



VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT - 2022

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Serving those who served

Our Mission

The Veteran Advocacy Project (“VAP”) provides free legal services to low-income veterans and their families, with a focus on those living with post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury, and substance dependency.

Our services provide access to health care and benefits, keep families in their homes, and empower veterans by removing barriers to success.

We are partnered with VA Vet Centers, community health clinics, and veterans’ organizations to reach individuals where they are, from a veteran treatment court to home. While our attorneys tackle the legal challenges, our advocates connect clients to culturally competent, trauma-informed resources.

VAP ensures veterans and their families achieve the stability needed to regain their health and rebuild their lives.

Our Team

Amanda Agwuegbo
Intake Advocate

Coco Culhane
Executive Director

Robin Emannuelli
Senior Staff Attorney

Brent Filbert
Director, Military Law

Amy Hozer-Weber
Director, Civil Practice

Jarmeika Taylor
Staff Attorney

Katelyn Vaiana
Staff Attorney



Removing Barriers



In our three practice areas - general civil legal services, VA appeals, and Department of Defense discharge upgrade applications - our team's focus is the person, not just a legal matter.

Our work helps veterans obtain:



Health care

VAP collaborates with doctors & nurses to ensure veterans receive the primary and behavioral health care they need. Our newest partner: Columbia University's PTSD Research & Treatment Program.



Housing

VAP screens clients from partnering social services agencies to ensure veterans and their families stay in their homes with the help of the Supportive Services for Veterans Families grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Income

Our VA and DOD practices remove barriers to employment and fight for the benefits veterans have earned by correcting unjust discharge characterizations and appealing related disability compensation denials.



Veterans Resources

Using our network of partner organizations our advocates assist veterans in finding the right attorney or program; we conduct follow-up, ensuring clients get connected to care, not just a phone number.

Our Work

The Year in Numbers:

1,504

cases
worked on

60+

volunteers

17

law firms working
on cases *pro*
bono

671

Post-9/11
veterans
assisted

\$56.7 m

value of benefits
now available to
clients

2,166

people
assisted by
our team

184

Vietnam Era
veterans
assisted

58

community
partners

\$738,788

income gained
for our clients

190

New VA cases
opened

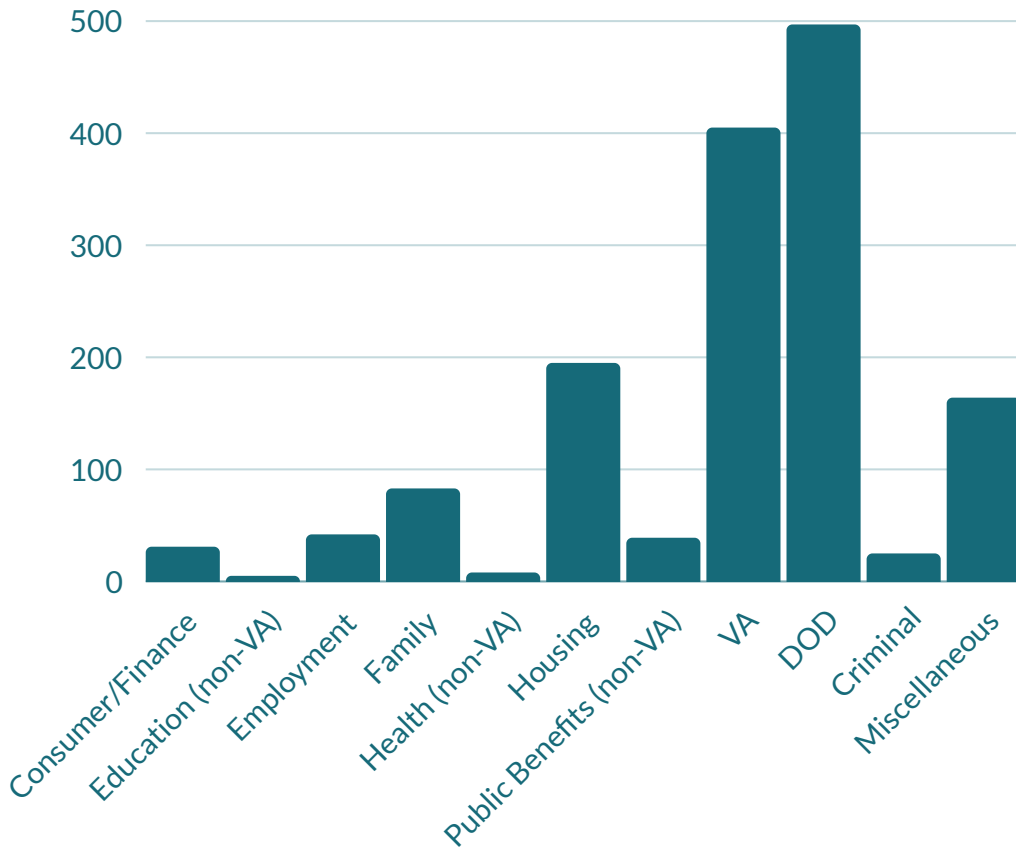
125

New DOD
cases opened

28

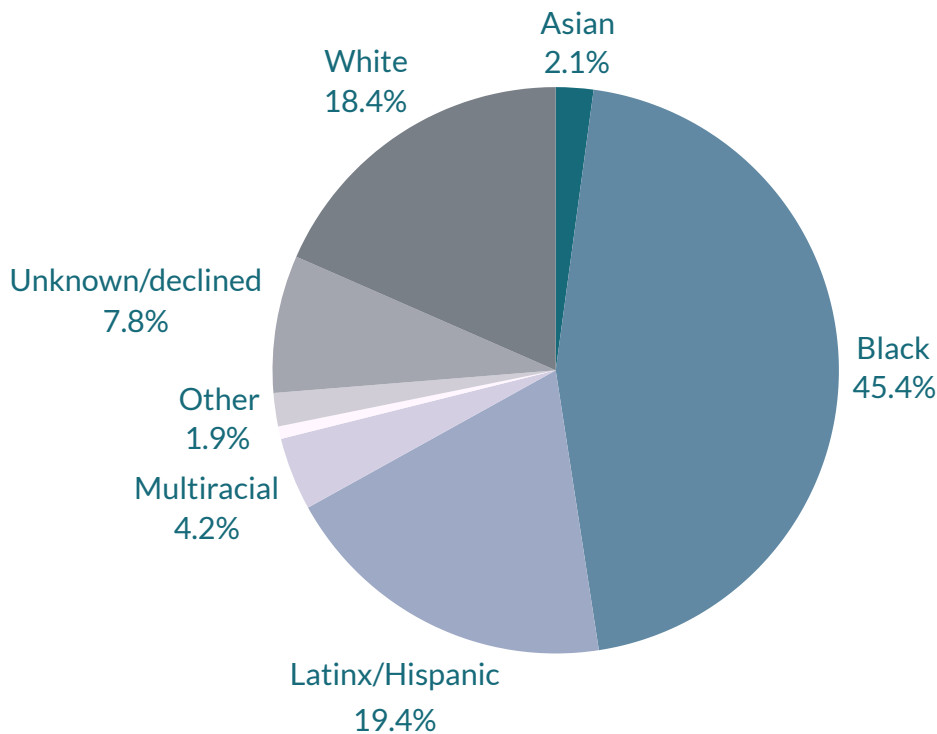
upgrade
applications
submitted

Our Work: Case & client data

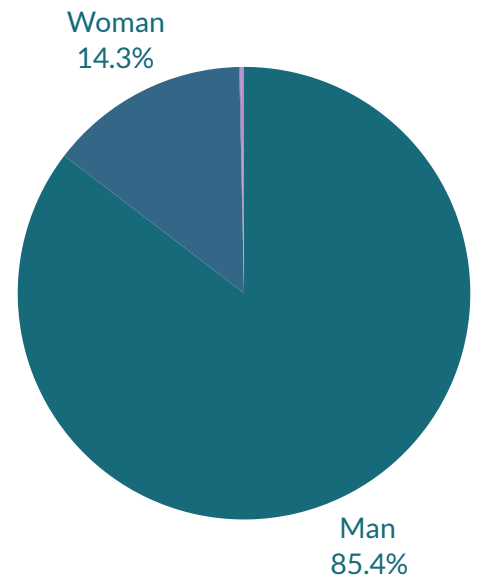


OPEN MATTERS BY ISSUE

CLIENTS BY RACE & ETHNICITY



CLIENTS BY GENDER



Our Initiatives

By collaborating with social services agencies, healthcare clinics, and other nonprofits, VAP ensures clients receive comprehensive assistance - no one gets left behind.

Discharge Upgrade Clinic (“DUC”)

We are one of the few legal services organizations with a practice dedicated to discharge upgrades. Members of the military leave service with one of six discharge statuses that determines access to VA health care and disability benefits. Post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury, systemic racism and homophobia, along with other injuries and injustices can lead to less-than-honorable discharges that deny access to the VA.

The suicide rate for a veteran with a misconduct discharge is nearly three times that of fellow veterans. A bad discharge is also a serious barrier to employment, education, and more. Cut off from the benefits they earned, and often alienated from their communities, too many individuals with “bad paper” are appearing in emergency rooms and in jails and prisons at higher rates than other vets around the country.

The Veteran Advocacy Project believes we owe it to these servicemembers to fight for their access to care. We train pro bono attorneys around the country to represent vets before the Department of Defense Review Boards as we grow our in-house team.

Veterans with misconduct discharges take their own lives at nearly three times the rate of other veterans.



Homelessness Prevention: Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF)

VAP provides legal services to the veterans of two SSVF grantees in New York: Jericho Project and Services for the UnderServed (S:US). We are onsite once a week meeting with veterans and caseworkers, removing barriers to income and ensuring housing stability. Jericho and S:US are important partners in VAP’s holistic approach to serving veterans. This year we added a staff attorney to help our new Director of the Civil Practice, Amy Hozer-Weber, build out her team to better serve the countless veterans being left behind by right-to-counsel in New York City’s Housing Courts.

Our Initiatives

(continued)

Justice-Involved Veterans Services

By bridging the divide between criminal and civil legal services, and providing services within the field of veterans law, VAP reduces justice-involved veterans' collateral consequences, assists families that are affected by the incarceration of a loved one, removes barriers to veterans benefits and programs, and educates stakeholders in the criminal justice system about veteran-specific resources. With VA VJOs leading the way, our outreach at Rikers improves reentry success.



Our newest partner, Black Veterans for Social Justice (BVSJ), works to keep veterans out of Rikers, in their homes, and matched with rewarding careers. Through education, outreach, and advocacy, VAP and BVSJ improve outcomes for veterans and their families interacting with the criminal justice system or facing housing instability.

Medical Legal Partnerships

Too many veterans forgo physical and mental care because they are struggling against complex benefits systems or fighting to maintain income and housing. Our attorneys work on those issues and on VA character of discharge (COD) and DOD discharge upgrade applications so that veterans can access the vast federal benefits they earned through service and get the health care they need.



For those vets who cannot access the VA, we launched a partnership in 2015 with Community Healthcare Network, a system of federally qualified health centers. VAP is also partnered with the VA, providing legal assistance onsite at Vet Centers that serve combat veterans and their families, providing counseling and transition assistance.

When doctors, nurses, social workers, and lawyers team up to address social determinants of health, we improve health outcomes and ensure that clients achieve the long-term stability needed to thrive.

PRO BONO PARTNERS

Our Discharge Upgrade Clinic trains hundreds of lawyers each year. Working with firms, banks, and other organizations allows VAP to maximize our impact with life-changing discharge upgrade cases. We are immensely grateful to the following firms for their time and effort on cases this year:

Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer, LLP

BakerHostetler, LLP

Bressler Amery & Ross, P.C.

Debevoise & Plimpton, LLP

Duane Morris, LLP

Kasowitz Benson Torres, LLP

Katten Muchin Rosenman, LLP

Kirkland & Ellis, LLP

Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP

Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLP

Seward & Kissel, LLP

Sidley Austin, LLP

Societe Generale

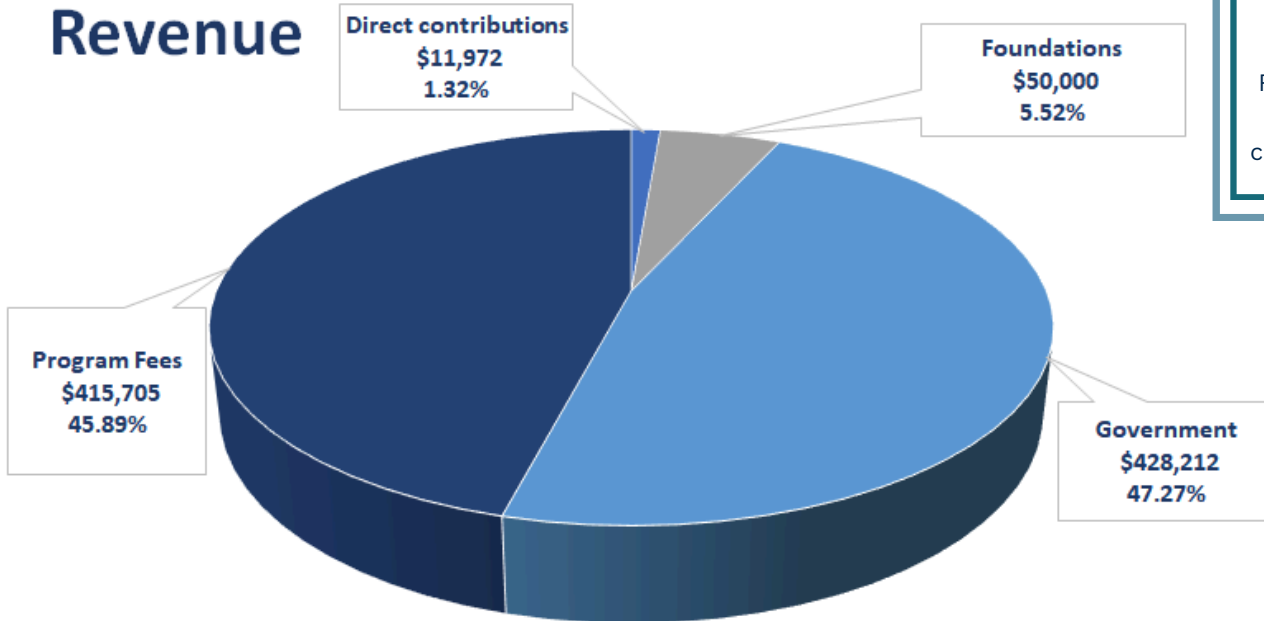
Susman Godfrey, LLP

White & Case, LLP

Financials

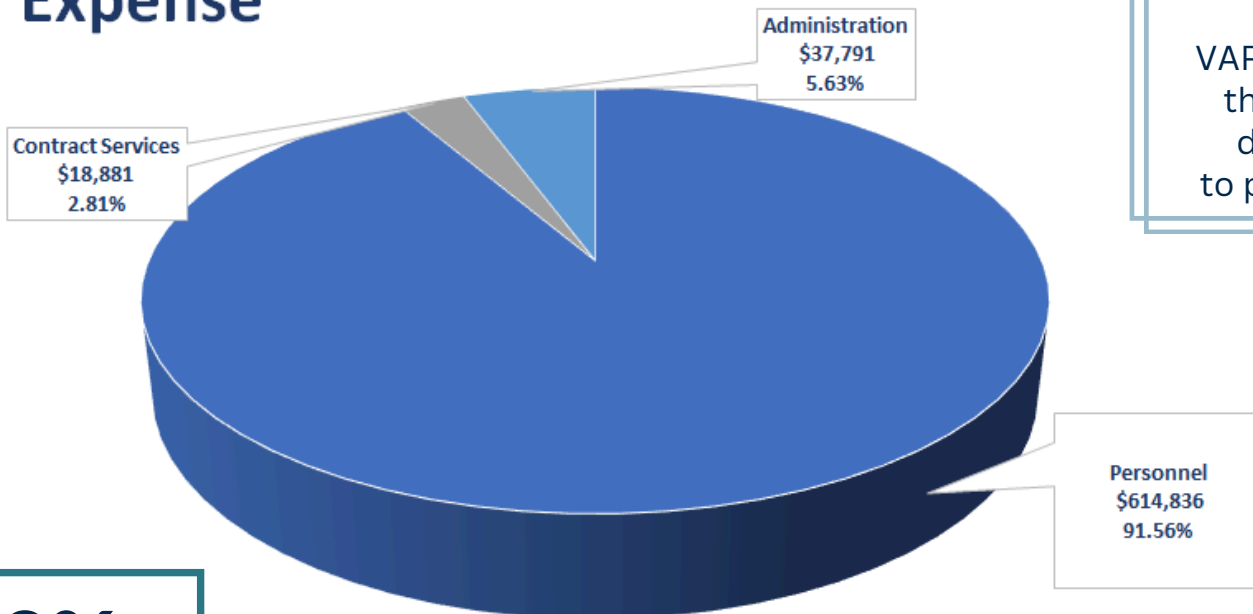
FY2022: 7/1/2021 – 6/30/2022

Revenue



98%
Funding that will renew in the coming fiscal year

Expense



93.5%
VAP funding that goes directly to programs

8%
Our low overhead cost means dollars get spent on programs, not admin

Our Supporters

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

\$100,000 – \$250,000

City of New York, Department of Veterans Services

City of New York, New York City Council

Veterans Legal Services Initiative

Jericho Project

Services for the UnderServed

\$50,000 – \$99,999

New York Community Trust

New York State, Division of Veterans Services

\$10,000 – \$49,999

Black Veterans for Social Justice

Capital Collateral Regional Counsel – North

Community Healthcare Network

State of Florida

State of Oklahoma

Orrick Foundation

\$5,000 – \$ 9,999

Melissa Hiler Fay

Northeast Georgia Regional Capital Defender

Heather Vodnansky

\$1,000 – \$4,999

Defender Association of Philadelphia Trustees Federal Division

Federal Office of the Public Defender of Massachusetts

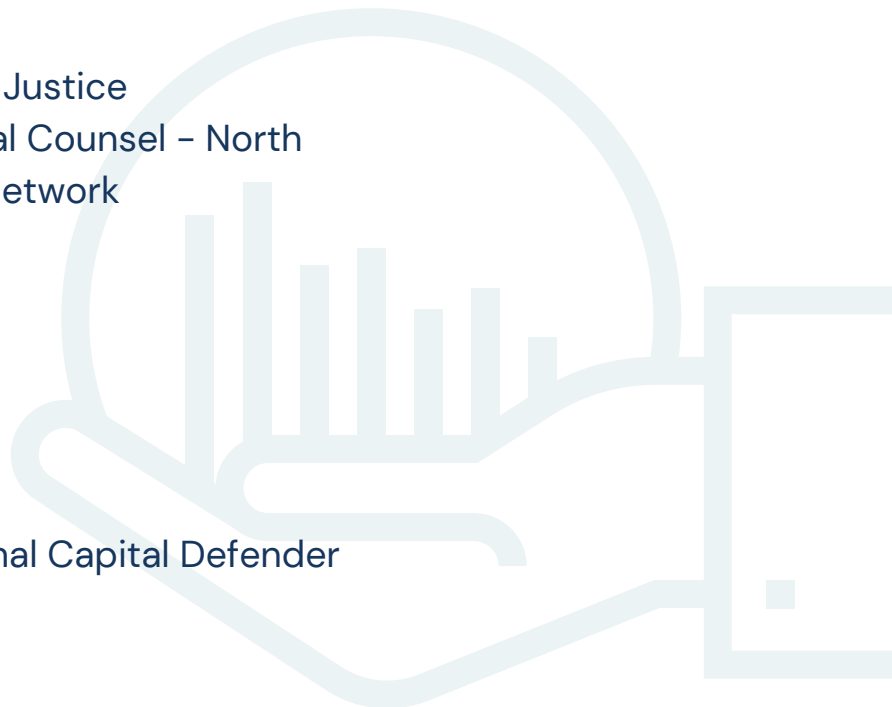
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Karen Porter

Krista Shipsey

Societe Generale

Willie Wright



Our Supporters (cont.)

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

\$500 – \$999

Stephen C. Lessard

\$250 – \$499

Kirsten Gillibrand

< \$ 249

The Blackbaud Giving Fund

David Carpenter

Samantha Chamblings

Sidney Covington

C.J.M. Culhane

Michael D. Grohman

Jonte Harrell

Laura Atkinson Hope

Gerald Lee

Allison Myrick



thank you

Gold
Transparency
2022

Candid.

Scan this QR Code
or click on the
image to the right
to support our
free services for
veterans.



MAKE A
PAYPAL
DONATION

HERE

PLEASE
SUPPORT
VAP



Board of Directors

Melissa Hiler Fay, Drexel Hamilton

Chair

Michael Grohman, Duane Morris

Treasurer

Stephen Lessard, Latham & Watkins

Secretary

Sidney Covington, AmeriVet Securities

Director

CJM Culhane, Veteran Advocacy Project

President

Karen Porter, Brooklyn Law School

Director (2017-2022)

Willie Wright, GE Capital

Director



Meet Our Newest Board Member:

Willie Wright



Willie is Senior Corporate Counsel at GE Capital. He is also the co-leader of the GE Capital Veterans Network, that works to support, hire, and develop military Veterans within the company, and support Veterans' causes in the community; he is also the co-leader of General Electric Company's Global Law & Policy team diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Prior to GE Capital, from 2005 to 2007, he was an associate at the law firm of King & Spalding. From 2000 to 2005, he was an associate at the law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, after spending 1993 to 1997 serving as a U.S. Naval Intelligence Officer.

Willie graduated *summa cum laude* from The Military College of Vermont at Norwich University and Columbia University School of Law, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar.

Willie's pro bono work includes representing an Iraqi translator that faced persecution stemming from his work with the U.S. military in connection with his special immigrant visa application and negotiating financing for the Harlem School of the Arts.



VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

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VeteranAdvocacy.org

