

# ONLINE CERTIFICATE IN MILITARY AND VETERANS HEALTH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY



The Lewis B. Puller, Jr.  
Veterans Benefits Clinic  
William & Mary Law School  
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\*This catalog supplements the University and Law School catalogs, and is designed specifically for the Certificate Program.



WILLIAM & MARY LAW SCHOOL



William & Mary Law School's Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic is now offering the first of its kind online Certificate in Military and Veterans Health, Policy and Advocacy (MVHPA).

The curriculum will benefit a variety of individuals, including attorneys, advocates, law students, veterans, service members, transition personnel, legal officers, veteran services officers, family members and caregivers.

Successful completion of all four courses in the MVHPA curriculum will lead to a non-degree Certificate, however courses can also be taken individually. The program will be entirely online and asynchronous, with classes offered pass-fail. The Certificate can be obtained in a minimum of two eight-week terms, or a maximum of four eight-week terms, with students able to complete the courses in the Certificate at their own pace. This course was not approved for CLE credit nor is it eligible for any G.I. Bill coverage. Courses are taught by Puller Clinic Faculty and Fellows experienced in these areas.

**PROGRAM FEES:**

Non-Degree Certificate Enrollee	Price Per Individual 8-Week Online Course	Discounted Price for All Four Courses and Resultant Non-Degree Certificate
Individual	\$1,995	\$5,995
Veteran or Service Member	\$1,495	\$4,495

**OTHER AVAILABLE DISCOUNTS:**

- ABA members                      Legal Services Attorneys
- MSJDN members                Equal Justice Works and AmeriCorps Fellows
- VDVS Employees                VSOs
- Clinicians                         W&M Faculty/Staff/Students

Please contact us at [veterans@wm.edu](mailto:veterans@wm.edu) if you need further information on

**2025 SESSION DATES (registration opens 8 weeks before start date)**

- January 20, 2025 – March 16, 2025: registration opens November 18**
- April 14, 2025 – June 8, 2025: registration opens February 10**
- July 7, 2025 – August 31, 2025: registration opens May 5**
- September 29, 2025 – November 23, 2025: registration opens July 28**

**Benefits of the Certificate:**

- ◆ Learn from William & Mary Law School experts about the legal and psychological challenges facing service members and veterans today, and how to help them as a volunteer, or in veteran-serving employment.
- ◆ Develop persuasive writing skills in order to effectively advocate for service members and veterans in the disability compensation systems.
- ◆ Gain the necessary knowledge and skills, and the education required in order to successfully represent veterans in the disability compensation process.
- ◆ Obtain a distinguishing credential demonstrating intensive training in veterans benefits law, skill in persuasive advocacy, and the psychological challenges our service members and veteran face.

## POLICIES FOR STUDENTS

### Enrollment Requirements

**Sequence:** Students should take the courses on Veterans

Disability Benefits and Legal Research and Writing for Advocacy during their first two sessions. Both of these courses are required before a student may advance to the remaining two courses if they intend to take all 4 courses and receive the resulting certificate.

**Requirements:** Students are required to have obtained a high school diploma or GED before the start of the class.

**Books and Materials:** It is not anticipated that texts and materials will exceed a cost of \$100 per course. Students will be notified prior to the course start date if a course requires a textbook.

**Miscellaneous Charges:** There are no anticipated outside expenses for students beyond texts and reading materials.

### Refund Policy:

**More Than 7 Days Prior to the Start of Class:** Full refunds are granted if a student cancels his or her registration up to one week (7 days) before the start of the course.

**Within 7 Days Prior to the Start of Class:** Students who cancel less than seven days before the start of the course will be given a full refund, minus a \$250 cancellation fee.

**Once the Course Has Begun:**

**Each Course Purchased Individually:** Students who withdraw once the course has begun are eligible for a pro rata refund based on progress through the course. Students are considered to have completed the modules for the number of weeks that have passed. Students will receive a refund based on the number of weeks that remain in the course at the time of withdrawal, or the modules that they have not yet completed, whichever is less. For example, if a student withdraws in Week 4, but has completed six weeks of course modules, he or she will receive a refund for the two weeks of material not yet undertaken.

**All Courses Purchased at Once:** The student will receive a full refund for the discounted value of the courses that have not begun (\$1,500 per course) and a partial refund based on his or her progress through those courses that have begun.



## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**Veterans Disability Benefits:** This course will equip advocates for veterans to pursue claims for VA disability compensation benefits. It will thoroughly explain the nature of disability benefits, eligibility criteria, and VA's adjudication process for awarding benefits. The course will enable students to assess the potential merit of claims, to develop the evidence necessary to establish entitlement, to work with healthcare providers and other resources to acquire this evidence, to prepare comprehensive claims and craft effective arguments in support of them, and to engage successfully with a complex and challenging federal agency bureaucracy. The course will also explore measures that active duty service members can take to enhance their chances of obtaining VA benefits in the future. Because less than honor-able discharges can negatively affect veterans benefits, the course will also discuss the basics of advocating for veterans in discharge upgrade cases and through the VA's Character of Service Determination process.

**Legal Research and Writing for Advocacy:** Advocacy for service members and veterans is accomplished almost exclusively in writing. It is vitally important, therefore, for advocates to be able to present clear and concise arguments on behalf of claimants. This course begins with a review of how written language is structured and how it communicates. Then the course will explore who our readers are and what pressures and limitations they have on them, and how, in turn, those pressures and limitations dictate how writing must be constructed to address bureaucratic decision makers effectively. These skills will serve advocates in various contexts, such as claims for VA disability compensation or other benefits and proceedings concerning military administrative separation or discharge issues.

**Psychological Challenges and Resulting Legal Issues for Service Members and Veterans:** This course will focus on the psychological impact of trauma and the resultant consequences experienced by some veterans and members of the military, including post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, depression, military sexual trauma and moral injury. A focus on coping, resilience, and post-traumatic growth will be included. In addition to learning about each of these health challenges and how they are identified and treated, the course will explore how service members and veterans can obtain medical assistance and disability compensation benefits, including issues related to findings of competency and assignments of fiduciaries for purposes of receiving benefits. When appropriate, legislative and policy issues related to these injuries may be explored. Students may learn through case studies, texts, or articles.

**Application of Techniques for Military and Veteran Advocacy:** The initial two courses in the Certificate program exposed students to the law and processes of veterans disability benefits and to the principles of writing in the advocacy context. This course supplies supplementary material on certain specialized aspects of veteran advocacy, such as separations and discharges, and provides practical experience applying the knowledge and skills developed in the first courses, as students engage in developing claims, mastering the various forms and approaches necessary to engage with the VA, and crafting legal arguments in support of veterans' claims.



## William & Mary Law School

### Our Mission

In 1779, with the American Revolution at its height, Thomas Jefferson instituted America's first program for the academic study of law at The College of William & Mary.

To guide this new experiment, Jefferson chose George Wythe, a leader of the Virginia Bar and Jefferson's mentor. Considered the most scholarly lawyer in Virginia, Wythe incorporated a range of academic subjects into the study of law, including political science, economics, history, and classical literature.

Wythe envisioned legal education not only as training for legal practitioners, but also as a means "to form such characters as may be fit to succeed those which have been ornamental and useful in the national councils of America." Many of Wythe's students achieved prominence in the early Republic. Foremost among them was John Marshall, future chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, whose importance for the development of American Constitutional law remains unequalled today.

We honor Jefferson and Wythe's founding vision through:

- ◆ Our commitment to training practitioners truly learned in the law through doctrinal, interdisciplinary, and experiential learning;
- ◆ Our devotion to the academic study of law, for the sake of preserving what is best in our legal regimes, reforming what can be improved, and, above all, contributing to the world's understanding of this fundamental human institution; and
- ◆ Our dedication to educating citizen lawyers who will serve with distinction in their communities, the nation, and the world.



The Puller Clinic is among nine clinics and a practicum at the Law School which provide students with the opportunity to hone their advocacy skills by working directly with clients who would otherwise go without representation.



### About Our Clinic

The Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic was the first legal clinic in the country to address veterans' needs holistically, combining legal and psychological assistance in Clinic representation of veterans in disability compensation claims. Since its inception in 2008, the clinic has:

Represented more than 185 veteran clients in over one thousand disability claims;

Recovered earned and owed back compensation benefits for veteran clients of over \$8 million, with a present value of benefits over their lifetimes of more than \$44 million;

Provided advice and counsel and made referrals to hundreds of additional veterans;

Trained more than 300 law students in veterans benefits law;

Trained dozens of pro bono attorneys in veterans benefits law; the pro bono attorneys of the Puller Clinic received the Virginia State Bar's 2013 Lewis F. Powell Jr. Pro Bono Award;

Trained dozens of clinical psychology students to work with veterans through partnerships with the Center for Psychological Services and Development at Virginia Commonwealth University, and at George Mason University's Center for Psychological Services;

Provided more than half a million dollars annually in pro bono legal services;

Through an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approach, utilized higher education professors and students to provide pro bono services to veterans while training future professionals the importance of giving back to those who have served our country;

Referred basic claims to Veteran Service Organizations including the Virginia Department of Veterans Services; handled in-house the most complex claims requiring extensive legal and factual research, often referred to Puller by VSOs, VA hospitals, and legislative staff;

Helped to create the National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium and established a national listserv, both of which encourage best practices in pro bono veteran legal services and assist law schools and firms in starting pro bono initiatives in support of veterans across the country.

The Puller Clinic is also the founder of Military Mondays, a partnership with Starbucks and their Armed Services Network, where professors and students provide advice and counsel twice monthly at Starbucks to service members and veterans seeking legal assistance related to their disabilities. Military Mondays has now expanded to 30 locations in 21 different states, and includes financial services and employment transition in some locations. Military Mondays recently received the American Bar Association's 2016 Brown Select Award. The Puller Clinic provides \$45,000 annually in pro bono services as part of Military Mondays, and has served more than 450 veterans as part of the program.

## Our Instructional Staff

### Michael E. Dick

Director, Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans  
Benefits Clinic

*Legal Research & Writing for Advocacy; Veterans Disability Benefits; Application of  
Techniques for Military and Veteran Advocacy*

### Elizabeth A. Tarloski, Esq.

Staff Attorney

*Psychological Challenges and Resulting Legal Issues for Service Members and Veterans*

### Dr. Judith Johnson, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist

*Psychological Challenges and Resulting Legal Issues for Service Members and Veterans*

### Director

Michael Dick, Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)  
Director, The Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic  
Clinical Associate Professor of Law

### Course Administrator

Laurie Ciccone  
(757) 221-3783  
laciccone@wm.edu

### Technology Support Center

(757) 221-4357 (HELP)  
support@wm.edu or lawit@wm.edu

Please note: Live technical support is not available after-hours or on weekends. If a technical problem prevents completing an assignment prior to a deadline, the student must contact the instructor and explain the circumstances.

William & Mary Law School at the College of William & Mary  
Hours of Operation: 8:30 - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

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