This workshop was held at the 2018 Equal Justice Conference in San Diego, California.

Title:

VetLex - An Innovation For Connecting Veterans To Lawyers

Presenters:

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The ABA and Jones Day have partnered to develop and pilot a national legal referral system for veterans called VetLex. VetLex is an innovative and flexible system that links U.S. Veterans, Veteran service organizations, and qualified pro bono or "low-bono" attorneys nationwide to veterans in need of legal help. Join us to learn more about VetLex, to see a demonstration of the technology, and find out how you can get involved.
Overview and Implementing Legislation

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) has been charged with the implementation of Public Act 99-0281, an amendment to the Access to Justice Act (2013). The Act created the Illinois Access to Civil Justice Council, with the mandate to create a pilot statewide legal assistance hotline and coordinated network of legal support services for military personnel, veterans, and their families. This effort is funded by a $2 filing fee on all civil filings until 2020. IEJF is responsible for developing, monitoring, and reporting on this project, with leadership from the Illinois Access to Civil Justice Council.

Need

In Illinois, there are approximately 750,000 veterans, 20,000 active service members, and 13,000 members of the Illinois National Guard. There are over 20,000 dependents of service members who were deployed between 9/11/2001 and 5/31/2015. A survey of legal aid providers and veteran serving organizations demonstrates that civil legal services are a highly sought resource by these groups. The top civil legal needs fall into the broad categories of housing, family, and consumer law issues. In addition, veterans often need assistance with VA benefits and appeals and discharge upgrades.

The Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN): 855-IL-AFLAN

IL-AFLAN provides civil legal services across Illinois. It is a network comprised of nine legal aid organizations and law school clinics. Its key features include:

- A statewide hotline that provides information, advice, brief services (including the preparation and review of legal documents), and referrals. The hotline acts as the hub of the network.

- Uniform eligibility guidelines: 80% of Chicago Area Median Income (applies statewide), no dishonorable discharges, spouse or dependent can’t use services in legal action adverse to veteran/service member.

- Current Member Organizations: CARPLS, Center for Disability & Elder Law, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services (CVLS), John Marshall Law, LAF, Land of Lincoln, Loyola Law, Prairie State, SIU Law. See Grant Recipients for more details.

For further information, please contact:
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What is VetLex?

VetLex is a national web-based network of coordinated pro bono service providers to serve the legal needs of veterans. VetLex does not provide legal services; rather, it is an online cooperative system of intake, assessment, and referral envisioned to quickly and effectively connect veterans in need of legal services with those who stand ready to provide them.

Who Does VetLex Serve?

**VETERANS**
- Simpler Navigation of Resources
- Quicker Process to Reach Attorneys
- Coordinating to Address Multiple Needs

**ATTORNEYS**
- Case Pre-Screening
- Easier to Send Client Referrals
- Training Opportunities (CLE, Cultural Competency)

**VETLEX BENEFITS**
- Access to the nation’s first fully coordinated legal network designed to service the legal needs of Veterans
- The ability to easily send and receive referrals to other pro bono attorneys to support Veterans
- A knowledge base for attorneys interested in serving the Veteran and military connected population

www.VetLex.org  I  Holly.Christian@americanbar.org
Equal Justice Conference
San Diego, CA
Introductions

Holly Christian, Director, Veteran Legal Service Initiative, ABA

Brian Longo, Account Manager, Unite Us

Devin Winklosky, Associate, Jones Day

Zach Zarnow, Program Director, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
Agenda

I. What is VetLex?
   o Background Information
   o Infrastructure & Technology Demonstration

II. How does VetLex Partner with Existing Resources?
   o VetLex Pittsburgh
   o VetLex Illinois

III. What’s next for VetLex?
   o Future State
   o How to Participate
Current State

• Some local coordination but limited to no national coordination
• Many attorneys want to serve the Veteran community but don’t know how or where to get involved
What is VetLex?

- The nation’s first fully coordinated network designed to service the legal needs of Veterans
- A Person-Centered System which allows referrals to easily be disseminated to appropriate pro-bono resources
- A knowledge base for Attorneys interested in serving the Veteran and Military connected population
The VetLex Team
Who does VetLex Serve?

Veterans

- Simpler Navigation of Resources
- Quicker Process to Reach Attorneys
- Coordinating to Address Multiple Needs

Attorneys

- Case Pre-Screening
- Easier to Send Client Referrals
- Training Opportunities (CLE, Cultural Competency)
Network Design

Local CC Pittsburgh

Jones Day Pittsburgh

Pitt Law

Attorney

Duty Officer

Pro-Bono Coordinator
Technology Demonstration
Referral Process & Data
How does VetLex Partner with Existing Resources?
Pilot Location: Pittsburgh
Local Coordination Center (Pittsburgh)

Local legal providers:
- NLS
- Pro Bono Partnership (County Bar Association)
- Private Attorneys
- Law Firms
- Law Schools (Duquesne, Pitt, WVU)
- In-house counsel (ACC Chapter)

Wrap-around service providers (housing, medical, employment, education, etc.):
- PA Serves
- Mercy Hospital
- VA
- VLP
- CCAC
- Red Cross, etc.

Local CC:
Neighborhood Legal Services
Pilot Location: Illinois

IL- AFLAN hotline

855-IL-AFLAN (452-3526)
HOURS: M-F 9 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

This hotline is for eligible veterans and service members (including National Guard and Reserves), spouses and their dependents residing or stationed in Illinois.

www.carpls.org/veterans
VA Benefits Appeals: Notice of Disagreements Filed
Number of Notice of Disagreements (NOD) filed at VA regional office.

VA Benefits Appeals: Board of Veterans Appeals
Number of benefits appeals filed at the Board of Veteran Appeals (BVA).

VA Benefits Appeals: Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
Number of benefits appeals filed at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC)

VA Benefits: New Benefits from Previously Denied Claim
Number of new benefits secured via appeal of previously denied claim.

VA Benefits: Increased Benefits
Number of increased benefits secured via appeal of previously granted lower disability rating.

VA Benefits: Benefit Decreases Prevented
Number of successful appeals in opposition to a decrease in disability rating/decrease in benefits.

VA Benefits: Value of Benefits Won for Clients via Appeal

VA Benefits: Non-Economic Benefits Secured
Number of cases where casework secured the client a non-economic benefit, such as medical care through the VA.
VetLex National Programs
What’s next for VetLex?
VetLex Future

- More Locations
- Increase Collaboration
- System Improvements
- Grow Capacity
How to Participate

Registration Now Open!

Go To: https://vetlex.org/organization-registration/
Questions?

Contact:

www.VetLex.org
Holly.Christian@americanbar.org