



UCLA | SCHOOL OF LAW

VETERANS LEGAL CLINIC

2017-18 Annual Report



OUR INAUGURAL YEAR

On August 23, 2017, the UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic (“Veterans Clinic”) began assisting veterans on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”) campus in West Los Angeles (“Campus”) with its inaugural class. The mission of the Veterans Clinic was twofold:

- to develop the practical skills of law school students while enhancing their knowledge of, and appreciation for, the issues facing our former military service members, and
- to address the unmet legal needs of veterans, particularly those living or accessing services on the Campus.

Throughout the year, students, under the supervision of the clinic’s co-directors, assisted veterans in

securing disability benefits to which they are entitled and addressed citations veterans have received for various minor offenses such as jaywalking and driving with a suspended license.

We also hosted guest speakers throughout the year, including VA General Counsel, James Byrne (pictured below), Fernando Abarca, East Los Angeles Community Corporation, Connie Huang Chu, Disability Rights California, Jerron Jordan, Second Chances Project, Californians for Safety and Justice and Jennie Pasquerilla, the ACLU of California. These opportunities enabled students to engage with policymakers, service providers and advocates working in a variety of areas to address the needs of veterans locally, in California and nationally.

THE NUMBERS

From opening day until June 30, 2018, the Veterans Clinic:

- provided services to **237 veterans** on **316 total legal matters**;
- conducted **27 official days of intake** (with intake happening on numerous other informal occasions throughout the year to address certain urgent situations);
- participated in several community outreach events, including the 3rd Annual VA Greater Los Angeles Veteran Stand Down held on the Campus on October 27, 2017,



during which a host of service providers gathered to assist veterans from throughout Southern California; and

- trained and engaged **16 law school students** in the delivery of legal services to veterans.



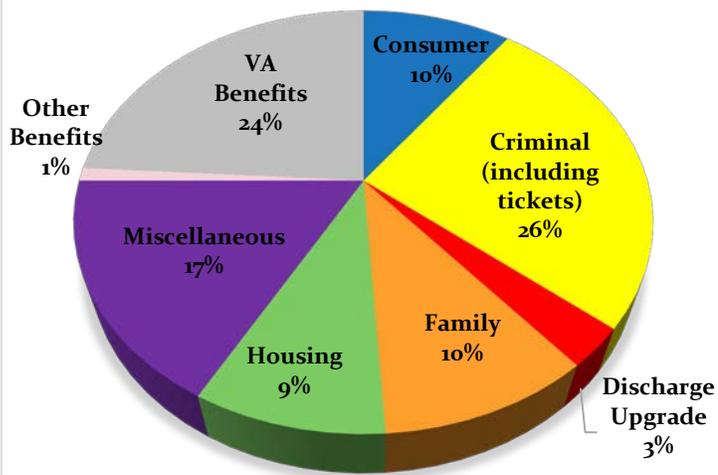
(Students, Veterans Clinic Faculty & Staff at 3rd Annual VA Greater Los Angeles Stand Down – October 27, 2017)

CASE STATISTICS

(August 2017 – June 30, 2018)

AREAS OF LAW

(all 316 matters presented to Clinic)



CLOSED CASES ONLY

Total Closed Cases	267
<i>Level of Service Provided</i>	
Legal Assistance, Advice or Limited Services	120
Referrals	137
Individual Withdrew/Never Followed Up	10
<i>Total Financial Benefits Achieved</i>	\$10,869.71
Citation Fees/Fines Waived	\$8,875
VA Benefits Awarded	\$1,993.71

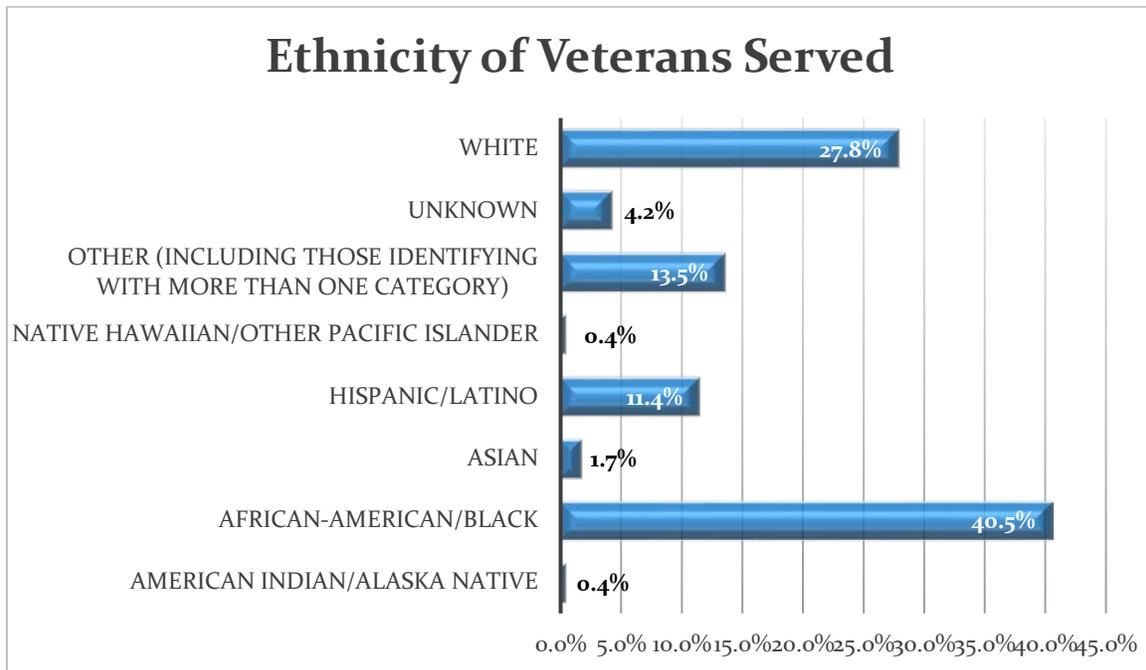
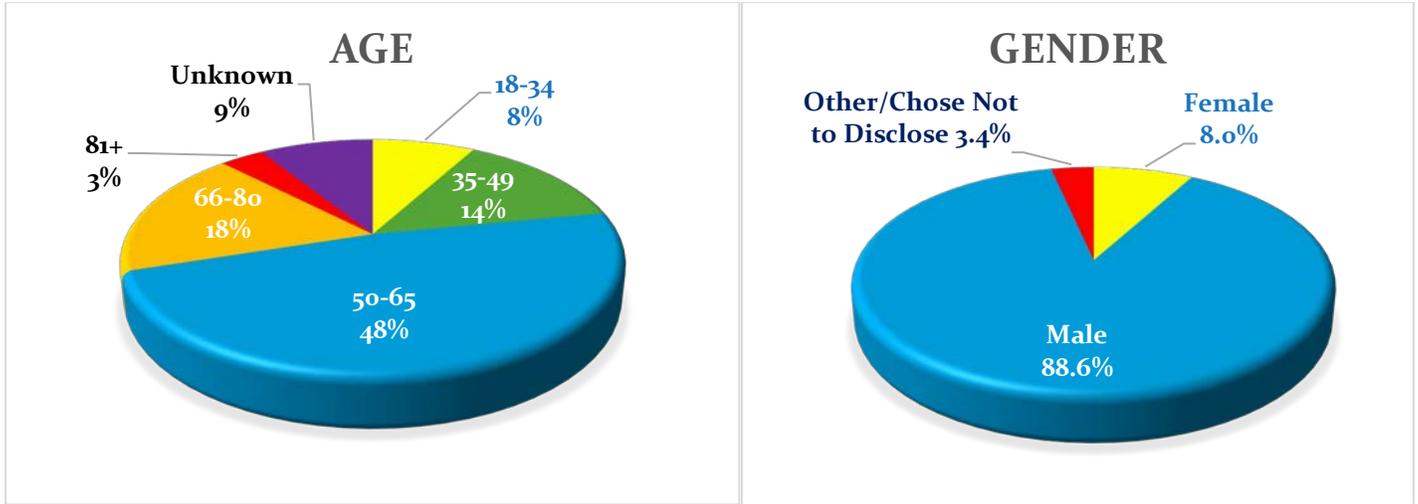
NOTE: As of June 30, 2018, the Veterans Clinic had 49 open cases, many of which involved full representation, counsel and advice or other limited services.

AVERAGE VALUE OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDED: \$1.3 million



CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

(August 2017 – June 30, 2018)



Annual Income & Housing Status of Veterans Served:

- 34% at or below \$12,140 (the federal poverty limit for a single individual)
- Average annual income: \$17,859 (just above the federal poverty limit for a 2-person household)
- 25% self-identified as homeless with numerous others reporting being on verge of homelessness



SUCCESS STORY

Homeless Veteran Able to Aim High Again Thanks to Assistance from the UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic

During the Spring 2018 term, Veterans Clinic students assisted a homeless veteran. His story, in his own words, follows:

“I pride myself on being someone who strives to be self-sufficient and hard working. After all, I’m a veteran of the US Air Force who honorably served and always “aims high.” But, due to the recession in 2010, I became homeless. And the trauma I experienced as a result of my service resulted in serious mental health issues that impacted my ability to work. Nonetheless, I pressed forward without treatment until I found myself confronted with 3 traffic citations for expired vehicle registration and an expired driver’s license. I took steps, including going without food, to correct these violations.

However, because of my health condition, I was unable to attend my court dates or to pay the amounts due on my tickets which lead to my court fines and fees increasing to over \$2,600 and my license being suspended. At the time, I had no money – not even General Relief or food stamps.

Eventually, I found my way to the UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic and 2 law students working there. They were a terrific team – taking the time to thoroughly understand my case, prepare the necessary court documents and, together with their supervisor, even go to each of the courts with me on my hearing dates. Their hard work resulted in all of the fines and fees being waived and my driver’s license being restored.

Now, as a result of the legal clinic’s services and treatment that I have been able to obtain since receiving my VA benefits, I am able to move forward with my plans to obtain housing and regain control over my life. I am extremely thankful for the UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic.”

**James Weda,
U.S. Air Force veteran**

“[A]s a result of the legal clinic’s services . . . I am able to move forward with my plans to obtain housing and regain control over my life.”



STUDENT VOICES

“Professionally, the Veterans Legal Clinic was an extraordinary opportunity to put what I learned in the classroom into action. I wrote real legal briefs, I



prepared arguments to give in court, I appeared in front of a judge with a client. Personally, as the stepson of a veteran and someone who is

dedicated to addressing the ongoing crisis of homelessness in our city, it was an incredibly meaningful experience.”

– Ian Grady, Class of 2019

“The UCLA Law Veterans Legal Clinic provided me with the unparalleled opportunity to practice humility, learn about myself through reflection, and instill in me the pivotal message that I can use the law to uplift the lives of our veterans and repay them for all of their sacrifice.”



– Byron Barahona, Class of 2018

SERVING BEYOND THE CLINIC



One of the aspirations of the Veterans Clinic is to encourage future lawyers to continue using their professional skills to benefit veterans. The Veterans Clinic is proud that one of the students from its inaugural year has already made such a commitment.

Nathan Goncalves, an Army veteran and Spring 2018 Veterans Clinic alum, was awarded an Equal Justice Work Fellowship to work with Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law, providing much needed family law services to area veterans starting Fall 2018. More details about Nathan’s project can be found at <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/node/90717>.

Reflecting upon his work in the Veterans Clinic, Nathan had the following to share:

“The UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic allowed me to develop essential lawyering skills and apply them to serve a community that is close to my heart. As a veteran, I found the clinic to be an amazing opportunity to give back to those who gave so much.”

Nathan Goncalves, Class of 2018
U.S. Army, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment
“Wolfhounds”

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Veterans Legal Clinic
<http://law.ucla.edu/veterans-clinic>

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