

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: LGBTQIA+ VETERANS

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center stands with LGBTQ+ Veterans in the fight for equal justice. Our primary purpose is to provide free legal assistance to low-income Veterans in the State of 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 LGBTQ+ 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 6, 2026.***

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 <https://www.swords-to-plowshares.org/self-help-guides-v2/upgrading-your-discharge-and-changing-the-reason-for-your-discharge>
- Connecticut Veterans Legal Center proudly represents veterans seeking discharge upgrades and changes to DD214s.

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

On March 12, 2025, an order was approved as part of a class action lawsuit (Farrell v. Department of Defense) that allows Veterans who meet certain conditions the opportunity to more easily have their DD-214 reissued to remove references to sexual orientation.

The settlement also allows those with General OTH discharges to request to be a part of a group review by the Veteran's relevant service's Board of Corrections. Learn more, including whether you qualify, at <https://www.justiceforlgbtqveterans.com/>. Veterans who do not fit into this class **can still file** for a military discharge upgrade by applying to their service's Board.

CVLC can assist Veterans living in Connecticut understand their options and available paths forward. Please reach out to the screening team at intakes@ctveteranslegal.org.

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. VA accreditation is NOT a guarantee of quality. You should always do research before signing any contracts or committing any money to an attorney or organization—these are YOUR benefits.

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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.



TRANS MILITARY BAN (EO 14183)

On June 1, 2026, a judge ordered an opinion in *Talbott v USA* that stops the Department of Defense from discharging service members solely on the basis of “gender dysphoria,” however, it upheld the DoD’s right to ban new Trans recruits. **As of June 30, 2026, *Talbott* has been certified as a class action.** If are or were serving in the military on or after Jan. 28, 2025, they are members of the class. Contact GLAD Law for more information.

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 (Talbott) or LAMBDA Legal (Schilling). For updates and contact information, please visit:

- GLAD Law: gladlaw.org/cases/talbott-v-usa/
- LAMBDA Legal: www.lambdalegal.org/case/shilling-v-trump/

MENTAL HEALTHCARE FOR MST SURVIVORS

The VA is legally required to provide mental healthcare for survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), even if you have an OTH and/or don’t meet the “time in” requirements for other care. If you are denied care in Connecticut or need additional help, you can contact a VA MST Coordinator. Contact information can be found at: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp>. CVLC may also be able to assist.

SUICIDE CRISIS

The COMPACT Act (Section 201) requires the VA to cover the cost of emergency care for Veterans who are experiencing a suicidal crisis. You do NOT need to use a VA Emergency Room. If you are in crisis, you may go to an ER of your choosing to get the help you need. At the earliest possible time, you or a trusted friend should alert the VA so they can cover the cost for your emergency care.

You are not alone—suicide and other mental health issues are common in the Veteran community. We encourage you to reach out for help, even if you just need someone to talk to.

- Veteran Crisis Line: Call 988+1, text 838255, or chat online at veterancrisisline.net
- Trans Lifeline: Call (877) 565-8860 for anonymous Trans peer support. Visit translifeline.org for more information.

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, with limited capacity for self-referrals on a case-by-case basis. 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, contact our screening team at intakes@ctveteranslegal.org or (203) 479-0375.

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