The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans’ Vetlaw Program
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

- GPD / Transitional Housing
- HVRP / Employment Assistance
- Case Management / Outreach
- Rental Assistance
- Legal Clinics / StandDowns
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
  o Serves all 87 counties
  o 3 regional offices: Twin Cities, Duluth, Mankato
  o 1 support staff, 2 attorneys
  o 2014 will host 34 clinics and StandDown events serving ~1,400

➢ Pro Bono/Pro Se Clinic
  o Varied legal issues
  o Walk-ins accepted
  o 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
Addressing Veterans Legal Issues

Infinite range of options for structuring legal component

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

- Spectrum of possible legal components
  - On-staff attorney at SSVF grantee providing full rep
  - On-staff attorney at SSVF grantee coordinating pro bono effort and/or legal services relationships
  - Contract relationship with legal services for full rep and/or pro bono assistance
  - Any combination of the above options

- Identifying veterans
  - Community-based legal clinics
  - Program participants
  - Community partners and VA homeless programs
SSVF and Legal Assistance

• Considerations when incorporating legal services into the wraparound services through SSVF:
  • Understanding the similarities and differences in the legal services and social services models.
  • Communicating the need, value, and impact of legal representation.
  • Outreach value of legal assistance provided in a clinic or workshop setting to SSVF providers.

• The importance of cross-training on SSVF legal issues:
  • Assist case managers in identifying legal issues impacting housing stability.
  • Non-legal remedies available through social service programs.
  • Understanding the restrictions of the SSVF grant and legal services programs.
  • Effectively communicating the professional rules that govern attorney-client relationships.
  • Understanding your SSVF partners’ client eligibility guidelines.