

Overview of Rapid Resolution with Veteran Households

Engaging Veterans immediately before or very soon after they become homeless and quickly assisting them by resolving the immediate crisis can reduce the trauma and negative impacts of homelessness on the Veteran and their family. Doing so can also assist the community in reducing the inflow into the homelessness system of care.

Through Rapid Resolution, a Veteran is engaged in a deeper-level conversation about safe, alternative housing options so that shelter can be avoided. The housing option could be staying where they were the night before or finding another temporary housing location. That temporary housing location might turn into a permanent location or it may not. The household might stay in the temporary housing location for one night, several nights, a month, or longer. SSVF can continue to follow-up with the household once they are in a temporary housing location to plan for a permanent housing solution. SSVF can also refer the household to VA and other community resources that might help stabilize their situation and prevent them from entering shelter.

The Rapid Resolution process should include a guided conversation with the person to determine their situation, their available supports and resources, and how SSVF might help them avoid shelter. This conversation should be collaborative, strengths-based, and focused on action steps that the Veteran and the SSVF staff can take to avoid shelter. This guided conversation should not be an intake assessment.

Meeting with Veteran Households

If you will be meeting households in person, try to create a private, quiet space to help put participants at ease while they work through their crisis with you. Set up the meeting space and meeting practices to foster trust building with the participant—minimize note taking, actively listen, and work together in partnership with the person to identify options and take next steps.

A key component to this process is listening carefully to both what is said, and not said by the person. Observe body language. Use open-ended questions to elicit information. Questions for the participant should build on each other and help identify potential temporary housing locations and available networks and personal supports that the person, in their crisis and stress, may have overlooked, or written off. Listen carefully and assume that you can help the participant find another/better situation than entering the shelter system. While this may not always be true, we need to act and work as if it is a good possibility. We want to help someone who is in very real crisis be able to think creatively and positively about their temporary housing options.

If at any point in the conversation the person identifies a possible temporary or permanent housing option, pivot to taking action steps with the person to confirm that the housing is available. Assist the person to make the necessary arrangements. It is not necessary to go through each step if housing has been identified and can be secured now. We will get back in touch with them the next day to talk about the next steps needed for a more permanent resolution including permanent housing

After understanding their situation, the goal is to move to action with them to identify and secure a safe, temporary housing location. Activities you may use in this process could include: coaching and problem-solving; conflict resolution and mediation (with landlords and/or friends and/or family); connection to mainstream resources; housing search assistance and stabilization planning.

SSVF has some resources that can be used to help someone return to a safe place. Offer these resources using a Progressive Engagement/Assistance model—offering just what is needed to address the housing crisis, not more. Your community may also have other non-SSVF resources to offer. Before these conversations happen, know what resources you have available so you can offer them on the spot if it will help resolve the housing crisis. Be prepared to respond to a specific request from the person but also work through other possible options.

Enrollment in SSVF

Your initial conversation with the Veteran may not get to all the information you need to enroll them in SSVF. As with the Outreach services you already provide to people who are assisted but not enrolled, the first step of helping them find a safe place for “tonight” can be accomplished without enrollment.

Following up the next day with the Veteran the next day is critical. After you have assisted them in being safe for the night, you now need to switch to how to find a more “permanent” solution. Further conversation with family/friends about staying 90+ days, enrollment in SSVF RRH or Prevention Assistance, referral to other COC resources are all going to be explored. ***Before you end today’s initial conversation, set a time to meet with the Veteran the very next day.*** At that meeting you are going to explore the questions that will allow you to enroll the Veteran (see Step 6 below). Once you have determined that they can be enrolled as “Pending Verification of Veteran Status”, or not, you will know the next steps of connecting the Veteran to the appropriate resources to address their housing crisis in a longer-term manner.

NOTE: *This conversation needs to be fluid. If the staff person conducting the conversation feels that the Veteran is comfortable and is being open to the discussion, and you have the time, go ahead and attempt to address a longer-term solution. This applies to enrollment questions and other kinds of information you may need to address longer term needs as well.*

This document is designed to help guide your conversation. This is not meant to be a script—the sample language and questions are suggestions. Staff should use an informal, supportive conversation style and active listening to work together with the participant to identify housing and support solutions.

STEP 1: Introduce yourself and the goal of the appointment

“Hi, my name is _____ and I work for _____. Our goal is to learn more about your housing situation right now and what you need. Together, we’re going to identify a safe place for you to stay tonight and find safe, permanent housing as quickly as possible. That might mean staying in an emergency accommodation—like a shelter—tonight, but we want to avoid that if at all possible. We’re going to work together to find a more stable alternative if we can.”

STEP 2: Determine preliminary eligibility for SSVF Rapid Resolution and household composition. If they don’t meet preliminary eligibility, refer (through a warm hand-off) to the appropriate CoC partner for assistance.

Have you served in the military? Are you a Veteran?

What is your income? [Is it under 50% AMI?]

Who is in your household (family, friends, partner, roommate)?

Self-declarations of Veteran status and income can be used. Assume SSVF Pending Verification of Veteran Status and SSVF Self-Declaration of Income at this point.

STEP 3: Active Listening—ask the person what brought them to seek assistance today and to share their current housing situation. Let them share and listen actively.

What led you to reach out to us today?

Tell me a little bit about your current situation.

Are you fleeing domestic violence or is there any other potential harm to your safety?

STEP 4: Explore housing options & social supports

Where and with whom did you stay last night?

Would it be safe to stay there tonight? A couple of days? A week?

Why did you need to leave? Are there other reasons you needed to leave?

Could you stay there again if we provided you or them with some help or services?

Tell me about your family, friends and other people important to you. Where are they? Are they available to help you? Would they be available to help you if we provided you or them with some help or services?

STEP 5: Selecting an option—help the person choose the best available option (staying with family or friend or receiving help from family/friend to pay for a night at a hotel, etc.). If shelter is the only viable option, assist them to access shelter for the night and let them know that you'll talk with them the next day about housing.

Assess if the option is safe.

Options could include going back to living with family or friends, relocating to a safe place in another area, or going into shelter.

STEP 6: If you feel that financial assistance may need to be on the table for this Veteran, you will need to establish SSVF preliminary eligibility by getting these questions answered. If it feels inappropriate to go into these questions at this time, then wait for the next day after getting the Veteran set for the night, but understand that you cannot offer financial assistance YET. The questions are:

- Were you discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or discharged for reason of General Court-Martial?
- What is your family size?
- What is your total gross income from all sources (ball park)
- You can then determine whether they are at 50% AMI

STEP 7: Action steps—provide the person with the assistance they need to secure the best option.

Example Action Steps could include:

Calling the landlord or family or friends to mediate a conflict or assist with the arrangements.

Helping the participant to call family or friends.

Referring to resources.

Providing financial assistance (if you have determined they are eligible for SSVF).

If a housing option is not possible tonight, assist them to access shelter for the night and make a plan for the program to be in touch with them the next day to talk with them about housing.

As the practice of rapid resolution is continuing to evolve, this tool was put together through a review of promising practices around the country.