

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: LGBTQIA+ VETERANS

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center stands with LGBTQIA+ Veterans in the fight for equal justice. Our primary purpose is to provide free legal assistance to low-income Veterans in Connecticut, practicing in the areas of civil-legal, VA Benefits Appeals, and Discharge upgrades. We also work to understand the systemic challenges faced by Veterans, including LGBTQIA+ Veterans.

*This information is provided for informational purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice on any subject matter. **It was last updated on July 15, 2025.***

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center is an independent non-profit organization, funded through private and public funds. None of this material or information is endorsed by the Department of Veterans of Affairs and no VA or federal funds were used to create this material.

DISCHARGE UPGRADES

If you received a discharge status other than “Honorable” or your DD214 includes a narrative that is harmful, you have the right to appeal. Discharge upgrades are RARELY automatic. The process can be extremely complicated, however there have been significant rules made that FAVOR Veterans with PTSD, MST, and/or TBI.

- Swords to Plowshares has an extensive guide for self-help:
 - Visit swords-to-plowshares.org/resources/self-help-guides
- Connecticut Veterans Legal Center proudly represents Veterans seeking discharge upgrades and changes to their DD214s.
 - Visit ctveteranslegal.org/veterans for more information.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL (DADT)

In October 2024, the Pentagon announced that all Veterans who were administratively separated under DADT would be automatically upgraded to “Honorable.” Many Veterans were excluded, including LGBTQIA+ Veterans who served prior to DADT and those who may have misconduct or additional narrative reasons included. **You still have the right to seek a discharge upgrade if you were impacted by DADT or pre-DADT policies.**

LGBTQIA+ ACCESS IN THE CT VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

You still have the right to affirming and welcoming care at the CT VA Healthcare System—there should be no changes to the level and quality of care you receive. If you are denied care, you may wish to contact an attorney or your Congressperson's office for support.

We highly recommend that you only work with an attorney or organization that is accredited by the VA. **VA accreditation assures that you will not be charged illegal fees.** It is NOT an endorsement by-or-for the VA.

On Friday, March 14, 2025, the VA rescinded the directive that provided gender affirming care for Veterans. According to NBC and others' reporting, Veterans already receiving hormone treatment should continue to receive treatment. There will be no new treatment plans involving hormone therapy or other gender-affirming care. Veterans will also be required to use bathrooms and facilities that align with their “birth sex.”

As of 6/6/2025, CVLC has NOT been informed of any denials of care within the Connecticut VA. If you have been denied care, we welcome you to reach out to our team: intakes@ctveteranslegal.org. (You do NOT need a clinician referral for this issue.)

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CONTACT INFORMATION

info@ctveteranslegal.org | (203) 794-4291

intakes@ctveteranslegal.org | (203) 479-0375 (text or call)

CTVeteransLegal.org

CVLC has four locations: West Haven, Orange, Newington, and New London.

Visit ctveteranslegal.org/contact to see hours of operation and addresses.

Our LGBTQIA+ services are
partially funded by:



TRANS MILITARY BAN (EO 14183)

As of May 6, 2025, the US Supreme Court has allowed the Pentagon to move forward with their policy of removing all Transgender service members. This is still being actively litigated in the courts—the fight is not over. If you are directly impacted and wish to pursue your right to serve, we recommend that you contact GLAD Law or Modern Military Association of America.

- GLAD Law: gladlaw.org/cases/talbott-v-usa/
- Modern Military Association of America: modernmilitary.org/

MENTAL HEALTHCARE FOR MST SURVIVORS

The VA is legally required to provide mental healthcare for survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), including those with OTH discharge status and who don't meet the usual "time-in" requirements.

SUICIDE CRISIS

The COMPACT Act (Section 201) requires the VA to cover the costs of emergency care for Veterans who are experiencing a suicidal crisis. YOU DO NOT NEED TO USE THE VA ER. If you are in crisis, you may use the ER of your choosing to get the help you need.

- Veteran Crisis Line: Call 988 +1 or text 838255 for 24/7 confidential support
- Trans Lifeline: Call (877) 565-8860 for anonymous Trans peer support

DD 214 NAME & GENDER CHANGES

If your military records are changed without your consent (gender and/or legal name), you have the right to appeal to have them corrected. We recommend seeking representation from an attorney and/or legal advocacy organization.

ABOUT CONNECTICUT VETERANS LEGAL CENTER

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's mission is to empower, support, and improve the lives of Connecticut Veterans by providing free legal assistance to help them overcome legal barriers to housing, healthcare, income, and recovery. CVLC primarily, but not exclusively, serves clients through a Medical-Legal Partnership model in which we partner with Veterans Administration Hospitals ("the VA") and other providers to foster holistic support for Veterans alongside their clinicians to secure positive legal outcomes.

Get Connected

We accept clients through a clinician referral process. You do not need to be VA connected to receive our help. CVLC works with clinicians from community nonprofits, independent healthcare providers, the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, and other referral sources. For a list of types of clinicians visit ctveteranslegal.org/clinician.

To get started, have your clinician contact our intake team at intakes@ctveteranslegal.org or (203) 479-0375.

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