



# Coronavirus Response

Updated May 12, 2020

## What Our Veterans Need

At first glance, it is not always apparent how important legal aid is to front line efforts during this crisis. However, in just a few short weeks, we have seen the strength of our medical-legal partnership rise to the challenges created by the COVID pandemic. There has never been a greater need for ensuring veterans have access to health care, are able to secure adequate income, and don't become homeless. These social determinants of health that are clearly now life or death for so many of CVLC clients and the surge of new clients we are planning to serve.

**Accessing Healthcare.** With job losses, more veterans need assistance accessing VA healthcare. Now we are trying to accelerate claims and appeals that involve access to healthcare. CVLC has successfully pressured the VA to hold phone and video conference hearings rather than put these claims off for a month or more. Even for those who we win access, they are being turned away when trying to make appointments. The attached photo shows our VA Benefits lead attorney accompanying a client, who was incorrectly denied access, to the VA eligibility office. We have two such cases in the last week.

**Housing.** Although courts have put a moratorium on actions until May 1st, landlords can still submit evictions and we are fielding calls from veterans who are receiving notices to quit with no way to address as courts are closed. We expect four times the number of cases in May/June as cases are piling up and will all hit the courts at once job losses will keep this surge high for the rest of the year as veterans are not able to pay rent.

**Income.** We are already receiving an influx of needs relating to employment issues, rights for those who cannot work from home, if veterans are eligible for stimulus funds, etc. Additionally, our client base is at particular risk with credit/debt issues, addressing financial scams that can affect housing and social benefits. While courts are closed, we are trying to address the root causes of eviction by ensuring our veterans have the highest possible social security, disability, and pension benefits. It is not uncommon to find benefit calculations out of date.

**Estate/Health & Legal Proxy.** Sadly, there has also been a marked increase in referrals for Advance Care Directives as veterans seek to arrange their affairs in light of COVID-19 or family members urgently need to be able make decisions on behalf of veterans who are in critical care.

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, Inc.  
114 Boston Post Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor ★ West Haven, CT 06516  
phone: 203 794-4291 ★ fax: 203 889-0111  
[ctveteranslegal.org](http://ctveteranslegal.org)

**COVID-19 Policy Advocacy.** Not only are we advocating on behalf of our veteran clients to maintain their health and stability, we are also working with federal and state officials to ensure that the proper policy actions are taking place to protect the vulnerable veterans in our community. We are working to ensure that no one falls between the cracks as legislation is passed quickly.

## Statistics: Veterans & COVID-19

- The Veteran death rate for coronavirus is 8 percent, higher than the national fatality rate of 5.8 percent.
- Veteran unemployment rate jumped to nearly 12 percent in April.
- Veterans who served in the Vietnam era or earlier saw a 17 percent unemployment rate in April, higher than any other Veterans group in the country as a whole.
- Women Veterans are also facing greater unemployment with 14 percent of women Veterans filed for unemployment compared to 11.4 percent of male Veterans.
- Black and Hispanic Veterans are testing positive at higher rates and may be at greater risk for coronavirus.
- Veterans are 4 times more likely to need hospitalization due to COVID-19 and twice as likely to need the ICU or a ventilator.
- Disabled veterans are more susceptible to COVID-19 because they often live in poverty and have housing insecurity.
- Housing, healthcare, and income are key to preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Homeless individuals have double vulnerability to COVID-19. Veterans make up 7% of the general population, but 12% of homeless Americans are veterans.
- Many homeless or at-risk veterans are older and have multiple chronic conditions that place them in more than one high risk category.
- As unemployment skyrockets, veterans are losing employer-based healthcare and VA eligible veterans are still being turned away at the door. Without healthcare, low-income veterans will struggle to pay for treatment if they get sick.

## How You Can Help

### Donate Today

CVLC is entirely dependent on donations to continue our work. We need your help today! [Donate online](#) or [Register for the Ride for Our Vets: Virtually Together](#) and help us get the word out to other veteran supporters.

### Volunteer to be a Pro Bono Attorney

CVLC needs talented attorneys to assist veterans with their legal issues. If interested, please contact Attorney Ashleigh Backman, Pro Bono Manager, at [abackman@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:abackman@ctveteranslegal.org).

### Share Resources

If you know of a local resource for veterans, please let us know! We would love to amplify resources available for veterans. Contact Khari Reynado at [kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org).

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, Inc.  
114 Boston Post Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor ★ West Haven, CT 06516  
phone: 203 794-4291 ★ fax: 203 889-0111  
[ctveteranslegal.org](http://ctveteranslegal.org)

## Stay Connected

Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) to get the latest updates on everything CVLC. Sign up for our monthly newsletter for updates on CVLC news and events.

## Tell Us Why You Support Veterans & Spread the Word

Tell us why you support veterans by emailing [kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org). Let others know you're supporting CVLC! Together, we can help the most vulnerable members of our community. Spread the word to other veteran supporters – our veterans need our help today.

Questions, comments, or concerns? Email us: [kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:kreynado@ctveteranslegal.org).

Bennett, Abbie. "Black, Hispanic veterans could be at higher risk for COVID-19, VA data shows." ConnectingVets.com. 11 May 2020. <https://connectingvets.radio.com/articles/black-hispanic-veterans-may-be-at-higher-coronavirus-risk>

COVID-19 Response Plan: Incident-Specific Annex to the VHA High Consequence Infection (HCI) Base Plan. *Veterans Health Administration - Office of Emergency Management*. March 2020. [https://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VHA\\_COVID\\_19\\_03232020\\_vF\\_1.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VHA_COVID_19_03232020_vF_1.pdf)

Shane III, Leo. "Veteran unemployment up to nearly 12 percent amid coronavirus crisis." *Military Times*. 8 May 2020. <https://www.militarytimes.com/education-transition/2020/05/08/veteran-unemployment-up-to-nearly-12-percent-amid-coronavirus-crisis/>

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, Inc.  
114 Boston Post Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor ★ West Haven, CT 06516  
phone: 203 794-4291 ★ fax: 203 889-0111  
[ctveteranslegal.org](http://ctveteranslegal.org)