

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Homelessness Prevention Screening Form

INSTRUCTIONS

Persons applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance (i.e., Category 1 of persons occupying permanent housing) must be screened for VA eligibility and targeting thresholds. Households who meet Stage 1 eligibility requirements but do not pass targeting threshold requirements may only receive “light touch” SSVF services (please see the Program Guide for more information).

Effective October 1, 2015, Eligibility must be determined using the **SSVF Homelessness Prevention Screening Form**. This form must be completed by SSVF grantee staff using information obtained from the head of household. The Screening form is designed to help staff assess and document SSVF eligibility (Stage 1) including 1) Veteran Status, 2) Income Status, and 3) Imminent Risk of Literal Homelessness. The form is also designed to help staff assess and document the targeting criteria a household meets and whether they meet the targeting threshold score established by your SSVF program and approved by the VA SSVF Program Office (Stage 2).

Information recorded in the Screening form must be supported by additional documentation as indicated in the SSVF Program Guide (e.g., proof of income). All screening forms must be signed and dated by the head of household, an authorized SSVF staff person completing the form, and an SSVF program supervisor.

STAGE 1: VA ELIGIBILITY

SSVF grantee staff should assess each applicant household according to the eligibility requirements listed below. To be eligible for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance, **each** of the following VA conditions must be met. Note that SSVF grantees may require additional eligibility criteria in addition to the VA criteria listed below.

Condition 1: Veteran Status: Applicant households must either be a Veteran or a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. A Veteran is *defined* as “a person who served in the active military, naval or air service, other than for training, and was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.”

Condition 2: Very Low-Income Status: Applicant household gross annual income must be less than 50% of area median income based on the income limits most recently published at <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.

Condition 3: Imminently At-Risk of Literal Homelessness: Applicant households must (1) be imminently losing their primary nighttime residence, (2) have no other residence, and (3) not have sufficient resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from becoming literally homeless.

Sections 3A through 3D are used to determine whether a household is at imminent risk of literal homelessness and therefore eligible for SSVF services. The form addresses a number of discussion points for SSVF grantees to use to determine imminent risk of literal homelessness. Staff should use these questions as a starting

point and ask additional questions to better understand an applicant's current circumstances and options. SSVF staff should seek to determine whether the household has safe, viable, immediate options to keep them from becoming literally homeless.

- **Section 3A: Imminent Housing Loss.** This section explores whether a Veteran household has a place to stay tonight and whether they must in fact immediately leave their current housing arrangement. Staff should explore whether the Veteran household could avoid literal homelessness by negotiating directly with their landlord. Staff should also seek to determine if the Veteran household is in immediate need of assistance to ensure they have a safe and appropriate place to stay in the near term.
- **Section 3B: Other Housing Options & Resources.** This section explores whether the Veteran household has other friends, family or close support networks that could assist them in avoiding literal homelessness. SSVF staff should engage in a conversation with the Veteran regarding potential support and use this information to determine whether the household has other housing options and resources available to them. Staff should be particularly mindful of any inappropriate, unsafe, or otherwise unhealthy relationships the Veteran household is reluctant or refuses to pursue and not assume such options are viable to prevent the household's homelessness.
- **Section 3C: Financial Resources.** This section explores whether the Veteran household has financial resources to pay for their immediate housing costs. This may include their own resources or community resources or financial assistance they are eligible for and that is available in time to prevent literal homelessness. This section should still be discussed for planning purposes even if the primary reason for the household losing their current housing is not related to financial need.
- **Section 3D: Other At-Risk Conditions.** To qualify for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance, an applicant household must meet at least one of the following conditions (ask additional questions, as needed, to determine each condition):
 - a) Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 - b) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - c) Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance (note: an eviction does NOT necessarily meet this standard nor does an eviction notice automatically qualify someone for homelessness prevention services)
 - d) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 - e) Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, or correctional institution) without a stable housing plan;
 - f) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved screening tool.

Condition 4: Other Program Eligibility Conditions: This is an optional section for additional Grantee Eligibility Requirements that have been approved by the VA SSVF Program Office.

A Veteran household must meet ALL of the VA eligibility conditions included in Stage 1 on the

form to qualify for and receive SSVF services, including any SSVF Light Touch services. These questions establish basic eligibility but do NOT confirm the Veteran household has passed the targeting threshold (see below) and therefore do NOT confirm eligibility for services beyond Light Touch interventions.

Veterans who do not meet Stage 1 eligibility requirements should be offered information and referral, including a “warm hand off” referral, to other assistance as needed and desired.

Households that meet Stage 1 eligibility should be enrolled in HMIS even though they can only receive Light Touch services. Households who do not pass all of the eligibility criteria should not be enrolled in SSVF and should be tracked as “screened but not enrolled”.

STAGE 2: TARGETING

No Veteran household is eligible to receive more than Light Touch assistance unless they have also met the targeting threshold criteria, as described below.

Each grantee must establish priorities for homelessness prevention assistance based upon the targeting criteria and point system included in the form. Targeting criteria have been identified to help further assess imminent risk of literal homelessness and to prioritize the provision of supportive services to those very low-income Veteran families who are most in need. Points have been assigned to factors based on research and practical experience. SSVF targeting criteria and threshold score must be approved by the VA.

SSVF grantees may use these targeting criteria to prioritize or limit SSVF services for applicant households who score higher or above a minimum threshold (i.e., when the number of eligible Veteran households meeting Stage 1 criteria are greater than the number of prevention households the program is able to serve). SSVF grantees should establish thresholds based upon the number of applicants they anticipate receiving as related to the SSVF prevention resources available. A grantee may establish that the higher the ratio of applicants to capacity, the higher the point threshold. For example, a program that can only accept and assist 10% of the number of eligible households who apply for prevention assistance could set a minimum score of 9 or higher to assign priority, while a program that has capacity to accept and assist 75% of eligible applicants may require only a score of 4.

Additionally, grantees may establish and score other targeting factors. The Stage 2 section includes rows for grantee-specific targeting criteria. Grantee established factors must be approved by the VA and should be assigned scores using a 1 to 3 scale.

Veteran households must meet both the Stage 1 VA Eligibility and Stage 2 Targeting requirements in order to receive the full range of SSVF services, including intensive supportive services (above and beyond Light Touch) and any Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA). The VA expects grantees to use a progressive approach to the delivery of services. This means that even if a household passes both the eligibility and targeting requirements of a given SSVF program, this does not automatically mean that TFA should automatically be offered. Grantees should aim to provide the least intensive and costly intervention possible and only use more intensive services or the provision of TFA when absolutely necessary to prevent a household from becoming literally homeless.