

Improving Access to Legal Services for Veterans (LSV)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Partnered evaluation of VHA Homeless Programs Office's new LSV initiative

In 2021, Public Laws 116-283 and 116-315 were enacted to authorize VA to fund legal services for Veterans by awarding grants to community organizations to deliver these services. This Legal Services for Veterans (LSV) initiative is managed by the Veterans Justice Programs under the VHA Homeless Programs Office. This Partnered Evaluation Initiative project will support internal implementation and evaluation efforts to help understand the outcomes, barriers and enablers, and costs associated with LSV.

Addressing Veterans' Unmet Legal Needs

Addressing Veterans' legal needs positively impacts their housing and psychosocial outcomes, yet **many legal needs of Veterans remain unmet.**

Public Laws 116-315 and 116-283 enacted in 2021 **authorize VA to fund legal services for Veterans** by awarding grants to legal service-providing organizations in the community, such as nonprofits and law schools.

Veterans Justice Programs under the VHA Homeless Programs Office is managing this new congressionally mandated LSV initiative.

In its first year, **the initiative will aim to award grants to about 75 organizations to deliver legal services to Veterans** related but not limited to housing, family law, income support, criminal defense, and discharge upgrades.

LSV's main goals are to deliver these core legal services to approximately 12,000 Veterans (at least 10% women) in its first year and have the organizations represent diverse geographic regions and target communities (e.g., rural).

As a new initiative, **LSV's outcomes, barriers and enablers, and costs are unknown.** Without this information, HPO cannot pursue its 2021-2025 strategic plan to use "analytical data, evaluation tools and processes to make informed and timely decisions" with regards to VA's ongoing and future LSV implementation in contextually diverse settings.

This **Partnered Evaluation Initiative** project will support internal implementation and evaluation efforts to help understand the outcomes, barriers and enablers, and costs associated with LSV.

1.8 million Veterans are estimated to be in need of legal services, such as for eviction prevention, discharge upgrades, family law, and Veterans benefits.



VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

Multi-faceted Approach to Evaluating the LSV Initiative

Goal of Project

This Partnered Evaluation Initiative project will **methodically evaluate LSV implementation** to inform continued implementation and sustainment of the initiative over time.

We will conduct the evaluation as a **prospective mixed-methods observational study** with a repeated measures design. The primary outcome of interest will be the number of Veterans served by LSV 12 months after competitively selected legal services-providing organizations are funded by VA.

To **inform sustainment, scale-up, and spread of LSV** beyond its initial implementation period, and given the varying types of grantee organizations and processes through which LSV will be operationalized, the evaluation must not only consider the outcomes of LSV implementation but also how and why certain outcomes were reached or not reached.

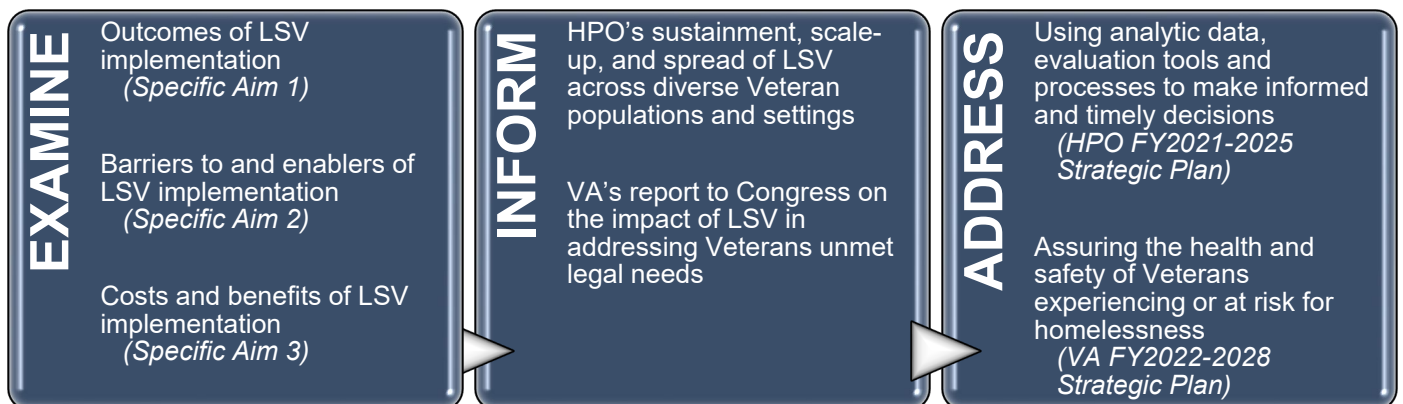
This evaluation will include three key Aims:

- **Aim 1:** Assess the outcomes of LSV implementation.
- **Aim 2:** Identify the barriers to and enablers of LSV implementation.
- **Aim 3:** Examine the costs and benefits of LSV implementation.

We will use data from (i) the Grants Management System of regular audits and compliance monitoring, (ii) a feedback questionnaire and optional interview to gather data from Veterans served by LSV, and (iii) key informant interviews with legal specialists and LSV leads at grantee organizations.

Anticipated Impacts of Project

This partnered evaluation will help the VHA Homeless Programs Office and Veterans Justice Programs to make **informed and timely decisions** about the new LSV initiative. Formal evaluation of this new initiative is imperative to understand diverse LSV processes and their resulting impact. Findings will culminate in recommended strategies and resource allocation for LSV to target Veterans' unmet legal needs and thereby decrease their risk for experiencing both health and social challenges including homelessness, a top priority for VA as identified in its FY2022-2028 Strategic Plan.



For more information, check out:

<https://www.queri.research.va.gov>

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