



NLADA

National Legal Aid &
Defender Association

nlada.org

Legal Services and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program:

LEVERAGING A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO CARE FOR CLIENTS

PARK CITY, UT

JULY 8, 2016



Leveraging the SSVF Program to Expand Legal Services to Vulnerable Populations: Two Oregons, Two Models

July 8, 2016

Presenters

- Alex Glover
 - Director of Veterans Services
Transition Projects, Portland, Oregon
1435 NE 81st Ave, Suite 500 | Portland, OR 97213 503.280.4673 o |
503.894.9407 f alex.glover@tprojects.org | www.tprojects.org
- Daniel Zene Crowe
 - Veteran's Advocate, MPD
Veterans' Justice Project
630 SW 5th Ave, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204
503-225-9100
dzcrowe@mpdlaw.com
 - Executive Director, Oregon
Veterans Legal Services
PO Box 850
Mount Angel, OR 97362
dzcrowe@ovls.org

Objectives for Today

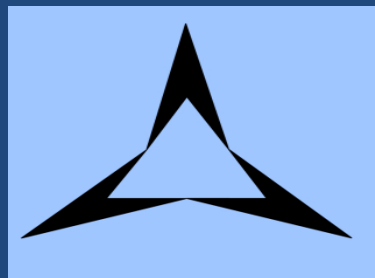
- Two Models for Legal Support
- How to identify your partner?
- Organizational structure, both within your office and with your SSVF Partner?
- How to work your partner through challenges and successes?
- Building an enduring relationship



SSVF Legal Services 101

Daniel Zene Crowe,
Veteran's Advocate, MPD Veterans' Justice Project,
630 SW 5th Ave, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204
503-225-9100
dzcrowe@mpdlaw.com

VETERANS' JUSTICE PROJECT
A Service of Metropolitan Public Defenders



Introduction – Why Are Legal Services Important to SSVF Participants?

- The goal is *Housing Stability*
- How can any lawyer help my Participants?
- How about with ...

...Evictions, Expungements, Restraining Orders, Legal Judgments, Contesting Bars to VA Facilities, Disputing Registered Sex Offender Status, Debt Problems, Welfare Payments, Unemployment Claims, Guardianship, Divorce, Child Support Issues, Outstanding Warrants, SSI/SSD Process, Re-entry Services for Incarcerated Veterans, and much, much more...

Top Ten Highest Unmet Needs as Ranked by Surveyed Veterans (FY 2010)

Veterans Literally Homeless (shelter, street, unfit for habitation) (n=3,184)	Veterans in Transitional Housing (VA Grant and Per Diem and Domiciliary) (n=6,111)	Veterans in Permanent Housing (including HUD-VASH) (n=2,672)
1.Long-term, permanent housing	1.Welfare payments	1.Dental care
2.Welfare payments	2.Child care	2.Legal assistance for child support issues
3.Dental Care	3.Legal assistance for child support issues	3.Welfare payments
4.Guardianship (financial)	4.Family reconciliation assistance	4.Child care
5.Legal assistance for child support issues	5.Guardianship (financial)	5.Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines
6.Job training	6.SSI/SSD process	6.Family reconciliation assistance
7.Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	7.Long-term, permanent housing	7.Credit counseling
8.SSI/SSD process	8.Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	8.Re-entry services for incarcerated Veterans
9.Family reconciliation assistance	9.Discharge upgrade	9.Legal assistance to help restore a driver's license
10.Job finding	10.Women's health care	10.Job training

Which of Those Needs Can Be Helped by Some Type of Legal Support?

Veterans Literally Homeless (shelter, street, unfit for habitation) (n=3,184)	Veterans in Transitional Housing (VA Grant and Per Diem and Domiciliary) (n=6,111)	Veterans in Permanent Housing (including HUD-VASH) (n=2,672)
1. Long-term, permanent housing	1. Welfare payments	1. Dental care
2. Welfare payments	2. Child care	2. Legal assistance for child support issues
3. Dental Care	3. Legal assistance for child support issues	3. Welfare payments
4. Guardianship (financial)	4. Family reconciliation assistance	4. Child care
5. Legal assistance for child support issues	5. Guardianship (financial)	5. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines
6. Job training	6. SSI/SSD process	6. Family reconciliation assistance
7. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	7. Long-term, permanent housing	7. Credit counseling
8. SSI/SSD process	8. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	8. Re-entry services for incarcerated Veterans
9. Family reconciliation assistance	9. Discharge upgrade*	9. Legal assistance to help restore a driver's license
10. Job finding	10. Women's health care	10. Job training

19 of the top 30 Priorities (63%) Have a Legal Component!

What Is “Housing First”?

- Philosophy driving SSVF
- Centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed
- Differentiated from other strategies is an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing
- Consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve

Elements of Housing First

- Helping individuals and families access and sustain rental housing *as quickly as possible* and the *housing is not time-limited*;
- Variety of services are delivered primarily *following* housing placement
- To promote housing stability and individual well-being;
- Time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and
- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services

Why Housing First?

- Concept is holistic
- By providing housing assistance, case management and supportive services responsive to individual or family needs (time-limited or long-term) after housing, communities can significantly reduce the time people experience homelessness and prevent further episodes of homelessness
- Social services to enhance individual and family well-being can be more effective when people are in their own home.

What Are the Steps of Housing First?

- Assessment-based targeting of Housing First services,
- Assistance locating rental housing, relationship development with private market landlords, and lease negotiation,
- Housing assistance – ranging from security deposit and one month's rent to provision of a long-term housing subsidy,
- A housing placement that is not time-limited, and
- Case management to coordinate services (time-limited or long-term) that follow a housing placement.

Two Models for Legal Support

- Built-in Module for SSVF Services in Portland, Oregon
- Veterans' Justice Project created to provide Legal Support to Transition Projects' SSVF Grant
- Universal Legal Screening Model for the Rest of Oregon
- Built with economies of smaller grants in mind

Identifying Partners

- Legal Aid “Bolt-On” Most Prevalent
- Good service & culture fit
- Prioritization of Veterans can be cultural problem
- Embedding specialized program in Legal Aid Offices can work
- Cultural Concerns with Veteran-Service Non-profits

Nonprofits and Lawyers – Cultural Challenges

- Nonprofits are often
 - Very efficient with resource allocation
 - Very self-reliant
 - Calling focused
 - (Internally) Consensus-driven
- It is sometimes hard to accept help, to trust lawyers, or to expend resources vigorously

“How Can *Your* Lawyer Help *Our* Veterans?”

- Congress directed VA to administer the SSVF Program to help Grantees do what they were already doing, but do it more effectively
- SSVF Grantees are a VA Force Multiplier to help Veterans
- Legal Support can be Grantees force multiplier to
 - Protect the rights of SSVF Participants, and
 - Reduce the workload of SSVF Case Managers

Organizational Structure

- How do you interact with the Grantee?
- Inevitable Cultural Clashes
- Requires multiple connections across organizational levels

- How do you structure your support internally
 - Stand-alone office (high overhead, max independence)
 - Embedded (more cost-effective, cross training)
 - Integrated (prioritization/resourcing can be a problem)
- Internal Structure and Funding go hand-in-hand

What Is MPD's Veteran's Justice Project?

- In coordination with Transition Projects (TPI), the Portland Metro Coordinator for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, Metropolitan Public Defender Veteran's Justice Project provides non-criminal legal services to assist veterans and veteran families with issues that interfere with their ability to obtain or retain housing or supportive services.
- We provide legal services to veterans to help them reduce or overcome legal barriers to stable and permanent housing.
- We assist SSVF Case Managers in obtaining positive outcomes for veteran clients.

Common Services We Provide

- Legal Services, including:
 - Landlord-Tenant Issues
 - Public Benefit Issues
 - VA Guardianship Review
 - Family Law Issues
 - VA/SSA Disability Disputes
 - Outstanding Warrants, *etc.*
 - Driver's License Issues
 - Debt & Bankruptcy Advice
 - Expungements (Sealing of an Oregon Conviction)
 - Restraining Order and Stalking Order Advocacy
 - Relief from Sex Offender Registration
 - Public Transport Exclusions
- Other Services Provided by SSVF Case Managers:
 - Assistance with rent, utilities, and other costs of tenancy
 - Assistance with housing search for homeless vets
 - Assistance with employment search
 - Assistance in finding transportation
 - Connection with local support services

Back to What Our Veterans Want...

Veterans Literally Homeless (shelter, street, unfit for habitation) (n=3,184)	Veterans in Transitional Housing (VA Grant and Per Diem and Domiciliary) (n=6,111)	Veterans in Permanent Housing (including HUD-VASH) (n=2,672)
1. Long-term, permanent housing	1. Welfare payments	1. Dental care
2. Welfare payments	2. Child care	2. Legal assistance for child support issues
3. Dental Care	3. Legal assistance for child support issues	3. Welfare payments
4. Guardianship (financial)	4. Family reconciliation assistance	4. Child care
5. Legal assistance for child support issues	5. Guardianship (financial)	5. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines
6. Job training	6. SSI/SSD process	6. Family reconciliation assistance
7. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	7. Long-term, permanent housing	7. Credit counseling
8. SSI/SSD process	8. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines	8. Re-entry services for incarcerated Veterans
9. Family reconciliation assistance	9. Discharge upgrade*	9. Legal assistance to help restore a driver's license
10. Job finding	10. Women's health care	10. Job training

Common Services We Provide

- Legal Services, including:
 - Landlord-Tenant Issues
 - Public Benefit Issues
 - VA Guardianship Review
 - Family Law Issues
 - VA/SSA Disability Disputes
 - Outstanding Warrants, *etc.*
 - Driver's License Issues
 - Debt & Bankruptcy Advice
 - Expungements
 - Restraining Order and Stalking Order Advocacy
 - Relief from Sex Offender Registration
 - Public Transport Exclusions
- Matching Up Priorities
 - #1, #7, N/a
 - #2, #1, #3
 - #4, #5, N/a
 - #5, #3, #2
 - #7, #8, #5
 - N/a, #9, N/a
 - N/a, N/a, #9
 - N/a, N/a, #7
 - N/a, N/a, #8

Where We Were ... and Where We're Going

- 322,355 Veterans in Oregon
- 1 in 3 Oregon Veterans (108,844) live in the Oregon Metro Counties + another 38,765 in Clark County, WA
- **FY2013**
 - Less than 75 Veteran Families Supported
 - Poor Integration with SSVF Case Managers
- **FY2014**
 - 350 Veteran Actions
 - Tight Integration with SSVF Case Managers
 - Extending Support to HUD VASH & GPD Case Managers (when screened into SSVF)

How One SSVF Legal Support Team Is Getting There...

- Synchronization with SSVF Case Managers
- Outreach to Evictors
- Broadening Awareness

A Different Approach for a Different Oregon

- Building Universal Legal Screening for “The Other Oregon”
- Needed a lighter touch for Grantees without built-in legal support
- Issue: How to get buy-in when the money isn’t dedicated in budget?

How Does Housing First Service Begin?

- The first step of Housing First is **Assessment and Targeting**
 - Individuals and families receive an in-depth, upfront assessment before being referred to or receiving services from a Housing First provider.
 - This allows providers to ascertain whether the community's Housing First approach is feasible given the providers' capacity to provide housing assistance and services tailored to their clients' needs.
 - The level of assistance programs are able to provide most often shapes who is targeted for Housing First services.

Connecting ULS and Housing First

- Grantees perpetually struggle with legal Assessment and Targeting
- This leaves the very technical responsibility of screening for legal challenges in the hands of non-lawyer Screeners & Case Managers
- ULS consolidates and streamlines legal screening for all SSVF Grantees in Oregon
- This screening provides Case Managers critical and timely information to use in creating an Individualized Action Plan for each Participant
- Also identified “hidden legal resources” SSVF Grantees have developed under the radar

Screening Services We Focus On

- Landlord-Tenant Issues
- Public Benefit Issues
- VA Guardianship Review
- Family Law Issues
- VA/SSA Disability Disputes
- Outstanding Warrants, *etc.*
- Driver's License Issues
- Debt & Bankruptcy Advice
- Expungements
- Restraining/Stalking Order Advocacy
- Relief from SO Registration
- Public Transport Exclusions

Work Flow: Challenge to Screening



Veteran or
Veteran
Family is
Homeless
or Imminently
Homeless

Contacts SSVF Program

Screened,
Provided
SSVF
Case
Manager,
Enrolled

Participant
Completes
Universal Legal
Screening
Questionnaire
(ULSQ)

Universal
Legal
Screening
Report
(ULSR)
Produced

Who Are We Working For?

- 322,355 Veterans in Oregon
- 58,000 Veterans in America are homeless = number of service members who died in Vietnam
- Veterans are twice as likely as other Americans to become chronically homeless
- Veterans represent about 8% of the Oregon population, but account for 27% of all suicides
- The risk of women Veterans becoming homeless is four times greater than for male Veterans

Working Through Challenges/Sustaining Successes

- Habitual Relationships
 - Strength in Portland
 - Weakness in “Other Oregon”
- “The Ask is Measured by the Cost”
 - Absent strong internal buy-in, essential to “build out” legal support to new grantees
 - Screening can show value, and value-add

Questions?



THANK YOU