

## **Community Legal Aid**

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio



[www.communitylegalaid.org](http://www.communitylegalaid.org)

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## **Legal Aid advocate appointed to Veterans Administration Advisory Committee**

Kimberly Adams is fueled by a passion to help veterans -- a dedication that led to a nomination and appointment to the Veterans Affairs' Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation.

A veteran herself, Adams knows first-hand the challenges that servicemembers face when returning to civilian life. She uses this knowledge in her role as a veterans' advocate at Community Legal Aid, where much of her work centers on serving veterans through holistic legal screenings at VA clinics.

"Being in the United States Air Force gave me a new sense of duty and purpose," shared Adams. "What I do with our Veterans Legal Team allows me to give back for all that the military gave to me."

Adams educates veterans on the services and benefits that may be available to them. But most importantly, she develops supportive relationships and gains credibility among the veteran community.

"It is critical to establish trust when working with veterans," she explained. "You have to go out to where they are and let them know you are here to help, not to judge."

Adams said the challenges veterans face can be magnified by service related health problems, such as post-traumatic stress (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, anxiety or depression. These issues can impact veterans' quality of life and their ability to understand, secure and use the benefits

they've earned through their service.

And these are the issues she's helping advise the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs on as part of the VA Advisory Committee. The committee advises the Secretary on disability benefits veterans can receive based on their service-related injury or illness, as well as issues affecting veterans' quality of life.

Adams is grateful for the opportunity to work on these issues with the local VA clinics, who often serve as an initial point of contact.

"It's important for us to be in those spaces," she shared, indicating that a veteran usually comes to the VA clinic for a medical reason.

A thorough medical examination can uncover other factors, commonly referred to as social determinants of health, that have a negative impact on the health outcomes for veterans.

"Things like housing, if they're homeless or if they have unsafe conditions in their home, or issues like not being able to work, so not having steady income to pay for necessities like food and medicine," explained Adams. "If you are able to fix those underlying problems, then their health improves.."

Steven McGarrity, executive director at Legal Aid, shared his appreciation for Adams and the passion and insight she brings to her role.

"Kimberly goes above and beyond to ensure that clients receive the legal and supportive services they need," he said. "Our organization as a whole is better equipped to help veterans because she is on our team."

For Adams, it's all about giving veterans, and their families, the tools they need for success. "They will flourish when given the chance."

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