

SSVF AND GPD Transitional Housing CO-ENROLLMENT CONSIDERATIONS DURING COVID-19

Introduction and Context

This document serves to offer basic guidance for SSVF and GPD co-enrollments and transfers recognizing that the nature of the COVID-19 public health crisis continues to evolve. Co-enrollments refer to those time periods where a Veteran is actively open in both programs at the same time, even if briefly. This document will remain in effect for the purposes of planning and local considerations until otherwise noted. This document may be updated over time as conditions change and should help to inform – not replace – local planning and service efforts.

The SSVF and GPD Program Offices have created guidance for decisions on co-enrollments in response to the [current SSVF flexibilities under the Stafford Act](#), the changing nature of the COVID-19 public health crisis, and the nature and availability of safe shelter options. There are some special considerations and circumstances when Veterans may be co-enrolled with both SSVF and GPD. Referral and placement decisions should be made with Veteran choice as a priority, keeping in mind permanent housing goals, available resources, the Veteran's safety and other VA or community partners. VA also recognizes that the COVID-19 crisis led to many Veterans being placed into various emergency housing settings that may no longer fit their current housing and service goals. VA understands that efforts to keep Veterans safe from COVID-19 may have led to enrollments or placements that no longer align with the service and housing needs of many Veterans.

Both SSVF and GPD offer flexibilities that allow for the safe and secure placement for homeless Veterans while they seek permanent housing. COVID-19 remains a serious and persistent health threat to many Veterans. We offer the below guidance with the knowledge that there are times where exception must be made. In situations where there are no other viable, safe emergency options VA homeless programs must always ensure that Veteran safety remains the priority: no Veteran should remain unsheltered or in an unsafe congregate setting while awaiting a decision on alternative housing options. Doing what is best for the Veteran – keeping Veteran safety and well-being at the forefront – should guide all decision-making.

Guiding Principles

Wherever feasible and safe, Veterans should be effectively screened for the most appropriate placement option at time of initial engagement to reduce the need for program transfers in the future. The screening should account for immediate health and safety concerns and, concurrently, the Veteran's longer-term housing and service desires. While a Veteran's choices, needs and housing pathway can change over time, SSVF and GPD providers, along with other community partners, should make every effort to link Veterans to the most appropriate program at the onset of their homeless crisis. While this document outlines guidance for SSVF and GPD, it is important to remember there are other programs that may be a better fit such as HUD-VASH, HCHV CRS, and/or community options. There are four primary points to consider as Veterans are screened for placement:

1. **Veteran safety is priority.** Emergency housing needs to be available on a same-day basis for unsheltered homeless. No Veteran – particularly older Veterans or those with underlying

health conditions - should be left on the street or forced to enter a congregate shelter option if another program can immediately provide emergency housing that is safe (i.e. HCHV CRS, Bridge Housing or other available GPD transitional housing, or hotel placement). [See HPO Policy Guidance on Accessing EH](#)

2. **The Veteran should be at the center of decision making.** Veterans should have full knowledge of the available resources and choices available to them, including the types of programs and the expectations of those programs, so they can make informed decisions about their housing and service plan.
3. **Co-enrollments should involve complementary services rather than duplication of services.** SSVF and GPD play distinct roles in the broader effort to end homelessness among Veterans; however, there are ways the two programs can complement one another toward that goal. This is also true for other VA homeless assistance programs.
4. **SSVF should play a limited role in emergency housing placements** that are expected to last more than 45 days. GPD is a targeted, transitional intervention design to support Veterans who choose to engage in a service-rich, more clinically focused transitional environment before entering permanent housing.

Emergency Housing Assistance (SSVF) vs. Hotel/Motel Assistance in GPD

Veterans who present as literally homeless and in need of shelter should be considered for all appropriate options, which may or may not mean a referral to SSVF or GPD.

- Both SSVF and GPD can offer hotels as part of crisis response based on resource availability.
 - SSVF Emergency housing should be explored only after all other emergency housing options have been explored. SSVF's primary mission is to deliver Rapid Rehousing services to Veterans. If other safe, appropriate shelter options exist for a Veteran then they should be linked to those options before a placement in a hotel or motel paid for by SSVF. There may be instances where it is appropriate to place a Veteran household in SSVF supported hotel/motel emergency housing even if other options are available. Some examples of this need may include keeping families together when family shelter options do not exist in the community, or if a chronically or long-term homeless Veteran with well-established resistance to program involvement is willing to accept EH.
 - Veterans may accept SSVF as a permanent housing pathway but still be co-enrolled in another VA or community option for their emergency housing needs. This may include HCHV CRS, GPD Bridge Housing or other VA non-congregate shelter settings.
 - GPD grantees have the ability to apply for a per diem rate increase to facilitate placement of Veterans safely into hotel/motel, if needed. GPD would provide all necessary services in this instance. (See [Options for Social Isolation](#) document for reference) Veterans entering GPD as part of crisis response must still meet all GPD eligibility criteria and have permanent housing as a goal.
- Veterans who have a desire to work on clinical needs in a transitional setting should be considered for appropriate GPD program models and should not be referred to SSVF for EHA.
- Veterans should not be referred to SSVF for emergency housing assistance with a planned transition into GPD unless there are no other immediate emergency housing options available or

accessible that day. Veterans should be assessed at initial contact for most [appropriate](#) placement option.

- SSVF has the ability to serve Veteran families. Veteran families who cannot access other local or community-based family shelter options may need SSVF emergency housing given other VA programs are generally targeted to individual adult Veterans.

Co-Enrollments or Overlap between GPD and SSVF During Housing Planning

Co-enrollment is sometimes needed in order to combine complimentary services and to ensure effective and efficient service and housing assistance. Please see below for some information that may guide you in the decision-making process in this area.

- Veterans may choose a traditional GPD program but decide to move toward housing more quickly than initially anticipated. In these cases, the Veteran may enroll in SSVF or HUD-VASH as they exit GPD for housing support, at which time SSVF would establish a service relationship with the Veteran and determine whether ongoing SSVF support is needed. GPD would provide non-duplicating services while the Veteran transitions to permanent housing.
- Veterans may choose GPD Bridge Housing if they have accepted or will soon enroll in a permanent housing option. In these cases, they may simultaneously enroll in both SSVF or HUD-VASH and GPD. Enrollment in SSVF or HUD-VASH would have to occur before or slightly after enrollment in GPD. In this instance, there are assigned roles for each program, void of duplication of services. Local program must establish clear protocol for the coordination of these complimentary services to avoid duplication and gaps, and to ensure the Veteran experience is as seamless as possible. This will likely include case conferencing and updates to the Veterans individual service plan. ([See HPO Policy Guidance on Accessing EH](#))
- SSVF typically limits hotel/motel stays to 45 days; however, the Stafford Act has allowed SSVF to remove that limit. SSVF now considers the 45-day limit as guidance that can be exceeded based on the needs of the Veteran household. Veterans may need longer stays based on the availability of affordable housing or the individual circumstance of that Veteran household. Determinations about extended stays in SSVF supported hotels/motels or possible transfer to another EH setting should be done through case conferencing and in close coordination with all parties ([See SSVF February 2021 Case Conferencing Overview](#)).
- SSVF typically allows for a faster track to permanent housing and provides ongoing supportive services once a Veteran is in housing. This is an important consideration in communities where there is no accessible GPD Case Management grant to support Veterans who need aftercare case management in their permanent housing.

The SSVF and GPD Program Offices, along with the broader network of VA homeless programs, understand the nuanced nature of housing and referral discussions at the local level. We strongly encourage proactive, ongoing coordination amongst partners to further the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans while accounting for the intended nature of the various VA homeless service packages. Please continue to review VA guidance as it is released.

For questions or concerns, please contact your program's national office or program point of contact.