

**THOMAS JEFFERSON**  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
SAN DIEGO • CALIFORNIA

For more information about eligibility and application criteria for  
Thomas Jefferson School of Law students, please visit

**TJSL.EDU**

# VETERANS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CLINIC

SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED US



# SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED US

Thomas Jefferson School of Law students have changed the lives of San Diego's veterans through the highly successful Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic (VLAC). Many of these veterans are residents and alumni of Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD), a residential program that provides housing, substance abuse, and mental health and job-training services to formerly homeless veterans. Now, these veterans also have access to civil legal counsel and representation thanks to the efforts of the Thomas Jefferson students and supervising attorneys who participate in our nationally recognized VLAC.

Our VLAC serves as a model for similar clinic operations throughout the country. We were one of the very first law school clinics in the country to focus exclusively on addressing the legal needs of veterans. Not only does our VLAC help these veterans transition back into productive lives, but our students gain valuable hands-on representation experience with real clients. Just as important, our students feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction as a result of providing much needed service to those who have served our nation. These services are needed, especially in San Diego. A recent report finds an estimated 17 percent of the 8,500 homeless in San Diego are veterans.

## WE WERE ONE OF THE FIRST SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS THE LEGAL NEEDS OF VETERANS.

### THE VLAC LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Each semester, participating students are supervised by a Thomas Jefferson School of Law professor. Students who are certified by the California Bar to provide direct client representation are assigned full service as well as limited assistance cases that provide practical experience in:

Interviewing and counseling clients

Drafting legal documents

Conducting discovery

Representing clients in court

Our VLAC students work at least 15 hours per week on their cases. They are exposed to a broad and diverse array of legal issues and often complex cases that typically fall within these main areas of focus:

Family Law

Administrative Law

Bankruptcy

Offender Reentry

Every year, students also have the chance to represent limited assistance clients at Stand Down, a VVSD event attended by hundreds of homeless veterans in the San Diego area. Stand Down offers food, clothing and showers to the homeless attendees as well as a special session of the San Diego Superior Court's Family Support Division that hears child support cases. Our students work alongside VLAC alumni and current and former VLAC fellows to represent all of the veterans on the division's Stand Down calendar.

Through field work at VVSD and Stand Down, our students are afforded valuable opportunities to polish their legal skills.

### VETERANS SELF-HELP CLINIC

In addition to the thriving VLAC, Thomas Jefferson School of Law has a Veterans Self-Help Legal Clinic on campus to help low-to-moderate income former military service members with their legal needs. The veterans will be assisted by volunteer lawyers from the community, working side-by-side with Thomas Jefferson Law students. The clinic offers a consultation with a licensed attorney and a law student, who will provide limited assistance. Self-help services available to veterans include help with filling out forms for court, computer access and assistance with legal research, and document review.

## ONE MAN WITH COURAGE IS THE MAJORITY -THOMAS JEFFERSON

"The Thomas Jefferson Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic has afforded me an opportunity to lend a hand to my fellow veterans as they work to get their lives on track. I have personally seen the hope return to the eyes and the smile return to the face of our clients as a result of the work that we put in."

**MATTHEW FERRARA,**  
VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
CLASS OF 2012

"The Thomas Jefferson School of Law Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic is a tremendous asset to the San Diego community. Many of these individuals feel as though the entire world is on their shoulders, and need advocates who will work to protect their interests. It was a great privilege to work with these veterans during my time in law school and help make their lives a little easier."

**ELISABETH DONOVAN**  
CLASS OF 2012

