

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Strengthening the Delivery of Civil Legal Help to Vulnerable Tennesseans

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Legal Aid Society Takes Initiative on Protecting At-Risk Veterans

NASHVILLE, Tenn., May 22, 2014 –Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland, Tennessee’s largest non-profit law firm, has partnered with Operation Stand Down Nashville and drawn on its Volunteer Lawyer Program to ensure at-risk veterans are receiving the resources they need.

With more than 20 referrals from Operation Stand Down Nashville (OSDN) since the start of the year, Legal Aid Society has provided low-income veterans vulnerable to homelessness the legal counsel needed to maintain or secure permanent housing. This is possible because of a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. SSVF is a homeless-prevention and rapid re-housing program which provided funding to OSDN in October 2013.

“Our goal is to see that every veteran has the opportunities any other American enjoys,” said Bill Burleigh, executive director of OSDN. “In helping our veterans with housing needs, we often require legal assistance, and we are pleased to have such a strong ally in Legal Aid Society.”

“One of Legal Aid Society’s main initiatives is to ensure at-risk veterans have equal access to legal assistance,” added Gary Housepian, executive director of Legal Aid Society. “The sacrifices veterans undertook to serve and protect our country are difficult to fathom, and it is our duty to advocate for their fair treatment. Our partnership with Operation Stand Down Nashville and the SSVF grant has made it possible for us to help more veterans.”

The Volunteer Lawyers Program staffs monthly clinics at OSDN that provide general advice and legal counsel to veterans. The clinics have helped veterans on a wide range of topics, including custody, drivers’ licenses, divorce and landlord-tenant issues. Many of the volunteer attorneys who staff the clinics are veterans themselves.

“I am extremely proud of the way our volunteer lawyers have met the needs and enriched the lives of our local veterans and their families,” said Lucinda Smith, director of the Volunteer Lawyers Program. “The program is yet another resource Legal Aid Society offers to protect veterans.”

Operation Stand Down Nashville is a nonprofit resource for veterans in Middle Tennessee that provides outreach, information and a range of social services including housing and employment at no cost to veterans.

Since 1968, Legal Aid Society has provided free legal assistance to low-income families. It serves clients in 48 counties through eight offices located in Clarksville, Cookeville, Columbia, Gallatin, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge and Tullahoma. Legal Aid Society is funded in part by United Way.

Printed: November 27, 2022

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