

Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS)

Antonin Scalia Law School

George Mason University

703-993-8214

Section 309-001, Summer 2024

*subject to change w/o notice

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Mission Statement

The Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS) mission is to provide free legal representation to active-duty members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families while offering law students the opportunity to receive supervised, practical legal experience by advocating for those who serve or have served in our armed forces.

Summary

General. If placed in an approved position, this multidisciplinary clinic qualifies for the law school's national and homeland security and criminal law concentrations. Access to M-VETS is by security code, which will be given out, along with computer and phone passwords, at the first class meeting.

Casework. Clinic students' efforts focus on casework on applicant and client matters, which is primarily accomplished outside the classroom. Students must submit weekly status reports (WSR and time sheets saved to the "T" Drive) and should be prepared to discuss them in that evening's class. You are responsible for your assigned cases/intakes until the start of the fall 2024 semester on August 21, 2024.

Classwork. In addition to casework, M-VETS students will meet each Wednesday during the term, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, as to which standard academic rules apply.¹ Classes will be partly devoted to instructional topics drawn from the blocks of instruction below, partially to a status roundtable, and to scenarios selected to enhance the instructional topics. Course materials (provided or online) will be selected for review and classroom instruction at a schedule determined by class progress on casework. You are responsible for attending Wednesday meetings from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm until the start of the fall 2024 semester on August 21, 2024.

At the outset of the term, time and attention will primarily be devoted to orientation to clinic operations and administration, reviewing status reports, archives, time sheets, and a military

¹ Attendance regulations are set forth in Academic Regulations 4-1 through 4-1.4.

history, status, and law overview. As the semester progresses, attention and instruction will turn to areas related to the substantive casework stemming from the intake of matters and how to develop a case, ethics, and conflicts, client interviewing, and counseling, as well as other legal developments that may have an impact on Veterans, Servicemembers and their families.

In-Clinic Requirement. In addition to the proscribed class time on Wednesday, students must spend at least two (2) additional hours per week performing office hours. Students will sign up for a regular time at the beginning of the semester. This time shall be used for answering and returning calls to the clinic, intake, electronic and hard copy client file maintenance, and other assigned tasks. You are responsible for your assigned office hours each week until the start of the fall 2024 semester on August 21, 2024.

Grades. There will be no exam. Students will be subjectively graded on written work, oral presentations, and professional responsibility. *Written work* will relate to matters for which you have primary responsibility (weekly and final status reports, factual and assessment memoranda, understanding and analysis of legal issues, court filings, substantive communications with clients, supervisors, and adversaries (letters, emails, etc.), and other written assignments, as needed). *Oral work* will be based on class participation, your oral presentation of your status reports during weekly meetings, and discussion of associated legal issues, subjects of instruction, and assignments in individual meetings.

Other Grading Factors. In the work of M-VETS, you will need to be attentive to aspects of legal representation such as responsiveness to supervisory direction, clients, and applicants; judgment in case management; effort and allocation in time management (including timesheets); maintenance of electronic and paper files (including use of standard clinic forms); and relationships with supervisor(s).

Every student will arrange a final, individual transition meeting with the Director and Deputy Director at the end of the semester to review case files (hard copy and electronic), activity logs, final correspondence, and transition memoranda.

Office Hours/Contact. The Director and Deputy Director are regularly available in their respective offices for meetings and discussions with students. They are also available by appointment and typically via phone and email for questions that may arise outside regular working hours.

Blocks of Instruction

Clinic Operations, e.g., organization (law firm model), history, resources, procedures, students, support, and publications.

Professional Skills. *E.g.,* client interviewing, client development, case and file management, and supervision.

Substantive Law. Virginia Practice and Procedure: Discharge Upgrades; Medical/Physical Evaluation; Veterans Benefits; Domestic Relations; Professional responsibility (*e.g.,*

confidentiality, conflicts, communication, and competence); and case-related substantive law (*e.g.*, administrative, consumer, contracts, benefits, and landlord-tenant).

Relevant Communities. *E.g.*, military, veterans, legal services, and clinical.

M-VETS Cases. *E.g.*, status, lessons, supervision, questions, and next steps.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should achieve the following learning outcomes:

- 1) Develop interviewing, investigating, and counseling skills. Interview clients/applicants to gather relevant information relating to a legal matter and objectively analyze the facts, pertinent documents, and applicable law to assess the strengths and weaknesses in a case and effectively counsel a client based on the legal analysis, litigation risks, client objectives, and other relevant practical considerations.
- 2) Become proficient in managing legal matters and exercising sound judgment regarding case management, including analyzing relevant legal issues and proactively suggesting courses of action to advance the representation based on the client's goals and available legal remedies.
- 3) Communicate effectively, professionally, and collaboratively with clients, supervising attorneys, military community members, administrative boards, courts, and opposing parties.
- 4) Become zealous, creative, and thoughtful advocates on behalf of clients, advising them on the legal and practical implications inherent in their legal matters.
- 5) Demonstrate thorough, accurate legal research skills that draw on relevant case law, statutes, regulations, and other relevant resources in a variety of areas of practice and an ability to draft well-written, thorough, and persuasive legal documents.
- 6) Understand a lawyer's professional responsibility to his/her client, adversaries, the court, and other legal bodies.
- 7) Develop an understanding of military culture, the issues facing the military community, and their potential impact on a client's legal matter.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking

As faculty members, we are designated as "Responsible Employees" and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please get in touch with one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (703) 380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (703) 993-

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2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling (703) 993-8730 or emailing cdc@gmu.edu.