



**NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

***At Your Service***

**HVRP Grantee Best Practices**

## **Using Legal Services to Remove Barriers**

The provision of legal services also plays a role in supporting veterans by increasing their ability to join the workforce. Once veterans have connected with an employment opportunity, an HVRP should always encourage strong communication with employers in the event there is a disruption to a veteran's period of employment. It is also important to maintain up-to-date information about potential employers in the community, and which employers will hire justice-involved veterans.

Bill Darnell of Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries works with his state Legal Aid Society to remove some barriers to employment for justice-involved veterans. "We have drafted a formal MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] with the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati. [...] The issue with Legal Aid Society is that they have about 30,000 referrals per year and can only take 1,000-2,000 of those. With our help, especially dealing with the veterans, they will take those cases because we can guarantee some payment through our grant system to help the financial cost of going to court."

HVRPs may find that law schools and local law firms can be helpful partners to assist justice-involved veterans in returning to stable employment. According to Joe Sluszka of the Albany Housing Coalition, by engaging in this kind of partnership, veterans can receive assistance from law students. He also noted that several local law firms have also been indispensable partners for his HVRP, "We have a small cadre of attorneys who volunteer to deal with those civil issues and matters, like drivers' licenses, like child support payment issues [...]." Goodwill Industries of Houston follows a similar approach in addressing legal challenges for veterans.

Karen Fleener-Gould of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County uses her organization's master database to identify employers throughout her HVRP's community who are willing to hire justice-involved veterans. She said, "The database includes all the information about the employer as well as whether [it] will hire justice-involved veterans or not. We can just push a few buttons and pull up a list of those employers that are willing to hire veterans who have a criminal history and in different fields of employment as well."