

Civil Legal Aid for Veterans



Line Item 0321-1600

Veterans are particularly vulnerable to a number of physical and mental health challenges, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. The loss of housing, benefits, or access to medical care is especially threatening to their health and financial stability — and the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated all these issues.

Legal aid promotes safety and stability for disabled veterans, unhoused veterans, and veterans with low incomes by assisting with:

- Financial problems, including bankruptcy and debt
- Family law issues, including child support and custody, divorce, and domestic violence
- Appeals of discharge status
- Housing problems, including eviction and poor conditions
- Access to and denial of benefits, including unemployment insurance, SNAP, MassHealth, Social Security, and state and federal veterans' benefits

People and families with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$37,500 per year for a family of four; \$18,225 for an individual) qualify for civil legal aid.

\$126 million

in estimated economic benefits were provided by civil legal aid to the Commonwealth and its residents last year, including:

\$105,259,736

in estimated benefits won for clients

\$21,647,960

in reimbursements and savings obtained for the Commonwealth

According to the U.S. Veterans Administration, 9 of the top 10 unmet needs of housing-insecure veterans have a civil legal solution.



Robert* is a U.S. Veteran who uses a voucher from the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program (VASH) to pay rent. Last year, the property where Robert and his family lived was sold. The new landlord refused to accept the VASH payment and threatened eviction. Robert called **South Coastal Counties Legal Services (SCCLS)** for help.

An SCCLS attorney took the case and connected with both the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation and South Coast Fair Housing. Together, the advocacy team was able to protect Robert's rights and prevent an eviction. The landlord apologized to Robert and his family, who have maintained stability in their home.

*Name changed for privacy