



WASHINGTON NAVY YARD

Legal Services to Navy Yard Gunshot Victims, Families

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In the wake of the Sept. 16, 2013, Washington Navy Yard shootings, the Secretary of the Navy extended legal assistance services to the gunshot victims and their immediate or surviving spouses and children.

Region Legal Service Office Naval District Washington (RLSO NDW) mobilized immediately to support an Emergency Family Assistance Center (EFAC) established at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling as a "one stop" location for counseling, financial assistance, and legal services. During the EFACs first days of operation, RLSO personnel staffed a table with both active and Reserve JAG Corps personnel.

FBI victim service professionals escorted survivors and their families through the EFAC. Survivors were given the opportunity to have discussions with RLSO attorneys about potential legal concerns. Shortly after the incident, the Secretary of the Navy extended legal assistance services to otherwise ineligible victims

of the shooting and their immediate families. RLSO NDW legal assistance personnel responded by scheduling appointments with victims and families to look comprehensively at their legal concerns. Because victims were mainly civilian, contractor, or retired military, the consultations included advice on workers compensation, survivor benefits, government and contractor pay structures, life insurance procedures, and sources of community and local government support. For some families, the deceased had been the sole breadwinner, and an immediate priority was to secure additional resources and reduce expenses.

While the American Bar Association's Military Pro Bono program is usually limited to active-duty personnel (E-6 and below), at the request of RLSO NDW's legal assistance department head, the ABA also extended its pro bono legal assistance services to the shooting victims and their immediate families. Working with the judge advocate

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"We want to ensure our Navy family is able to understand the resources available to them."
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—Secretary of the Navy
Ray Mabus
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assigned to advise individual families, the ABA recruited local attorneys to provide services tailored to the applicable jurisdiction. This cooperative effort resulted in the best possible service to the shooting victims and their families in legal specialty areas such as probate and estate planning.

During the month-long effort, RLSO NDW contacted all 12 of the deceased victims' families, as well as the other individuals who were injured. The legal assistance department also offered legal assistance to the 55 Navy employees and contractors who were in proximity to the shootings, teamed up with OJAG's Legal Assistance Division (Code 16) to brief the Casualty Assistance Calls Officers assigned to each family, and participated in response efforts organized by Commander, Navy Installations Command. The Navy JAG Corps team (active and reserve), in partnership with the larger legal community, was privileged to be able to help in a tragic moment when a few families needed a steady hand. 🙏