

# SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF) PROGRAM

## NATIONAL WEBINAR

APRIL 13, 2023

# PLANNING FOR THE END OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY (PHE)

[Link to Audio](#)

# HOUSEKEEPING

- This call will last for 75 minutes.
- Slides and handouts are in the “handout” section.
- The recording, handouts and slides will be sent via email following the call.
- Submit questions in the question box or any time by email to [ssvf@va.gov](mailto:ssvf@va.gov)

# AGENDA

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Expiring PHE Reminders and Updates
- III. Post-PHE planning and prioritization
- IV. Grantee Presentation: Featherfist, Inc., Chicago, IL
- V. Q&A

## PRESENTERS, FACILITATORS AND SUPPORT

- Rico Aiello, SSVF Compliance Officer
- Jennifer Colbert, SSVF Regional Coordinator Supervisor
- Cindy Spencer, SSVF Regional Coordinator Supervisor
- Abraham House-EL, Featherfist Chicago
- Douglas Tetrault, Technical Assistance (TA) Team, Technical Assistance Collaborative
- Matt Leslie, TA Team, Technical Assistance Collaborative
- Randy McCoy, TA Team, Abt Associates

# EXPIRING PHE REMINDERS AND UPDATES



## MAJOR CHANGES

- Limits on the number of months of rental assistance over a 2-year period are going back into effect.
- Limits on the number of months of utility assistance over a 2-year period are going back into effect.
- Limits on Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) timelines are going back into effect.
- The \$500 limit on food as part of General Housing Stability Assistance (GHSA) is going back into effect.

# RECERTIFICATIONS

- SSVF grantees must follow the standard recertification process (i.e., recertify every 90 days from the date of enrollment) per the [SSVF Program Guide](#).
- Veterans receiving Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) as of May 11, 2023, will have their TFA limits reset, with an effective start date of June 1, 2023.
- Rental and Utility Assistance for June 2023 will represent month 1 of assistance for calculating the months of assistance provided for Veterans enrolled on or before May 11, 2023.
- EHA limitations reset for Veterans in hotels or motels as of May 11, 2023. The 60-day time limit will apply moving forward beginning on May 12, 2023.
- For Veterans who enroll in SSVF after May 11, 2023, SSVF grantees must follow the traditional guidelines and TFA limitations.
- Veterans participating in Shallow Subsidy do not need to be recertified until month 24 of service from the date of their transition to shallow subsidy service.

# SSVF SERVICES AND TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TIMELINES



# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>Rental Assistance</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For Extremely Low-income (ELI) Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in any 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Utility Assistance</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For ELI Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in any 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Security Deposits or Utility Deposits</b>	Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period for a security deposit. Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period for utility deposit	Original Regulation
<b>Moving costs</b>	Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period.	Original Regulation

# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>GHSA</b>	Maximum of \$1,948 during a 2-year period (includes \$500 for emergency supplies).	Updated Regulation
<b>Childcare</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For ELI Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in a 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Transportation</b>	For tokens, vouchers, etc., no limit. For automobile repairs or maintenance, a maximum of \$1,200 during a 2-year period.	Original Regulation
<b>EHA</b>	Limited 60 days. Limited to one instance in a 2-year period	Updated Regulation

# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>Rapid Resolution Targeted Assistance</b>	One time host payments or other costs, with conditions.	New Permanent TFA Category (2019)
<b>Shallow Subsidy Assistance</b>	Requires a 2-year commitment once the Veteran certified into service. Maximum 50% of unit rent. Veteran households between 30-80% Area Median Income (AMI) can receive 2 years of rental assistance minus X months of traditional rental assistance received. Veterans at or below 30% AMI are eligible for a full two years of rental assistance.	New Permanent TFA Category (2021)
<b>Landlord Incentives/Resources to Secure Permanent Housing</b>	Up to 2 months value of lease rent for high barrier Veterans and where necessary for Veterans to access permanent housing.	New Permanent TFA Category (2022)
<b>Tenant Incentives/Miscellaneous Move In Costs</b>	Up to \$1,000 in goods for items of Veterans' choosing that create normal comforts of permanent housing; above and separate from General Housing Stability Assistance.	New Permanent TFA Category (2022)

# POST-PHE PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION

# VETERAN CASE CONFERENCING AND HOUSING PLAN PRIORITIES

SSVF grantees should prioritize efforts in the following order:

- **Priority 1: Moving Veterans in Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) into permanent housing.**
  - This includes long-term stayers who have been in EHA for many months and those Veterans without a clear housing path within their EHA allowable period.
- **Priority 2: Strengthening plans for Veterans in Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Homelessness Prevention (HP) who are long-term stayers or do not have clear exit or transfer pathways.**
  - Long-term stayers are those who have received more than the allowable months of TFA under traditional limits. The focus should be on long-term stayers who cannot afford rent under Shallow Subsidy (50% of rent) or have significant services or clinical service needs.
- **Priority 3: Strengthening plans for Veterans in RRH and HP who are short- or medium-term stayers with prospects of exiting on their own or with Shallow Subsidy who are not at immediate risk of losing housing or SSVF support.**
  - Short- and medium-term stayers are those who have received TFA within the traditional limits.
- **Priority 4: Strengthening plans for Veterans receiving Shallow Subsidy services who may be coming up on the end of the initial Shallow Subsidy commitment period.**

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIORITIZING VETERANS IN EHA

- Engage in highly focused rehousing efforts with coordinated housing navigation and services, including:
  - Community-level landlord engagement efforts to bring new units into your portfolio.
  - Rapid Resolution efforts for those with other options within their own network that can end their housing crisis quickly.
  - Possibly prioritizing incentives for Veterans in EHA, given that many face significant housing barriers.
  - Offering shared housing options to Veterans willing or wanting a roommate to achieve affordability.
- Develop plans for messaging and communicating with Veterans and partners to provide awareness and clarification on the returning program limitations.
- Consider referrals to Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) or Continuum of Care (CoC) permanent supportive housing (PSH) services: For Veterans needing long-term rental assistance with clinical services, identify cases early to allow for screening and referral. Note that coordinated entry processes may apply.
- Review other appropriate interim housing options (e.g., Health Care for Homeless Veterans Contracted Residential Services, Grant & Per Diem [GPD], and community beds) for those Veterans who will not be housed in time; maintain SSVF enrollment for housing services even for Veterans utilizing other EHA options, where appropriate.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIORITIZING VETERANS IN RRH OR HP

- Review cases to identify Veterans who can begin exit planning to assume the full cost of their rent and do not need continuing services.
- Review Veterans who can pay 50% of the rental costs can be transitioned to Shallow Subsidy, allowing them to maintain a rental subsidy and services.
- Identify Veterans who cannot sustain themselves or with Shallow Subsidy and consider referrals to HUD-VASH or other supportive housing programs through the CoC.
- Consider referrals to enhance income maximization for Veteran households, including:
  - The Department of Labor's (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) and other VA or community employment services.
  - Veterans Benefits Administration service and non-service connected benefits.
  - Social Security Administration benefits.
  - Legal services.

# IMPROVING COORDINATION WITH OTHER VA OR COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Some Veterans will need temporary or permanent housing options outside of SSVF services. Improving coordination with other programs will allow these Veterans to develop successful housing plans.

These programs include:

- Progressive assistance that allows transfer to HUD-VASH for those Veterans who cannot maintain housing without permanent subsidy and clinical support.
- CoC programs that offer additional RRH or PSH options for Veterans that need ongoing rental assistance. This may require a closer partnership with coordinated entry processes.
- GPD, which offers transitional housing options for Veterans who have been long-term stayers in EHA without desire or pathway toward permanent housing. GPD may also need to play a greater EHA/temporary role, given SSVF limitations.
- VA Geriatric and Extended Care (GEC) programs: Housing and services for older Veterans with high service or clinical needs may require more intensive services or residential living programs.
- HVRP and other DOL employment services to increase and maximize Veteran's income



## COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Ensure VA and community partners are aware of upcoming changes, particularly for communities where SSVF still provides significant levels of EHA.
- Begin communicating limitations to Veterans, especially those who have been enrolled or housed with SSVF support for long periods of time.
- Grantees will need to coordinate at the local level to address any anticipated prioritization changes related to current capacity enrollments and ongoing referrals.
- Engage or re-engage case conferencing to review high-priority unhoused Veterans for RRH.
- Engage or re-engage case conferencing to review Veterans unable to establish housing stability to mitigate against returns to literal homelessness.
- Ensure relevant or affected landlords understand changes for individual Veteran households, as needed.

# PLANNING FOR FUTURE SERVICE PROVISION

## EHA

- Consider SSVF as a last resort for EHA placements.
- Justify EHA by ensuring a general housing plan is in place upon entry.
- For more information, read the [Emergency Housing Assistance Guidance](#).

## HP

- Review HP Screener and adjust the threshold score as needed to reflect currently available resources.
- Review current HP and eviction prevention resources in the community (HUD, state or local) to ensure SSVF RRH demand can be met.

## Program Administration

- **Staff Training:** Create opportunities for staff and supervisors to share information, ensuring frontline staff are educated about allowable timelines, costs and RRH practices.
- **Exit Planning and Case Conferencing:** Ensure housing stability plan is appropriate, additional referrals or resources are provided to Veteran households, and future services are appropriate for housing stability. Creating opportunities for staff and supervisors to share information and effectively plan will be critical.
- **Service Coordination and Exit Planning:** Ensure that all staff, including housing and health care navigators and legal service partners are part of the conversation. Planning meetings with the full team can facilitate comprehensive exit planning and mitigate returns to homelessness.

## Grantees are strongly encouraged to review:

- March 9, 2023, [Expiration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency \(PHE\) and Stafford Act Flexibilities Webinar](#)
- March 24, 2023, [SSVF End of Public Health Emergency Declaration and Stafford Act Flexibilities Follow Up Webinar](#)
- [SSVF TFA Limit Overview](#)
- [Shallow Subsidy Two Pager](#)
- [SSVF YouTube Page](#) which holds all webinar recordings

# **EXPIRATION OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY (PHE) AND STAFFORD ACT FLEXIBILITIES**

**From a Grassroots, Social Service, Nonprofit  
Organization Perspective; “What will this mean  
to us”?**

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Featherfist - SSVF Program Coordinator  
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# Day 1 of Enrollment:

- Veterans who enroll in our SSVF Program on Day 1 are informed that their “Exit Strategy” begins today.
- Being a client-centered organization, we want to know what it is that the veteran expects to get out of our program?
- How long do they see themselves in need of our assistance?
- If they are enrolling with insufficient income, what is the organization strategy for assisting the veteran with establishing a meaningful income?

# Housing:

- We apply a Housing First Approach to all veteran households.
- This is not always easy since our staff cannot impose any preconditions and barriers to entry.
- While we do drug screen a small percentage of our program participants, we immediately let them know the results will not disqualify them for housing.
- We have an in-house housing department solely responsible for securing housing for our program participants. Veterans are given their own Housing Locator who will assist in the housing search.
- We maintain a large list of realtors / landlords who we have a working relationship with. They know they can reach a staff person day or night if needed.
- Our normal timeframe to get a veteran housed is anywhere from 7-35 days.

# Landlord Incentives

**While landlords are happy to accept additional funds for housing a military veteran, our landlords are more concerned about, “What’s going to happen when I start having issues / challenges with your veteran”?**

**Some of the things that our organization commits to:**

- Providing that landlord with a phone number of a staff person that will answer their phone when the landlord calls.
- For veterans that revert to active addiction, how will the organization respond to the matter?
- Will a staff person come out here and check on a veteran if called?
- What will happen when the veteran stops paying their portion of rent?

# Employment / Legal Services

- Utilizing an in-house employment specialist has proven to be extremely successful as our employment specialist right now has a 95% success rate.
- For those veterans who prefer to work with an outside organization for employment...we strongly recommend / suggest they work with a community HVRP Provider.
  
- We have retained the services of The Village Legal & Community Project.
- They assist our veterans with a list of approved legal services that enhance their housing stability.
- They take the pressure off our case managers by handling landlord tenant issues.
- Landlords are no longer quick to threaten our veterans with evictions when our attorney contact them representing our veterans.



# Shallow Subsidy

## Lessons Learned in Shallow Subsidy Services and Supports

- With over 175 veterans enrolled in our Shallow Subsidy intervention, more than 50% of them are still in need of Intensive Case Management Services”.
- Veterans paying their Tenant Portion Payment (TPP) of rent remains a challenge.
- Veterans that feel if the VA is going to pay 50% of my rent, I’m going to move into a much larger unit.
- The Public Health Emergency Act has caused many veterans to state frequently how they are not able to pay their utilities this month.
- Overall, Shallow Subsidy has prevented a measurable number of veterans from returning to homelessness.
- Less than 2% of Featherfist Shallow Subsidy veterans have returned to homelessness.

# QUESTIONS

