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Seeking Applicants for Military Records Corrections Staff Attorney
February 2017

The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) supports veterans in recovery by helping them overcome legal barriers to housing and income. CVLC and VA Connecticut's Errera Community Care Center created the country's first VA medical-legal partnership to integrate legal help into VA mental health, housing and addiction services. CVLC staff helps veterans resolve their legal issues through advice, representation and referral to a large number of volunteer attorneys. Since 2009, CVLC's high quality legal services have helped almost 2000 veterans rebuild the fulfilling lives they deserve.

CVLC seeks applicants for its military records corrections or "discharge upgrade" program. Each year, the Department of Defense erroneously denies service members an "honorable" discharge, often because of behaviors symptomatic of PTSD. These "bad paper discharges" make veterans ineligible for VA educational, medical, or disability benefits and make it harder for them to get civilian jobs. These veterans, many of whom served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, are three times more likely to commit suicide than other veterans. This means we fail to care for and educate some of our country's most wounded warriors when they need it most.

The Department of Defense (DoD) creates this problem by misusing the separation process to eliminate rather than counsel struggling soldiers, and the problem is growing with military budget cuts. According to the Colorado Gazette, Army "bad paper" discharges for "misconduct" were up 25% from 2009 to 2013. More disturbingly, the greatest increases are in the eight Army posts that house most of the services' combat units, where misconduct discharges are up almost 70%.

This position requires a range of skills including: representing individual veterans before DoD administrative boards and APA review of those decisions in federal court; training and assisting volunteer attorneys representing veterans in these venues; and implementing process improvements to CVLC's discharge upgrade practice to improve outcomes. This position offers the opportunity for an ambitious attorney to define this burgeoning social justice field by establishing best practices and achievement metrics for legal aid offices adopting discharge upgrade practices. CVLC envisions this attorney presenting progress and outcomes at national conferences to inspire, identify and recruit legal aid offices and attorneys interested in developing a discharge upgrade practice and collaborating with partner organizations on projects to reform the statutes and regulations governing discharge upgrades. This position is currently funded for one year, with funding for future years likely.

Familiarity with Department of Defense administrative law or an eagerness to learn it, admission and good standing to any bar, a willingness to take the CT bar, a valid drivers' license and access to a vehicle in order to meet with clients across CT, are all required.

The office environment is client-centered, hard-working, creative, democratic, outcome-oriented and collegial. The ideal candidate is open, organized, collaborative, self-directed and comfortable working independently. Experience with

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landlord-tenant, consumer, foreclosure, criminal, benefits and/or other areas of poverty law, experience working with veterans, the homeless and/or the mentally ill, and/or experience with the military and/or military law would be beneficial. If you loathe the idea of addressing your own envelopes, faxing your own documents or folding chairs after an event, this is not the job for you; we all do windows here.

As physical space is tight and office amenities are sparse, someone with an easy-going, adventurous attitude towards work would be the best fit. This job is for someone who enjoys learning and helping people, seeks meaningful work that involves widely different skills and is interested in taking on considerable responsibility at a young organization with an important mission. Salary is based on experience and is commensurate with other public interest law jobs. Benefits include health insurance, generous paid vacation and sick leave and a family friendly workplace.

To apply, please submit a cover letter, resume, three references, a legal writing sample and a sample of professional correspondence (letter or email) to the CVLC's Executive Director Margaret Middleton at applicants@ctveteranslegal.org. Please do not hesitate to email with questions. The position is open until filled, and we anticipate that it will be filled quickly, so please send your materials as soon as possible.