The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans’ Vetlaw Program

Addressing Veterans Legal Issues

Infinite range of options for structuring legal component

• Which model works best for your community?
• What resources and relationships does your organization have to address legal needs?
• Where do you start?
  • Identifying the need(s)
  • Structuring the program to fit client needs
  • Identifying volunteer resources
  • Scope: How often? How varied?
Civil Legal Issues

• Spectrum of possible legal components
  • On-staff attorney providing full rep
  • On-staff attorney coordinating pro bono effort and/or legal services relationships
  • Contract relationship with legal services for full rep and/or pro bono assistance
  • Collaboration with legal services (unfunded)
  • Any combination of the above options

• Identifying veterans
  • Community-based legal clinics
  • Program participants
  • Community partners and VA homeless programs

How the MACV Vetlaw\(^2\) Program Started

• Responding to community need for veterans legal services.
• First clinic limited in scope; learned early on that a broader scope was necessary to respond to individual needs.
• Learn from our mistakes: go to where the veterans are, and that is not in courthouses.

  • Started without formal volunteer recruitment strategy or funding resource.
  • “If you build it, they will come”, applies to clients, volunteers and funding!
Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)

Statewide 501c3 nonprofit established in 1990

MACV Vetlaw Program

- Triage brief advice and referral
- Full representation services
- Representation Partnerships with Legal Services Offices
- Pro Bono partnerships with law firms and in-house counsel
- Legal Clinics
- StandDown events
- Interstate referrals
MACV Veterans Legal Clinics

- **Vetlaw Program**
  - Serves all 87 counties
  - 3 regional offices: Twin Cities, Duluth, Mankato
  - 3 staff, 2 attorneys
  - 2014 will host 34 clinics and StandDown events serving ~1,500

- **Pro Bono/Pro Se Clinic**
  - Varied legal issues
  - Walk-ins accepted
  - Law students and non-attorneys used to leverage attorney time

Common Issues seen at Legal Clinics

- Family Law
- Consumer Debt
- Criminal Charges
- Criminal Expungement
- Employment
- Tax
- Housing
- Benefits
- Medical Malpractice
- Wills, Trusts & Estates
What are your Challenges?

- Identifying Legal Partners
  - Legal Services Offices
  - Pro Bono Programs
  - Bar Associations
  - Individual Attorneys
- Identifying Legal Issues Amongst Veterans
- Getting successful legal outcomes for your clients
- Identifying and accessing legal resources in other states