

All about

The Military Counseling Service of *Vietnam Veterans Against the War*

Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967

FREE SERVICES PROVIDED;

- CONFIDENTIAL DISCHARGE COUNSELING,
- LEGAL, MEDICAL & MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS FOR GI'S & VETERANS,
- VA CLAIM & DISCHARGE UPGRADE HELP
- COUNTER RECRUITING & DRAFT INFO

LEAVE NO VET BEHIND

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, VVAW, is a national veterans organization founded in 1967 to voice the growing opposition among returning GI's to the war in Indochina. Through grassroots actions and our personal testimonies we exposed the ugly truth about "Agent Orange." We revealed how the US got involved in S.E. Asia and how American troops came to commit atrocities. Our work helped other Americans see the unjust nature of the war.

VVAW members helped identify Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, and start the "store-front" Vet Centers, now run by the VA. VVAW members continue to press for reforms in the VA's compensation claim and appeal process and the military's discharge upgrade standards.

Today, when we hear that GI's are being issued faulty equipment, we remember how helpless we felt staring at our useless weapon or vehicle. When we read that the VA sees patients promptly "95%" of the time, we worry about warehousing the wounded and those who have slipped through the promised "safety net" and don't get care at all.

We know that the GI's who stand up for their rights or file for a Conscientious Objector discharge or transfer or refuse to abuse or be abused will be in that minority that doesn't get treated fairly by the military's "justice" system. We know that injured or stressed out combat veterans who should have been medically retired are being sent back into action. We know that the military's "involuntary extension" of active duty is little more than a draft.

VVAW revived its Military Counseling Service because the only people that many GI's can talk to about war are other GI's and veterans. We continue

to fight for the veterans of our era and stand ready to support and protect this generation of GI's.

PEOPLE CALL US WHEN;

- The war or military life is driving them crazy.
- They need help dealing with rage, anxiety, nightmares, hatred, depression, guilt, frustrations, fears or flashbacks.
- They are told that have an "attitude problem."

We help GI's (military personnel) Veterans, and family members or friends who are trying to help them and who;

- Need treatment, military discharge or compensation for **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**, or other medical or mental condition.
- Have been **raped** or **abused** and need **treatment** or help **filing complaints**.
- Are considered by the military to be a **deserter** or **AWOL/UA**.
- Are fighting unfair discharges for **poor performance** or **misconduct**.
- Are fighting a discharge for **homosexuality**
- Are being denied such a discharge.
- Have a **conscience** that won't allow fighting in a war.
- Have military service that is a **hardship** for themselves or their families.
- Need help filing, supporting and winning **VA Benefits Claims** or **appeals**.
- Need help **changing** the **character** or **reason** on a **military discharge**.
- **Want out** of the military's **DEP, Delayed Entry Program**.
- Are concerned about **militarism** or **military recruiters** in schools.
- Want to volunteer services as a **legal, medical or mental health professional**.
- Want to start a **veteran** or **GI counseling** or **anti-war group** in a local area.
- Want **training** as a draft, GI or veteran's counselor.
- Want to help us by making a **donation**.

PTSD & “POLITICAL THERAPY”

PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, can afflict combat veterans and victims of rape or abuse. This mental illness can cause anxiety, depression, rage, self-destructive behavior and suicide. Although some PTSD symptoms may persist for a lifetime, the sooner veterans get treated, the less disabled they will be. The military and VA have been overwhelmed. They are now hiring “outside” therapists to treat vets. Reservists who aren’t near Vet Centers are being neglected. GI’s with PTSD are being sent back to the war after having been declared “cured.” The misconduct caused by PTSD results in bad discharges, which bar veterans from VA treatment and benefits. Since PTSD symptoms include a reluctance to even admit that a problem exists, we reach out to families through our contacts and groups such as MFSO, Military Families Speak Out. PTSD can destroy family and work life, but those can be restored with treatment and support.

When veterans criticize government policy they are called “traitors” and face a lot of hostility. That’s unfortunate, because many veterans find that speaking to young people about their war-time experiences can help them better deal with those memories. VVAW breaks down the barriers to this therapy by taking vets to speak to students, parents, other individuals and groups who want to discuss militarism in our society and military recruiters in our schools. We do this “counter recruiting” work directly with churches, schools and with groups such as CCCO, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors.

VVAW supports and gets referrals from CCCO’s national toll-free GI Rights Hotline. VVAW is one of the few groups who are helping vets who end up with less than honorable discharges get them “upgraded.” Recent studies reported that one third of homeless men are veterans, and that there may be as many as 250,000 homeless vets nationwide. VVAW has participated in homeless veterans’ “stand downs” since the beginning. The VA’s refusal to spend money already appropriated for the construction of housing for homeless vets shows the need for non-government programs, such as ours, that reach all vets.

Members of VVAW know that everyone’s wartime experiences are both unique and traumatic to some degree. Not all veterans find the help that they need to deal with what they saw and did, or what was done to them during the war. Some vets don’t have the necessary supportive friends or family. Some can’t find that help within the military or the Veterans Administration, or have lost all trust in the government that sent them to war. Many are told to just “deal with it,” or are ridiculed or punished for complaining. Some can’t even ask, and continue to suffer and die in silence and solitude.

The members of VVAW have accumulated a wealth of knowledge through our personal experiences and our continuing efforts to help fellow vets recover from the war and thrive in a society that many feel excluded from. Having survived our own problems, we feel duty-bound to use and pass on these skills so that future generations of “stressed out” vets will have fewer suicides and wasted lives.

HELPING US HELP

Ray Parrish is VVAW’s GI Counselor. Ray grew up in the military. His mother was one of the first women in the USAF. Ray’s father was in the Merchant Marines in WWII, transferred to the US Army on his 18th birthday and put on a new uniform when the USAF was created. He retired in 1973 as a CMSgt. on a total disability after 30 years and two tours of Vietnam.

Ray, Sgt., USAF, 72-75, was trained as a Russian Linguist, served as an intelligence analyst in Turkey and spent his last year cleaning rain gutters at Pope AFB. He worked his way thru college as a part-time veteran’s counselor and a full time activist. He ran the Midwest Comm. for Military Counseling for a decade until the funding ran out in 1995. Then he spent five years as an American Legion Veterans Service Officer until the VA had him fired. For the 3 years before coming to VVAW, he was a mental health caseworker reintegrating the homeless into the community.

Ray is VVAW’s first and only full-time staff. His barely living wage depends on your tax-deductible donations. You can call our National Office at **(773) 276-4189**, write or send a donation to **PO Box 408594, Chicago IL 60640** or visit our website: **www.vvaw@vvaw.org**.

For GI Counseling call

773/561-VVAW

or e-mail Ray at

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