

ASK THE QUESTION

HAVE YOU EVER SERVED IN THE MILITARY?

One question can make a big difference.

Legal & Advocacy Services

STAND UP WITH THOSE WHO SERVE BY:

*Advocating for justice-involved veterans.
Identifying legal challenges related to military service.
Linking to effective military-veteran legal support resources.*

WHY ASK THE QUESTION?

Attorneys, paralegals, legal aid providers and other advocates encounter veterans, service members, and military family members, but they don't always know it. Veterans do not always identify themselves. They can be proud and stoic, and tend to be more comfortable helping others than asking for help themselves – even when they are in some kind of trouble or crisis. Military life can impact an individual's safety, finances, relationships, and opportunities. *The best way to ensure service members and veterans get the representation they need is to ASK!*

When you encounter a new client, ASK THE QUESTION:

"Have you or a family member ever served in the military?"

WHEN THE ANSWER IS "YES," you may consider thanking them for their service. You may also then be able to increase your understanding of the potential impact of military service on their current situation, and help them to identify veteran-specific programs, services, and benefits. Asking further questions will also help you to:

- Build rapport and demonstrate interest and cultural competency
- Identify any service-related legal or other stressors that may impact how best to pursue support and representation
- Link to any needed military and veteran resources and referrals, including VA and non-VA programs
- Explore sources of income and financial stability
- Identify any other areas in need of support, as well as individual and family supports and resources
- Address perceived barriers to seeking support and services

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Following are some questions that could be asked in the context of gathering information for more effective referrals and services. Pay attention to non-verbal cues, and show respect, curiosity, and empathy. Also be aware that responsiveness and effective follow-up are critical to building trust and rapport.

- When did you/your family member serve? What service era? Which Branch?
- What is your/your family member's discharge type/status?
- In what ways may the situation you're dealing with now be connected to your/your family member's military service?
- Are you currently dealing with any legal issues involving the JAG (Judge Adjutant General)?
- Are you experiencing any issues or stressors related to employment or financial needs?
- Have you had a recent deployment and/or are you facing a deployment?
- Are you enrolled at or connected to the VA or other veteran resources or organizations for support or services?
- Do you have a service-connected disability or condition?
- What reservations did you have about coming in to seek assistance? Is there anything that might be a barrier to further seeking assistance?

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