberservices@lawyerswithpurpose.com) to register. See you there!