

6/30/07

REQUEST FROM AMY FAIRWEATHER (CJC S98 & F98):

SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES, where Amy is the Iraq Veterans Project Coordinator, is seeking a Consultant to design sustainable non-profit legal assistance program for veterans.

Swords to Plowshares is a community-based not-for-profit organization that provides counseling and case management, employment and training, housing, and legal assistance to veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area. We promote and protect the rights of veterans through advocacy, public education, and partnerships with local, state, and national entities.

Veterans have faced a unique hurdle in the legal system. Federal law prevents veterans from suing the government directly for their in-service injuries. Their sole recourse is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits system, but a Civil War-era law prohibited veterans from paying attorneys to counsel or represent them before the VA in most instances. Violations of the fee statute subjected both the veteran who wants to retain a lawyer and the attorney to criminal penalties. Congress has just repealed the ban on attorney fees, and there are also efforts being made to overturn the recent legislation. We want to pursue this project irrespective of the outcome of the new law.

Our attorneys provide free legal help to veterans who are seeking VA benefits. We have a small, collegial staff and our model for providing services is simple: we pair an attorney with each client, and do all the casework ourselves. We have done this successfully for many years but are always constrained by limited funding opportunities. With more disabled veterans than ever needing services, we want to do more: to provide free legal help to more veterans, and do it as economically as possible.

We are seeking a consultant who will work with Swords to Plowshares' legal, administrative and development staff to design a new service delivery model for our Legal Unit. The consultant will:

1. Investigate the feasibility of a program to utilize unpaid law student interns and volunteer attorneys, to provide direct services to veterans seeking VA benefits;
2. Forecast how such a model would increase the number of veterans we assist;
3. Create a transition plan to move from our current service delivery model;
4. Investigate potential sources of funding; and
5. Create a sustainable financial plan for the new model.

The consultant will work with staff and may interview outside stakeholders. We want the project to be completed within a six-month time frame, with a budget of \$10,000 - \$15,000.

Please send your bid - resume or curriculum vitae, and a letter of interest with your qualifications for the project and amount of bid - to:
<<mailto:legaljobs@stp-sf.org>>

If you have questions, please contact Legal Director Elinor Roberts at (415) 252 - 4788.