

# VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

## Director, VA Claims

The Veteran Advocacy Project (VAP) seeks an attorney to lead our veterans law practice, supervising a small team and providing representation to veterans in appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VAP ensures access to health care, housing, and benefits for low-income veterans and their families, with a focus on those living with post-traumatic stress, brain injury, substance dependency, and other mental health conditions. Through advocacy, education, and free legal services, the team fights for clients' rights to benefits, keeps families in their homes, and empowers veterans by removing barriers to recovery and success.

The attorney will work with other members of VAP to address the legal needs of low-income veterans in a holistic manner. VAP focuses on advocacy that enables veterans to access VA health care and benefits. The director will: supervise a very small but growing team; collaborate with partner organizations with a particular focus on our medical-legal partnerships in NYC; carry a modified case load, providing representation in VA character of discharge (COD) determinations, disability benefits appeals with a focus on mental health related claims, and any other claims, as needed and as the attorney chooses. The work will include outreach at partner sites, communication with social workers and case managers, reviewing staff work, and taking on appeals by gathering evidence, preparing briefs, and representing veterans in hearings. The attorney will also work with the team on systemic advocacy efforts and will collaborate with the executive director on fundraising to expand the practice. The ideal candidate is someone who has ideas for programmatic development, along with experience fundraising for and implementing new initiatives.

Individuals with military service, prior experience working with veterans, people with disabilities, people of all gender identities, people from underrepresented communities, and people of color are strongly encouraged to apply.

### Responsibilities:

- Represent clients before the VA, and potentially in federal court; write COD and service-connected compensation appeals, along with various other VA claims;
- Supervise a small team;
- Screen veterans for relief, with exhaustive investigation of military history and medical records;
- Oversee assignments for law student's working on investigations, claims, and briefs;
- Collaborate with forensic mental health professionals;
- Research legal issues, with a focus on military discharges and VA character eligibility;
- Provide telephone and/or written advice to clients;
- Provide thorough referrals to connect clients with other services; work with staff on case strategies and integration of services to meet clients' needs;
- Work with the ED and staff to shape policy positions and the organization's advocacy goals;
- Work with ED and Director of Finance on funding (reporting, new opportunities, etc.);
- Track client information in a database, attend meetings, perform administrative tasks related to the work.

### Qualifications:

- Current member in good standing of a state bar (New York preferred);
- Accreditation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs;

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- Minimum six years' experience in veterans law;
  - Knowledge and practice in VA claims, including character of discharge applications and disability compensation appeals for PTSD and other mental health conditions;
  - Experience with VA hearings at both regional level and BVA, experience at CAVC preferred;
- Excellent analytical and critical thinking skills;
- Excellent organizational and time-management skills;
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to work well with people living with mental illness, substance use disorders, and traumatic brain injury;
- Ability to work independently with strong self-motivation, to meet deadlines, to be flexible, and to collaborate with and mentor junior staff;
- Demonstrated commitment to social justice and veterans' rights.

**Salary** is competitive and commensurate with experience, ranging from \$100,000 – \$135,000, along with a benefits package, including employer-paid healthcare premiums, life insurance, 401K, etc.

**Location:** VAP is a hybrid environment where staff work from home but conduct outreach and attend events in person. Proximity to the New York metropolitan area is strongly preferred to oversee and facilitate our many partnerships but not required.

**To apply**, please send a cover letter, resume, and legal writing sample with a VA character of discharge brief to [hiring@veteranadvocacy.org](mailto:hiring@veteranadvocacy.org) with "VA Director" in the subject line. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Veteran Advocacy Project, Inc., is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will be afforded equal employment opportunities without discrimination because of race, religion/creed, color, national origin, immigration status, gender or gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, military status, caregiver status, arrest or conviction record, unemployment status, predisposing genetic characteristics, survivor of domestic/intimate partner violence status, or marital or partnership status.