

# Veterans Legal Services



**FOUNDED:** 1991  
**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$250,000  
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## INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Veterans Legal Services seeks to raise \$750,000 over the next two years to meet the growing need for civil legal services for homeless and at-risk veterans in the Greater Boston area. VLS will use this investment to sustainably increase its capacity to serve more veterans by building its volunteer attorney program, developing additional community partnerships, and expanding its existing relationships with area law schools and firms.

Veterans Legal Services (VLS) provides civil legal assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans to remove barriers to self-sufficiency, stability, and financial security. While veterans are only 8 percent of the general population, they make up nearly one-third of the homeless population. The lasting physical, mental, and financial impact of military service often results in legal problems that contribute to homelessness. Studies show that legal needs are among the top 10 needs of homeless veterans, ranking even higher than housing. Unlike in criminal matters, there is no right to a lawyer in these civil cases. This is where VLS comes in.

- VLS utilizes volunteer law students and attorneys to provide free, walk-in legal services on site at Boston area homeless shelters
- VLS partners with community service agencies to provide holistic support to maximize veteran success

VLS envisions a world where no veteran remains homeless due to a lack of legal representation.

## TWO-YEAR GOALS

- Invest in capacity building to expand volunteer attorney program and increase services
- Increase veterans served to 550/year and offer enhanced services to existing clients
- Expand community partnerships to include U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs hospitals ("VA")
- Diversify funding for long-term sustainability

## WAYS TO INVEST

### FINANCIAL

- \$60,000 – Salary for attorney/volunteer coordinator
- \$36,000 – Office rent and utilities for one year
- \$10,000 – Training for 100 volunteer lawyers
- \$5,000 – Services for 50 veterans at Stand Down, a supportive services event for homeless veterans

### IN-KIND

- Pro bono attorney time
- Board, Committee, and Advisory Council membership
- Development assistance
- Website upgrade
- Office space, furniture, and equipment

## LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

VLS is governed by a 12-member board of directors, five of whom are military veterans.

Attorneys Anna Richardson and Sarah Roxburgh joined VLS in 2008 and have served as co-directors since 2010. Anna received her JD from Boston University School of Law where she received the Rappaport Fellowship, as well as BU Law's Victor J. Garo Public Service Award. Sarah received her JD from New England School of Law where she received the Timothy J. Cronin, Jr. Memorial Award for her outstanding commitment to public service.

Board President Tim McLaughlin, a lawyer at Holland & Knight, served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2000 to 2006, deploying to Iraq.

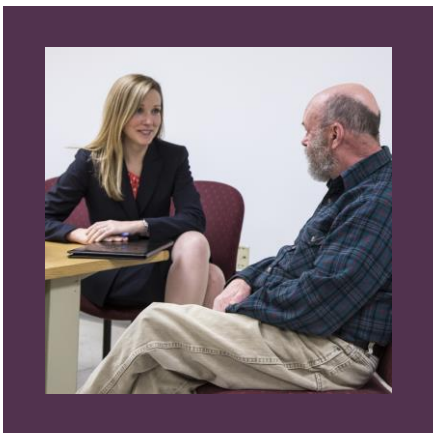
“

[Veterans Legal Services] ...kept me from drowning in this vast legal system and gave me back my dignity.

Tom

23 Years of Service, U.S.M.C.

”



## The Veterans Legal Services Model



VLS was founded in 1991 because homeless and at-risk veterans' legal needs were going unmet. Today, VLS remains the only legal services organization in Massachusetts whose mission is to serve veterans. VLS has an established, innovative, and effective model that removes legal barriers to veterans achieving self-sufficiency and dignity.

### Outreach

VLS meets with veterans on site at Boston area shelters. Our partnerships with the New England Center for Homeless Veterans, Chelsea Soldiers' Home, and various service providers enable us to provide holistic services, increasing the likelihood of veteran success.

### Education

VLS trains law student volunteers from all six area law schools to build capacity and ensure the next generation of lawyers are informed about veterans' needs. These students assist with VLS client representation and often join VLS as volunteer attorneys after graduation.

VLS also trains attorneys and community advocates on veterans' legal needs through courses at Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education and area bar associations. VLS is working with Access to Justice Fellow Rosemary Allen, Esq., to develop its volunteer attorney training program to build capacity and expand services.

### Advocacy

VLS provides direct legal representation to veterans. Services range from advising veterans on how to resolve matters on their own to representing veterans in court and before agencies such as the VA.

VLS's advocacy is accessible, culturally competent, compassionate, and pragmatic. We resolve veterans' legal matters so that they may move on to lead dignified, independent lives.



The professionalism, time spent, and attention to detail made me feel as if I were their only client. I can't say this enough, I am extremely grateful for what VLS does and continues to do. I could not have handled this on my own.

**Michael**  
 Disabled Vietnam Veteran  
 Formerly Homeless



### KEY INVESTORS

- BOSTON BAR FOUNDATION
- EASTERN BANK CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
- THE KLARMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION
- MASSACHUSETTS BAR FOUNDATION

### LAW SCHOOL PARTNERS

- BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL
- BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
- HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
- NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
- SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
- NEW ENGLAND LAW | BOSTON

### PROGRAM PARTNERS

- NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR HOMELESS VETERANS
- CHELSEA SOLDIERS' HOME
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## Uniquely Positioned to Meet a Growing Need

The number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness has tripled since 2009. According to the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, unmet legal needs are one of the root causes of veteran homelessness. With 23 years of experience, a tested, proven model, and long-standing partnerships with the shelters and community partners, VLS is uniquely positioned to meet this growing need.

VLS achieves this through:

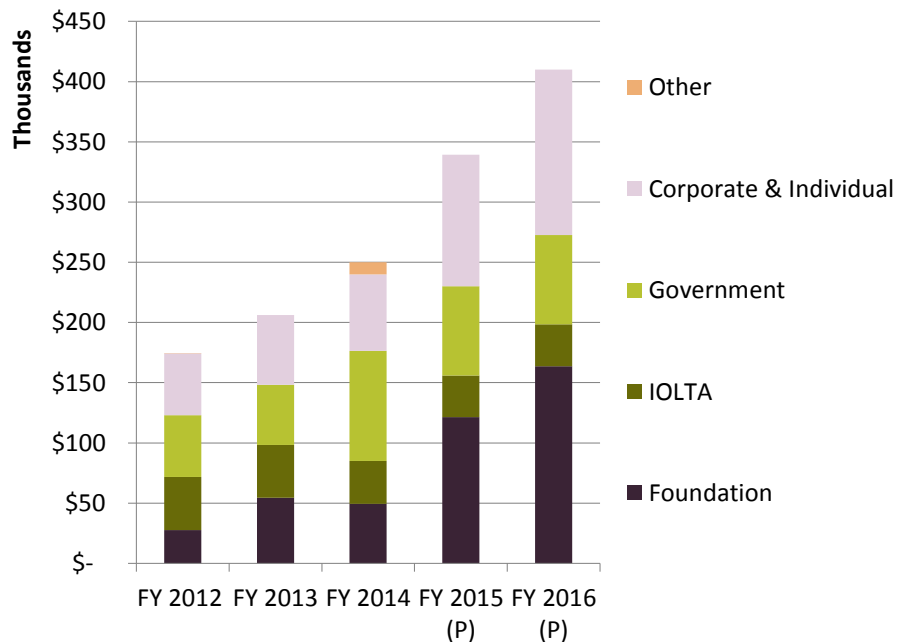
- Regular walk-in legal clinics at homeless shelters
- Long-standing relationships with supportive service providers
- Trusted relationships between clients and staff/volunteers
- A mental health-informed, culturally competent approach
- Customized services for each veteran's needs
- A growing network of trained volunteers, many of whom have a personal connection to military service

As a result, approximately 75 percent of VLS clients transition from a place of instability and desperation to stable, dignified living.

## Financial Sustainability

Historically, VLS was primarily funded by Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts ("IOLTA funds"), a major source of legal aid funding nationwide. However, IOLTA funds have dramatically decreased since 2009. VLS is currently implementing a strategic plan, which was developed in 2012, to ensure stability and sustainability. In accordance with the plan, VLS will diversify its revenue mix over the next two years.

Revenue by Source



## SUCCESS STORY: MARIKA

Marika grew up in Massachusetts and joined the Army when she turned 18. She served on active duty from 2000 to 2008, deploying to Iraq. When Marika came to VLS she was a single mom, working, going to school part-time, and living in a shelter with her child.

Marika's child's father refused to provide financial support. VLS assisted Marika with locating her child's father and securing a court order for child support and health insurance. Because VLS stood up for Marika, she and her child are now receiving the financial assistance they desperately need to make ends meet and have hope for a better future. They have moved out of the shelter and now have an apartment to call home.



## Program Performance and Organizational Health

Below is a summary of the key measures VLS will track to demonstrate progress, capture lessons learned, and make course corrections.

	FY 2014 (P)	FY 2015 (P)	FY 2016 (P)
	9/2013-8/2014	9/2014-8/2015	9/2015-8/2016

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE			
# of veterans' cases serviced	350	450	550
# of clinics at shelters/service centers	60	72	120
# of partner sites	3	4	4
# of community trainings offered by VLS	4	6	16
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING			
# of VLS staff	3	4.5	7
# of volunteers	70	85	150
Strategic fundraising plan	Develop	Implement	Implement and update
Board development plan	Develop	Implement	Implement and update
New corporate and individual donations	\$20,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
Total revenue	\$250,000	\$340,000	\$410,000

## Social Impact

Due to the complexity of factors affecting veterans and the broad services that VLS provides, measuring the depth of VLS's social impact is a challenging task. Experience and anecdotal evidence indicate that when we remove a complex legal obstacle, veterans' circumstances—economic, mental health, and family—improve. Currently, VLS is using the following metrics to gauge its direct impact on veterans.

INDICATORS	2014 (P)	2015 (P)	2016 (P)
Veterans who improved/stabilized financial situation*	80%	85%	90%
Veterans who improved/stabilized housing situation*	70%	75%	80%
Veterans who improved/stabilized family situation*	80%	85%	90%
Value of free legal services provided by VLS	\$1,400,000	\$1,800,000	\$2,000,000

\*Of those clients assisted with the respective subject matter.