

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development _____

HB Section(s): 3.255

Program Name: University of Missouri - MU School of Law Veterans Clinic

Program is found in the following core budget(s): University of Missouri - MU School of Law Veterans Clinic

1a. What strategic priority does this program address?

Access and Success

1b. What does this program do?

The Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic "Clinic" has been in existence since spring semester 2014. Under the supervision of two experienced attorneys, law students act as a veteran's attorney (at no charge) in claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as well as discharge upgrades as necessary. This clinical opportunity provides students with experiential learning credit, required by the American Bar Association as part of the school's accreditation requirements.

The VA system that provides veterans disability benefits is complicated, cumbersome, and confusing – fertile ground for learning and helping others. Veterans often know they deserve compensation, but they don't know what their first step should be or how to proceed after a denial. That's where the Veterans Clinic comes in acting as the veteran's attorney and securing federal money for Missouri veterans.

Key Points:

- Since the Clinic's inception just 7 years ago, the Clinic has secured over **\$7 million in federal money for veterans.**
- At various points, including most recently at the beginning of 2021 the Veterans Clinic turns away 2-3 veterans per week due to a lack of resources and have recently been forced to implement a full freeze on taking new clients due to capacity.

The Clinic also actively assists veterans and veterans' organizations in various other ways such as providing continuing legal education on veteran's issues for attorneys, and supporting attorneys who are helping veterans. The clinic has also launched an initiative to provide assistance to veterans in rural Missouri which is called Tigers for Troops. Under this program, the Clinic is partnering with the University of Missouri Extension to have students and supervising attorneys visit extension offices throughout the State to assist veterans with disability claims, appeals and discharge upgrades as well as educate veterans about available resources. Through the Tigers for Troops program, Clinic personnel also train attorneys on veterans' law to increase the number of attorneys qualified to help veterans in Missouri's rural areas.

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2a. Provide an activity measure(s) for the program.

The Clinic provides legal representation to veterans, free of charge. Because the Clinic does not charge their clients, the funding is provided by private donations and, most recently, the State. This funding provides for a small team of staff and attorneys that work to help as many veterans as possible. In the past, the Clinic has had to institute a freeze on taking in new clients because the Clinic could simply not handle the need that Veterans had for legal services. With recent funding, the clinic will be able to hire more staff and in turn, help more veterans.

Number of Clients*				Number of Veterans Assisted Since the Clinic's Inception	Amount of Federal Benefits Secured for Veterans Since Clinic's Inception	Students Trained and
FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY2021**			
35	55	105	150	More than 615	More than \$7,000,000	119

*Approximate Values: A typical claim in front of the VA takes an average of 5-7 years.

** With recent new State funding, the clinic anticipates being able to increase our client load by almost 40%.

2b. Provide a measure(s) of the program's quality.

The Clinic is highly successful in achieving its mission to empower legal minds and provide our nation's veterans with compassionate and effective representation. The quality of the Clinic's program is demonstrated by the success rate in claims worked and discharge upgrades, the various advocacy and training opportunities the Clinic provides, as well as the confidence and trust that national organizations and individuals have placed in the Clinic.

The Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic is a nationally renowned Clinic. It is well known and respected within the Veterans Clinic community. Clinic attorneys have been selected to serve as the leaders of veterans organizations and speak at conferences. At our annual symposium, nationally known and respected veteran's law advocates willingly attend and speak. Additionally, the Missouri Bar has provided grants to the Clinic and has requested that the Clinic train Missouri licensed attorneys.

Finally, the results in the awards the Clinic's clients are granted speak to the quality of the representation and service they receive at the Veterans Clinic. Clinic attorneys are held to a high standard, both as Mizzou Law faculty and as barred attorneys in Missouri.

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2c. Provide a measure(s) of the program's impact.

COMPENSATION

Since the Clinic's inception in 2014, we have secured over \$7 million in federal disability compensation for veterans, equating to more than \$1 million every year. These veterans receive both retroactive payments (which often results in tens of thousands of dollars) as well as monthly payments as high as \$8,000 per month which continue for the life of the veteran. Therefore, the amount of money that the Clinic brings in for Missouri veterans grows exponentially as clients age, in addition to the new clients the Clinic secures new compensation benefits for. The granting of these compensation benefits can provide benefits for the veteran including vocational and healthcare benefits, and in some cases, educational and healthcare benefits for the veteran's family as well.

DISCHARGE UPGRADES

The Clinic also helps the clients get their discharge upgraded to a higher classification. Getting a discharge classification upgraded from an "other than honorable characterization" can be life-changing for a veteran because of the stigma attached with the discharge classification and can act as a bar for benefits for the veteran. By getting a discharge upgraded for a veteran, they can often be granted access to life saving medical care, counseling, educational benefits, and job opportunities. The Clinic has been successful with discharge upgrades for the clients.

ADVOCACY

The Clinic has been a major player in veterans law advocacy that has led directly to positive outcomes for veterans and clients. Most importantly, the Clinic has written amicus briefs in higher level federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court. These briefs have been instrumental in advocating for positive systemic change for veterans. Recently, the Clinic was part of an amicus briefing effort to extend the Agent Orange Presumption Exposure to include Blue Water Navy Veterans which was granted and opened the door for thousands of service members to be eligible for compensation benefits. The Clinic has been involved in publishing law review articles and other academic materials.

The Clinic is also active within various veteran advocacy groups which entails partnership and collaboration. That collaboration has resulted in valuable knowledge and practices that has led to positive outcomes for the Clinic's clients and veterans across the nation.

SYMPOSIUM

Every year the Clinic holds a symposium highlighting updates in veteran's law as well as hot topic veteran's law issues. Through symposia, the Clinic has been able to provide hundreds of CLE hours to attorneys and education related to veteran's law so the attorneys can help veterans in their own practice.

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2c. Provide a measure(s) of the program's impact. (continued)

TIGERS FOR TROOPS

Under our Tigers for Troops program, members of the Clinic travel to rural areas of Missouri where there are very few services for veterans. The Clinic partners with Mizzou Extension to get the word out to veterans that attorneys from the clinic will be in the area and will provide them with free legal consultations. Under the Tigers for Troops program, the Clinic's attorneys have traveled to 73 counties, consulted with 87 veterans, and trained more than 270 attorneys in veterans law.

STUDENT CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

The ABA requires that, as part of the a law student's education, the student receive some type of practical or clinical experience. The Veterans Clinic provides an opportunity for the law school to abide by this mandate from the ABA as well as provide law students with invaluable experience. By working with actual clients while in law school, students become imminently prepared upon graduation to step into the legal field with confidence. Additionally, because the opportunity to work with veterans is often extremely inspiring, the Clinic has produced many students who have gone through the Clinic that are now veteran advocates in private practice and have helped veterans themselves. The Veterans Clinic experience also instills in students (future attorneys) the value and worth of pro bono. Through the Clinical experience, hundreds of students have been impacted and have gone on to have a positive impact on their client's lives.

2d. Provide a measure(s) of the program's efficiency.

All of the work the Clinic does is accomplished with a small team of:

- two less than full-time attorneys
- two part time administrative assistants
- one full time intake coordinator; and
- a Fellow under a one year program

Attorneys working in the Clinic have teaching duties outside of the Clinic which inhibits their ability to devote their full time and effort to client work. Additionally, attorneys have to spend a considerable amount of time fundraising in order to provide funding for yearly expenditures. With funding from a generous donor the Clinic has secured funding for one year for a Fellow who will help with client claims, appeals, and rural outreach.

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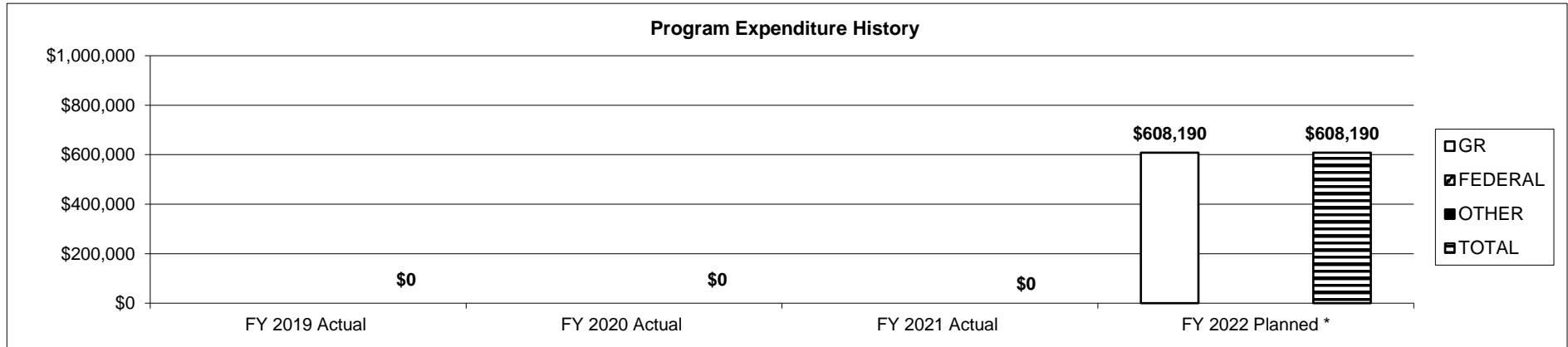
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3. Provide actual expenditures for the prior three fiscal years and planned expenditures for the current fiscal year. (Note: Amounts do not include fringe benefit costs.)



* Net of 3% statutory withholding

4. What are the sources of the "Other " funds?

Reliant on private donations and grants in addition to the important state funding.

5. What is the authorization for this program, i.e., federal or state statute, etc.? (Include the federal program number, if applicable.)

No authorization needed

6. Are there federal matching requirements? If yes, please explain.

No

7. Is this a federally mandated program? If yes, please explain.

No