Providing Long-Term Economic Security for a Combat Veteran in Need

Through a successful appeal, attorneys obtained nearly $2,000 in monthly VA benefits and $40,000 in retroactive payments, resulting in an estimated $700,000 increase in lifetime income for one Nanticoke veteran.

When Dan, an Army veteran from Luzerne County, sought help, he was homeless and no longer receiving the veterans' benefits tied to his service. He was connected to Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP) through a partnership with the Veterans Multi-Service Center—part of a coordinated effort to provide legal representation and supportive services to veterans in suburban and rural areas.

During his military career, Dan advanced quickly to the rank of sergeant. He was deployed to Afghanistan, where he spent 15 months in combat, experienced multiple explosive blasts, and lost several fellow service members. Following his return home, he began experiencing significant symptoms of PTSD and depression. Untreated at the time, these conditions led to alcohol misuse, including a DUI and missed duty, which ultimately resulted in an Other Than Honorable discharge. This left Dan without access to essential VA benefits, including healthcare, income support, and housing assistance.

Attorneys worked with Dan to compile evidence of his service-connected trauma, file a claim for VA disability benefits, and appeal his discharge characterization.

The appeal was successful: the VA approved his claim related to service-connected PTSD, granting him nearly $2,000 in monthly benefits and another $40,000 in retroactive payments. Altogether, this result is expected to increase Dan's lifetime income by nearly $700,000—providing long-term financial stability that was previously out of reach.

With reliable income, Dan secured an apartment and is no longer experiencing homelessness. He also has access to VA healthcare, where he is able to address his medical needs consistently for the first time in years. While his attorneys continue to pursue a full discharge upgrade—an administrative process that can take several years—these changes have allowed Dan to maintain stable housing, care for his health, and plan for the future.

Dan's situation demonstrates how coordinated legal and supportive services remove barriers to federally funded benefits for veterans and others, helping them access earned benefits and achieve stable housing and long-term financial security.