

Doug Mitchell



Doug Mitchell retired in March, 2013 from the Phoenix VA Health Care System.

With over 30 years of VA service, Doug chose Social Work toward the end of his military career, as he worked in a mental health center and was able to work with the various mental health disciplines. As he came to know the social workers, he realized they were the most successful working with their clientele. This inspired him into the field.

Douglas Mitchell, is a 1978 MSW graduate of Tulane University.

He entered Federal Service as a Team Leader in the Shreveport LA Vet Center. While working for the Vet Centers, he was a therapist, an Associate Regional Manager, and later a Regional Manager.

Doug truly loved working in the Department of Veteran Affairs. For him, it was an opportunity to work with his brothers and sisters. His guiding principle throughout his career in VA has been "Ask what the right thing to do is and do it." For his staff, knowing what "was the right thing to do," was the key to solving problems. "Can't" has never been acceptable vocabulary; not when a Veteran was counting on us to find a way.

Among his greatest victories in life, Doug counted transitioning Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) social work from the fragmented model of product line based – social workers, back to a Social Work Service Line. That transition included great growth, from 39 social workers in 2001 to over 145 in 2013. In addition, Doug developed a greater role for education, training and management within his service line. During his tenure as Chief, PVAHCS social workers had a major roles in program management within the facility, supervisors were empowered, and many more opportunities for promotion were given increased access to clinical educational offerings.

In 2009, the National Association of Social Workers, Arizona Chapter presented Doug with the Social Worker of the Year Award. He has been active with NASW since 1994 and served on various committees.

He also serves on the Arizona State Board of Behavioral Health Examiners from 2006 to present. He has served as the Chair of the Social Work Credentialing Committee since 2010 and as a member of the Board from 2009-2011.

Doug was a graduate of SWALT in 1996 and credits that experience as one of the most profound in his career. He states that he was blessed with the strongest possible mentors and advisors. Doug served as President of AVASW, chaired the VA Social Work Leadership Council, and received recognition and awards from Western Region Vet Center Team Leaders in recognition of his leadership and management skills when he was Western Region Director, VA Readjustment Counseling Service. He was the only regional director to be recognized by receiving awards initiated by his subordinates.

Doug never stopped caring about new social workers. He continues to teach at the ASU Graduate School of Social Work. He always made time to meet with front line social workers. He remained a part of the PVAHCS mentoring program and continued to provide clinical supervision through his last

day at the VA. His dedication to growing skilled clinicians and supervisors for the future is a gift that will remain in VA Social Work for years to come.

