



Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

SSVF National Webinar Series

Medical-Legal Partnerships

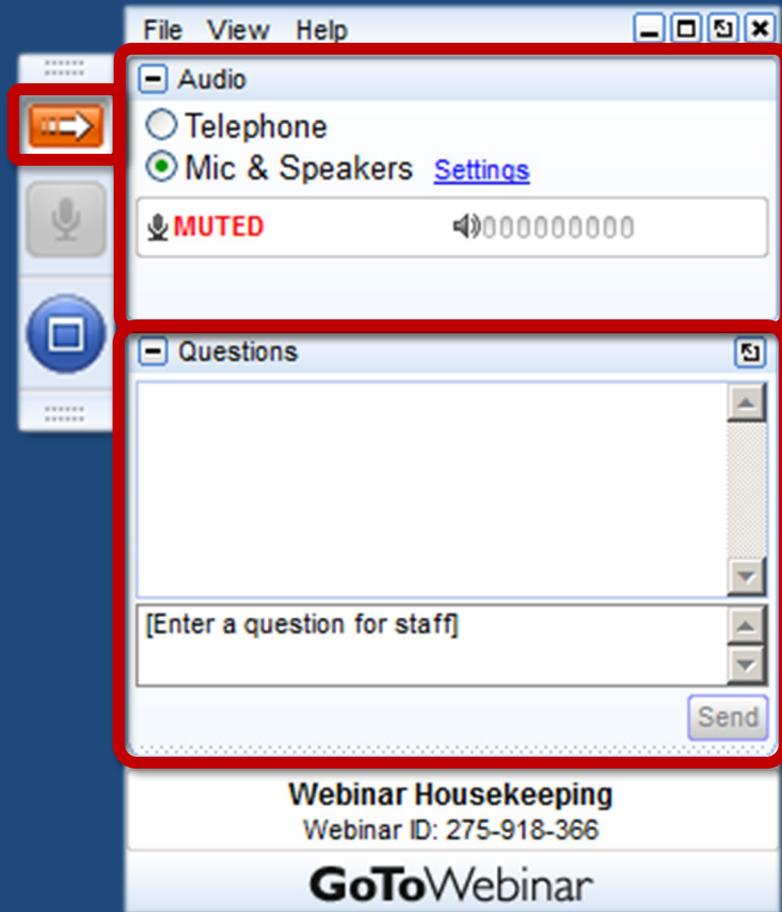
May 9, 2019

[Link to Audio Recording](#)

Webinar Format

- Webinar will last approximately 60 minutes
- Participants' phone connections are “muted” due to the high number of callers
 - Questions can be submitted during the webinar using the Q&A function
- Questions can also be submitted anytime to SSVF@va.gov

How to Submit Questions during the Webinar



Your Questions

Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel

SSVF Program Update

The Unannounced Standardized Veteran (USV) SSVF “Secret Shopper”

USV Mystery Shoppers are currently in the field visiting SSVF grantees

Initial results:

- **DD214:**
 - No SSVFs have denied services for lack of a DD-214- **Awesome job everyone!**
- **Phone #:**
 - Of the 14 SSVFs visited, 5 did NOT ask for a phone number.
- **Veterans’ Bill of Rights**
 - Out of the 14 SSVFs visited 13 did not have it posted and the one site that did have it posted did NOT have the contact info.

SSVF Program Office USV Action Plan

- Train staff on:
 - Each and every Veteran screened is eligible with a VA ID Card
 - During an initial screen, request if the Veteran has a phone number
 - Veteran “Bill of Rights” “Bill of Rights” must include a Point of Contact
- Develop a process to ensure each Veteran receives a copy of the Bill of Rights or that it is displayed at initial engagement.

Insert Agency Logo

Veterans' Rights

As a Veteran, you have the right...

1. to be treated equally, professionally, and with respect, regardless of your gender, legal history, ability/disability, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, housing status, or any other protected class
2. to be assessed for available services as a Veteran with your Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued photo identification (ID), whether or not you have your DD214.
3. to access or be directly referred to services you need for which you are eligible and that are available within your local community.
4. to have your phone number and general location with a time you can be reached requested so you can receive a text message, phone call, or in-person follow-up within a reasonable time, and to assist you with applying for a subsidized Universal Services Administration Lifeline phone plan, when needed.

Who to contact with concerns:

Insert Agency Contact Name, Title,
Telephone Number and Email

USV Resources

- Review with staff the SSVF webinar on Customer Service (January 10, 2019)
https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp?page=/ssvf_university/webinar_library
- Copy of “Bill of Rights”
 - <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp>
- Questions or concerns contact your Regional Coordinator or:
 - SSVF Satisfaction Team
 - Katie Morrissett Catherine.Morrissett@va.gov
 - Rico Aiello Riccardo.Aiello@va.gov

Webinar Objectives

- ✓ SSVF Providers will learn how Medical-Legal Partnerships can increase Veterans access to legal services
- ✓ SSVF Providers will learn how they can collaborate with and participate in Medical-Legal partnerships

Webinar Presenters

- ✓ Lara Eilhardt, Attorney for VA Office of General Council
- ✓ Fanita Jackson-Norman, VA Medical-Legal Taskforce
- ✓ Maxine Pulliam, SSVF Regional Coordinator



Legal Clinics and MLPs in VA Facilities:

Integrating Legal Aid into VA Services

VA MLP Taskforce

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Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



What are Veterans' Legal Needs?

➤ 5 of homeless Veterans' top 10 unmet needs are *actually legal* needs *

- 1) eviction/foreclosure issues,
- 2) discharge upgrades
- 3) child support and family law
- 4) restoring driver's licenses
- 5) outstanding warrants/fines

* Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education & Networking Groups (VA CHALENG survey)

What are Veterans' Legal Needs?

...And why do they matter?

a) Addressing legal needs affects Veteran health outcomes

- Mental Health: Veterans may suffer from depression that stems from an unmet legal need (i.e., child support, eviction)
- Veterans with serious mental illness and substance use disorders benefit from access to legal advocacy
- Enhanced productivity and efficacy for VA clinical staff is possible when legal needs are addressed

b) Health Affairs study shows that VA MLPs:

- **decrease** PTSD symptoms
- **reduced** spending on substance abuse
- **increase** Veterans' mental health and housing stability

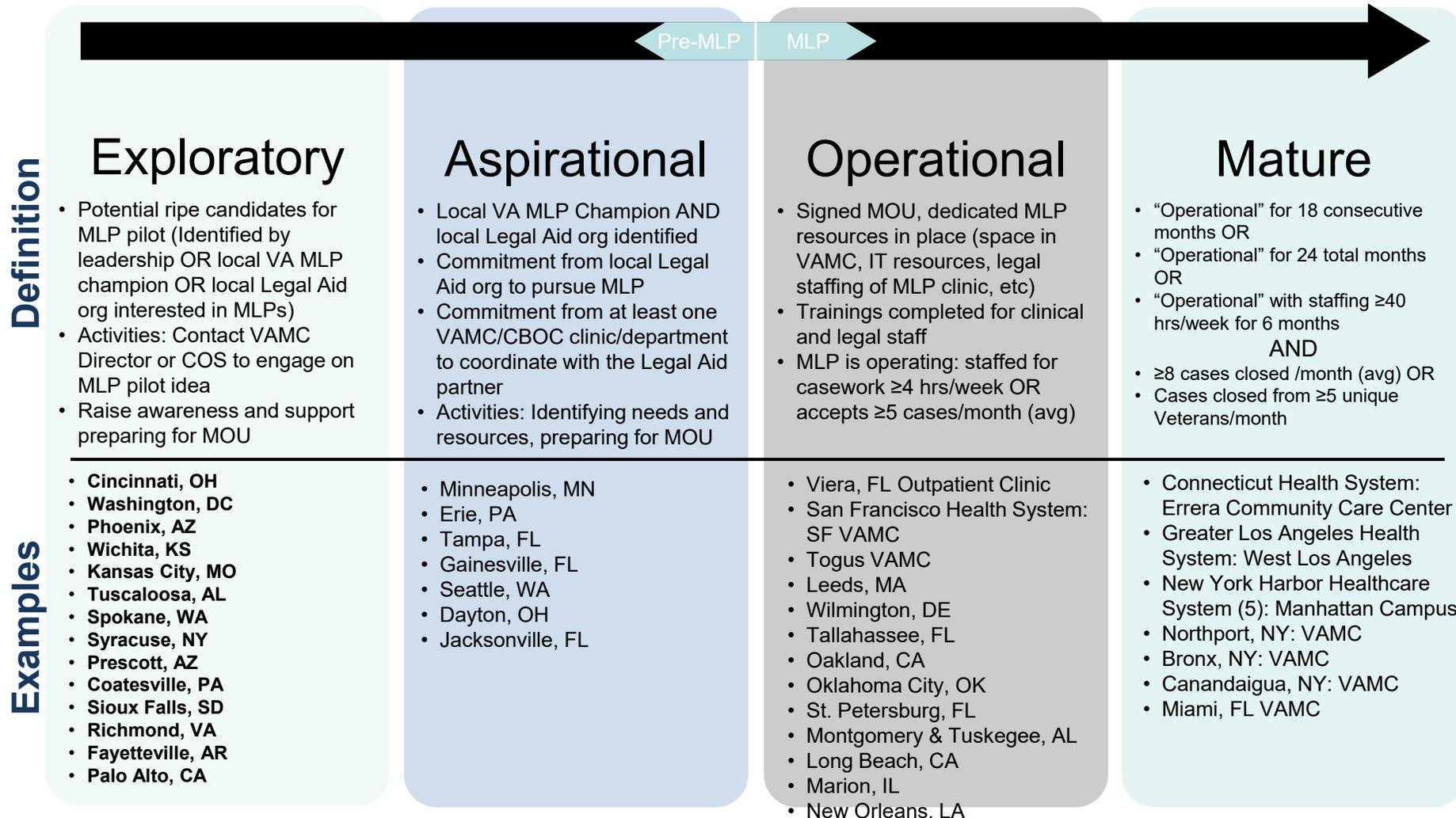
What are VA's Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLPs)?

- **VA MLPs: It's more than just a referral.**

Care delivery collaboration between Medical and Legal practitioners

1. VA medical providers work directly with pro bono attorneys and are trained to detect Veterans' legal needs.
 2. Healthcare team refers Veteran to the legal team, whose attorneys provide advice, intervention, and representation.
 3. Both healthcare and legal teams follow up with Veteran and coordinate on case feedback via clinical communication.
 4. The result? → Improved medical and legal outcomes for Veterans.
- Currently, VA has at least **31** Medical-Legal Partnerships at VA facilities across the country, such as VA hospitals, outpatient clinics, and Vet Centers.

VA MLP Pipeline



Current Status of VA hosted legal clinics

- ****VA has yet to identify statutory authority to directly provide or fund legal services for Veterans***
- VHA Directive 2011-034: VA Medical Centers and staff are encouraged to make space available for legal service providers to assist Veterans.
 - Currently, 170+ pro bono legal clinics, including 31 MLPs, serve Veterans in VA facilities under this directive
 - VA Veterans Justice Outreach (VJOs) are key contacts
 - VA facilities' legal clinics and MLPs:
<http://www.va.gov/ogc/docs/LegalServices.pdf>
 - Clinics are staffed and funded by outside legal aid organizations, law school clinics, foundations, and pro bono private attorneys.

SSVF and MLPs: **The Connection**

- Eligible supportive services under the SSVF Program include **legal services** (38 CFR Part 62.33(g))
- Grantees are ***strongly encouraged to provide legal services*** to assist participants with issues that interfere with participants' ability to obtain or retain permanent housing or supportive services, including issues that affect the participant's employability and financial security (such as the lack of a driver's license).

SSVF Overview Role of Legal Aid

- **Service Models**
 - In-House Counsel
 - Built-in Legal Service Module to SSVF Grant
 - Subcontract
 - Referral/Informal Agreements
 - legal aid organizations, on-site clinics, pro bono programs, bar ass'ns, law schools
- **Gaining Buy-In**
 - Less than 30% (87 out of 308) of grantees currently providing legal services via contract or in-house counsel.
 - All of our grantees are **required** to at least provide link to legal services via referral, but this is difficult to track

SSVF + Legal Services = Keep Veterans Housed

- ***Veteran S.H. is a 49-year-old Navy veteran who experienced MST in service that led to severe PTSD and resulting homelessness on and off for several years. S.H. filed for service-connection several years ago but chose not to pursue her claim further after an initial denial due to feeling overwhelmed by the stress of navigating the claims process while also being homeless and trying to maintain employment. This year S.H. received a VASH voucher and became stably housed, inspiring her to work with legal on re-opening a claim for service-connection for her PTSD.***
- ***Veteran R.R. receives SSVF services for housing assistance and legal services at Swords to Plowshares. He was homeless when he first entered Swords' doors but is now housed thanks to the help of Swords' SSVF team. After gaining that housing stability, R.R. was able to focus on the legal work necessary to prevail in his service-connected disability compensation claim for psychosis and more regularly attend mental health group therapy and receive the treatment he needs. As a result, Swords' legal team recently won his service-connection claim for disability compensation for psychosis, which the VA rated at 100%, creating income stability for this very vulnerable veteran.***

How to start a VA MLP: The 4 Step Process

Step 1: → Identify and Engage a VHA Healthcare Champion

Step 2: → Identify and Engage a Legal Partner

Step 3: → Draft an MOU

Step 4: → Review/Sign MOU to launch MLP!

Step 1: → Identify and Engage a VHA Healthcare Champion

- Identify a front-line manager your VHA facility or healthcare system who is open to (and hopefully, enthusiastic about) a Medical Legal Partnership... this may be you!
- The VHA Healthcare Champion should socialize the MLP to VA clinical staff in the facility. For example, he or she may:
 - Consider a legal needs assessment amongst VA clinical staff (potentially with the Legal Partner) to determine the most common legal issues seen amongst veterans who use your facility
 - Conduct training or an information session (potentially with the Legal Partner) for the appropriate VA clinical departments who may involved in the MLP on the legal needs of veterans at the facility and a proposed Medical Legal Partnership.
 - Reach out to the VA facility Director to introduce the idea of an MLP
- Connect the VHA Healthcare Champion with our VA MLP Taskforce

Step 2: → Identify and Engage a Legal Partner

- VHA Healthcare Champion should meet with the legal partner, and:
 - Explain legal-related needs of the veteran population at your VA facility (e.g., housing, child support) and whether they can provide those corresponding legal services;
 - Discuss the parameters for having the MLP at VA (e.g., Legal Partner must be able to independently fund the legal services; VA must post a disclaimer and cannot endorse any particular legal entity).
 - Discuss the scope of VA's involvement in the MLP (i.e., VA providers can provide legal referrals and assist in detecting legal needs in the course of clinical care, but cannot perform tasks outside the scope of employment).
 - Check with the VA Office of General Counsel to vet the potential legal partner (i.e., ensure attorneys are in good standing with their state bar, will not take medical tort claims, and if providing any assistance on VA benefits claims, are VA accredited)
- VA MLP Taskforce can assist with identifying a legal partner
- To explore potential landscape of legal partners, see:
www.statesidelegal.org

Step 3: → Draft an MOU for the MLP

- **VA MLP MOU Samples - Attached**
- The MOU must abide by **VHA Directive 2011-034**'s requirements that:
 - When making a legal referral, VA must provide Veterans with a list of local legal service providers (not just the Legal Partner in the MLP) and state the specific Disclaimer in VHA Directive 11-34.
 - VA Form 10-611 (a revocable license) must be completed for the Legal Partner to use the VA space
- **The MOU should address as many expectations and responsibility from both sides as possible, including:**
 - a) Healthcare Partner Responsibilities
 - b) Legal Partner Responsibilities
 - c) Privacy Act Compliance / Veteran Disclosures
 - d) Plan for Evaluation/Metrics of the Partnership
 - e) Types of legal care and issue areas which will/will not be addressed by the MLP team
 - f) Any persons not eligible for representation by the MLP
 - g) Term, Renewal and Termination of MOU

Step 4: → Review/Sign MOU to launch MLP!

- Consider incorporating into the MOU ongoing joint training from VA and the Legal Partner for VA clinicians and staff on how to detect legal needs and the legal services offerings available
- Obtain feedback and approval from VA Office of General Counsel on the terms of the MOU *before* signature
- MOU should be signed by the VA facility director and Legal Partner director/supervisor
- Signed MOU? Great! Now use it:
 - The MOU should be shared widely and used as a team building tool. The MOU becomes a standing agenda for discussing program activities and impact.



Thank you!