



## **TALLAHASSEE VETERANS LEGAL COLLABORATIVE**

providing veterans with access to legal services that protect their interests and promote justice

### **SUMMARY REPORT**

Since its 2018 inception, the Tallahassee Veterans Legal Collaborative (TVLC) has hosted weekly Veterans Legal Clinics and has assisted nearly 1500 Veterans with thousands of legal issues and more than 200 Veterans in obtaining their driver's license. The Veterans Legal Clinic is a holistic, multi-pronged, sustainable effort to ensure that our Veterans have access to the legal support they need. Our approach is to partner with all other community resources to provide a one-stop-shop for the Veterans and their families - one place they can visit that will assist them with confronting any and all barriers they may encounter. The intent is to help them to overcome their devastating circumstances and to regain their independence.

The TVLC has also maintained a commitment and purpose to the community through hosting Tallahassee's annual Veterans Homeless Stand Down. We strive to work in partnership with local, state, and other agencies to provide a range of human and economic development services and activities which ameliorate the causes and characteristics of poverty and otherwise assist Veterans in need. Through partnerships Veterans receive assistance with housing, jobs, food, clothing, medical and wellness services, veterinarian services for pets, reinstatement of driver's license, and a host of other services. It is our responsibility to encourage and do our best to effect the change between the current circumstances and the life of the dreams. In 2018, we hosted 271 homeless/at-risk Veterans and 360 homeless/at-risk Veterans in 2019.

**VETERANS SERVED:** 1,400+ Veterans sought legal services over the past three years.

**LOCATIONS:**

- TVLC has consistently conducted two weekly legal clinics (2018- 20) and continues to support the Legal Program at the annual North Florida Homeless and At-Risk Veterans Stand Downs (2013-19).

(<https://tvlc.legal/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD-2019-After-Action-Report.pdf> ). Currently, the Legal Clinic and Stand Down 2020 are suspended due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

- The two weekly clinics are hosted by the Saul's Bridges American Legion Post 13 and the V.A.'s Sgt. Ernest "Boots" Thomas Tallahassee Healthcare Center.

### **VOLUNTEERS AND COLLABORATION:**

- Hundreds of attorneys have volunteered at the Stand Down legal programs since 2013 and more than two hundred (200) referrals to attorneys' offices have offered advice and representation beyond the walk-in, "Advice & Referrals" legal clinics themselves.
- Several paid part-time staffers and numerous administrative support volunteers devote additional hours alongside pro bono attorneys, a law professor, more than seventy law students so far, (of which 50%) half were in the law school's clinic itself and (50%) the other half were themselves pro bono, along with dozens of multi-disciplinary paralegals, social workers and other professionals comprising the Legal team of some twenty volunteers each week.
- TVLC's two dozen Collaborative agencies and organizations also provide reliable counselors, advocates, social workers and various other services for housing, job opportunities, benefits, and other referrals.
- TVLC's Team coordinates regularly with the Leon County Veterans Treatment Court, as well as numerous other agencies.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE AND DRIVER'S LICENSES:**

- More than 200 Driver's License Reinstatements have resulted from the Stand Down Courts (10 different proceedings) and the TVLC Clinics.
- To clear many of those suspended licenses, TVLC has coordinated thousands of Veterans' community service hours at events throughout the Capital area.
- In addition, TVLC has advocated to out-of-circuit & out-of-state jurisdictions to clear criminal & civil records, for job clearance or driver's license reinstatement.
- In addition, we have convinced individual Veterans, often with peer advocacy, to turn themselves in to law enforcement when necessary to satisfy outstanding warrants as a first step toward rebuilding their lives, job & family, and encourage them to seek services, including the VA, mental health treatment, PTSD counseling, substance abuse services, and job training.
- EXAMPLES of legal victories for Veterans and their families include resolution of:
  - o contempt of court proceedings;
  - o injunctions for individual veterans separated from families;
  - o landlord-tenant disputes and other help in securing housing;
  - o consumer and credit legal battles;
  - o step-parent adoptions;

- o quashed warrants;
- o restoration of competency;
- o clemency, expungement and sealing petitions;
- o voter registrations;
- o payments from pensions, IRA's & benefits cases;
- o birth certificates & other legal documents from around the country;
- o divorce proceedings;
- o wills, & powers of attorney;
- o hardship licenses & other DMV administrative proceedings.