Mission Statement

The mission of the Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS) is to provide (a) active-duty members of the armed forces, their families and veterans with free representation in matters of clear injustice or in which they could not retain counsel without undue hardship; and (b) law students with hands-on experience working with real clients and an opportunity to learn about, interact and give back to the military community.

Summary

General. This multidisciplinary clinic qualifies for the law school’s national and homeland security concentration and criminal law concentration if placed in an approved position. Access to M-VETS is by security code which will be given out, along with computer and phone passwords, at the first class meeting.

Casework. The focus of clinic students’ efforts is casework on applicant and client matters, which are primarily accomplished outside the classroom. Students are required to submit weekly status reports (WSR and time sheets saved to the “T” Drive), and should be prepared to discuss the same for that evening’s class.

Classwork. In addition to casework, M-VETS students will meet each Wednesday during the term, from 4:00 pm to 5:50 pm in Hazel Hall, as to which normal academic rules apply. Classes will be devoted in part to instructional topics, drawn from the blocks of instruction set forth below, partially to a status roundtable and to scenarios selected to enhance the instructional topics. Course materials (provided or online) will be selected for review and classroom instruction at a schedule determined by class progress on casework.

At the outset of the term, time and attention will primarily be devoted to orientation to clinic operations and administration, a review of status reports, archives, time sheets, and a military
history, status and law overview. As the semester progresses, attention and instruction will turn
to areas related to the substantive casework stemming from the intake of matters and how to
develop a case, ethics and conflicts, client interviewing and counseling, as well as other legal
developments that may have an impact on Servicemembers and their families.

In-Clinic Requirement. In addition to the proscribed class time on Wednesday, students are
required to spend a minimum of two (2) additional hours per week in the M-VETS office.
Students will sign up for a regular time at the beginning of the semester. This time shall be used
for intake, electronic and hard copy client file maintenance, and other assigned tasks.

Grades. There will be no exam. Students will be subjectively graded on written work, oral
presentations, and professional responsibility. Written work will relate to matters for which you
have primary responsibility (weekly and final status reports, factual and assessment memoranda,
understanding and analysis of legal issues, court filings, substantive communications with
clients, supervisors and adversaries (letters, emails, etc.), and other written assignments, as
needed). Oral work will be based on class participation and your oral presentation of your status
reports during weekly meeting, discussion of associated legal issues, as well as subjects of
instruction and discussion of assignments in individual meetings.

Other Grading Factors. In the work of M-VETS you will need to be attentive to aspects
of legal representation such as responsiveness to supervisory direction, clients and
applicants; judgment in case management; effort and allocation in time management
(including timesheets); maintenance of electronic and paper files (including use of
standard clinic forms); and relationships with supervisor(s).

Every student will arrange a final, individual transition meeting with the Director at the
end of the semester to review case files (hard copy and electronic), activity logs, final
correspondence and transition memoranda.

Furthermore, the law school rule of thumb that each credit entails approximately 60 hours
of work applies.

Office Hours>Contact. I am regularly available in my office for meetings and discussions with
students. I am also available by appointment and will typically be available via phone and email
for questions that may arise outside normal working hours.

Blocks of Instruction

Clinic Operations. E.g., organization (law-firm model), history, resources, procedures, students,
support, and publications.

Professional Skills. E.g., client interviewing, client development, case and file management, and
supervision.

Substantive Law. Virginia Practice and Procedure: Discharge Upgrades; Medical/Physical
Evaluation; Veterans Benefits; Domestic Relations; Professional responsibility (e.g.,
confidentiality, conflicts, communication and competence); and case-related substantive law (e.g., administrative, consumer, contracts, benefits, and landlord-tenant).

Relevant Communities. E.g., military, veterans, legal services, and clinical.

M-VETS Cases. E.g., status, lessons, supervision, questions, and next steps.