



# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

## Policy and Procedure Guide

2018

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## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose of the Homeless Services Network of Central Florida (HSNCFL) Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program Guide

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The purpose of this Program Guide is to provide an overview of the HSNCFL Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. This Program Guide has force for oversight, auditing and program review purposes, and is to be used by staff members assigned to the SSVF Program.

### B. SSVF Program Description and Background

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Section 604 of the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008, Public Law 110-387, authorized VA to develop the SSVF Program. Supportive services grants will be awarded to selected private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will assist very low-income Veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. Grantees will provide a range of supportive services to eligible Veteran families that are designed to promote housing stability.

The statutory authority for the SSVF Program is found at 38 U.S.C. 2044. The implementing regulations are found at 38 CFR Part 62.

### C. Definitions

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Please refer to 38 CFR 62.2 and 38 CFR 62.10 for definitions of terms used in the SSVF Program. A summary of key definitions used within this Program Guide is provided below.

Applicant: An eligible entity that submits an application for a supportive services grant announced in a Notice of Fund Availability

Area or community: A political subdivision or contiguous political subdivisions (such as a precinct, ward, borough, city, county, State, Congressional district or tribal reservation) with an identifiable population of very low-income Veteran families

Continuum of Care (CoC): Continuum of Care and Continuum refer to the group that is organized to carry out the responsibilities required under the Continuum of Care Program regulations, 24 CFR Part 578, composed of representatives of nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless Veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons. These organizations consist of the relevant parties in the geographic area.

Department of Defense (DD) Form 214: The Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty issued by the Department of Defense to each Veteran, identifying the Veteran's condition of discharge – honorable, general, other than honorable, dishonorable or bad conduct.

Dependent: For SSVF reporting purposes only, dependents are defined as children under the age of

18 at project entry. This reflects an alignment with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of "households with children and adults," and can now be tracked in and reported out of HMIS. (Note: a Veteran may identify adult dependents as part of their "household." These adult dependents may be served as part of the Veteran family, but for SSVF and HMIS reporting purposes, would not be reported as a "dependent.")

Eligible child care provider: A provider of child care services for compensation, including a provider of care for a school-age child during non-school hours, that: (1) is licensed, regulated, registered, or otherwise legally operating, under state and local law, and (2) satisfies the state and local requirements, applicable to the child care services the provider provides.

Emergency housing: Temporary housing provided under 38 CFR 62.34(f) that does not require the participant to sign a lease or occupancy agreement

Emergency Housing Assistance: The provision of up to 45 days of temporary housing for a Veteran family with dependents (up to 72 hours for a single Veteran) that does not require the participant to sign a lease or occupancy agreement. The cost cannot exceed the reasonable community standard for such housing. Emergency housing is limited to short-term commercial residences (private residences are not eligible for such funding) not already funded to provide on-demand emergency shelter (such as emergency congregate shelters).

Emergency supplies: Items necessary for a participant's life or safety that are provided to the participant by a grantee on a temporary basis in order to address the participant's emergency situation.

Extremely Low Income (ELI): An income category for a Veteran family whose annual income, in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609, does not exceed 30 percent of the area median income.

General Housing Stability Assistance: The provision of goods or payment of expenses not included in other sections but which are directly related to support a participant's housing stability, and are authorized under 38 CFR 62.34(e), which are not available through existing mainstream and community resources..

Homeless: Homeless has the meaning given in section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302), which currently states that the terms "homeless," "homeless individual" and "homeless person" means:

- (1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- (2) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- (3) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(4) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(5) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(6) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);

(7) An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

(8) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(9) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);

(10) An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

(11) An individual or family who—

a. Will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations as evidenced by:

i. A court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;

ii. The individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days;

iii. Credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for the purposes of this clause;

b. Has no subsequent residence has been identified; and

- c. Lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and

(12) Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who-

- i. Have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing;
  - a. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and
  - b. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment; and

(13) Any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Homeless, "Literally": The "literally homeless" definition is a more narrow definition than "Homeless" defined above. It is this "literally homeless" definition that is a critical requirement to qualify Veterans for SSVF rapid re-housing (consistent with the Emergency Solutions Grants program). This means every participant in SSVF rapid re-housing (category 2 and 3) is carefully qualified within the parameters of "literally homeless." Note that a Veteran who is residing in what is commonly referred to as a "doubled up" or a "couch surfing" situation in permanent housing, or otherwise residing in permanent housing, would not fit the "literally homeless" definition below. Note that such persons would be considered category 1 and could qualify for homelessness prevention. Further, persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence are considered literally homeless and would be served as a rapid re-housing household.

As per HUD 24 CFR 576.2, "literally homeless" is defined as:

An individual/family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- (i) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- (ii) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals);
- (iii) An individual who is exiting an institution where s/he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

Household: All persons as identified by the Veteran, together present for services, and identify themselves as being part of the same household.

Occupying permanent housing: A very low-income Veteran family will be considered to be occupying permanent housing if the very low-income Veteran family:

(Category 1) Is residing in permanent housing and at risk of becoming literally homeless but for grantee's assistance;

(Category 2) Is literally homeless, and at risk to remain in this situation but for grantee's assistance, and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or

(Category 3) Is literally homeless after exiting permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income Veteran family's needs and preferences. Regarding above references to literally homeless: for specifics as to what circumstances do and do not constitute literal homelessness, see the definition: Homeless, Literally.

Participant Household: A very low-income Veteran family occupying permanent housing who is receiving supportive services from a grantee.

Permanent Housing: Community-based housing without a designated length of stay. Examples of permanent housing include, but are not limited to: a house or apartment with a month-to-month or annual lease term, or home ownership.

Supportive services: Any of the following provided to address the needs of a participant:

(1) Outreach services as specified under 38 CFR 62.30.

(2) Case management services as specified under 38 CFR 62.31.

(3) Assisting participants in obtaining VA benefits as specified under 38 CFR 62.32.

(4) Assisting participants in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits as specified under 38 CFR 62.33.

(5) Other services as specified under 38 CFR 62.34.

Very low-income Veteran family: A Veteran family whose annual income, as determined in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609, does not exceed 50 percent of the median income for an area or community (current income limits can be found at [www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html](http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html))

Veteran: A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released there from, excluding any one who received a dishonorable or was discharged or dismissed by reason of a General court-martial (PL 114-315; 38 USC § 2002(b)).

Veteran family: A Veteran who is a single person or a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran.

## II. Overview

### A. Goal of the SSVF Program

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The goal of SSVF is to promote housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who reside in or are transitioning to permanent housing, through a wide range of supportive services.

### B. Eligible Participants

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To determine eligibility a Veteran and their family must meet the following guidelines:

***A member of a “Veteran family”:*** Either (a) a Veteran<sup>2</sup>; or (b) a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. *(Note: The head of household should be identified by the Veteran family.)*

***“Very low-income”:*** Household income does not exceed 50% of area median income. Unless VA announces otherwise in the NOFA, the median income for an area or community will be determined using the income limits most recently published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for programs under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437,) which can be found at ([www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html](http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html)).

***“Occupying permanent housing”:*** A very low-income Veteran family will be considered to be occupying permanent housing if the very low-income Veteran family:

- (Category 1) Is residing in permanent housing and at risk of becoming literally homeless but for grantee’s assistance;
- (Category 2) Is literally homeless, and at risk to remain in this situation but for grantee’s assistance, and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or
- (Category 3) Is literally homeless after exiting permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income Veteran family’s needs and preferences. Regarding above references to literally homeless: for specifics as to what circumstances do and do not constitute literal homelessness, see the definition: Homeless, Literally.



Category of Occupying Permanent Housing	Time Restriction
<b>Category 1:</b> If a very low-income Veteran family is residing in permanent housing and is at risk of becoming literally homeless but for the grantee's assistance.	A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within Category 1 so long as the participant continues to meet the definition of Category 1.
<b>Category 2:</b> If a very low-income Veteran family is literally homeless, and at risk to remain in this situation but for the grantee's assistance, and is scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing.	A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within Category 2 so long as the participant continues to meet the definition of Category 2, even if the participant does not become a resident of permanent housing within the originally scheduled 90-day period.
<b>Category 3:</b> If a very low-income Veteran family is literally homeless after exiting permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income Veteran family's needs and preferences.	A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within Category 3 until the earlier of the following dates: 1. The participant commences receipt of other housing services adequate to meet the participant's needs OR 2. 90 days from the date the participant exits permanent housing

Grantees are required to certify the eligibility of each participant at least once every three months, per 38 CFR 62.36(a), as described in Section V of the SSVF Program Guide (October 2017),

### C. Supportive Services Provided

Through the SSVF Program, VA aims to improve the housing stability of very low-income Veteran families. HSNCFCL will provide a set of required SSVF services and have the option of providing additional SSVF services as outlined below.

#### Required SSVF Support Services

1. Outreach
2. Case management
3. Connection to VA benefits and programs
4. Connection to public benefits and mainstream, community resources
5. Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)

#### Optional SSVF Support Services

1. Complementary services from SSVF "public benefits" list (proposed to and approved by VA)
2. Other unique, grantee-designed services (proposed to and approved by VA)

### D. Rapid Re-Housing Assistance

HSNCFCL has allocated up to 60 percent of supportive services grant funds to be used for rapid re-housing services. This includes those Veterans and their families who are homeless and scheduled to become residents of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing or have exited permanent housing within the previous 90

days to seek other housing that is responsive to their needs and preferences - as per 38 CFR 62.2(a).

#### **E. Homelessness Prevention Assistance**

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HSNCFL has allocated up to 20 percent of supportive services grant funds to be used for rapid re-housing services. For Veteran families who do not meet the housing categories (i) or (ii) for rapid re-housing assistance, grantees may use supportive services grant funds to provide prevention assistance to eligible households who also meet criteria for imminent risk of homelessness. Grantees must use Stage 1 of the SSVF Homelessness Prevention Screening Form to determine eligibility. In the event there are not sufficient resources to assist all eligible at-risk Veterans, Grantees must establish a threshold score, using Stage 2 of the SSVF Homelessness Prevention Screening Form with criteria that targets those most at-risk of homelessness.

HSNCFL threshold score is 22.

#### **F. SSVF Coordination with Local Continuums of Care (CoCs)**

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HSNCFL is the local Continuum and works in coordinated partnership with other homeless service providers and continuums throughout the State. Through their work as the local continuum, HSNCFL participates in regular outreach activities and the PIT count, as well as has been a direct participant in planning for and implementing the coordinated assessment. HSNCFL, as a recipient of other federal funds for permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing, has added SSVF as yet another resource for finding the right type of assistance for Veterans and their families.

#### **G. Housing First**

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HSNCFL has incorporated the “Housing First” approach in addressing and ending homelessness. Housing First establishes housing stability as the primary intervention in working with homeless persons. The Housing First approach is informed by research demonstrating that a homeless individual or household’s first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues impacting the household can and should be addressed as housing is obtained. Research supports this approach as an effective means to end homelessness. Under Housing First, housing is not contingent on compliance with support services. Instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

It is important that each participant household’s file includes documentation verifying that the participant meets SSVF Program eligibility requirements and specifies the participant’s category of “occupying permanent housing.”

## H. Waitlist

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Waitlist are only created and in use when the grantee has limited funding. The waitlist is used to help prioritize the most vulnerable clients on the list. The following formula is used:

- ii. Rank all Individuals/Families based on VI-SPDAT score
- iii. Rank all Individuals/Families based on # of Days Since Shelter Entry or # of Days Homeless (Most Recent Episode)
- iv. Calculate weighted score as  $(1/3 \times \text{VI-SPDAT}) + (2/3 \times \text{\# Days Since Entry or Start of Most Recent Episode})$ , except that all Individuals/Families with 180+ days since shelter entry/homeless episode are ranked above those with <180 days

\*Formula regarding Homeless Prevention Cases is currently pending.

## I. Progressive Engagement

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Per VA SSVF Memo in 2016; Progressive Engagement is an approach to helping households end their homelessness as rapidly as possible, despite barriers, with minimal financial and support resources. More supports are offered to those households who struggle to stabilize and cannot maintain their housing without assistance. In this approach, participants are initially offered “light-touch” assistance, including help creating a reasonable housing placement/stabilization plan, housing information and search assistance, and limited financial assistance for arrears, first month’s rent, or security deposit. Programs using Progressive Engagement regularly re-assess housing barriers and seek to close cases as soon as housing retention barriers are resolved. Assistance is provided on an “as-needed basis” to keep a participant housed and, within funding constraints, programs offer more intensive support, additional rental assistance, or step-up referrals and help to access community-based assistance. This is a paradigm shift to providing services/case management to households experiencing homelessness and therefore, staff may need to be re-trained to be able to successfully make this change.

### **Rational behind Progressive Engagement:**

- Avoids False Assumptions
- Individualization
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness

**Avoids false assumptions:** people who are very poor and may be disabled – including those who score high on assessment tools – do not all need or want more intensive or longer-term assistance. People who initially appear to need more may end up needing less – and vis-versa.

**Individualization:** when a participant shows s/he needs more help, more help can be provided. Programs should offer the right amount of assistance for the right amount of time to meet individual needs.

**Efficiency:** by avoiding more assistance than is required to end homelessness and prevent an immediate return to streets or shelter, programs can help more people, close housing placement gaps, and reduce the time people remain homeless.

**Effectiveness:** rapid re-housing programs that use Progressive Engagement show high rates of success serving people with a wide range of needs. Programs take risks, frequently have to make

tough decisions, and assume some will fail – meaning the program may need to do something different if they help the same participant again.

What is the purpose behind Progressive Engagement?

- 1) Target and Individualize client's needs
- 2) Create an Initial Client Case Plan/Housing Plan
- 3) Develop a Financial Plan
- 4) Appropriate Exit Plan

**Target and Individualize client's needs:**

- Evaluate how much assistance a client needs. "Light touch" case management or a more intense approach.
- Will this client need frequent follow up or will they need little follow up.
- Is the client suitable for SSVF or are they better with a Grant Per Diem or a permanent subsidy like Hud VASH.

**Create an Initial Client Case Plan/Housing Plan:**

- Focus only on barriers directly related to obtaining/maintaining housing
- Plan should include short-term, actionable goals – accounting for limited ability to take action and make changes
- Reassess barriers every 30, 60 or 90 days and plan progress and adjust plan, as needed
- Offer assistance in small amounts and short increments (e.g., move-in costs, first month rent, and weekly home visits for initial month once housed); increase or extend when needed
- Ensure the program is capable of providing flexible assistance: providing as little (e.g., housing search assistance, mediation) OR as much support as needed, desired, and allowed by funders to obtain/maintain housing
- Conduct regular case reviews to ensure housing plan progress, review needs, obtain consent for additional assistance, share lessons and build team competencies, and celebrate successes
- Document encounter with client and document progress.
- Some clients may need frequent homevisits. (i.e. weekly or monthly homevisits)
- Review housing plan with client. Dos and Don'ts of moving into a unit.
- Review housing rules and financial plan to maintain housing.

**Develop a Financial Plan:**

- Create a realistic budget with client. Account for any substance use if needed.
- Employment increase income, refer to SOAR or increase VA benefits.
- Offer temporary financial assistance as needed.
- Create for a financial exit plan.

**Appropriate Exit Plan:**

- Evaluate case and determine if client is ready for exit.
- Is the client financial stable? Can they maintain housing without financial assistance?

- If client is self-sufficient exit client form SSVF.
- If the client cannot maintain housing. The case manager should plan for a better alternative. This can be GPD or HUD VASH.
- If a client is more suitable for a permanent subsidy like HUD VASH the case notes and client engagement should support this decision.

(See Attachment A & B)

#### **J. Victims of Domestic Violence**

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Any household fleeing a domestic violence situation is considered literally homeless and therefore enrolled as a rapid re-housing household. This is a change to previous guidance. A participant household experiencing domestic violence receives special consideration in SSVF with regards to supportive services. This is a consideration designed for participants fleeing a domestic violence situation mid-stream during their SSVF participation such that the original participant household breaks apart. Under this policy, the victim of domestic violence (whether or not the victim is the Veteran), if forming a new participant household, will have the “tolling period” for SSVF’s temporary financial assistance reset back to the beginning. The “tolling period” refers to the limited timeline of months for paying temporary financial assistance within a 12-month or 2- year period (for details, see Section VI.F.). For these newly formed households, that timeline begins again at zero months. Note that under these circumstances a new participant household may be created even without Veteran in it.

### III. Participant Eligibility

#### A. SSVF Eligibility Requirements

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To determine eligibility the following conditions must be met:

1. **A member of a “Veteran family”:** Either (a) a Veteran; or (b) a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. *(Note: The head of household should be identified by the Veteran family.)*
2. **“Very low-income” Household:** income does not exceed 50% of area median income. The median income for an area or community *will be determined using the income limits most recently published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for programs under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f)*, which can be found at: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.
3. **“Occupying Permanent Housing”:** A very low-income Veteran family is considered to be occupying permanent housing if it falls into one of three categories:
  - (1) Is residing in permanent housing;
  - (2) Is homeless and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or
  - (3) Has exited permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income Veteran family’s needs and preferences.

#### B. Determining Veteran Household Status Eligibility

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As discussed above, eligible participants will be part of a “Veteran family,” meaning that the person to be served is either (a) a Veteran; or (b) a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran.

##### 1. Verifying Veteran Status

A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released there from, excluding any one who received a dishonorable or was discharged or dismissed by reason of a General court-martial (PL 114-315; 38 USC § 2002(b)).

As per 38 U.S. Code § 101 – Definitions: active service includes:

- i active duty;
- ii any period of active duty for training during which the individual concerned was disabled
- iii or died from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty; and
- iv any period of inactive duty training during which the individual concerned was disabled
  - o from an injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty; or
  - o from an acute myocardial infarction, a cardiac arrest, or a cerebrovascular accident occurring during such training.

**As an example, a Veteran's DD214 may indicate that the Veteran has not completed active duty training, however is receiving VA benefits.** If a Veteran has already established VA eligibility for VA medical services or is enrolled VA health care, then this Veteran meets Veteran eligibility criteria for SSVF.

Active duty means full time duty in the active military service of US Title 10. Hence, the National Guard and Reserve Members must have been called into Federal Service, by the President, in order to be considered eligible for SSVF services.

- i. Note that bad conduct discharges (BCD) are not the same as dishonorable. A person with a bad conduct discharge from a general court-martial is not a Veteran when determining program eligibility, whereas a person with a bad conduct discharge from a special court-martial is a Veteran and eligible to participate.

Furthermore, for Veterans with multiple discharges, the best discharge status may be used for SSVF eligibility.

To prove a participant's Veteran status, grantees should obtain at least ONE of the following documents:

- ii. Veteran's Department of Defense (DD) Form 214 Certificate of Release Discharge from
- iii. Active Duty
- iv. VBA Statement of Service (SOS)
- v. VHA Veteran's Identity card
- vi. VISTA printout from VHA healthcare provider
- vii. Hospital Inquiry System (HINQS)

If such documents proving eligibility are not immediately available, an Affidavit of Veteran Status signed by the Veteran can be used to allow grantees to temporarily enroll Veterans who are Pending Verification of Veteran Status and initiate supportive services. However, temporary financial assistance will not be provided until the grantee/Veteran can obtain documentation proving Veteran status. Please see **Exhibit D** in the SSVF Program Guide dated 10/31/2014 for further guidance on Pending Verification of Veteran Status.

If the Veteran is not in possession of his or her DD Form 214, the grantee should assist the Veteran in submitting an SF-180, Request Pertaining to Military Records, to confirm the individual's status. Information on how to submit this form can be found on the National Archives website: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/dd-214.html>. Please note that grant funds cannot be used to help an individual change his or her discharge status.

### **Additional Helpful Links**

- E-benefits enrollment: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits>
- Download documents
- Online application for VHA service: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>
- Eligibility confirmation will be mailed to the Veteran
- DD214 online: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>
- Put “Expedite: Homeless Veteran” in the comments section
- DD214 telephone application: call 314-801-0800 to request same day service.
- Form will be mailed to the Veteran

The Department of Veteran Affairs utilizes several methods of Veteran eligibility verification:

- The Health Eligibility Center (HEC) supports VA's health care delivery system by providing centralized eligibility verification and enrollment processing services.
- Hospital Inquiry System (HINQS) is used by VA Medical Centers to query VBA's compensation and pension BDN to secure information on C&P entitlements and eligibility.
- Veteran Information Solution (VIS) is a web-based application that provides a consolidated view of comprehensive eligibility and benefits utilization data from across VBA.

To request verification through an existing VIS or HINQS user, program staff will contact the SSVF POC at the local VA medical center with VIS access.

## **2. Verifying Veteran Household Status**

The SSVF Program defines a Veteran family as “a Veteran who is a single person or a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran.” Head of household status in the form of self-declaration or other documents deemed appropriate to document household composition must be documented. As noted previously, a household is defined as “All persons who together present for services and identify themselves as being part of the same household.” Self or staff declarations are acceptable. *(Note: Proof of family status is not required, but may serve as proof of household status in some circumstances.)*

### **C. Determining Income Eligibility**

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The SSVF Program defines an eligible very low-income Veteran family as one whose annual income, as determined in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609, does not exceed 50 percent of the median income for an area or community. The median income for an area or community will be determined using the income limits most recently published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for programs under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f). SSVF Program Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that they are using the most current of these HUD established income limits found at: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.

#### **1. Area Median Income (AMI)**

To be eligible to receive any type of SSVF assistance, a Veteran family must have a gross annual income that is at or below 50% of AMI, (which is considered “very low-income”). AMI is based upon



income data for the state or local jurisdiction in which a household resides, and is dependent on the size of the household (i.e., number of household members). The AMI for each state and community can be found at: <http://www.huduser.org/DATASETS/il.html>. Please note this data set is updated annually.

## **2. Income Definition**

The SSVF income definition contains income "inclusions" (types of income to be counted) and "exclusions" (types of income that are not to be counted as income) for SSVF purposes. Annual income means all included amounts that go to or are on behalf of, another family member during the 12-month period following admission or annual reexamination effective date.

The following types of income **MUST** be counted (inclusions) when calculating annual income for SSVF eligibility purposes:

- Earned Income—Wages, Salaries, etc. for any adult member of the household (note: wages that are garnished are included as earned income)
- Self-Employment/Business Income
- Interest & Dividend Income
- Pension/Retirement Income
- Unemployment & Disability Income (excluding lump sum payments)
- TANF/Public Assistance, including the portion of the grant designated for child(ren)
- Alimony and Child Support Income
- Armed Forces Income
- Veteran Benefits Administration Service Connection & Non-service Connection Benefit
- The Post 911 GI Bill Subsistence Payment (Housing Stipend)
- Chapter 11 Transition Assistance

Note that gross income is used for the income calculations that are discussed below. However, there is one exception where net income is substituted for gross. This exception is when a household receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or Veteran Benefit Administration income benefits was overpaid by their public benefit office and, to rectify the overpayment, is subsequently receiving a monthly check with a deduction to it. Under this circumstance, the SSVF grantee uses net income to assess eligibility. In all other cases, gross income is used as outlined below. Furthermore, it is worth noting, as the question frequently arises, that garnishments or payments by the SSVF participant household for child support or owed to the Internal Revenue Service will not reduce the calculation of gross income.

The following types of income are **NOT** counted (exclusions) when calculating current gross income for SSVF eligibility purposes:

- Earned income of participant household members under age 18 years.
- Inheritance and Insurance Income
- Medical Expense Reimbursements
- Income of Live-in Aides
- Student Financial Aid, including G.I. Bill Student Financial Aid

- Armed Forces Hostile Fire Pay
- Self-Sufficiency Program Income
- Other Income (i.e. temporary, non-recurring or sporadic income)
- Reparations
- Income from full-time students (excluding head of household)
- Foster Care Income
- Adoption Assistance Payments
- Deferred and Lump Sum Social Security & SSI payments
- Deferred Land Lump Sum from VA Disability Compensation (Service Connected Benefits)
- Income Tax and Property Tax refunds
- Home Care Assistance
- Veteran Health Administration Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)
- Chapter 31 Program Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Subsistence Payment
- VA Aid and Attendance Benefit
- Other Federal Exclusions

A detailed list with an explanation of these inclusions and exclusions is included in Exhibit C of the SSVF Program Guide dated October 1, 2017. Some types of excluded income, such as tax refunds, could be counted as household assets. Annual income must include any interest or dividends earned on assets held by the family.

### **3. Income Calculation**

After determining and documenting specific sources of income that must be included in the income calculation for each household, calculating the household's (not just the Veteran's) annual income must be completed.

#### **a. Annualizing Wages and Periodic Payments**

When calculating income based on hourly, weekly, or monthly payment information, add the gross amount earned in each pay period for which there is documentation and divide by the number of pay periods. This provides an average wage per payment period. Depending on pay periods used by the employer or the schedule of periodic payments, the following calculations convert the average wage into annual income:

- Hourly Wage multiplied by hours worked per week multiplied by 52 weeks
- Weekly Wage multiplied by 52 weeks
- Bi-Weekly (every other week) Wage multiplied by 26 bi-weekly periods
- Semi-Monthly Wage (twice a month) multiplied by 24 semi-monthly periods
- Monthly Wage multiplied by 12 months

HSNCFL will use the following method of calculating annual income:

- Using information available to average *anticipated income* from all known sources when the sources are expected to change during the year.

For example, a Veteran works as a teacher's assistant nine months annually and receives \$1,300 per month. During the summer recess, the Veteran works for the Parks and Recreation Department for \$600 per month. Grantees may calculate the Veteran family's income using either of the following

two methods:

*Calculate Annual Income Based on Average  
Experience: \$11,700 (\$1300 x 9 months)*

*+ 1,800 (\$ 600 x 3  
months) \$13,500*

Under this method, the Veteran family's intake file would include documentation of both sources of income. If a household's periodic benefits and/or period of employment are capped, do not annualize benefits/pay beyond the maximum level of benefit/pay that can be received. For example, a client receives \$100 of unemployment per week, but unemployment is capped at \$4,000 per year. The client's annualized unemployment benefits should be calculated at \$4,000, and not  $\$100 \times 52 = \$5,200$ . Another example, the household is employed for a quarter and will receive \$500/week. The client's annualized pay should be calculated at \$6,000 and not  $\$500 \times 52 = \$26,000$ .

Future income should be taken into account when determining whether a household has other financial resources. **Remember, program staff is encouraged to assess all circumstances and document that the household would be homeless but for the SSVF assistance.** As such, case managers should carefully evaluate the circumstances and probability of future income. For example, while a seasonal worker may expect to earn income during an upcoming season, if s/he has no promise of future employment, the potential of future employment should not be counted as a resource. In contrast, if a school teacher has a promise of future employment (by way of a renewed employment contract), the potential of future employment should be accounted for in the assessment of other financial resources. This is not to say that the school teacher in the example would be automatically determined ineligible. Staff with guidance from Program Coordinators should determine when the employment opportunity will take effect (i.e. when the income will be earned) and create financial assistance plans that account for an eligible Veteran family's financial resources.

Documentation of a Veteran family's annual income and the percent of AMI that income represents (not to exceed the SSVF maximum of 50% of AMI) must be maintained in the participant's file as documentation of eligibility.

#### **b. Determining Income from Assets**

Staff are required to include in the calculation of annual income any interest or dividends earned on assets held by the family. When the net family assets are \$5,000 or less use the actual income from assets. When they are more than \$5,000 use the greater of:

- Actual Income from assets or
- A percentage of the value of such assets based upon the current passbook savings rate as established by HUD. This is called imputed income from assets.

Asset Inclusions		Asset Exclusion	
A.	Amounts in savings and checking accounts.	1.	Necessary personal property, except as noted in Inclusion I.
B.	Stocks, bonds, savings certificates, money market funds and other investment accounts.	2.	Interest in Indian Trust Lands.
C.	Equity in real property or other capital investments. Equity is the estimated current market value of the asset less the unpaid balance on all loans secured by the assets and reasonable costs (such as broker fees) that would be incurred in selling the assets	3.	Assets that are part of an active business or farming operation.
D.	The cash value of trusts that may be withdrawn by the family.	4.	NOTE: Rental properties are considered personal assets held as an investment rather than business assets unless real estate is the applicant's / tenant's main occupation.
E.	IRA, Keogh and similar retirement savings, even though withdrawal would result in a penalty.	5.	Assets not controlled by or accessible to the family and which provide no income for the family.
F.	Some contributions to company retirement/ pension funds.	6.	Vehicles especially equipped for the disabled.
G.	Assets, which although owned by more than one person, allow unrestricted access by the applicant.	7.	Equity in owner-occupied cooperatives and manufactured homes in which the family lives.
H.	Lump sum receipts such as inheritances, capital gains, lottery winnings, insurance settlements, and other claims.		
I.	Personal property held as an investment such as gems, jewelry, coin collections, antique cars, etc.		
J.	Cash value of life insurance policies.		
K.	Assets disposed of for less than fair market value during the two years preceding certification or recertification.		

**NOTE:** A key factor in whether or not to include an asset in the calculation of annual income is whether any member of the family has access to the asset.

### Assets Calculation Example

Compare Actual Income from Assets to Imputed Income from Assets  
Applicant has \$7,900 in assets. (Assume passbook rate of 3.5 percent.)  
Applicant actual income from assets is paid at 1.5% simple interest annually = \$119.

Assets:	\$7,900
	x
HUD-determined passbook rate	<u>.035</u>
Imputed income from assets	\$ 277

Compare actual interest of \$119 to imputed interest of \$277. The actual interest of \$277 (the greater of the two) will be used as income from assets in the calculation of annual income.

### Contributions to Company Retirement/Pension Funds

While a participant is employed, count as an asset only amounts the participant could withdraw from a company retirement or pension fund without retiring or terminating employment.

After retirement or termination of employment, count as an asset any amount the employee elects to receive as a lump sum from the company retirement/pension fund.

Include in annual income any retirement benefits received through periodic payments.

In order to correctly include or exclude as assets any amount now held in retirement/pension funds for employed persons, the grantee must know whether the money is accessible before retirement.

### Equity in Real Property

Real property includes land or real estate owned by the participant or participant household. Equity is the portion of the market value of the asset which is owned by the participant (the amount which would be available to the household if the property were to be sold). It is equal to the market value less any mortgage or loans secured against the property (which must be paid off upon sale of the property).

#### Calculate equity in real property as follows:

*Market Value - Loan (Mortgage) = Equity*

#### Calculate the cash value of real property as follows:

*Equity - Expense to Convert to Cash = Cash Value*

Expenses to convert to cash may include costs that would be paid to liquidate the asset, such as sales commissions, settlement costs, and transfer taxes.

### Assets Disposed of for Less Than Fair Market Value

At initial certification or reexamination, grantees must ask whether a household has disposed of an asset for less than its market value within the past two years. If the family has, the grantee must determine the difference between the cash value of the asset at time of sale or other disposal and the actual payment received of for the asset.

Some of the types of assets that must be considered include cash, real property, stocks, bonds, and certificates of deposit. They must be counted if the household gave them away or sold them for less than the market value. *Note: generally, assets disposed of as a result of a divorce, separation, foreclosure, or bankruptcy are not considered assets disposed of for less than fair market value.*

VA does not specify a minimum threshold for counting assets disposed of for less than fair market value. A grantee may establish a threshold that will enable it to ignore small amounts such as charitable contributions. (HUD Handbook 4350.3, for multifamily subsidized housing, uses \$1,000 as a threshold.) Verification of assets disposed of for less than fair market value is generally done by participant certification. **Staff need verify only those certifications that warrant documentation.**

### **Valuing Assets**

Because of the requirement to include the greater of the actual interest/dividend income earned or a percentage based upon a HUD published passbook rate when assets are greater than \$5,000, the value of assets may affect the family's annual income.

Staff must determine the market value of the asset and then calculate the cash value by subtracting the estimated expense required were the participant to convert the asset to cash.

Expenses to convert to cash include costs such as:

- Penalties for premature withdrawal (e.g., the 10% penalty paid when a retirement account is closed prior to retirement age, or a certificate of deposit is withdrawn prior to maturity);
- Broker and legal fees (e.g., a percentage of the value of the asset incurred in the sale of stocks, bonds, real estate, etc.); and
- Settlement costs incurred in real estate transactions (e.g. the typical percentage of sales price for settlement in the locality).

*Please note: Participants are not required, nor should they be required, to dispose of assets in order to determine the costs to convert to cash. These amounts simply reflect a realistic estimate of costs, and by deducting them from the market value of the asset, the imputed income from the asset is based on an amount the participant would have in hand if they converted their assets to cash.*

#### **Federal Tax Refunds Received within the Previous 12 Months**

If Federal tax refunds received within the previous 12 months make up part of a household's cash assets, that part of the household's cash assets must not be counted among the household's financial resources when determining the household's eligibility or need for assistance under SSVF. See "Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010," Pub. L. No. 111-312, § 728, 124 Stat. 3296, 3317.

For example, if a household applying for SSVF assistance in July 2011 has \$2,000 in total assets that includes a \$500 federal income tax refund received in April 2011, no more than \$1,500 of the household's total assets may be considered when determining whether the household has the financial resources and support networks needed to obtain immediate housing or remain in its existing housing or when determining the amount or type of assistance that household needs.

This exclusion does not apply to Federal tax refunds received prior to the previous 12 months or state tax refunds. If those tax refunds make up part of a household's cash assets, they are treated the same as the other cash assets.

#### **D. Determining Housing Status Eligibility**

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As with income eligibility, upon entering the SSVF program, all participants applying for SSVF assistance must undergo a housing status eligibility determination. The results must be documented in the case file. This section provides detailed information on housing status eligibility (in addition to requirements and instructions provided in Section VI. of this Program Guide).

##### **1. Category 1 Eligibility (Homelessness Prevention)**

Homelessness prevention assistance is intended for eligible Veteran families who are imminently at-risk of becoming literally homeless (e.g., entering an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation) **but for** SSVF assistance. Note that these Veteran families include "couch surfing" households (defined as homeless under the HEARTH Act). Targeting SSVF assistance in this manner helps ensure limited SSVF resources are directed to Veteran families most in need of assistance to avoid falling into or experiencing literal homelessness.

To qualify under **Category 1**, a Veteran family must be "residing in permanent housing." This encompasses many different housing situations, including where a Veteran family is residing in (i) a leased unit, (ii) a house with a mortgage, (iii) a unit shared with others (i.e. doubled-up), or (iv) a hotel or motel not paid for by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations.

Veteran families who are presently in such permanent housing and applying for SSVF assistance must be assessed for 1) program eligibility (Stage 1), and 2) program targeting (Stage 2) using the VA's "SSVF Homelessness Prevention Screening Form" (version 2). Apart from meeting SSVF eligibility requirements for Veteran status and income, applicant families must minimally meet the following Stage 1 eligibility criteria to receive SSVF homelessness prevention assistance

A. Be facing the imminent loss of their current primary nighttime residence (housing an individual or family owns, rents, or lives in with or without paying rent; housing shared with others; and rooms in hotels or motels paid for by the individual or family) within 30 days or less of applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance<sup>4</sup> . ;

B. Be at risk of becoming literally homeless **but for** SSVF assistance, meaning the Veteran family:

- Has no other residence; **AND**
- Has no resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from becoming literally homeless.

A. Lastly, a Veteran family must be assessed and scored for VA targeting criteria using the VA's "Homelessness Prevention Eligibility Screening Disposition Form" and receive a score at or above the "targeting threshold" for the program. The targeting threshold scores for HSNCF is 22, which has been approved by the VA. For those households that do not meet the targeting threshold but are at imminent risk of homelessness, "light touch" services may be offered. "Light touch" assistance includes case management, without temporary financial assistance, to prevent literal homelessness. For further guidance regarding homelessness prevention screening and targeting thresholds please see Exhibit E of the SSVF Program Guide dated 10/01/2017.

Those Veteran families that qualify under **Category 1** may require assistance to help them remain in their existing permanent housing or identify new housing that will better meet their needs and be sustainable. For example, the Veteran family may imminently lose their housing if rent arrears are not paid, and program staff may assist that Veteran family to pay the arrears and develop a housing stability plan that will reasonably result in the Veteran family being able to afford the rent for that unit in the future. Alternatively, if that same Veteran family would not reasonably be able to afford that unit in the future, staff will assist the Veteran family to locate an alternate housing arrangement that is sustainable for the Veteran family.

## **2. Categories 2 and 3 Eligibility (Rapid Re-Housing)**

SSVF's rapid re-housing assistance is intended for eligible Veteran families who are literally homeless. Persons qualifying as "literally homeless" include persons who at the time of application or reassessment lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including Veteran families who are:

- Staying in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train



- station, airport, or camping ground; **OR**
- Staying in a supervised publicly- or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); **OR**
- Exiting an institution where s/he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution; **OR**
- Are fleeing or attempting to flee a domestic violence situation

To qualify under **Category 2**, the Veteran family must **ALSO** be:

- Scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of suitable permanent housing.
- Not otherwise be eligible under Category 1.

To qualify under **Category 3**, a Veteran family must also:

- Have exited from permanent housing in the last 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the Veteran family's needs and preferences; **AND**
- Not otherwise be eligible under Category 1.

#### **E. Recertification of Eligibility**

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In order to ensure that SSVF programs fully evaluate participants' needs and eligibility for services, SSVF requires recertification at least once every three months. While the intent of SSVF is to provide short-term intervention, it is acceptable for SSVF staff to provide lengths of service that are either shorter or longer than three months. A simple recertification step is required to determine whether the service timeframe warrants an exit from the program or continued provision of services.

Participants who are assessed and determined to no longer require or qualify for SSVF assistance should be exited from the program. Staff should recertify only those participant households that are both eligible for and in need of services. The recertification requirement applies to all participants regardless of whether or not temporary financial assistance is offered.

Note that, in situations where there is a break in assistance (e.g., the participant receives two months of assistance, is exited from the program, and later re-applies for assistance), the household must be reevaluated as if they were going through the initial certification process not a recertification.

##### **1. Reassessment Areas**

At recertification, the following areas should be reassessed:

a. **Income Eligibility:** At recertification, the participant's income must still be at or below 50% AMI. Income must be recalculated and documented household income as was done during the initial certification, given that circumstances may have changed in the intervening months. If a household is over 50% AMI at the time it is reassessed, that household is no longer eligible for SSVF assistance.

- b. **Housing Status:** At recertification, the participant's initial SSVF housing status (Category 1, 2, or 3) is simply carried over from their initial certification regardless of changes that have transpired since then. For example, a participant enrolled as Category 2 upon initial certification will remain in this category at every recertification interval thereafter.
- c. **Other Resources/Support Networks ("But For") Eligibility:** At recertification, participants must still meet the threshold of need in the "But For" assessment. This means SSVF staff must again assess and document whether the participant, absent the help of SSVF, continues to lack the financial resources and support networks to either obtain new housing or remain in housing.
- d. **Confirmation of Veteran Family Status:** At recertification, staff must confirm whether the participant remains part of a Veteran family. If the Veteran becomes absent from a household or dies while other members of the Veteran family are receiving supportive services, then services may continue to the remaining family members for a grace period established by the SSVF grantee. The grace period cannot exceed 1 year from the date of absence or death of the Veteran, and all other requirements for eligibility remain the same. The SSVF grantee is required to notify the Veteran's family member(s) of the duration of the grace period.

## 2. Adjusting Assistance at Reassessment

As explained above, the appropriate level of supportive services and temporary financial assistance, if given, should be based on a participant's specific needs. It is important for case managers to consider during each reassessment if circumstances have changed and how much assistance a household actually needs for housing stability at that point. Assistance levels for services or financial assistance can then be adjusted to be greater or less than included in the original plan.

If a participant becomes ineligible to receive supportive services with SSVF funds during the recertification process, program staff will provide the participant with information on other available programs or resources.

Each person who conducts an assessment and eligibility screening should complete *an SSVF Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF Assistance*, for every participant case file.

## F. Program Exits

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The goal of the SSVF Program is to promote housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who reside in or are transitioning to permanent housing. VA understands that every household exit is different; however, SSVF staff should strive to ensure that households being exited from SSVF into permanent housing are stable and have the resources/supports to sustain housing. When it is determined that a participant household will be exiting SSVF, the grantee should review the final housing stability plan goals with the participant, review a final budget, review housing counseling elements such as lease requirements and home maintenance which contribute to housing stability, and make any last referrals to community resources. Staff can utilize the SSVF Program Exit Checklist to ensure the appropriate exit steps have been carried out once it is determined a household is going to be exited. For Veterans who may exit the program due to being unresponsive to the program, or discharged for other reasons (e.g. reunited with family, jail, relocated, etc.), program staff should develop internal policies and procedures for exiting those households. See "Releasing Participants from Program" under Program Operations for more information.

## G. Case File Documentation Requirements

Case files are maintained for each participant household. During the annual monitoring visit, case files will be inspected for the following forms:

HSNCFL Designated Forms		
	Homeless Prevention	Rapid Re-Housing
<b>Intake Screening</b>	•	•
<b>Housing Stability Plan</b>	•	•
<b>Release(s) of Information</b>	•	•
<b>HMIS Release of Information</b>	•	•
<b>VA Release of Information</b>	•	•
<b>Grievance Procedure with Participant Signature</b>	•	•
<b>Case Notes</b>	•	•
<b>Program Agreement with Participant Signature</b>	•	•
<b>Approval/Denial Letter</b>	•	•
<b>ID &amp; SS for ALL family members</b>	•	•
<b>DD214 and/or VA ID CARD</b>	•	•
<b>Lease</b>	•	•
<b>Eviction Letter</b>	•	
<b>Utility Bill</b>	•	•
<b>Rental/Utility Deposit Statement</b>	•	•
<b>But FOR form</b>	•	•
<b>Housing Preferences Worksheet</b>	•	•
<b>HSNCFL/SSVF Temporary Financial Assistance Form</b>	•	•
<b>Check Request</b>	•	•
<b>Copy of Check(s)</b>	•	•

<b>HSNCFL Exit Survey</b>	•	•
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<b>Required SSVF Forms</b>		
	Homeless Prevention	Rapid Re-Housing
<b>Homeless Prevention Screening Form</b>	•	
<b>Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF</b>	•	•
<b>Critical Incident Report</b>	As needed	As needed
<b>Participant Satisfaction Survey (Electronic Record)</b>	•	•

<a href="#"><u>Official SSVF Forms</u></a>		
	Homeless Prevention	Rapid Re-Housing
<b>Staff Recertification of Continued Assistance</b>	As needed	As needed
<b>Pending Verification of Veteran Status</b>	As needed	As needed
<b>Income Verification Template OR Self-declaration of Income**</b>	•	•
<b>Asset Income Calculation Worksheet</b>	•	•
<b>Income Calculation Worksheet</b>	•	•
<b>Literally Homeless Certification Template OR Self-declaration of Literal Homelessness**</b>		•
<b>Self-declaration of Housing Status**</b>	As needed	As needed
<b>Documentation Checklist 1: Participant Eligibility</b>	•	•

<b>Documentation Checklist 2: TFA and Housing Unit</b>	•	•
<b>Recertification Checklist 3: Participant Eligibility</b>	As needed	As needed
<b>Rent Reasonableness Checklist</b>	•	•
<b>Housing Habitability Standards</b>	•	•
<b>Emergency Housing Assistance Verification</b>	As needed	As needed

## 1. Documentation Standards

Program Staff is responsible for verifying and documenting the eligibility of all Veteran families prior to providing SSVF assistance. They are also responsible for maintaining this documentation in the SSVF participant case file once approved for assistance. For purposes of SSVF, VA allows various types of documentation, ranging from third-party written verification to participant self-declaration. Minimum acceptable types of documentation vary depending on the type of income or particular housing status and circumstance being documented. See Exhibit B in the SSVF Program Guide dated 10/01/2017 for detailed documentation standards.

General documentation standards, in order of preference, are as follows:

- **Written Third Party:** Verification in writing from a third party (e.g. individual employer, Social Security Administration, welfare office, emergency shelter provider, etc.) either directly to SSVF staff or via the Veteran family is most preferred. Third party verification of income, such as a deposit slip for a paycheck, might show income after deductions have been made; grantees must document gross income, before any deductions. Written third-party documentation may include completion of a standardized form, such as a verification of income statement.
- **Oral Third Party:** Verification from a third party (e.g. individual employer, Social Security Administration, Welfare Office, etc.) provided by the third party over the telephone or in-person directly to SSVF staff. Oral third party verification is acceptable only if written third party verification cannot be obtained in time to resolve the housing crisis. SSVF staff must document reasons why third party written verification could not be obtained in the SSVF participant file.
- **Self-Declared:** An affidavit of income and/or housing status as reported by the household is allowable, but is only acceptable if written or verbal third party verification cannot be obtained. Self-declaration of housing status (e.g., eviction) should be rare. SSVF staff must document reasons why third party written or oral verification could not be obtained in the SSVF participant file. **Self-declaration will always be used for families that are fleeing a violent situation.**

## 2. SSVF Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF Assistance

*The Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF Assistance Form* should be maintained in each participant's file and is subject to review by VA. This form should be completed for each household deemed eligible for SSVF assistance. The form should be completed and signed by both the person

determining eligibility and the Chief Program Officer for all households. While this form is completed at intake, a *Staff Recertification of Continued Assistance Form* should be completed at the time of recertification.

### **3. Timeliness of Income Documentation**

The definition of income for the SSVF program reflects a Veteran family's annual income at the time of application. Accordingly, documents and information collected to verify income should be recent and current at time of application for SSVF assistance.

### **4. Case Notes**

SSVF and HSNCFI recognize that intensive case management is the most important component of helping SSVF participants become or remain stably housed. As such, case notes are required as proof that case management and other supportive services are being provided to participants. If a service is not documented by a note, there is no way of verifying that it was provided. Accordingly, all staff and subcontractors are required to document services with a note in HMIS stating the date of service, nature of service, person and organization providing the service, and duration of service. HSNCFI requires that all case notes be in the DAP format (Data, Assessment, Plan). HSNCFI recognizes that the assessment will not be a clinical one but more of an overall assessment of the client at the moment.

**Note that unsuccessful attempts to provide service, such as an unanswered call or e-mail or a missed appointment, must be documented by a note as well.**

### **5. Documenting Domestic Violence**

As discussed earlier, for all participant households newly created under circumstances of domestic violence, SSVF resets the tolling period for receiving temporary financial assistance. For participants for whom this policy applies, grantees must certify a participant's domestic violence situation using the *SSVF Domestic Violence Certification Form*. **Note that this form only requires third party verification, from a social worker or legal service provider for example, in cases where performing this due diligence does not jeopardize the safety of household members. Where safety might be jeopardized, this form allows participants to provide a self-certification as to their circumstances.**

## IV. Supportive Services

The primary aim of the supportive services of the SSVF Program is to help Veteran families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. HSNCFCL uses supportive services grant funds to provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families that fall within one of the three categories of occupying permanent housing. HSNCFCL will assist participant households by providing a range of supportive services designed to resolve the immediate crisis and promote housing stability. The following are required supportive services:

- Outreach
- Case Management
- Assistance in obtaining VA Benefits
- Assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits
- Temporary Financial Assistance

### A. Outreach

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#### Description of Services

Performing outreach is a critical component of HSNCFCLs' programs.

Outreach plans will vary based on the community where services are provided specifically in areas that are considered rural where available resources are scarce.

There are two parts to the provision of outreach services: identifying very low-income Veteran families and screening them to determine eligibility.

#### Identifying Veteran Families

Effective outreach should ensure that supportive services are provided to very low-income Veteran families who are "most in need" and who would otherwise be difficult to locate or serve.

As part of providing outreach, HSNCFCL will:

- Develop relationships with local social services and public benefit agencies, shelters, and faith-based and community-based organizations serving low-income, at-risk, and homeless Veteran families;
- Develop relationships with local VA facilities, including Vet Medical Centers and Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) offices;
- Host local informational events; and
- Participate in Stand Down, CHALENG meetings (or similar) events.

Maintaining contact with local organizations who serve Veterans will help in HSNCFCLs' desire to identify additional participants. Such organizations are able to provide referrals, which will simplify the process of recruiting new participants to the HSNCFCLs' program. HSNCFCL will

leverage the following sources to identify very low-income Veteran families in the area:

- Local VA facilities, including VBA Regional Offices and Vet Centers;
- Grant & Per Diem Programs;
- CHALENG network;
- Emergency shelters;
- Existing supportive housing programs;
- Department of Defense (DoD) Resources (e.g., Transition Assistance Program);
- VA Medical Center Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) / Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/ Operation New Dawn (OND) Care Management Teams; and
- Community agencies serving low-income populations, including but not limited to:
  - Board of Education (assistance in identifying children who have been absent from school);
  - Churches and other places of worship;
  - Domestic violence agencies (**See Exhibit F** in the SSVF Program Guide dated 10/01/2017 for guidance on entering DV households into HMIS);
  - Groups assisting people in foreclosure;
  - Energy assistance agencies;
  - Housing courts;
  - Landlords;
  - Legal aid organizations;
  - Public Housing Authority waiting lists;
  - Rental agencies;
  - Food/clothing shelters; hot meals programs;
  - Day/Temporary labor programs;
  - Detoxification programs;
  - Hospitals that offer uncompensated care; and
  - Welfare offices.

### **Navigation**

HSNCFL has developed a Veteran Service Navigation role to specifically help assess the needs in our community. The Outreach Navigator is responsible to provide case management and supportive services by means of assessing the needs for and application and access to VA benefits and housing referrals to very low income homeless, at risk veterans living in camps, on the streets and in emergency shelters including those with mental health, substance abuse, HIV, co-occurring disorders and other barriers to housing. Navigators will work closely with Veterans to help develop the skills required to utilize the necessary resources to support their permanent housing. Outreach Navigators may work as advocates, referral agents, transportation specialists, and/or facilitators with the VA, other government agencies and community partners on behalf of the Veteran.

### **Eligibility and Evaluation**

HSNCFL/SSVF uses the Coordinated Entry System (CES) when assessing all possible participants. The veteran enters CES either by calling 211, our Veteran Intake Specialist, or VA coordination HUBS. This helps us assist the clients by (a) confirming a very low-income Veteran family's eligibility for supportive services and (b) prioritizing those families in the greatest need.



Screening is the first step of the intake process. HSNCFI uses the BIG 3 to assess the client which includes an intake, release of information and VI-SPDAT. This will assist them in (a) confirming a very low-income Veteran family's eligibility for supportive services and (b) prioritizing those families in the greatest need. Through this process Intake staff are able to quickly screen, assess, and assist the Veteran family as they are likely in crisis. Additionally, through this process staff is able prioritizing those eligible Veteran families who are in the greatest need and considered a priority for SSVF services.

When serving participants who are residing in permanent housing, it is helpful to remember that the defining question to ask is: "Would this individual or family be homeless **but for** this assistance?"

HSNCFI will target SSVF Program funds towards those with an increased number of potential "risk factors." Some factors are listed below and could indicate a higher risk of becoming (or remaining) homeless.

The risk factors for homelessness that are considered priority are highlighted on the list below:

- **Eviction within two weeks from a private dwelling (including housing provided by family or friends);**
- **Discharge within two weeks from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 180 days (including prisons, mental health institutions, hospitals);**
- Residency in housing that has been condemned by housing officials and is no longer meant for human habitation;
- **Vets returning from Afghanistan or Iraq**
- **Sudden and significant loss of income;**
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs;
- Mental health and substance abuse issues;
- Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues, including HIV/AIDS;
- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income for housing costs);
- **Dependent under the age of 6**
- **Homeless in last 12 months;**
- Young head of household (under 25 with children or pregnant);
- Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care;
- Pending foreclosure of housing;
- **Extremely low income (less than 30 percent of area median income);**
- High overcrowding (the number of persons in household exceeds health and/or safety standards for the housing unit size);
- Past institutional care (prison, treatment facility, hospital);
- Recent traumatic life event, such as death of a spouse or primary care provider, or recent health crisis that prevented the household from meeting its financial responsibilities;
- Credit problems that preclude obtaining of housing; or
- Significant amount of medical debt

SSVF Program staff will establish a file for each incoming participant that contains documentation confirming the participant's eligibility and to assign each participant to one of the SSVF Categories of Occupying Permanent Housing.

**a. Participant Eligibility Verification and Documentation**

HSNCFL is required to serve very low-income Veteran families occupying permanent housing as defined in 38 CFR 62.2 and 38 CFR 62.11(a).

**b. New Participant Health Screening (Physical and Mental Health)**

By coordinating the provision of health screenings of new participant households, SSVF Program staff assists the VA in ensuring the health and well-being of very low-income Veteran families. Although program staff will not provide health screenings directly, SSVF Program staff will refer all new SSVF participants for health screenings. With participant agreement and consent, staff will coordinate these screenings at intake. For the Veteran, this may mean connecting the Veteran to the local VA facility to ensure he or she receives medical care. For the Veteran's family members, this may mean identifying local community health resources that can assist non-Veteran household members. Screenings should assess, as appropriate, both the mental health and the general physical well-being of new participants.

**c. Referral When Sufficient Resources are Not available**

When there are not sufficient resources to accommodate additional participants at a given time, HSNCFL staff will make efforts to refer eligible Veteran families to other programs run by VA and/or public or private entities that will provide the assistance they require. Assistance from the VA can be obtained by contacting the VA National Call Center at 877-424-3838.

**d. Referral of Ineligible Veteran Families**

If program staff encounters Veteran families who do not meet the eligibility requirements of the SSVF Program, efforts will be made to refer such Veteran families to another program that will provide them with the assistance and services they require.

**e. Eligible Expenses for Outreach**

Outreach activity and costs are typically made up of direct outreach staff time. The following list provides guidance on expenses, other than direct staff time, that can be used for the purpose of outreach.

- Traditional staff-driven methods of outreach were tried but target numbers are still unmet.
- An assessment was performed to ensure chosen marketing method will be effective.
- A comparison was made between effectiveness of staff outreach versus marketing.
- Care was taken to market only the SSVF program itself and not HSNCFL.
- Marketing was designed to ensure effectiveness in connecting Veterans to SSVF.
- Participation in outreach consortium/coordination driven by COC wide process. SSVF providers must be billed for the same type of services to the COC so that it meets the definition of being equitable and reasonable

**Housing Partnerships and Landlord Relationships**

Developing and maintaining strong housing partnerships is key to a successful SSVF Program. Housing partners include private landlords, property management companies, public housing authorities, developers, and other entities that own or operate rental units. Housing units are considered broadly to encompass the private rental market, public subsidized housing, CoC Program housing, properties with low income or other tax credits, and local/state housing operating for the general public and/or targeted to relevant subpopulations, among others. HSNCFL SSVF Programs work in conjunction with our Coordinated Entry Team and Housing Locator Team to develop housing and landlord

partnerships. HSNCL Housing Locator Team works with various program managers and private landlords in our community to secure housing for our hard to serve clients such as sex offenders or chronic clients.

## **B. Case Management Services**

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### **Description of Service**

To effectively assist participant households in achieving housing stability, SSFV Program staff will provide ongoing case management services. The primary objective of case management is to ensure that participants receive the assistance needed to promote housing stability. Case management services may include consulting with participants to conduct needs assessments, working with participants to create individualized housing stability plans that include participant specific goals, monitoring participants from the time of intake until they exit the program, and ensuring that participants obtain needed supportive services. Case management should be the central focus of the grantee's program.

- Case management services including needs assessment, monitoring, follow-up, linkage and/or referral to supportive services, and overall coordination of services shall be provided primarily by Veteran Service Navigators- Case Managers.
- Case management services associated with outreach, education, eligibility determination, VBA/VHA benefit linkage, and veteran-specific issues shall be provided by Veteran Service Navigators- Housing Case Managers.
- Case management services associated with resource allocation shall be performed by HSNCL' leadership staff.

### **Interaction of Navigators and Case Managers**

Close coordination between Veteran Service Navigator teams is critical to successful outcomes for SSFV participants. As noted in the sections on Participant Screening and Eligibility Determination and Program Enrollment, the Veteran Service Navigator assumes primary responsibility for client engagement and interaction in the pre-enrollment phase through program enrollment. After enrollment, the Veteran Service Navigator works in partnership with the Case Manager who is the primary staff member responsible for service planning and goal progress.

NOTE: Participants who receive HUD-VASH services shall have case management provided per HUD-VASH program guidelines to ensure no overlap of services.

### **Caseload Assignment**

Veterans are assigned to a Veteran Service Navigator team early in the SSFV process. This team consists of a Veteran Service Navigator and SSFV Case Manager. Decisions for caseload assignment are based on several factors such as number of cases a team has, severity and intensity of needed services, and Veteran's request.

### **Intake**

#### **a. Needs Assessment**

Once the participant's eligibility has been confirmed, the assigned Veteran Service Navigator team will begin by consulting with the participant to determine his/her household's needs and priorities

and performing an assessment of the participant's needs. Participants entering the HSNCF SSVF program will be experiencing varying degrees of housing instability, from those who require temporary support in getting through a difficult period to those who require long-term support in overcoming a combination of challenges. As such, Veteran Service Navigator teams should gather as much information as possible about the participant's health, income, eligibility for public benefits, employment skills, background, family relationships and support, and living situation in order to identify and coordinate those services that will be most effective and acceptable to the participant in improving housing stability. Some of this information will also be required for HMIS data collection.

#### **b. Housing Stability Planning**

To maximize the effectiveness of services provided to or coordinated on behalf of the participant, the Veteran Service Navigator team will work with the participant household to develop an individualized housing stability plan that will be based upon the household's strengths, weaknesses and priorities, as identified through the needs assessment. In some situations, the participant will have entered the program with a well-defined idea of their discrete needs and goals. In other situations, the participant may not understand how the options available through SSVF might contribute to housing stability. The Veteran Service Navigator team is responsible for explaining the SSVF, VA and community services that are available and, with the participant, establish reasonable milestones for obtaining greater housing stability. These milestones will become a set of actionable goals intended to address the participant's obstacles to housing stability. Goals should be appropriate, time oriented, and reasonable.

Once goals have been set, the Veteran Service Navigator team and participant will monitor the progress toward achieving the established goals, including requesting updates from the participant service providers, as necessary.

#### **C. Service Level and Coordination**

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Veteran Service Navigator teams will provide intensive services to Veterans participating in the program from the time the Veteran is enrolled until they can successfully maintain housing. "Intensive services" indicates the Veteran and Veteran Service Navigator team will be in contact at least weekly or more. At a minimum, Veteran Service Navigator teams will monitor rent and utility payments including contact with the Veteran's landlord, lease compliance, employment search or attendance, school enrollment for children, attendance at scheduled appointments with other community agencies, and offer advocacy and assistance as needed.

Veterans will be assisted to determine proper housing needs and provided with lists of appropriate housing options, with the Veteran Service Navigator team acting as advocate when needed. Assistance to obtain needed documentation, appointments with other community agencies, and financial assistance will be provided. Veterans must keep their Veteran Service Navigator team informed of their goal progress and, if leaving the shelter, provide contact information.

Aftercare services should be provided if needed. Unless problems exist, a phone call to check on the Veteran's welfare may be sufficient with face-to-face contact monthly.

### **Housing Search and Placement**

Services or activities necessary to assist program Veterans in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable permanent housing, include the following:

- Assessment of housing barriers, needs, and preferences;
- Development of an action plan for locating housing;
- Housing search;
- Outreach to and negotiation with landlords;
- Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases;
- Assessment of housing for compliance requirements for habitability, lead-based paint, and rent reasonableness;
- Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements; and
- Tenant counseling.

### **Appropriate Housing**

Housing should be mutually agreed upon by both the Veteran Service Navigator team and the Veteran. At a minimum, housing should be clean, decent, well maintained, affordable, and in a neighborhood that meets the needs of the Veteran.

Locating adequate housing is a mutual responsibility of the Veteran and Veteran Service Navigator team. All resources should be used to find housing. If needed, transportation should be provided to help Veterans visit the units, complete the Housing Checklist, and complete the housing application. Financial assistance with application fees is available for Veterans. Veteran Service Navigator teams should keep abreast of current rental markets, landlords to avoid, and appropriately refer Veterans to partnering landlords. Referrals will not be made to landlords that have repeatedly proven uncooperative with HSNCF, have refused to reimburse due funds, do not adequately maintain properties, or have otherwise abused tenants' rights.

Veterans should examine any potential housing units and ensure for themselves that it is in good repair, that all facilities are in good working order, and that it is located in suitable neighborhoods. To ensure a minimum inspection has been done and Veterans are willing to accept housing, a Housing Checklist must be completed for each unit accepted and/or denied that has not had a formal inspection completed. Veteran Service Navigator teams should caution Veterans not to accept housing that does not meet minimum standards even if the landlord verbally promises to fix these problems.

### **Role of Veteran Service Navigator Teams in Coordinating Provision of Support Services**

The Veteran Service Navigator team will be the participant's primary point of contact within the SSVF program. In addition to assisting the participant to assess his/her needs, the team will be responsible for coordinating the provision of supportive services. The case manager will coordinate supportive services that are offered by the grantee and provide referrals for other supportive services not offered by HSNCF (or more efficiently or effectively provided elsewhere). Veteran Service Navigator Team(s) must be familiar with the area or and actively cultivate a working knowledge and connections to relevant area resources such as affordable housing; emergency, mental and physical health care professionals; public benefits offices; employment training and job placement programs, etc.

## **D. Assistance in Obtaining VA Benefits**

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### **Description of Benefits/Services**

As part of participant intake, SSVF program staff should determine whether the participant household is already receiving services from VA. If the participant is already receiving services, the assessment should focus on what additional services the participant may need, want and be eligible for, to refer the participant to the appropriate VA office for assistance. If the participant is not already receiving services from VA, the program staff will make the participant aware of the services for which he/she may be eligible and offer to refer the participant to the nearest VA facility.

Potential VA benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- Income Assistance;
- Vocational and rehabilitation counseling;
- Employment and training service;
- Educational assistance; and
- Health care services.

Income assistance, employment, training, and educational resources are especially important for the target population of the SSVF Program. Participants will need to establish regular incomes to support the program's primary goal of housing stability. Health care benefits will offer participants mental and physical health services that are not currently being addressed. VA offers health care services at over 1,400 locations nationwide, including hospitals, clinics, community living centers, domiciliary care facilities, readjustment counseling centers, etc. A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable or was discharged or dismissed by reason of a General court-martial may qualify for VA health care

### **Guidance on Administration of Benefits/Service**

If a participant has not yet enrolled in the VA health care system, the program staff will provide assistance in the enrollment process. Additional information on VA healthcare and benefits can be found on the following VA websites: <http://www.va.gov/health/index.asp> and: <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>.

If necessary, assistance provided to participants should also include helping Veterans locate an accredited claims agent or attorney and other services short of actual representation before VA. Although staff will assist participants in obtaining available benefits from VA, Veterans can only be represented in benefit claims before VA unless the individual providing representation is an accredited claims agent or attorney.

### **Using Community Linkages to Enhance Effectiveness**

HSNCFL will maintain good working relationships with local VA facilities, State Veterans Affairs Offices and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). A list of State Veterans Affairs Offices can be found on the following VA website: <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>. VA also maintains a searchable database of VSOs that can be accessed online at: <http://www.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=search>.

Through these relationships staff will maintain lines of communication with VA facilities will be able to stay aware of new benefits and services for which participants may be eligible and make or receive referrals as appropriate.

## **E. Assistance in Obtaining and Coordinating Other Public Benefits**

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### **Description of Services**

SSVF staff are required to assist participant households to access both public benefits and mainstream community resources that are available from federal, state, local, or tribal agencies, or any eligible entity, in their communities. The terms “public benefits” and “community resources” are defined broadly to include healthcare (medical, mental health, and substance abuse services) and daily living services, affordable housing, employment and vocational services, income support (from public benefits), legal services, transportation, personal financial planning and credit counseling, VA fiduciary and representative payee services, and childcare. The goals for connecting with these external programs are, first, to meet immediate housing-related and non- housing related needs and, second, to avoid a future housing crisis.

While all SSVF program staff deliver this connectivity component of supportive services, the work to link with each resource listed above may be organized by HSNCFI using three possible approaches:

1. **Direct:** by SSVF program staff (Note: SSVF funds cannot pay for direct provision of healthcare or daily living services).
2. **Indirect:** refer out to external resources with grantee utilizing a conventional information and referral approach and building upon in-house knowledge of external resources.
3. **Both:** direct by SSVF program and indirect referred out to external resources with SSVF program staff utilizing a conventional information and referral approach and building upon in-house knowledge of external resources

Benefits that are required to assist participants to obtain (if available and appropriate) include, but are not limited to:

- Health care services (referral only);
- Daily living services (referral only);
- Medicaid and/or subsidized insurance applications
- Personal financial planning services;
- Transportation services;
- Income support services (e.g. referrals to disability benefits, Social Security, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), unemployment assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or formerly, food stamps), etc.);
- SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery)
- Fiduciary and representative payee services;
- Legal services;
- Child care services;
- Housing counseling services; and
- Employment and vocational services

By leveraging available public resources to keep participants in housing, HSNCFCL will ensure that participants are given the highest level of support possible while efficiently utilizing SSVF grant funds. Detailed descriptions of the above-noted public benefits are provided in 38 CFR 62.33.

### **Using Community Linkages to Enhance Effectiveness**

SSVF program staff will develop linkages in the community as a way to enhance services for SSVF participants. Veteran Service Navigator team(s), in partnership with Intake staff, will assist the Veteran in applying for all community benefits including but not limited to: TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, Social Security benefits, etc.

Community resources should be sought for assistance with employment opportunities, education, and job skills or parenting classes; physical health care and mental health services; child care; transportation services; alcohol and other drug treatment programs; moving and furniture assistance; and additional financial planning as needed.

## **F. Other Supportive Services/Temporary Financial Assistance**

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### **Other Supportive Services**

The HSNCFCL SSVF program will provide additional supportive services. Those services include:

#### **Access to Public Education**

Veteran Service Navigator teams shall ensure that the children and youth served by the program have access to public education, and their rights are protected in accordance with Federal and state requirements. Additional coordination with local school district staff can be made available.

#### **Employment Linkages**

Program staff will establish referral relationships with employers and employment programs for each Veteran who is seeking employment and will work in conjunction with the Veteran Service Navigator team. Further, in instances where additional job skills are obviously necessary to elevate the Veteran's income to a viable level, the Veteran Service Navigator team will link the Veteran member(s) to local job training programs such as Goodwill, Voc. Rehab., etc., making efforts to ensure the Veteran is motivated and engaged.

#### **Credit Counseling/Financial Literacy**

Veteran Service Navigator teams will assess a Veteran's needs at initial intake and ongoing, and if assistance is needed beyond the budget counseling performed by the case manager, establish referral relationships with consumer credit counseling and/or other financial planning organizations. Initial assessment is required to determine financial support needed and is required as part of the financial assistance request and documentation process.

The Veterans Service Navigator team will work with each Veteran to determine their target budget for sustainable living. In addition, the Veterans Service Navigator team should work with Veterans to develop a household budget while receiving services to resolve any past debts and improve credit standing.



Expenses for rent and utilities must be reasonably based on the Veteran's projected ability to sustain payment for the rent and utilities in the future, generally no more than 50% of their monthly income. Veterans will not be assisted to move into housing that they cannot reasonably be expected to maintain/afford for the twelve months following exit from SSVF. Veterans must be able to obtain and maintain utilities in the name of the Head of Household or other contributing adult residing with the Veteran.

Veterans who have previous evictions or financial assessments due to damages will be considered. Excessive records need to be handled on a case -by-case basis depending on the circumstances. When possible, program staff will assist Veterans in negotiating a re-payment plan. Veterans must be willing to cooperate with their Veterans Service Navigator team to address these issues.

Veterans should be prepared and expected to pay a portion of their housing expenses, with either household resources or leveraged community resources

### **Legal Services**

SSVF funds may pay for legal services, except that the eligible subject matters also include landlord/tenant matters, and the services must be necessary to resolve a legal problem that prohibits the program Veteran from obtaining permanent housing or will likely result in the program Veteran losing the permanent housing in which the program Veteran currently resides. Please note that grant funds cannot be used to help a Veteran change his or her discharge status. SSVF legal will assist Veterans in obtaining available benefits from VA, however, they are not be permitted to represent Veterans in benefit claims before VA unless the Veteran providing representation is an accredited claims agent or attorney.

### **Eligible Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)**

SSVF Program Staff may choose to provide TFA to participant households. However, not all households require such assistance. Supportive services grant funds should only be used as direct financial assistance when **"but for"** criteria are met and, for homelessness prevention, when a participant meets or exceeds the targeting threshold score of 22. That is, after first considering readily available homeless and mainstream benefits (such as TANF, general assistance, and food stamps), the SSVF program staff must explore whether the household would become or remain literally homeless **"but for"** the provision of SSVF TFA. When SSVF program staff do choose to provide TFA, it should be used as a supplement to services provided to a participant as part of a plan to increase the participant's housing stability. Per 38 CFR 62.34, eligible forms of temporary financial assistance are:

- Rental assistance;
- Utility-fee payment assistance;
- Deposits (security or utility);
- Moving costs;
- Transportation (public transportation or car repair);
- General Housing Stability Assistance;
- Emergency Housing Assistance; and
- Child care.

SSVF financial and non-financial assistance should be conducted in a progressive assistance approach. Veteran Service Navigator teams should request financial support for only what it takes to get a Veteran into permanent housing or to maintain a Veteran in permanent housing during the period their case is open. **At no time should the Veteran receive promises or indications of a set amount of financial assistance.** All assistance depends upon urgency of the need and availability of funds. HSNCFCL may find it necessary to change allocations throughout the fiscal year as needs and funding dictate. Veterans should contribute to their housing expenses when possible.

Funds will not be issued to vendors that have abused Veterans' right or proven repeatedly uncooperative in the past or where getting appropriate documentation has been difficult. Additionally, vendors who misuse funds or who falsify information will not receive funds from HSNCFCL.

Additionally, when necessary and appropriate, HSNCFCL' leadership staff may seek legal counsel to recoup any misused funds from vendors.

Veteran Service Navigator teams are responsible for tracking financial assistance, including leveraged resources, on the Financial Assistance Tracking Form. This form must be completed and maintained in the Veteran record.

Specific assistance amounts may vary based on program and availability of funds.

#### **Rental Assistance**

Rental assistance includes the payment of rent, mobile home lot rent when Veteran owns the mobile home, penalties or fees to help a Veteran remain in or obtain permanent housing. *(Note: Where a rental fee is inclusive of utilities, the entire amount will be considered "rental assistance" and will be subject to the applicable conditions).* Rental assistance payments can be provided for amounts that are **currently due** (including first month or prorated rent paid prior to or at move in) or are in arrears, and for the payment of penalties or fees that have been incurred by the Veteran and are required to be paid under an existing lease or court order. Such fees may include broker fees, inspections, background checks, application fees, etc. and included in the deposit assistance and not as part of the monthly rental assistance.

Veterans and their families are required to share in the cost of rent payments as a condition of receiving assistance. Additionally, program staff will work with landlords to waive fees, security deposits and other fees. Program staff should determine the amount of assistance needed on a case-by-case basis, based on the minimum amount needed to prevent the Veteran or family from becoming homeless or returning to homelessness in the near future.

Restrictions on Rental Assistance	
<b>Payment</b>	Must be paid by the grantee directly to the third-party provider to whom rent is owed.
<b>Rent Reasonableness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grantee must determine reasonableness of rent, penalties or fees prior to providing assistance by conducting a market study</li> <li>• A market study involves documenting details of three comparable advertised rental units. Grantees may substitute a letter from the property manager of the unit under consideration that cites details of three comparable within the manager's portfolio. Note that citing Fair Market Rents (FMRs) is insufficient for market study purposes</li> <li>• Must be completed for Veterans receiving financial assistance and either staying in or moving into a new housing unit.</li> <li>• Rent reasonableness is not required in SSVF files where participant are using a HUD-VASH voucher. However, for other subsidized housing placements (e.g. Housing Choice Voucher (aka Section 8)), rent reasonableness is required either from the administering agency, or completed by SSVF staff</li> <li>• Details documented for each comparable unit cited in the market study must include rent, location, number of bedrooms, and if utilities are included.</li> <li>• In general, the assisted unit must be comparable to rents charged during the same time period for similar units in the private, unassisted market</li> <li>• In general, the assisted unit must not be in excess of rents charged by the property owner during same time period for other unassisted units</li> <li>• Online platforms that assess rents for a specific area, such as Rento-meter, are only allowable as a tool to evaluate rent reasonableness if they examine all of the required elements listed above.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent charged for a participant must be proportional to the size of the participant's private space in comparison to other private space in the unit (i.e., excluding common space).</li> <li>• Participation in shared housing arrangement must be voluntary</li> </ul>
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental assistance payments cannot be provided on behalf of participant households for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided by any and all other Federal, State, or local subsidized affordable housing programs such as HUD-VASH, public housing, and other subsidized programs. This restriction includes a tenant's own portion of rent owed when in subsidized housing. SSVF may not pay the tenant's portion of rent under these circumstances</li> <li>• When the cost type is different than what is paid by the housing subsidy, SSVF rental assistance may be used. This means SSVF may pay for a security deposit for a Veteran who is receiving HUDVASH or receiving another form of subsidized rental assistance. Furthermore, SSVF may be used to pay rent arrears for a Veteran who is receiving HUD-VASH rental assistance or receiving other forms of subsidized housing. These costs are both considered a different cost type.</li> </ul>
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible for payments currently due or in arrears (<i>Note: the number of months in arrears paid for through rental assistance counts towards the maximum allowable months of assistance</i>).</li> <li>• Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 6 months in a 12-month period.</li> <li>• Must be in compliance with rent reasonableness.</li> </ul>
<b>Assistance Limit for Extremely Low Income Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period.</li> <li>• Maximum of 9 months in a 12-month period.</li> <li>• Must be in compliance with rent reasonableness.</li> </ul>

### **Utility Assistance**

Utility payment assistance includes the payment of utility costs (i.e., heat, electricity, water, sewer and garbage collection) to help Veterans and their families obtain or retain permanent housing. Utility assistance can be provided for amounts that are currently due or are in arrears. **Amounts owed for telephone, cell phone, cable, and other utilities not listed above are not eligible.** Veterans and their families are required to share in the cost of utility payments as a condition of receiving assistance.

Utility payment assistance necessitates the development of a reasonable plan to address the Veteran or family's future ability to make utility payments. The grantee should assist the Veteran or family to implement such plan by providing necessary assistance directly or by helping the Veteran or family to obtain any necessary public or private benefits or services. If the grantee cannot help the Veteran or family to develop a reasonable plan to address the Veteran or family future ability to pay utility payments, supportive services grant funds should not be used to provide utility-fee payment assistance. Instead, the grantee should attempt to connect the Veteran or family with a program offering long-term assist.

**Note that SSVF may use TFA to pay outstanding utility arrears pertaining to a previous rental situation where the Veteran no longer resides provided that the old utility debt now prevents the participant household from obtaining utilities in a new housing arrangement. This debt may only be paid directly to the third party, the utility company, under whom the debt was incurred**

<b>Restrictions on Utility Payment Assistance</b>	
<b>Payment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a utility company</li> <li>• Participant, legal representative or a member of the household must have an account in his/her name with a utility company or proof of responsibility to make payments.</li> </ul>
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payments for utilities cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program.</li> </ul>
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 10 months utility payments in a 2-year period</li> <li>• Maximum of 6 months utility payments in a 12-month period</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrears may be paid up to, but not exceed, the maximum allowable months of assistance. In other words, each month of payment past due is counted individually towards the maximum number of allowable months.</li> </ul> <p>For example, Jeff owes \$900.00 in utilities accrued over 9 months with \$100.00 owed each month. The SSVF program may pay up to \$600.00 for debt accrued over 6 months. Note: Utility assistance may consist of payments for multiple types of utilities. For example, over a 2-year period, a grantee could assist a participant with 10 months of assistance for gas, electricity, and water, provided the payments cover the same ten months.</p>
<b>Assistance Limit for Extremely Low Income Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum of 12 months utility payments in a 2-year period</li> <li>Maximum of 9 months utility payments in a 12-month period</li> </ul>

### **Deposit Assistance**

Deposit payment assistance includes the payment of security or utility deposits to help the Veteran and their family obtain permanent housing.

Veterans and their family are required to share in the cost of a deposit payment as a condition for receiving assistance. A deposit should be no more than two months 'rent as this typically considered to be the maximum reasonable level.

Deposit payment assistance may only be provided if the payment of such assistance will directly allow the Veteran and their family to obtain permanent housing. Program staff must work with the Veteran to develop a reasonable plan to stabilize housing so that additional deposits are not needed, and should assist the Veteran in implementing a housing stability plan by directly providing necessary assistance or to help the Veteran obtain necessary public or private benefits or services. If Program staff cannot help the Veteran and their family to develop a reasonable plan to address the Veteran's future housing stability, grant funds should not be used to provide deposit payment assistance.

Deposit payment assistance may be provided on behalf of eligible Veteran and do not count towards the monthly assistance restrictions for both rent and allowable utilities, and have the following restrictions:

<b>Restrictions on Deposit Payment Assistance</b>	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to the third party to whom the security or utility deposit is owed.
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payments for deposits cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided for by any and all other Federal, State, or local subsidized affordable housing programs such as rapid re-housing programs that pay for security deposits.</li> <li>When the cost type is different than what is paid by the</li> </ul>

	housing subsidy, SSVF deposit payment assistance may be used.
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of one security deposit during a 2-year period</li> <li>• Utility deposit assistance is limited to one time during a 2-year period. In cases where water and power are not included in the rent and are billed separately, deposits can be paid on each utility</li> </ul>

### **Moving Assistance**

Moving assistance includes costs associated with truck rental, hiring a moving company, or short-term storage fees for a maximum of 3 months or until the participant is in permanent housing, whichever is shorter. Note: A one-time moving cost for truck rental means one episode of moving to permanent housing. A truck rental may be needed to move participant's belongings to storage unit and then moved again once permanent housing is secured. Relocation expenses are an allowable use, when a solid housing stability plan is in place.

As a condition of providing moving costs assistance, SSVF program staff must help the participant develop a reasonable plan to address the participant's future housing stability and assist the participant to implement such a plan. SSVF program staff may require participants to share in the cost of moving as a condition of receiving assistance with moving costs

<b>Restrictions on Moving Costs Payment Assistance</b>	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a third party
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	Payments for moving costs cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program.
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	Maximum of cost of one move to permanent housing during a 2- year period.

### **General Housing Stability Assistance**

General Housing Stability Assistance is limited to a total of \$1,500 per Veteran households. This category allows for the provision of goods or payment of expenses not included in other sections, but, which are directly related to support a Veteran's housing stability and is not available through existing mainstream and community resources.

### **Four Classes of Housing Stability Assistance**

There are four classes of Housing Stability Assistance expenses, outlined below, that can be authorized up to a maximum of \$1,500 per participant household during any 2-year period.

- (1) **Expenses associated with gaining or keeping employment:** Eligible items include but are not limited to uniforms, tools, driver's license fees, license/certification costs required for employment, documentation acquisition fees such as for Social Security Number or birth certificate, document court filing fees, and short term training leading to employment, where other funding is not available.
- (2) **Expenses associated with moving into permanent housing:** Eligible items include but are not

limited to furniture delivery costs, furniture bank fees, bed frames, conventional mattresses, air mattresses, box springs, bedding (sheets, pillowcases, and pillows), basic kitchen utensils, and cleaning supplies

**(3) Expenses necessary for securing appropriate permanent housing:** Eligible items include but are not limited to fees for rental applications, background checks, housing inspections, credit score checks, credit counseling, criminal background check, tenancy screening reports, financial literacy class, document court filing fees, and documentation acquisition such as for Social Security Number or birth certificates.

**(4) Items necessary for life or safety provided on a temporary basis to address an emergency.** Eligible items include food, baby formula, diapers, and winter clothing. These items are allowable up to \$500 per participant household in a 2-year period and are included in the overall \$1,500 cap.

#### **Brokers Fee**

Reasonable amount for a realtor broker's fee. This may be paid once during a 2-year period. The reasonableness of this fee must be determined based on the condition of the local housing market.

**Items that cannot be funded under General Housing Stability Assistance are: phone cards, gift cards of any kind, and furniture (except beds). Major appliances are also generally non-eligible with the rare exception of circumstances when the VA allows such an item for an individual case**

Restrictions on General Housing Stability Assistance	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a third party
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	Payment under General Housing Stability Assistance cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Items in the four classes add up to a maximum total of \$1,500 per participant household during any 2-year period. Items for life and safety add up to a maximum of \$500 within the overall \$1,500 limit.</li><li>• Realtor broker fees are once in a 2-year period and are not included in this \$1,500 limit.</li></ul>

#### **Emergency Housing Assistance**

This assistance allows SSVF programs to provide temporary housing for eligible literally homeless participants who are awaiting permanent housing **if** no other shelter is available. As SSVF resources must be focused on securing and sustaining placement in permanent housing, grantees are expected to exercise great care in committing resources to emergency housing, ensuring no alternative VA resources (such as Grant and Per Diem or Healthcare for Homeless Veterans residential contract housing) or community resources exist. Emergency housing may be provided to short-term commercial residences, not already funded to provide on-demand emergency shelter,

that does not require the participant to sign a lease or occupancy agreement (private residences are not eligible). Note that the *Emergency Housing Assistance Verification* is used to confirm eligibility. If permanent housing, appropriate shelter beds, and transitional housing are not available and subsequent rental housing has been identified generally but is not immediately available for move-in by the participant, then a grantee may place a participant in emergency housing, subject to the following limitations:

**Limitations:**

- Placement for a single Veteran may not exceed 72 hours, unless the grantee can certify that shelter beds and transitional housing are still unavailable at the end of 72 hours. Extensions beyond the 72 hours may not exceed 45 days.
- Placement for a Veteran and his or her spouse with dependent(s) may not exceed 45 days.
- A participant may be placed in emergency housing only once during any 2-year period, beginning on the date the grantee first pays for emergency housing.
- The cost of the emergency housing must be reasonable in relation to the costs charged for other available emergency housing considering the location, quality, size, and type.
- At least one viable option for a permanent housing unit must be identified for the participant who is temporarily receiving emergency housing assistance.

Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) may also be provided by the SSVF grantee under 38 CFR 62.34(f) to offer transition in place when a permanent housing voucher, such as one offered through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program (aka. Section 8), is available from any source, but access to the permanent housing voucher is pending completion of the housing inspection and administrative processes necessary for leasing. In such circumstances, the EHA payment cannot exceed what would otherwise be paid when the voucher is utilized. Note that the Emergency Housing Assistance Verification is NOT used for this request.

Restrictions on Emergency Housing Assistance	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a third party
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	Payments for emergency housing assistance cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 45 days for Veterans with spouse and/or dependents.</li> <li>• Maximum of 72 hours (extensions for up to 45 days) for a single Veteran.</li> <li>• No more than once in a 2-year period for all participants.</li> </ul>



### **Transportation Assistance**

SSVF Program Staff may provide transportation assistance if it will enhance housing stability. The use of public transportation is generally less expensive than the use of private vehicles and may be more sustainable in the long-term, SSVF program staff should consider providing public transportation tokens or vouchers before offering financial assistance for personal vehicles. If sufficient public transportation options are not locally available, program staff may provide car repair or maintenance assistance on behalf of a participant.

The provision of money or gift cards to a participant to pay for gasoline is **not** permitted with SSVF funds. However, in rural areas with limited to no public transportation, the issuance of Gas Vouchers may be allowable under the conditions listed below:

1. A gas voucher is allowable as transportation cost only towards needs directly related to housing stability and is incorporated in the participant's Housing Plan.
2. Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a third party. For example, program staff may make arrangements with a local gas station by pre-paying for gasoline only, require gas station to view identification of participant prior to approval of any gasoline purchase, and provide grantee with receipts for all gasoline purchases.

Restrictions on Transportation Payment Assistance	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to a third party
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	Payments for transportation cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No financial limit on amount of public transportation assistance for participants</li><li>• No time limit on public transportation assistance</li><li>• Maximum of \$1,200 car repairs/maintenance in a 2-year period on behalf of a participant</li></ul>

### **Childcare Assistance**

Payments may be on behalf of a participant to an “eligible child care provider” providing child care services. Such child care payments should only be provided if the assistance will improve a participant’s housing stability.

<b>Restrictions on Child Care Assistance Payment</b>	
<b>Payment</b>	Payment must be made by the grantee directly to an “eligible child care provider.” An “eligible child care provider” is a provider of child care services for compensation, including a provider of care for a school-age child during non-school hours, that: (1) is licensed, regulated, registered, or otherwise legally operating under state and local law, and (2) satisfies the state and local requirements applicable to the child care services the provider provides
<b>Cost-Sharing with Other Programs</b>	Payments for child care cannot be provided on behalf of participants for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another Federal, State, or local program
<b>Assistance Limit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period, per child in household</li><li>• Maximum of 6 months in a 12-month period, per child in household (Note: Household may include multiple children)</li><li>• Begins on the date grantee first pays for child care on behalf of participant</li><li>• Child care assistance can be provided for children under the age of 13, unless a child has a disability. Child care assistance can be provided for children with a disability under the age of 18</li></ul>
<b>Assistance Limit for Extremely Low Income Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period, per child in household</li><li>• Maximum of 9 months in a 12-month period, per child in household</li></ul>

As with all temporary financial assistance payments made under the SSVF Program, the provision of temporary assistance requires the development of a reasonable housing stability plan to address the participant’s future ability to pay for all expenses related to obtaining and/or maintaining permanent housing.

Implementing this plan should consider assistance or helping the participant to obtain any necessary public or private benefits or services. If program staff cannot help participants develop a reasonable plan, child assistance should be limited to efforts to connect the participant with a program offering long-term assistance.

### **Financial Assistance**

Requests for more than \$1500 must be approved in advance by the Chief Program Officer. All other requests can be approved by the Program Coordinator.

### **Restrictions on Payments**

**Temporary financial assistance payments cannot be paid to the participant and must be paid directly to a third party on behalf of a participant.**

### **Ineligible Expenses:**

- Mortgage costs or costs needed by homeowners to assist with any fees, taxes, or other costs of refinancing;
- Construction or rehabilitation of buildings;
- Credit card bills or other consumer debt;
- Extensive car repairs for participant households (beyond the eligible \$1,200 in repairs/maintenance); Car payments for participants;
- Medical or dental care and medicines for Mental health, substance use, or other therapeutic interventions designed to treat Axis I or II diagnostic conditions in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Addition;
- Home care and home health aides typically used to provide care in support of daily living activities (*Note: This includes care that is focused on treatment for an injury or illness, rehabilitation, or other assistance generally required to assist those with handicaps or other physical limitations.*);
- Food, including food provided at staff and other meetings or trainings (except as a qualified emergency supply);
- Pet care, including additional deposit for pet;
- Entertainment activities;
- Direct cash assistance to program participants;
- Purchase of gift cards for program participants;
- Court-ordered judgments or fines. Note that late rent fees are an allowable expense.
- Court-ordered fees that are related to a court order/adjudication;
- Petty cash for program staff or
- Gift cards of any kind

No bulk purchases of items are allowed, unless each item is necessary for a specific identified Veteran family at the time of purchase. Any TFA purchases made must be tied directly to an eligible SSVF Veteran family. For example, an agency cannot buy bulk household goods with SSVF funds to be provided to Veterans as needed. An agency would have to purchase items with other agency funds, and reimburse themselves as SSVF Veteran family needs arise, or buy each item as needed.

Funds may *not* be released directly to the participant. All funds are to be issued to a third party such as a landlord or utility company.

**Documentation Required**

SSVF Program Staff must maintain records that justify the provision of temporary financial assistance. SSVF Program Guide (dated 10/01/2017) Section VIII.C outlines the case file documentation required to verify the eligibility of a temporary financial assistance payment. Program Staff must also maintain all back up documentation and invoices to support the costs paid with SSVF funds. This pertains to all funds drawn down under Services, TFA, and Admin. This documentation will be reviewed during annual monitoring visits.

## V. Program Operations

### **Funding Sweeps**

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Funding Sweeps VA regularly reviews grantee expenditures to ensure that funds are being used in a manner consistent with programs goals and regulations. It is expected that grantee spending will be consistent across quarters as significant variance, particularly lower than expected spending, may indicate either a lower demand for services or difficulty in managing funds. Effective October 1, 2017, if during the course of the grant year the VA determines that grantee spending is not meeting the level expected at key milestones indicated below, VA may elect to recoup projected unused funds in order to be reprogrammed to address homelessness in other, higher need areas. HSNCF will review each provider contract and determine if funds need to be swept in order to reallocate to other providers that are in higher need. A memorandum will be provided if the funds are swept back due to provider not meeting the percentage allocated below. The percentages pre-quarter are as follows:

- 1) Provider must be at 25% by the end of the first quarter of the total contract award amount.
- 2) Provider must be at 45% spent by the end of the second quarter of the total contract award amount.
- 3) Provider must be at 65% spent by the end of the third quarter of the total contract award amount.
- 4) Provider must be at 100% spent by the end of the fourth quarter of the total contract award amount.

### **SSVF Program Staff Training and Mentor Program**

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The SSVF Program Office has developed a SSVF Grantee Orientation Guide which is posted to the SSVF website. The Guide offers a broad introduction to the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Each SSVF grantee is expected to share the orientation materials with new program staff as part of their organization's onboarding process. New staff should read all materials in their entirety and review the resources and materials that are included in the hyperlinks throughout the document. Grantees should confirm that new staff has read required all the required materials during their quarterly certification process.

The SSVF Program Office offers a Mentor Program, which identifies “Mentor Sites” that have effectively developed interventions that successfully meet VA’s goals of preventing and ending homelessness. Mentor Sites work with new grantees or grantees who have turnover in leadership and need to accelerate their skill development and knowledge acquisition of the SSVF Program. Mentor Sites will provide experiential, rather than didactic training, as the latter will continue to be offered through VA’s technical assistance provider. Grantees are encouraged to have a program

manager spend a week at their assigned Mentor Site to observe how that program organizes and delivers SSVF services. It is hoped that by shadowing key Mentor Site SSVF staff, grantees will be better able to apply formal training and quickly organize effective and productive services upon return to their home agency.

In addition, grantees must attend VA-mandated training sessions. Trainings will be conducted by VA and its technical assistance providers. Information on training, including eligible training expenses, will be emailed to grantees. It is also expected that grantees will provide training for case managers and staff who will provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families. VA mandated training will be provided at no-cost to grantees.

### **Participant Agreements**

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There are written guidelines of expected behaviors, and the consequences of rules violations are clearly stated and consistently enforced. Veterans will be asked to sign an agreement form during their intake meeting with their Veterans Service Navigator team.

Veteran(s) must be willing to actively partner with their Veterans Service Navigator team for the time needed to attain housing, as well as time to establish linkages to community resources to ensure the ability to maintain housing.

### **Participant Fees**

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Program staff may not charge a fee to Veterans for providing supportive services that are funded using funds from a supportive services grant. *Note: this prohibition does not prevent staff from requiring Veterans to cost-share any expenses for which temporary financial assistance is provided.*

### **Participant Safety and Critical Incident Reports**

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A critical goal of the SSVF Program is to ensure the safety of all participant households, supportive service coordinators, and their staff.

The SSVF program shall ensure that prevention, timely reporting, and remediation occurs for all critical incidents. Critical incidents include events such as participant and staff injury, aggression, violence, suicide, and attempted suicide.

Work-related injuries should be handled using the guidelines established in the most current Employee Handbook. Additionally, staff is required to following guidelines around establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries with Veterans who are assigned to them. This relates to giving Veteran(s) rides in their cars, loaning them or engaging in any other relationship that organization views as harmful.

If program staff becomes aware of a health or safety issue related to the participant, including unsafe accommodations, staff must report the issue to the appropriate authorities. SSVF Program staff is expected to comply with all applicable laws. If a participant's actions pose a health or safety risk to that participant or another person, staff must notify the police or another appropriate authority. Critical incidents include, but are not limited to, death, attempted or completed suicide,

arrests for violent crimes, an assault on program staff, or inappropriate staff involvement.

### **Reporting**

SSVF staff and subcontractors shall report all potential critical incidents within one business day of occurrence. All HSNCF and subcontractor staff shall be trained and responsible for adherence to applicable state and federal mandated reporting requirements.

In the event there is a critical incident involving an SSVF program Veteran, staff are to notify the Veteran Services Program Manager immediately. The Veteran Services Program Manager will notify the Regional Coordinator within a timeframe not to exceed 24 hours after being made aware of the situation. Critical incidents include but are not limited to death, attempted or completed suicide, arrests for violent crimes, assault on program staff, or inappropriate staff involvement.

The Critical Incident Protocol is designed to enhance security of confidential information. Critical Incident Reports will be faxed to the VA SSVF Program Office at 215-222-2591.

### **Habitability Standards**

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Housing should be mutually agreed upon by both the Veteran Service Navigator team and the Veteran. At a minimum, housing should be clean, decent, well maintained, affordable, and in a neighborhood that meets the needs of the Veteran.

Locating adequate housing is a mutual responsibility of the Veteran and Veteran Service Navigator team. All resources should be used to find housing. If needed, transportation should be provided to help Veterans visit the units, complete the Housing Checklist, and complete the housing application. Financial assistance with application fees is available for Veterans. Veteran Service Navigator teams should keep abreast of current rental markets, landlords to avoid, and appropriately refer Veterans to partnering landlords. Referrals will not be made to landlords that have repeatedly proven uncooperative with HSNCF, have refused to reimburse due funds, do not adequately maintain properties, or have otherwise abused tenants' rights.

Veterans should examine any potential housing units and ensure for themselves that it is in good repair, that all facilities are in good working order, and that it is located in suitable neighborhoods. To ensure a minimum inspection has been done and Veterans are willing to accept housing, a Housing Checklist must be completed for each unit accepted and/or denied that has not had a formal inspection completed. Veteran Service Navigator teams should caution Veterans not to accept housing that does not meet minimum standards even if the landlord verbally promises to fix these problems.

### **Housing Inspections**

Veteran Service Navigator teams must conduct habitability inspections when grant funds are used to provide rental assistance, security deposits or moving costs. Inspections are to be completed when Veterans are moving into a new housing unit. This habitability inspection does not require a certified inspector. A visual lead inspection must occur on units built before 1978 and housing a family with a child under 6 or a pregnant woman who is receiving financial assistance. Upon failure of the visual inspection, the unit must undergo appropriate lead-based paint abatement before financial assistance can be provided.

Completed inspection forms should be maintained in the Veteran record files.

### **Notification to Participants**

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Before providing SSVF assistance to a participant household, grantees must notify the participant that the assistance will be paid for, in whole or in part, by VA.

Program staff will ensure that Veterans are involved in decision-making processes, including planning for services and program quality improvement. This is accomplished by ensuring Veterans choose their own housing, using the Housing Checklist, computing successful exits, and by reviewing grievances and exit surveys. Additionally, Veterans are represented and have an active voice on the Guest Advisory Board or the Veteran Alumni Group.

To ensure that Veteran families receiving supportive services under the SSVF Program are receiving quality services, program staff must give a VA-designated satisfaction survey to each participant within 30 days of the participant's pending exit from the program.

### **Data Collection**

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Program staff will utilize HMIS for data collection. When data is collected and utilized correctly it is efficient, cost effective and beneficial to the evaluation, review and improvement of the program. Data entered into HMIS will be according to HSNCFL' Policies & Procedures and include all required data elements.

### **Veteran Records**

The primary source for Veteran records will be in HMIS. In addition, each Veteran will have a paper file, with minimal information primarily related to eligibility and re-certification documentation. Paper files will be kept in a secure and locked (or capable of being locked) location to maintain confidentiality. Veteran files maintained in HMIS are kept permanently. Paper files are kept for a period of seven years.

### **Confidentiality**

Program staff is required to maintain confidentiality of records kept on Veterans. Staff and subcontractors must comply with all applicable federal and local laws to assure the confidentiality and security of Veterans' physical and electronic records.

If family violence prevention or domestic violence treatment services are provided, staff must establish and implement additional procedures to protect Veterans by ensuring the confidentiality of:

- (1) Records pertaining to any Veteran provided services, and
- (2) The address or location where the services are provided.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) protocols include standards for the privacy and security of information entered into the HMIS system. These standards were developed by HUD based on Health Insurance and Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards for securing and protecting Veteran information. HUD has defined baseline standards that are required of any all organizations (such as a Continuum of Care, homeless assistance providers, Veteran service organizations, or HMIS software companies) that record, use, or process personal protected information on homeless Veterans for an HMIS. Some communities have elected to adopt additional



laws, protocols or policies to further enhance the privacy and security of information collected through HMIS. Users of HMIS products must comply with the baseline HUD standards and must also comply with any additional federal, state and local laws that require additional confidentiality protections

### **G. Releasing Participants from Program**

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If a Veteran refuses to comply with the SSVF Program Agreement, they may be terminated from the program. Veterans must receive written notification of reason for program termination, a copy must also be provided to the VA. In the event a participant violates a grantee's program requirements, a grantee may stop providing assistance to the participant. Grantees may resume assistance to a participant whose assistance was previously suspended. In terminating assistance to a participant, the grantee must first provide a formal process that recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance to due process in the termination decision. This process, at a minimum, must consist of:

- (1) Written notice to the participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination
- (2) A review of the decision, in which the participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a grantee's staff member other than the staff member (or a subordinate of that staff member) who made or approved the termination decision, and
- (3) Prompt written notice of the final decision to the participant.

The SSVF Program fully endorses use of a Housing First approach and encourages grantees to target assistance to those Veterans in most need. As such, dismissal or termination policies should avoid unnecessarily terminating assistance due to program violations, unless in extreme cases. Unless basic SSVF Program requirements are not being met, grantees should not otherwise terminate assistance due to program rule infractions if such termination can be avoided. Such instances provide an opportunity for further proactive, progressive service delivery. For example, terminating assistance solely because a Veteran is using substances, refuses treatment or is not fully in line with their housing plan would not be consistent with a Housing First approach.

Program staff may resume assistance to a Veteran whose assistance was previously terminated at the SSVF teams' discretion.

### **H. Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedure**

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It is the policy of HSNCF to give prompt and impartial consideration to the complaints and grievances of program participants without restraint, interference, coercion, or reprisal. The following procedures establish a uniform method by which program participants may report a complaint or grievance.

The SSVF Program encourages our clients and staff to attempt to resolve issues verbally before they get to the formal grievance level. However, when that is not possible, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure grievances are addressed:

Document the grievance in writing and address it to the manager/supervisor of the department in question. If the client is unaware of the staff member's name, he/she may request a listing of SSVF Program staff.

Client must have a current "Release of Information" form filed with SSVF Program. Grievance must only involve the client filing the grievance. SSVF Program staff will not discuss any other clients with the client filing the grievance. No grievance will be filed over the telephone. Once the grievance has

been documented and delivered to the appropriate supervisor of the SSVF Program's staff member, that supervisor will contact the client and request to meet with him/her to discuss the grievance face to face.

The supervisor will ask the client if he/she would be willing to meet with the SSVF Program staff member in question to try to resolve the grievance. If the client agrees to meet face to face, every attempt is made to resolve the grievance at this first level. If the client does not agree, the supervisor will meet with the client and attempt to resolve the grievance. If after meeting face to face, the client is still not satisfied, he/she may then request, in writing, to meet with the Executive Director of the agency.

If, after meeting with the Executive Director of the agency, the client is still not satisfied, he/she may then request, in writing, to meet with the Veterans Services Programs Manager, of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida. The Veterans Services Programs Manager will contact the client within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving the written request and all notes and documentation to set up a meeting with the client. Every effort will be made to resolve the grievance at this meeting. If the grievance is not resolved, the next step is for the client to request a meeting with the Grants Manager, of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida.

The Veterans Services Programs Manager, will ensure that a copy of the grievance and the notes from all previous meetings are delivered to the Deputy Director of Programs and Budgets, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida. The client will be notified, in writing, as to when a meeting will take place. If after the meeting with the Deputy Director of Programs and Budgets, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida, is still not satisfied, he/she will be directed to the Executive Director, of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida and will be advised of the proper grievance documentation. This will be done 15 business days after the official final written grievance outcome from the provider agency.

In the event the grievance is against one of the above named individuals the client would be directed to file the written grievance directly to the next individual listed.

## **I. Exiting Program Participants**

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To prepare Veterans who are exiting the program, the following will apply:

- Program staff prepares the Letter of Termination sending the original to the Veteran at last known address. The letter will specify the exit date and reason(s) for termination such as stably housed, etc. The letter will also specify all the services provided to the veteran during their enrollment in SSVF.
- Veteran Service Navigator team will conduct exit interviews for each household exited, and discuss terminating the Veteran/staff relationship and provide additional community resources. Additionally, Veterans will receive instructions to complete an online survey so the VA can review and analyze feedback.

## VI. Program Process

### Referrals

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The SSVF program accepts referrals from any community organization that serves Veterans. Counties served through SSVF include Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. HSNCFI also serves South Lake County. Veterans can access services through the dedicated phone line. To determine eligibility for services, Veterans should call 211 or 407-893-0133 x 638.

### Participant Screening

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To receive SSVF supportive services and/or temporary financial assistance, Veterans and their families must be screened to determine initial eligibility, recertification and priority status. Program staff uses the SSVF Documentation Checklist and Financial Screening Tools as guides to determine eligibility and priority status.

### Screening

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HSNCFI will adhere to federal SSVF program policy in determining participant eligibility.

Pre-screening will be conducted for all potential SSVF program participants who have applied or been referred to the program.

The goal of pre-screening is to do a rapid, low-cost determination of probably program eligibility and to screen out obviously ineligible applicants.

Applicants will be contacted by the Veteran Intake Specialist, CES Intake staff, or Veteran Services Navigator staff for pre-screening within three business days of receiving the referral.

- The screening may be conducted by phone or in person at the VA HUBS.
- The screening results may be reviewed with SSVF Program Coordinators, when necessary before referring the applicant to an SSVF Agency.
- Participants are immediately notified of next steps and what to expect.
- Applicants who are screened out will be provided with linkage to non-SSVF services that may help address their priority needs as determined in the pre-screen process.
- Based on screening results a determination will be made about whether to screen the applicant out or to proceed to eligibility determination.
- Screening for all housing categories is predicated on determining:
- Program eligibility;
  - Fit for Category 1, 2, or 3;
  - Likelihood of achieving stable housing within 90 days of enrollment; or Relative need (“but for” criterion).
- Applicants who are screened out will be provided with linkage to non-SSVF services that may help address their priority needs as determined in the pre-screening and screening processes.
- HMIS will be updated with the results of the screening process outcome and the enrollment status will change to 1<sup>st</sup> Intake Interview.

## Eligibility Determination

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The SSVF Program serves those Veterans and their families who are homeless, or who are at risk of becoming homeless. Those served will have one or more barriers to obtaining permanent housing, have other identified need for supportive services, and are earning or receiving income adequate to maintain permanent housing at the conclusion of program services.

Those who are homeless may participate if they have barriers to stability that can be addressed in a community-based setting once they are housed, additionally they must be capable of achieving stability with the support of community resources. Those who cannot reasonably be expected to achieve stability within the timeframe of rapid re-housing services should be referred to other, more appropriate housing.

- The goal of eligibility is to verify that potential participants meet all SSVF requirements for participation in the program.
- Intake and Outreach staff, with oversight from Program Coordinators, will assign a Veteran Service Navigator team to the participant and schedule an initial appointment.
- The Veteran Service Navigator and/or Housing Case Manager is responsible for assembling the eligibility information and ensuring outstanding information is collected in a timely manner. Target is three business days from the eligibility meeting, with the understanding that participants and third parties such as employers may not reply on a timely basis. Verification of veteran status via DD-214 is required. Additional required eligibility documentation shall be collected according to the Documentation Checklist.
- Applicants who are found eligible will be assessed by the Veteran Intake Specialist for criteria including Prevention vs. Rapid Re-housing, Threshold score (if Category 1, Prevention), need, likelihood of being successfully housed, likelihood of sustainable stabilization, and overall fit with the program.
- Applicants who are not deemed eligible or not confirmed for enrollment will be provided with linkage to non-SSVF services that may help address their priority needs as determined in the pre-screen, screening, and eligibility processes.
- HMIS will be updated, and applicants who are not enrolled will be considered withdrawn from the program or rejected due to program ineligibility.
- Eligible applicants who are approved for enrollment will be referred to an SSVF Agency. The assigned CM will contact the applicant for an initial appointment.

## **Program Enrollment**

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When an applicant is approved for enrollment into SSVF they will be assigned to a Veteran Service Navigator team. Intake staff will schedule an intake meeting within three business days. At the intake meeting, the Veteran Service Navigator and/or Housing Case Manager will collect all required documentation.

The SSVF Housing Case Manager is responsible for assuring that program participants have the information necessary to complete the online Satisfaction Survey.

Program staff must be able to document the following, prior to providing assistance:

### **1. “But For” Assessment**

- a. Because funds are limited for temporary financial assistance, as part of the initial case management meeting, program staff must determine, “but for” this assistance, would this Veteran be homeless or at-risk for homelessness.

### **2. CES Screening**

- a. SSVF staff will use the HNSCFL Coordinated Entry System’s screening, known as the ‘Big 3’ which includes an intake with the veteran, VI-SPDAT to assess vulnerability/barriers, and release(s) of information to assess the risk of homelessness and to prioritize veteran families most in need. Veterans must score 22 or higher to be considered for homeless prevention. If a Veteran scores less than a 22 but presents as high needs, that case will be case conferenced with the HSNCFCL Veteran Services Program Manager to see if the veteran is eligible. However, all assessment areas (income, housing status, Veteran family status, and housing options/resources) still apply and should be reviewed and documented during the recertification.

The SSVF Housing Case Manager shall have primary responsibility for ensuring the recertification is completed on time with all required documentation.

In the event that program staff is unable to reach a Veteran, the following will occur:

- Staff will make attempts to call and schedule the veteran in holding status at least three times.
- Documentation of all attempts will be captured in HMIS under the case notes.
- If no response from veteran on the fourth attempt, a letter will be sent to the last known address of the Veteran. If there’s an email on file, an email will also be sent to the veteran. A copy of the letter and/or email will be kept in the file. The letter and/or email will also be copied and pasted in the case notes section in HMIS.
- If veteran is reached and still needing services, they be scheduled for a recertification appointment ASAP.
- If the veteran is not reached it will be assumed they are no longer seeking services at this time and an exit letter will be sent to the Veteran’s last known address.

## VII. Fiscal Administration

Temporary financial assistance must be paid directly to a third party on behalf of a participant. Temporary financial assistance must never be paid directly to a participant.

Temporary Assistance	Associated Restrictions	Suggested Documentation
<b>Child Care Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided by “eligible child care provider.”</li> <li>• Max. 10 months in a 2-year period, per child</li> <li>• Max. 6 months in a 12-month period, per child Extremely Low Income<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Max. 12 months in a 2-year period, per child</li> <li>• Max. 9 months in a 12-month period, per child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of invoice for services</li> <li>• Receipt of payment</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No restrictions on public transportation</li> <li>• Max. \$1,200 in car repair in 2-year period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of bill for services</li> <li>• Receipt of payment</li> </ul>
<b>Rental Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible for payments currently due or in arrears (<i>Number of months in arrears paid for with rental assistance counts towards the max. allowable months of assistance</i>).</li> <li>• Penalties or fees (e.g. application fees) must be reasonable and must directly allow participant to obtain/ remain in permanent housing. In compliance with rent reasonableness<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Max. 10 months in a 2-year period.</li> <li>• Max. 6 months in 12-month period.</li> </ul> <p><b>Extremely Low Income</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Max. 12 months in a 2-year period</li> <li>• Max. 9 months in 12-month period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of payment demand from landlord/ management company, clearly identifying participant and unit</li> <li>• Document indicating participant’s portion of rent</li> <li>• Receipt of payment</li> <li>• Signed lease</li> <li>• W9 from landlord required for payment</li> <li>• Required Habitability Standards inspection (if new/different unit)</li> </ul>
<b>Utility Payment Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible for payments currently due or arrears</li> <li>• Participant, legal representative or a member of the household must have an account in his/her name with a utility company or proof of responsibility to make payments.</li> <li>• Max. 10 months in 2-year period</li> <li>• Max. 6 months in 12-month period</li> </ul> <p><b>Extremely Low Income</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Max. 12 months in 2-year period</li> <li>• Max. 9 months in 12-month period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of utility bill, itemized by month</li> <li>• Proof that participant is responsible for payment</li> <li>• Receipt of payment</li> <li>• Required Habitability Standards inspection (if new/different unit)</li> </ul>
<b>Security deposits/ Utility deposits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security deposit assistance limited to one time during a 2-year period</li> <li>• Utility deposit assistance limited to one time during a 2-year period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written statement from landlord/management or utility company that deposit is required. In cases where water and power are not included in rent</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved deposits do not count towards maximum rental assistance limitations.</li> </ul>	<p>and are billed separately, this is to be included in the statement from landlord/t.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed lease or utility agreement</li> <li>Required Habitability Standards inspection (if new/different unit)</li> <li>Receipt of payment</li> </ul>
<b>Moving Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max. of cost of one move to permanent housing during a 2-year period</li> <li>Short-term storage for a max. of 3 months or until participant is in permanent housing, whichever is shorter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of receipts for: moving costs, short-term storage fees</li> <li>Receipt of payment</li> </ul>
<b>General Housing Stability Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max. of \$1,500 per participant household for “four classes” during 2-year period</li> <li>Max. of \$500 per participant household for items for life/safety (falls within \$1,500 max)</li> <li>Broker fees allowable once in a 2-year period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of bill or invoice</li> <li>Copy of receipts for allowable expenses</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency Housing Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max. 45 days for Veteran with dependents</li> <li>Max. 72 hours for single Veterans - extension in limited circumstances up to 45 days.</li> <li>May be used once during 2-year period</li> <li>At least one viable option for a permanent housing unit must be identified for participant who is receiving this assistance.</li> <li>No space available at community shelter</li> <li>Cost must be reasonable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy of invoice and receipt</li> <li>Emergency Housing Assistance Verification Form</li> </ul>

Payments cannot be made on behalf of the participant for the same period and for the same cost types that are being provided for the same participant through another Federal, State or local subsidy program.

### **Accounting Process**

The SSVF sub-grantee(s) will submit their financial packets for reimbursement to the HSNCFI Veteran Services Program Manager by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. The Veteran Services Program Manager will thoroughly review the entire packet to ensure all backup documentation is present. If any documentation is missing, Veteran Services Program Manager will flag it and notify the agency. The Veteran Services Program Assistant will re-review the packet for checks and balances and to ensure nothing is missing.

Once the packet is complete and has all the backup documentation the packet will be turned in to the HSNCFI Grants Account Specialist for review. HSNCFI Grants Account Specialist will review and process the packet.

After review the packet will be turned back in to the Veteran Services Program Manager to sign off on the check. If the Veteran Services Program Manager is not available to sign off on the check, the Deputy Director of Programs and Budgets can sign off on the check as back-up.

The HSNCFI Grants Account Specialist will be the one to draw down the money from the PMS system. Once the money is drawn down a check will be mailed out to the SSVF sub-grantee(s) within 3 days.



## VIII. Administrative Functions

### **Team Meetings**

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The SSVF team will meet regularly. The purpose of these meetings includes, but is not limited to:

- Review status of all cases in the SSVF Program;
- Weekly to discuss active incoming veterans in our by-name list
- Program Supervisor/Manager(s) will engage in weekly Manager Meetings with HSNCF.
- Review and update program and administrative procedures as needed.

### **Decision Making Process**

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The group will function under a consensus based decision making model.

### **Agency Role and Responsibility**

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Each member of the SSVF team will operate in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in this manual. They will achieve the Program Outcomes for the SSVF program. The primary role is to provide direct services to enable those Veterans who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless obtain and sustain appropriate housing.

### **Sub-grantee(s) Contract(S)**

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HSNCFL does sub-contract the direct services to several different community providers. HSNCF maintains all the contracts and addendums for each sub-grantee.

### **Staffing**

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All SSVF Program Staff have written job position descriptions, with performance measures and program expectations.

### **Professional Development**

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All clinical staff will be encouraged to attend professional development activities to enhance skills and keep current in the field.

### **Data Collection**

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Program staff will utilize HMIS for data collection. When data is collected and utilized correctly it is efficient, cost effective and beneficial to the evaluation, review and improvement of the program. Data entered into HMIS will be according to HSNCF's Policies & Procedures and include all required data elements.

### **Veteran Records**

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The primary source for Veteran records will be in HMIS. In addition, each Veteran will have a paper file, with minimal information primarily related to eligibility and re-certification documentation. Paper files will be kept in a secure and locked (or capable of being locked) location to maintain confidentiality. Veteran files maintained in HMIS are kept permanently. Paper files are kept for a period of five years.

## Quality Assurance

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Implementation of policies and procedures, as well as effectiveness will be evaluated annually program staff under the leadership of the HSNCF Veteran Services Program Manager who will consider recommendations for improvements. Program staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the program through:

- Monthly monitoring reports;
- Quarterly indicator reports, and
- Program audits as needed.

## Conflict of Interest

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A Staff Certification form must be completed for each household deemed eligible for assistance. The Staff Certification should be completed and signed by the person determining eligibility and the sub-grantee(s) Program Supervisor/Manager. This form is completed at intake and at all reassessments. The form certifies that the household meets all eligibility criteria for assistance, that true and complete information was used to determine eligibility, and that no conflict of interest exists related to the provision of rapid re-housing assistance.

*Prohibited conflicts, include but are not limited to:* No person who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to activities assisted under the Rapid Re-Housing program, or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to activities assisted under the program, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from an assisted activity; have a financial interest in any contract, subcontract, or agreement with respect to an assisted activity; or have a financial interest in the proceeds derived from an assisted activity, either for him or herself or for those with whom he or she has family or business ties, during his or her tenure or during the one-year period following his or her tenure. The conflict-of interest provisions of this section apply to any person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of HSNCF or any of our sub-contractors.

## Supervision

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HSNCF Veteran Services Program Manager oversees the overall strategy, management and administration of the SSVF Grant as it specifically applies to the Program Guide and the specifications as stated in the grant application.

- a. Provides program and administrative supervision to program team in a manner that promotes growth and professional development.
- b. Ensures program staff is meeting specific program goals through weekly supervision and case/chart review.
- c. Facilitate development and expansion of SSVF program policies within HSNCF.
- d. Facilitate SSVF Team and social work meetings.
- e. Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve operations and work cooperatively and jointly to provide quality services.
- f. Oversee training to direct-service staff in interpersonal communication skills, boundary issues, mental health awareness and other relevant topics.

## IX. Service Point Transactions

This guide covers the most common SSVF Service Transactions created by the case management teams.

### Three Important Notes:

1. Financial assistance Service Transactions are to be attached to the head of household and/or family.
2. Record each service on the date it was provided. If you meet with a client five times, there should be a record for each date.
  - a. The date for financial assistance services should be the date the check was cut.
3. If a check is returned or not cashed, create a Client Note to document this, and amend the client's folder.

<b>Taxonomy Terms</b>	<b>SSVF Services</b>
Rent Payment Assistance / BH-3800.7000	<b>Rental assistance</b> (includes arrears, late fees, & payment assistance)
Utility Service Payment Assistance/ BV-8900.9300	<b>Utility-fee payment assistance</b> (includes arrears & payment assistance)
Utility Deposit Assistance / BV-8900.9150	<b>Deposits</b> (utility)
Rental Deposit Assistance / BH-3800.7250	<b>Deposits</b> (security)
Moving Assistance / BH-5000	<b>Moving costs</b> truck rental, hiring a moving company, or short-term storage fees for a maximum of 3 months
Transportation Expense Assistance /BT-8300	<b>Transportation</b> (public transportation or car repair)
Housing Expense Assistance / BH-3800	<b>General Housing Stability Assistance</b>
Homeless Motel Vouchers / BH-1800.8500-300	<b>Emergency Housing Assistance</b>
Child Care Expense Assistance / NL-3000.1500	<b>Child care</b>
Case/Care Management / PH-1000	<b>Case Management</b>
Information and Referral / TJ-3000	<b>Referrals to any community agency, VASH, VA, Mustard Seed, Legal Services, SOAR, etc.</b>
Relocation Assistance	<b>Relocation Assistance for Disaster Relief Funds Only</b>

**Legal Services Only**

<b>Taxonomy Terms</b>	<b>SSVF Services</b>
Benefits Assistance (FT-1000) (for Service Connected)	Assistance obtaining VA Benefits
Benefits Assistance (FT-1000) (for Social Security)	Assistance in obtaining or coordinating other public benefits
Landlord/Tenant Assistance (FT-4500)	Assistance in obtaining or coordinating other public benefits
Legal Services (FT)	Assistance in obtaining or coordinating other public benefits

## X. Miscellaneous

### **Satisfaction Surveys**

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To ensure that Veteran families are receiving quality services under the SSVF Program, SSVF Program staff must give the VA-designated satisfaction survey to each Veteran within 30 days of the Veteran's pending exit from the program. In situations where a Veteran exits the program unexpectedly, program staff should attempt to follow-up to provide a survey. Surveys are conducted online and in the event that a Veteran does not have access to a computer or computer skills, SSVF Program Staff will offer assistance. In addition to the VA-designated satisfaction survey, SSVF program staff will also provide the veteran with the HSNCFCL paper satisfaction survey.

### **Targeting Households That Require Long-Term Housing Supports**

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SSVF is designed to place Veteran families into permanent housing. Veterans should not be accepted into SSVF based on their placement on HUD-VASH or other permanent housing waiting lists of indeterminate length, as there is a statutory requirement that Veterans accepted into SSVF can be placed into housing within 90 days.

Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) may also be provided by the SSVF grantee under 38 CFR 62.34(f) to offer transition in place when a permanent housing voucher, such as one offered through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program (aka. Section 8), is available from any source, but access to the permanent housing voucher is pending completion of the housing inspection and administrative processes necessary for leasing. In such circumstances, the EHA payment cannot exceed what would otherwise be paid when the voucher is utilized. Note that the Emergency Housing Assistance Verification is NOT used for this request.

### **Collaborative Delivery of HUD-VASH/SSVF Services**

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The VA has a variety of resources available to serve homeless Veterans. Housing First is the guiding approach to the delivery of these services, so it is critical that program resources are employed as supports to housing placement, not barriers. The ability of program staff to screen and assess effectively, will allow Veterans to access the intervention appropriate to their needs.

Based on guidance from the SSVF Program Office the following SSVF/HUDVASH Coordination Policy has been developed.

The policy provides oversight for the coordination of all HUD-VASH in the HSNCFCL SSVF service area. The coordination guidance comes directly from the VA SSVF Program Office.

SSVF will assist HUD-VASH households in the following ways:

1. Targeted case management for non-Veteran household members
2. Temporary financial assistance (i.e. deposit(s), rental assistance, utility assistance,

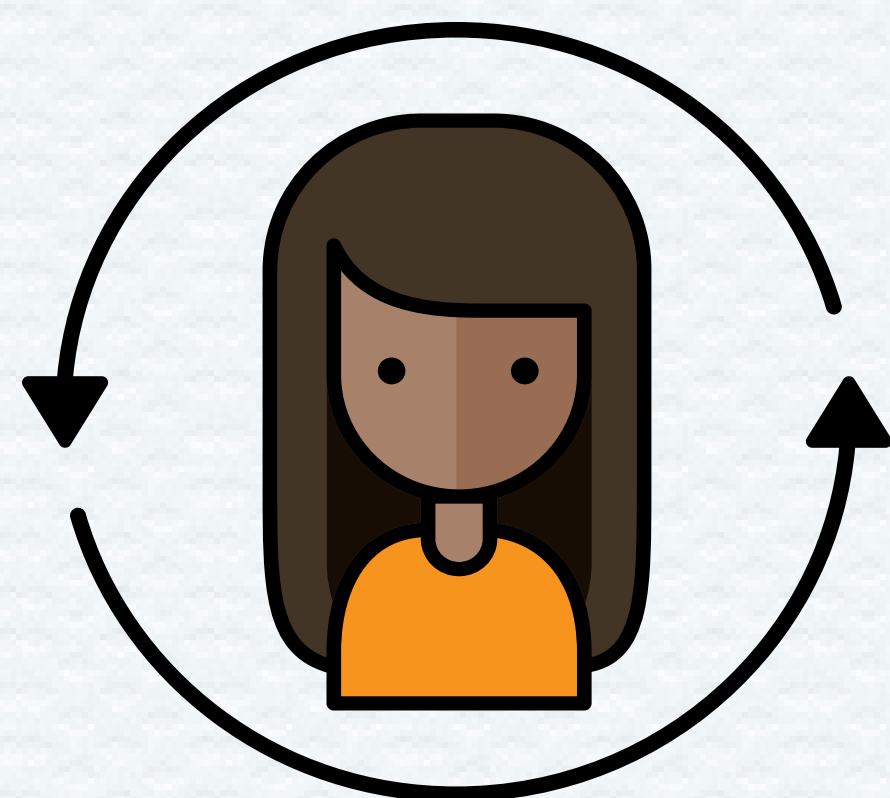
- general housing stability (furniture) )
3. Legal Services for non-veteran household members.

In order to receive SSVF assistance, Veterans in HUD-VASH must:

1. Be enrolled in HUD-VASH
2. Have income less than 30% of the local AMI
3. The Veteran's Social worker must submit the SSVF HUD VASH RRH Packet to HNSCFL for eligibility review.

# Progressive Engagement

Supportive Services for Veteran Families



01 | Veteran Enrolled in SSVF



02 | Develop Case Plan



Increase  
Income



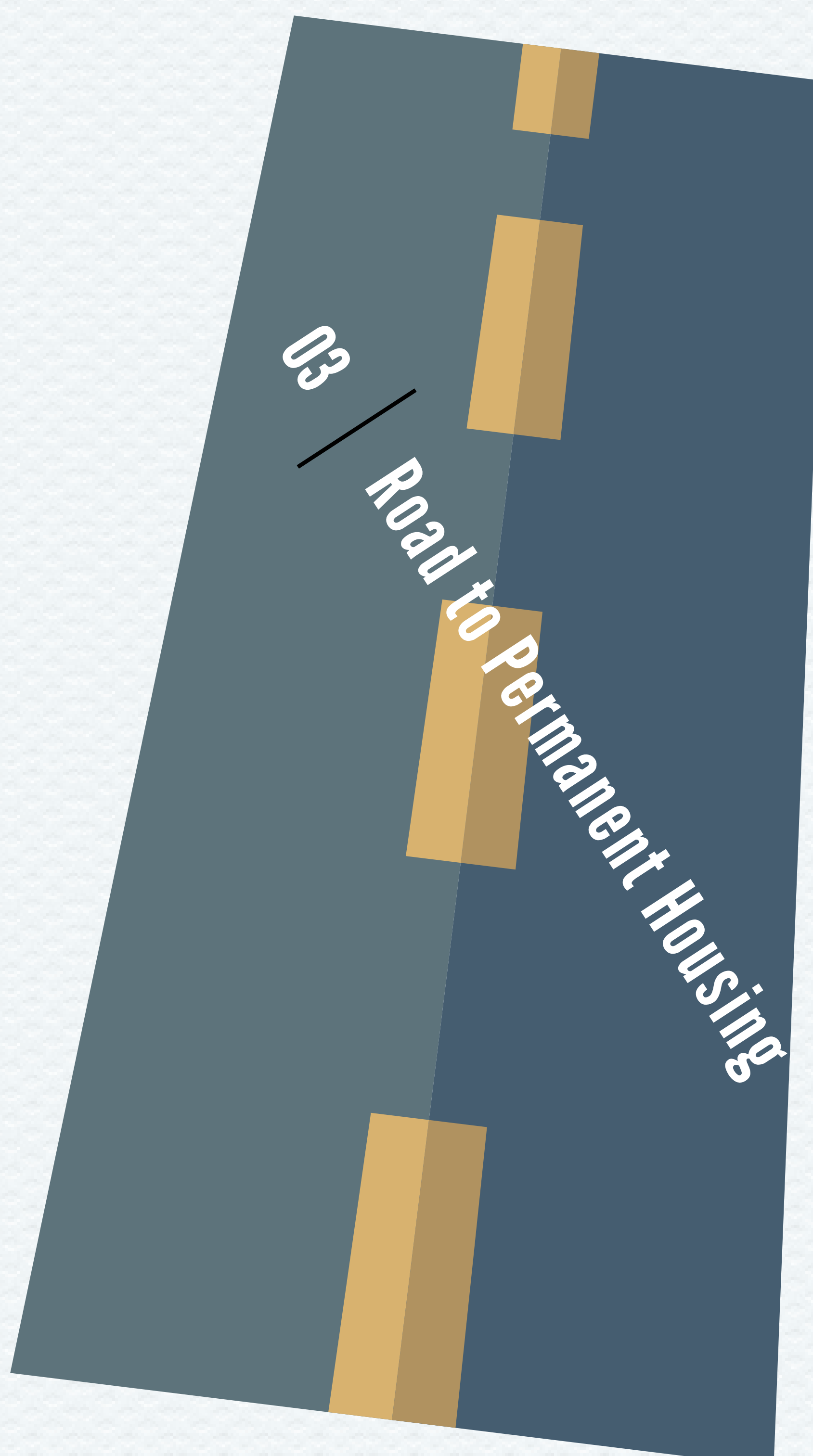
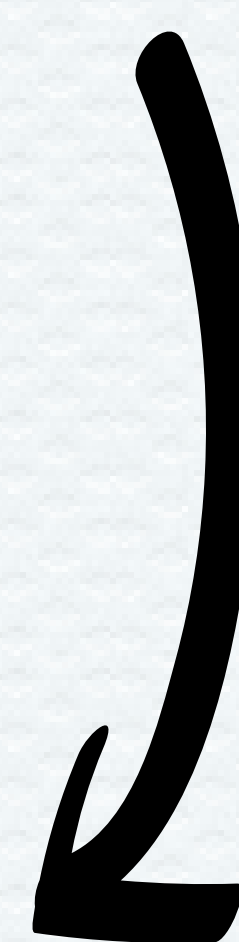
Medical  
(physical)  
needs  
assessed



Mental Health  
and/or  
Substance  
Abuse needs  
assessed



Weekly  
Home  
Visits



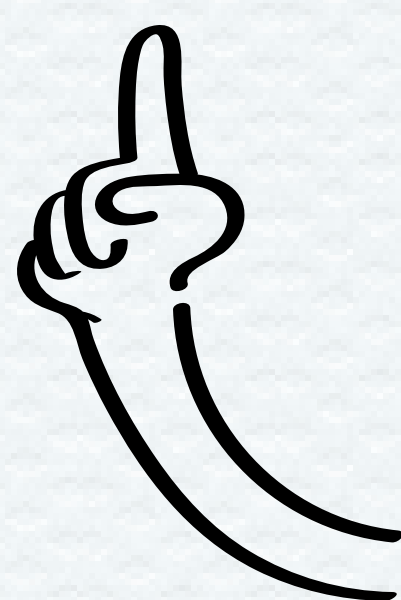
03

Road to Permanent Housing



SSVF RRH

Rapid Re-housing program for Veterans only. This is a short-term program that allows the veteran to self-sustain their house & become self-sufficient.



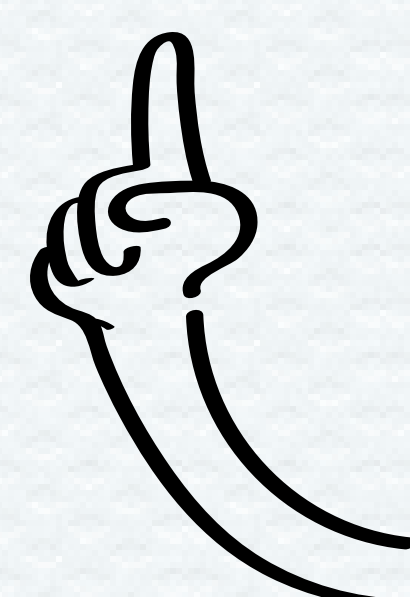
HUD VASH

Permanent Supportive Housing for Chronic Veterans Only. However there is flexibility to allow a non-chronic veteran in the program if they need long term help & cannot self-sustain with SSVF. This program has intensive case management and the veteran must have a clinical need.



PSH

Permanent Supportive Housing for all homeless individuals that are chronic. These clients have been on the streets longer than a year and have a disability.





# Progressive Engagement

Supportive Services for Veteran Families

## #1

### Client enters Coordinated Entry System

#### Coordinated Entry System Workflow

##### Assess

1. ROI
2. Entry Assessment
3. VI-SPDAT

The assessment gathers the needed information to determine basic eligibility and vulnerability of clients in order to route them to the best housing options

##### Referral

Once assessed they are referred in HMIS to the appropriate SSVF agency (RRH or HP) where the clients eligibility is reviewed.

## #3

### Progressive Engagement

## #2

### Client Enters Program

*The goal of Progressive Engagement is to continually reassess the client & move them to the program that they will succeed in. Whether it's staying in SSVF, moving to GPD, PSH, or VASH.*

Months

**0-3**

The first few months enrolled in the program can be very stressful or overwhelming to a client. The case manager will provide the client(s) an introduction on what the SSVF program entails.

Case Managers will ensure that the client(s) are provided with proper financial literacy such as budgeting.

Case Managers will provide linkages to other programs that the client(s) may need such as Snaps, SOAR, VA Health Care, VA Benefits, Healthcare for the family, etc.

The case manager assigned to the case will help develop landlord relationships and ensure that the client understands their lease.

Case Managers are making weekly phone calls and home visits to the client(s) housing, whether it's an emergency shelter, emergency housing, or client is already housed.

Months

**3-6**

Months 3-6 are very paramount to the client's livelihood. The number of home visits will decrease from weekly to monthly with daily check in phone calls. The client(s) should be housed by this point. The case manager assigned to the case will help develop landlord relationships and ensure that the client understands their lease.

These months will help the case manager see if the client can self-sustain on their own in the house or if more help is needed. The extended help could be additional rental assistance from SSVF (depending on how much rental assistance has been used) or a successful exit from SSVF.

However if the case manger notices that neither of those options work out for the client then they can be exploring other options such as Grant Per Diem (GPD), Permanent Supporter Housing (if not VA eligible), or HUD VASH.



**GPD**

Grant Per-Diem Housing can be up to two years. The veteran will live in a facility type of housing and be provided with the tools needed to self-sustain. These tools can range from mental health help, substance abuse help, saving money etc.



**SSVF RRH**

Rapid Re-housing program for Veterans only. This is a short-term program that allows the veteran to self-sustain their house & become self-sufficient.



**PSH**

Permanent Supportive Housing for all homeless individuals that are chronic. These clients have been on the streets longer than a year and have a disability.



**HUD VASH**

Permanent Supportive Housing for Chronic Veterans Only. However there is flexibility to allow a non-chronic veteran in the program if they need long term help & cannot self-sustain with SSVF. This program has intensive case management and the veteran must have a clinical need.