

An Invaluable Service for Veterans

The VDP is supported by over 100 veteran, legal and health organizations, including the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League, NYS Council of Veterans' Organizations, National Alliance for Mental Illness and VFW; and 50 public defense groups, including the Chief Defenders Association of NY, and the NYS Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

"The mitigation reports we received from you were an invaluable defense tool. With your assistance we were successful in painting a clear and favorable picture of our clients for the court."

Barbara Kelly, Allegany County Public Defender

"I send this message with much gratitude and appreciation. The VDP's assistance and professionalism has been a great asset. I cannot thank you enough for your service and commitment to THIS veteran as well as others." U.S. Army Specialist, Schenectady, NY

"I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with the VDP. I feel confident that I can speak for the defense bar when I say that defense attorneys are fortunate to have such dedicated people working on our client's behalf."

Samuel Karliner, Attorney, NY, NY

"I commend the VDP for its important work in helping justice-involved veterans regain their status as productive members of society."

Honorable Judge Robert Russell, Jr.

City Court Judge, Buffalo Veteran Treatment Court

"Without the VDP, my client would not have received the consideration that veterans deserve. I cannot count the number of times my client expressed his gratitude for the VDP's hard work on his behalf."

Rachit Anand, Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County

"I can't thank you enough for your help and guidance through one hell of a storm in my life. You were there when many turned their backs. I will never forget that."

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, Albany NY

"On behalf of struggling veterans, I thank you for continuing the fight for them and their families! I do believe that if it weren't for the VDP's assistance, my son would not have been saved from a life doomed to being lost within the prison system."

Mother of U.S. Army Veteran, Buffalo NY

Veterans Defense Program

List of Attorneys & NYS Judicial District (JD) Coverage Areas

Gary Horton, Director

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JD 7 & 8 (Western NY)

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Sandra Cassidy, Staff Attorney

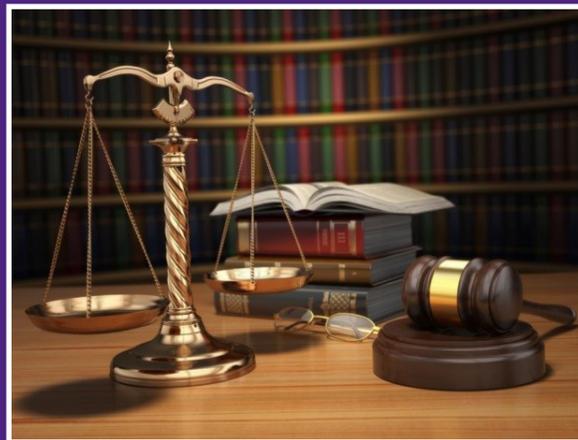
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JD 4, 5 & 6 (North Country, Central NY)

www.nysda.org

Go to Special Projects website section for VDP



New York State
Defenders Association

Veterans Defense Program

The Veterans Defense Program provides training and legal assistance to attorneys defending veterans and service members in the family and criminal court systems.



The VDP provides a treatment-oriented mitigation approach leading to family restoration and reintegration into society.

Enhancing Justice & Fairness

The Veterans Defense Program (VDP) is part of the New York State Defenders Association, a statewide non-profit organization working to improve the quality and scope of publicly supported legal representation for people who cannot afford a lawyer.



Defending Those Who Defended Us

The VDP provides training, support, and legal assistance to promote trauma-informed effective representation of veterans and service members in New York State's criminal and family court systems. The first of its kind in the nation, the VDP was launched in response to a crisis situation as growing numbers of veterans with service-related mental health illnesses were lost in the criminal justice system.

Invisible Wounds of War

Studies report that depressive disorders, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) among veterans are at epidemic proportions.

Of the 375,000 Post-9/11 and Vietnam veterans in the state, approximately 112,000 have PTSD, TBI or depression. Studies show 50% of those veterans are untreated.

The U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) and the National Academy of Medicine report that veterans with mental health conditions are at significant risk of arrest as their trauma symptoms may lead them to criminal conduct. PTSD and TBI are linked to incarceration, antisocial behavior, and violence among veterans.

Legal Support Services

Expert VDP attorneys provide innovative and case-specific legal assistance, research, and consultation in criminal and family court veteran cases.

On a daily basis, the VDP advises public defense attorneys representing veterans on military culture and its impact on clients, service-related mental health ailments, and client-centered legal approaches focused on treatment and sentencing mitigation.



The VDP assists attorneys during every step of a case, from pre-trial motions to sentencing and re-entry. For instance, VDP attorneys will conduct in-depth research and interviews, make court presentations, and write mitigation memoranda. The VDP provides direct legal representation or comprehensive "second chair" assistance in strategic cases.



Training Programs

The VDP conducts continuing legal education trainings across the state for hundreds of public defense attorneys and presentations to bar associations, government agencies, and veteran organizations. An Accredited Provider of Mandatory Continuing Legal Education, VDP trainings receive rave reviews with one seasoned public defender stating, "This was the best training I have ever attended. Very moving, informative, and wonderful." For the Training Calendar, go to <https://nysda.site-ym.com/?page=VetsDef>



Mentoring, Guidance & Expert Referrals

Veterans who call the VDP receive peer-to-peer mentoring guidance and expert referrals on criminal defense or family court issues.

The VDP guides defenders representing veterans on obtaining appropriate military or mental health experts.