



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ASSISTING VETERANS IN NEED

in

KITSAP COUNTY

Approved by Kitsap County Board of Commissioners

Resolution No:164-2024

Approved October 28, 2024

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References: RCW 73.08 Veterans Assistance, Kitsap County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, Chapter 2.92 Veterans Assistance

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL FOR VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose: Kitsap County is home to a significant number of veterans of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserve components, and Merchant Marine who have faithfully served their country. Kitsap County recognizes and honors the service of all veterans and is especially dedicated to helping indigent and homeless veterans and their families who may be experiencing difficulties.

The overarching goal is to assist all veterans-in-need back into mainstream society and self-sustainment by ensuring they understand all the programs available to them.

The program priority is helping veterans with emergent basic needs. Emergent needs are generally limited to basic needs to survive, such as housing, heat, medicine and food. Needs secondary to those necessary for life are important but might not be addressed by the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). Instead, these needs may be met through a variety of other programs that are widely available to the veteran through other social service agencies.

Because the VAF is a needs based and income tested program, it is neither a veteran benefit or entitlement.

This document has been developed to provide guidance in assisting all veterans in need and provides direction for administration and use of the Kitsap County VAF. The fund was developed in accordance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 73.08 and Kitsap County Ordinance, Title 2, Administration and Personnel, Chapter 2.92 Veterans Assistance and provides for temporary assistance to indigent veterans and their dependent family members.

Assistance from the fund can be provided through contracted vendors.

Contracting for the use of the VAF is the responsibility of Kitsap County through the Department of Human Services with the advice of the Veterans Advisory Board. Kitsap County Board of Commissioners has statutory oversight for the use and expenditures of the fund.

1.2 Source of Funds: Washington state law and the Kitsap County code have established the VAF with a steady source of tax dollars to be utilized for the needs of indigent veterans and their dependent family members. A portion of property tax collected in Kitsap County is earmarked for the VAF.

1.3 Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board: The Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board is a volunteer advisory group appointed by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners to serve veterans residing in Kitsap County. The Veterans Advisory Board is made up of veterans from the community at-large and representatives from nationally recognized veteran organizations within Kitsap County.

1.4 Contracted Services: If contract services are needed to administer the VAF, the County, with the advice of the Veterans Advisory Board, selects contracted organizations through the County's procurement process completed at least once every three years. The County is responsible for all contracts issued through this process.

1.5 Service Administration: Eligible veterans may receive assistance through a variety of contracted agencies, individuals, and organizations. Assistance must be provided to needy individuals without discrimination. Agencies, individuals, and organizations agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, and ordinances relating to nondiscrimination. Two types of services are provided:

- Direct emergency assistance on a temporary and limited basis.
- Ongoing support and assistance through community social service agencies/organizations/individuals that may provide short and long term services to indigent people.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Use of Veterans Assistance Fund: Eligibility is required for any service provided through the VAF. Eligibility to access the VAF is determined by a contracted organization or the staff within the Kitsap County Human Services Department.

2.2 Service Requirements: "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW73.08.005 as; A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service; a member of the women's air forces service pilots during World War II; a United States documented merchant mariner with service aboard an oceangoing vessel operated by the war shipping administration; the office of defense transportation, or their agents, from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946; or a civil service crewmember with service aboard a United States army transport service or United States naval transportation service vessel in oceangoing service from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946 who meets one of the following criteria:

- (A) Served on active duty for at least one hundred eighty days and who was released with an honorable discharge;
- (B) Received an honorable or general under honorable characterization of service with a medical reason for separation for a condition listed as non-existent prior to service, regardless of number of days served; or
- (C) Received an honorable discharge and has received a rating for a service connected disability from the United States department of veteran's affairs regardless of number of days served;
 - (i) A current member honorably serving in the armed forces reserve or national guard who has been activated by presidential call up for purposes other than training;
 - (ii) A former member of the armed forces reserve or national guard who has fulfilled his or her initial military service obligation and was released with an honorable discharge;
 - (iii) A former member of the armed forces reserve or national guard who was released before their term ended and was released with an honorable discharge.
- (D) At the discretion of the county legislative authority and in consultation with Veterans Advisory Board, counties may expand eligibility for the veteran's assistance fund as the county determines necessary, which may include serving veterans with additional discharge characterizations (i.e. general discharge under honorable conditions).

2.3 Documentation of Veteran Status: Documentation includes a DD-214, VA Statement of Service (SOS), or if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge. The Veterans Service Officer or agency staff will assist the veteran in completing a request to receive a copy of their DD-214 as necessary.

2.4 Spouses, Domestic Partners and/or Dependent Children: Spouses, domestic partners as defined by the state of Washington and/or dependent children of deceased veterans may apply for any/all benefits. Spouses must not have remarried and dependent children must not have reached their 18th birthday (or 23rd birthday if they are a full-time student).

2.5 Family Member: A family member of a veteran is defined as a spouse, domestic partner as defined by the state of Washington, veteran's minor and/or dependent children, widow or widower.

2.6 Income Guidelines: The applicant's (including family members of deceased veterans who are applying to use the VAF) net family household income for the last 90 days must equal or fall below 200% of current federal poverty level published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at time of application.

2.6.1 Family/Household Size: The applicant's household size includes the veteran and/or his or her legal dependents. See Section 2.4 and 2.5.

2.6.2 Family Income: Family net income equals monthly net income after allowable deductions as described in paragraph 2.6.3.

2.6.2.1 Applicants must provide proof of all household income. Eligibility cannot be determined until all required documentation is received and validated. Documentation that appears to be altered will not be accepted.

2.6.2.1.1 Applicants who claim no income must provide statements that verify no receipt of benefits. If the client claims no source of income and has maintained a residence for six or more months, household income will be calculated at 100% of the applicant's monthly rental obligation.

2.6.2.1.2 An applicant may have up to \$3,000 in cash, savings, CD and checking to remain eligible for the VAF.

2.6.3 Deductions: Deductible expenses incurred in the past 90 days will be deducted from the applicant's household income. The following deduction will be taken from the income from the following sources which are taxed at the time of payout:

- Earned income - 20%.
- Retirement income -10%.
- Unemployment benefit income - 10%.
- Medicare deduction from social security.
 - Actual payments for child support and spouse maintenance will be deducted from the payer's income for purposes of income determination. Verification must include:
 - Either a court support order, or written declaration by both parties when no court order exists; and
 - Documentation of actual payments made during the period considered to determine eligibility (for example, canceled checks, a collateral statement from spouse or child's guardian, pay stub deductions).

2.7 County Residency: Applicants must provide written documentation of current residency in Kitsap County for at least 60 days at the date of application. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Driver's License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements, and bank statements.

2.8 Unemployed Veterans - Work Search Requirement: Unemployed veterans who are able to work and have not been determined by the state and/or federal government to be fully disabled and unemployable, must be registered with the Veteran's Job Service Section at a local WorkSource office, or with a contractor approved by the Olympic Workforce Development Council, and have applied for unemployment compensation.

Exceptions to this paragraph include one or more of the following:

- Enrolled in a Workforce Investment Act training program or other accredited educational institutions.
- Currently collecting Unemployment Insurance
- Collecting Social Security
- Temporarily disabled for 30 days or longer (documented by a physician)

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

3.1 Overview: The goal is to help veterans and their families with emergent needs. Kitsap County uses recognized veteran's organizations, community service providers and a contracted community agency to provide service. Veterans who do not qualify for VAF assistance are directed towards other resources provided by the contractor and other programs that help the indigent.

Regardless if the veteran does or does not meet VAF criteria, the contractor is charged with assisting all veterans respectfully and in a timely manner.

Funds can be used only when other resources have been exhausted.

Emergent needs are generally limited to basic needs to survive, such as housing, heat, medicine and food. Needs secondary to those necessary for life are important but might not necessarily be addressed by the VAF.

The VAF should not be viewed as a veteran's benefit or entitlement program.

3.2 Maximum Allocation:

3.2.1 Maximum financial benefit for direct individual assistance for an indigent veteran or family member will not exceed \$3,500 of total aggregate services during a twelve-month period for all assistance under section 3 and all of its subsections. An additional \$500 benefit is available in extraordinary situations but must be reported by the contractor to the Veterans Advisory Board in the next monthly report if awarded. An individual veteran or family member cannot receive funding for direct emergency assistance more than two years in a row. A veteran requesting assistance must complete a financial training program before approval is granted to use the fund the second year. A waiver may be made by the Veterans Program Coordinator for those who are experiencing hardship through unforeseen circumstances as covered under paragraph 3.12 below. Neither burial and cremation services nor eviction relief and prevention expenditures apply to the restrictions in this paragraph.

3.2.2 Unemployed veterans must meet the guidelines of paragraph 2.8, Unemployed Veterans - Work Search Requirement. Burial and cremation services, eviction relief, and clean and sober housing assistance may be paid over and above the restrictions stated in paragraph 3.2.1.

- 3.3 Method of Payment:** Individual assistance is provided through a check payable directly to vendors, creditors, landlords, and service agencies on behalf of the veteran. Checks are issued as soon as possible after veteran eligibility is confirmed and requested expenses are verified by the contractor's VAF administrator.
- 3.4 Documentation of Costs:** Costs may be documented by invoice, purchase order, receipt, or bill.
- 3.5 Housing Assistance:** The purpose of this paragraph is to ensure the veteran has shelter for at least 30 days (excluding 3.5.5) after the application approval date by the contractor; however, every effort will be made to place veterans in housing their income level and subsidies will support for at least the next 12 months to offer stability to the veteran and family members.
- 3.5.1 Rental Property:** Veteran must have a written rental or lease agreement displaying the veteran's name and signed by the landlord.
- 3.5.2 Eviction:** Veteran must show proof of eminent danger of eviction including but not limited to a late or delinquent payment letter, eviction notice, or notice to vacate signed by the landlord or property owner.
- 3.5.3 Shared Dwelling:** In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person(not immediate family as described in Section 2.5) the rental amount will be prorated by the number of people living in the house.
- 3.5.4 First Month's Rent Assistance:** Veteran may receive first-last-month's rent and deposit (or a portion thereof) funding to move into housing.
- 3.5.5 Temporary Lodging Assistance:** If no shelter beds are available, applicants may receive assistance for temporary lodging. Applicants must be homeless and too ill to stay in the elements; or have children in their custody; or a new enrollee in a transitional or permanent housing program waiting for placement. Transitional/permanent housing enrollees must be referred with accompanying documentation by the agency offering the housing placement.
- 3.6 Energy or Utilities Assistance:** Veteran may receive funding to pay for heating, electricity, telephone, water or sewer only after working with the utility company on a payment plan and enrolling in utility discount plans.
- 3.6.1 Utilities Notice:** Veteran must demonstrate that he or she is in eminent danger of losing a utility or energy source. Telephone assistance covers only basic services. Cell phone assistance may be provided temporarily but only up to the cost of the carrier's basic plan.
- 3.6.2 Shared Dwelling:** In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with other adults (not immediate family as described in Section 2.5), the utilities assistance costs will be prorated by the number of adults living in the house.
- 3.7 Food Assistance:** A single veteran may receive assistance and a family with children may receive more based-on need and circumstances after exhausting benefits through local food banks. Alcohol, recreational marijuana, and tobacco products are excluded.
- 3.8 Transportation Assistance:** Veteran may temporarily receive transportation assistance to and from work and to keep appointments, for medical or treatment services, social services

(SSI, SSDI, DSHS) or job interviews.

3.8.1. Public Transportation: If the veteran does not own a vehicle or vehicle is inoperable, one bus pass may be issued per month.

3.8.2. Transportation Home. If veteran is seeking assistance to relocate to his or her home state or city where his parents or relatives reside; and they are willing to accept the veteran if he or she returns, the veteran may receive assistance for public transportation to the nearest town or city. Veteran must be able to demonstrate that he or she is homeless and unable to pay for his or her transportation.

3.9 Medical, Dental and Prescription Coverage: Every effort shall be made by the contractor to cause a veteran to enroll in an approved health plan before reimbursement is made for services in this category. A veteran may receive assistance to cover out of pocket expenses associated with co-pays and health plan deductibles for medical, dental, long-term medical needs, or medication prescribed by a licensed medical professional, providing the veteran is enrolled in a VA or other health care insurance plan. A prescription must be in the veteran's name with a price quote from a licensed pharmacy. Costs associated with non-essential services, non-covered health plan benefits, or misuse of the plan, are not covered.

3.10 Burial Assistance: Families or friends of qualified veterans may receive assistance with the cost of burial or cremation of an indigent veteran provided the deceased veteran's total household income was within qualifying income guidelines. The VAF can only be used to supplement the cost of the burial after all other resources have been exhausted. The total authorized shall not exceed \$1,500 dollars and may be awarded in addition to other VAF awards.

3.11 Other Assistance: Veteran may receive other assistance described below.

3.11.1 Auto Repair: Repair or parts necessary to make the vehicle road worthy for the veteran to seek work, attend medical appointments, or maintain employment. In exceptional cases repairs can be made to vehicles to serve in lieu of "transportation home" as described in paragraph 3.8.2 above but not to exceed the cost of the most economical public transportation mode. Veteran must prove ownership, show current registration, and have valid insurance for at least 30 days.

3.11.2 Appliances: Purchase or repair of necessary appliances such as refrigerators, furnaces, ranges etc. Veteran must provide ownership documentation of appliances.

3.11.3 Clothing: Purchase of occupation-required clothing necessary for a veteran to become or remain employed as documented by an employer, or to clothe veterans who are currently unsheltered. Veteran must prove emergent need.

3.11.4 Occupational certification: Funds may be used to pay for occupation certification test fees and/or occupation license fees for otherwise qualified applicants. Veteran must prove emergent need.

3.11.5 Union dues: Funds may be used to pay for delinquent union dues for otherwise qualified applicants if applicant can prove assistance guarantees employment.

3.11.6 Clean & Sober Housing - Up to four months for drug and alcohol rehabilitation in a 12-month period. Benefit is in addition to total amount in paragraph 3.2

3.11.7 Eviction Relief and Prevention- Up to \$5,000 in a 12 month period provided the

Veteran can demonstrate a sustainable financial plan to remain housed over the next 12 months. Benefit is in addition to the total amount in paragraph 3.2.

3.11.8 Personal Hygiene Items - Toiletries may also be purchased under this section that enhance health and personal hygiene.

3.12 Unforeseen Circumstances: If an applicant needs assistance beyond the maximum allowable allocation or in an area not covered under paragraph 3, the contractor may forward the request directly to the Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator for review and approval per paragraph 7.2.6.

4. VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS / VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER (VSO)

4.1 Veteran Organizations/Service Officers: Local chapters of veteran organizations and their volunteer veteran service officers can be natural conduits of information when assisting veterans. They understand veterans' needs and if properly trained can help them apply for benefits on federal and state levels. Many are also familiar with county veteran programs and social services.

4.2 Annual Contact: The County Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator, or a member of the Veterans Advisory Board, will contact the local posts or chapters of veteran service organizations in the month of August to determine if any changes are needed in the Policy and Procedures Manual; and to ensure correct information regarding the names and availability of service officers willing to be the first point of contact for veterans seeking assistance through the county program.

4.3 Assisting in the Application Process: Collectively, fully trained service officers are a well suited point of contact because of their geographical location throughout the county, their experience in working with veterans and their familiarity with veteran programs. In addition, community service providers who are familiar with the Policies and Procedures Manual and received training in the VAF application process by the Kitsap County Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator or designee, may assist the veteran. By guiding a veteran through the county veteran's assistance application packet, the VSO can ensure the veteran has all the proper documentation prior to the veterans scheduling an appointment with the contractor's fund administrator.

4.4 Referral to Contract Service Provider: When the application packet is completed, the VSO or community service provider shall refer the veteran and the application to the nearest office of the contract service provider displayed on the application form.

5. SERVICES THROUGH CONTRACTED AGENCY

5.1 Overview: Kitsap County uses contracts with area agencies to provide assistance to eligible veterans.

5.2 Eligibility: Agency staff will ensure that a veteran meets the eligibility criteria outlined in Chapter 2.

5.3 Basic Agency Requirements: A contracted agency must have the following:

- Washington State Tax Registration Number.
- Employer Identification Number/Social Security Number.
- Business License.
- Proof of professional/general liability and employee fidelity insurance.
- Process to conduct criminal background checks on staff that have contact with the public.

- Proof that agency's facility/program location is American Disabilities Act compliant.
- Provide for security of veteran's information.
- Policies and procedures approved and adopted by the agency's board of directors.
- A copy of the most recent financial statement, audit, or review (including the management letter from a Certified Public Accountant) or alternately, if the agency does not receive an annual audit or review, the most recent financial statements for the agency.
- Information on ability to repay any disallowed costs.
- A list of all members on organization's governing board.
- A copy of the agency's bylaws.
- The primary employee providing service to veterans shall also be a veteran.
- Demonstrate access to other resources that would be available to all veterans including those who do not meet the criteria for VAF assistance.
- Grievance procedure to handle veteran complaints.

5.4 Reporting and data collection: The contracted agency shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, last four of social security number, address along with address of service, type and amount of service and other information as described by contract.

5.4.1 Disposition Reports: The contractor will provide a monthly disposition summary report on all applicants in accordance with the contract to the Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator, Veterans Advisory Board, and the VSOs.

5.4.2 Denied Applications: Veterans or family members whose application to the VAF is denied will be informed of the decision in writing by the contractor. The correspondence will include the reason(s) why the application was denied, and the appeal process.

5.5 Contingency Operations. In the event the contractor is unable to respond to veteran VAF requests in a timely manner or the urgency of a veteran's circumstances dictate, the County's Veteran Program Coordinator may approve applications and forward those approved applications to the designated contractor representative for processing and prompt payment by the contractor's financial management staff per paragraph 7.2.6. The contractor shall assure all data entry for those cases approved and submitted by the Veteran Program Coordinator are accomplished by contractor staff in a timely manner.

6. GRIEVANCE /APPEAL PROCESS

6.1 Filing a Grievance or an Appeal: The contractor will have an in-house grievance or appeal procedure for veterans. The veteran shall be notified of the decision on their grievance within 10 calendar days. If the issue is not resolved internally, the veteran can file a written grievance or appeal to the Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator:

Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator
c/o Kitsap County Human Services Department, 614 Division, Street, MS-23
Port Orchard, WA 98366

6.2 Responding to a Grievance or an Appeal: The Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator generally will acknowledge receipt of the correspondence within three business days by writing to the veteran.

6.3 Review and Determination: The grievance or appeal generally will be reviewed and determined within 30 calendar days of receipt. A written determination will be mailed to

the veteran.

7. KITSAP COUNTY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Fiscal Management: The Human Services Department acts as the fiscal agent for the Veterans Assistance Program and provides the following assistance per county policy and procedures:

7.1.1 Monthly Reimbursements: Process monthly reimbursements to the contracted agencies, for the cost of assistance provided to the veterans.

7.1.2 Oversight: Provide oversight to ensure accountability of funds, including audits as described in service provider contract.

7.1.3 Annual Review: Work with the County Auditor's Office to schedule and perform an annual review of the Veterans Assistance Fund.

7.1.4 Annual Budget: Develop an annual budget, and process budget adjustments through the Supplemental Appropriation hearing process if necessary.

7.1.5 Tracking and Reporting: Compile revenue and expenditure tracking and reporting; perform internal auditing of vouchers and other expenses for compliance with state law and fiscal agency policies and procedures.

7.1.6 Financial Statements: Provide fiscal information to the Veterans Advisory Board, as requested, but at a minimum provide quarterly and annual financial reports.

7.2 Administrative Assistance: The County Human Services Department provides administrative assistance to the Veterans Advisory Board, including the following:

7.2.1 Procurement Process: Prepare Requests for Proposals for the VAF, following the County's procurement procedures. Ensure that all documentation is on file with the County's Purchasing Department. Assist with developing proposal rating sheets.

7.2.2 Contracting: Prepare contracts, reviewed by the Veterans Advisory Board, that allocate funds to assistance organizations awarded contracts through the County's procurement process.

7.2.3 Review: Review contractor performance following the County's risk assessment process. Ensure oversight, documentation, and audits of organizations that make assistance determinations and process costs charged to the VAF. Review includes ensuring that direct service providers have standard performance practices in accordance with county code, state and federal laws.

7.2.4 Planning: Assist the Veterans Advisory Board with its planning process and coordination with federal, state and local agencies and related organizations.

7.2.5 Evaluations: Assist the Veterans Advisory Board with evaluations regarding the effectiveness of programs.

7.2.6 Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator: The coordinator is a Human Services Department employee. The coordinator will provide staff support to the board, which can include recording meeting minutes, arranging facilities for meetings, and providing other services that fall within the realm of a county advisory board. The coordinator will review and approve applications not covered under section 3, review and approve grievances from applicants; and oversee

contracts with outside agencies.

7.2.7 Stand Downs and Other Programs: The Human Services Department will be responsible for coordinating the County's involvement in producing, executing Stand Downs and other programs with the intent of providing for, or improving services to, indigent veterans.

RESOLUTION NO. 164 - 2024

**Resolution Revising the Policy and Procedures Manual for
Assisting Veterans in Need in Kitsap County**

WHEREAS, RCW 73.08 charged the County legislative authority with oversight of the Veterans Assistance Fund; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 2.92 of the Kitsap County Code, readopted on November 6, 2006, requires Kitsap County Board of Commissioners to approve all policies and procedures in administering the Veterans Assistance Fund; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Veterans Assistance Fund is to assist indigent veterans with emergent needs; and

WHEREAS, the need exists to modify the Policy and Procedures Manual to more clearly identify emergent needs, funding limitations, and eligibility criteria.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KITSAP COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, that the Policy and Procedures Manual for Assisting Veterans in Need in Kitsap County be amended as described in Attachment A, effective upon the adoption of this resolution.

ADOPTED this 28 day of October, 2024.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITSAP COUNTY, WASHINGTON


KATHERINE T. WALTERS, Chair


CHRISTINE ROLFES, Commissioner


CHARLOTTE GARRIDO, Commissioner

ATTEST:


Dana Daniels, Clerk of the Board