
EMPOWERING CHANGE: THE IMPACT OF LEGAL SERVICES FOR UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

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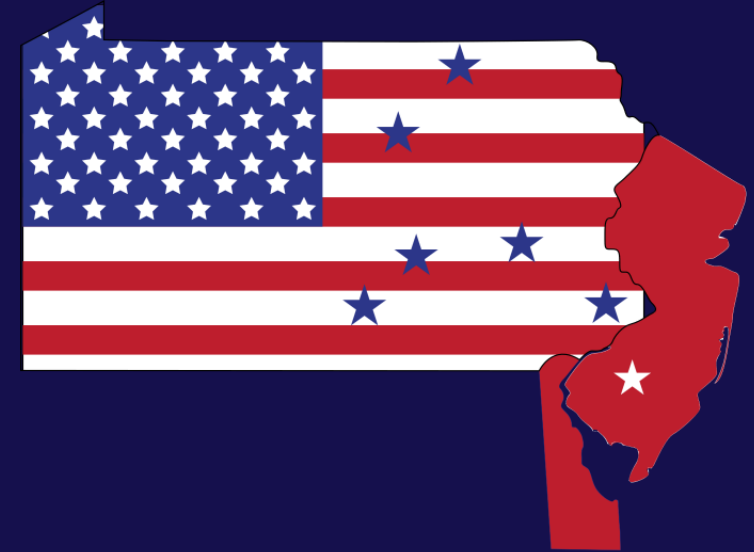
ABOUT VMC

Since 1980, the Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC) has provided wrap-around services including housing, benefits, employment, and food support to over 6,500 Veteran households annually across Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Southern New Jersey

The VMC has been recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs for its innovative practices. We provide training and technical assistance to federally funded Veteran-serving organizations throughout the country

Visit VMCenter.org to learn more about our mission.

“For Veterans, legal support can be the difference between becoming homeless and having safe, stable housing,” –VA Secretary Denis McDonough



SERVING VETERANS IN:

- ★ **PENNSYLVANIA**
- ★ **DELAWARE**
- ★ **SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY**

ABOUT ME

I serve as the Chief Legal Services Officer for the Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC), an agency with over 40 years of experience in delivering services to Veterans in PA, NJ, and DE. Since joining VMC in 2020, I have created a legal services program, working with 7 legal aid societies in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Southern New Jersey. This program has granted expedited, free legal services to thousands of low income and homeless Veterans to date, as part of a holistic homeless and housing program.

I previously worked at Legal Aid of Southeastern PA, where I created the Veterans Unit in 2019, which brought targeted legal services to low-income Veterans across a multi-county geography.

I received a B.A. in Political Science at Syracuse University, received my Law Degree (J.D.) from Widener University School of Law, and my Masters in Taxation (L.L.M.) from Villanova University. I am a VA Accredited Attorney.



NON-CRIMINAL LEGAL ISSUES

Most commonly used legal interventions relating to housing and income:

- Landlord/tenant issues
- Child Support issues
- Assistance in obtaining Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits and/or assistance for claims with those benefits
- Court fees in limited circumstances
- Drivers license reinstatement issues/fees
- Criminal records expungements
- Debt collection issues/Bankruptcies
- Requesting military records from the National Archives
- VA benefits (initial application through appeals process) and military discharge upgrades



Attorneys protect the rights of clients through application, mediation and claim filing, representation, and advocacy through civil legal problems

LEGAL SERVICES & HOMELESS AGENCY PARTNERSHIP

A partnership between legal services providers and homeless agencies breaks the cycle of homelessness and poverty through:

- Prioritization and ensuring equity of referred homeless Veterans in receiving legal services
- Training homeless agency staff in legal issue spotting to provide rapid crisis intervention and cultural competency cross-training
- Services are delivered to unhoused and un-stably housed Veterans through a client-centered, trauma-informed perspective



VMC MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

A partnership between legal services providers and homeless agencies breaks the cycle of homelessness and poverty:

- VMC has opened almost 4000 legal files for Veterans
- Illegal evictions are down by almost **90%** due to legal services interventions
- Approximately 87% of unsheltered Veterans present with 3 or more legal issues acting as barriers to housing as we have seen at VMC
- Millions of dollars of debt waived due to legal advocacy
- We have had 97 Drivers licensed restored
- Close to 93 successful expungements
- Obtained over 300 positive VA and Social Security Administration Decisions resulting in **almost 2.5 Million**
- **\$48.47 MILLION** in anticipated lifetime income- due to legal advocacy while trying to obtain VA benefits
- Through benefits application, debt relief and other income services, legal services have helped to increase household income, on average, by **almost \$1,500/month**
- The last three statistics all occurred within an average of 5 months from the date the application was filed as opposed to close to 24 months-when an attorney is not doing the filing and the Veteran must attempt to do it on their own

FEDERAL MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

From the Legal Services Corporation Justice Gap Report:

- Low-income Americans did not receive any or enough legal help for 92% of their civil legal problems
- 76% of Veteran households had 1+ legal problems, 44% had 5+
- Tenants facing eviction proceedings who had no legal aid remained in their homes 14% of the time, while those who received full representation remained in their homes 55% of the time



THANK YOU

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