

Getting help to those who deserve it

Mike: When I got back from my last tour I started clerking for a firm up here in the twin cities that specializes in Veterans' legal needs, and we actually ended up establishing, the first Veterans' C.O.R.E. program here in the state of Minnesota, and it's a lot, lot of it has to do with, you know, guys who get involved in the criminal justice system.

It's kind of this strange, combination now of folks who have never really received help from the VA from the Vietnam era and now you've got folks from my era that are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan and having problems, and they're getting into trouble, and this Veterans' C.O.R.E. system links these guys up with resources that they already rated at the VA, you know, on the accounts and services disability services, things like that maybe they didn't necessarily understand as well when they first got back, when they were being told about their benefits, and you know, now they've gotten into some trouble with the law and instead of just sitting there and saying to these Veterans, you know, "We're going to—going to throw you away for the prescribed period," we need to say to them "Hey, there's some other things going on, you know, upstairs," and we need to address those psychological issues because it's a dual thing.

You feel bad in your head, so you drink, or some guys use or, you know, some guys end up using drugs, you know, to try to escape, and it happens, it's a reality of what's going on, and to treat those individuals the same as you would any other offender in the criminal justice system is just, well, I don't think it's right morally, but it also doesn't make any sense fiscally either because, well, I can go into that some of that later if you want, but the bottom line is that it's a good social program, and it's allowed me to kind of use my, you know, kind of legal knowledge up to this point and it's really been a good thing for the state, and it's kind of an up and coming thing in the US. I know that they had been running them out in New York and then up in Alaska and I, we actually mimic our system off of a Veterans course that's run in California as well, so, it's been good, and it's been good to work with these guys that come back and you, I mean, you see it all the time. They're drinking and they get behind the wheel and that's not okay, but if you want to stop them from doing it again, you'd better find out what the original problem was, and it's what drove them to drink, you know?



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