

# SSVF Rapid Resolution Practice Training

## Considerations and Guidance

Rapid Resolution is an intervention designed to assist Veterans upon contact with the crisis response system in attempt to divert a homeless episode, or immediately after entry into the emergency shelter system with the goal of rapidly resolving the homeless episode. When a Veteran reaches out for assistance with a housing crisis, practitioners start the process of engaging them in a conversation that explores alternatives to becoming or remaining homeless and potential assistance needed to access those alternatives. Assistance can include supportive services to mediate with a landlord, resolve conflicts or concerns with a family member, or connect to support networks in other places. Through active-listening, staff learn about the person's housing crisis and what their support network looks like. The conversation can be a deep exploration of social network relationships, potential safe housing alternatives, and community resources. After a safe place to stay is identified, whether it is for a night, or a few nights, or a longer period of time, staff can then provide the Veteran with services to address the other needs they have.

SSVF introduced Rapid Resolution as a newly allowable intervention in 2018. Since that time, grantees have requested additional guidance on what trainings are important and appropriate for staff engaged in Rapid Resolution conversations and services. This document is intended to describe recommended trainings, and to help grantees assess their progress in training staff for Rapid Resolution and prioritize which trainings staff should receive. The SSVF Program Office expects grantees to identify and access free and low cost web-based or local trainings, when feasible, to support and reinforce the key skills needed to facilitate successful Rapid Resolution interventions.

**The intent of this document is to guide SSVF grantees through assessing their internal training gaps in the core skills associated with Rapid Resolution so they can make informed decisions regarding direct practice training needs. This document does not go into detail about system implementation or coordination training needs; the SSVF Program office has and will continue, through in person and web-based engagements, to support grantees in their efforts to implement and coordinate Rapid Resolution in their communities.** Grantees must work with staff, managers and system stakeholders to determine where and how Rapid Resolution fits into their unique local system.

SSVF grantees should direct all training questions to their Regional Coordinators.

## Section I: Training Topics and Focus

The effective implementation of Rapid Resolution is highly dependent on having grantee and community partner staff trained on and/or proficient in a core set of skills needed to successfully assist households to connect with natural supports to avoid or quickly exit a literal homeless situation. SSVF grantees should first consider training needs for SSVF staff, but also engage with key partners and stakeholders throughout the CoC and local VA system to coordinate joint or mutual training opportunities where possible.

### Rapid resolution – Core Skills

While Rapid Resolution is still an emerging practice, early learning has shown that proficiency in the following three core domains are helpful and often necessary to effectively provide Rapid Resolution interventions. The definitions provided are general in nature and not exclusive to other training opportunities with similar titles or names.

#### 1. Mediation, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution

- Mediation is a dynamic, structured, interactive process where a neutral third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflict through the use of specialized communication and negotiation techniques.
- Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution.
- Ability to act as a neutral and unbiased third-party coach or mediator to assist clients with addressing conflicts that have led to their housing crisis or could endanger their ability to be housed.

- Comfortable with negotiating and mediating between landlords, property managers, friends, family, and/or neighbors.
- Ability to remain calm and de-escalate tense situations.

## 2. Safety planning and Trauma Informed Care

- Ability to recognize signs of distress, domestic violence, mental illness, or other emergency situations that may require immediate action (i.e., referral to DV provider or to a hospital).
- Keen awareness of emergency resources and provider networks to ensure swift referral or safety planning.
- Ability to provide services in a trauma-informed, client centered way.

## 3. Active and Attentive Listening

- Active listening requires the listener to fully concentrate on what is being said as well as what is not being said and be observant of body language and demeanor of the client. Staff should also ensure their own body language is open and relaxed, that they make eye contact with the client.
- Ability to listen without interrupting while asking open-ended questions without following a script.
- Ability to remain neutral and non-judgmental and not make assumptions or view situation through personal biases.
- Comfortable with periods of silence to allow the person time to explore their thoughts and feelings.
- Ability to paraphrasing and summarize back to the person to check you understand them correctly.

## Other Training Considerations

- **Motivational Interviewing** – training on the methods used to help individuals in the process of change by resolving feelings of ambivalence and insecurities through exploring internal motivations.
- **Boundaries** – training on placing an individual’s needs first and foremost, while also considering dynamics of trust, power, respect and closeness.
- **Strengths-Based Services** – training that focuses on an individuals’ self-determination and strengths rather than focusing on an individual’s deficits and problems.
- **Progressive engagement** – training that assess for the least amount of assistance needed to stabilize an individual’s housing crisis.
- **Supervision and Coaching** – training management staff on how to support staff morale, encouragement, team building, problem solving with staff, setting realistic expectations, discussing ethical/safety situations as they come up.

### Get Creative!

One SSVF Grantee has partnered with a professor in a local university’s social work department. They reviewed with the professor the guidance SSVF has provided and working closely with the professor, they were able to establish a tailored curriculum that had the right amount of training on identified topics for a relatively inexpensive cost to the Grantee.

## Section II: What Makes a Good Training?

Many entities offer trainings with titles similar to or exactly like the ones mentioned in Section I. Once a SSVF grantee has located these trainings, they need to determine if the training will focus on skills needed for Rapid Resolution. Many communities may offer a “Motivational Interviewing” training, but is it focusing on the skills your team needs? This Section is intended to help you answer the question “How can you assess whether or not trainings will provide your staff with the training they need?”

### Practical Application

Trainings should focus on the practical application of new or improved skills. This means that the trainings should include role playing and/or scenarios that help the staff apply what they are learning to real-life scenarios. The scenarios

should be applicable to staff conducting Rapid Resolution conversations and appropriate for their work. A training that is strictly a didactic presentation is not ideal.

### Tailored Trainings

Some organizations provide “off the shelf” products that provide skills training that may or may not apply to a community’s Rapid Resolution needs. These trainings can be effective, but SSVF grantees should also look for opportunities to tailor trainings to their specific program design and staff skills gaps. It is important to know how willing the training entity is to adapting their material to Rapid Resolution’s unique needs before entering into a contract with the training provider.

#### Think Outside the Box!

One rural SSVF Grantee knew that they would be conducting most Rapid Resolution conversations on the phone. They reached out to a local suicide prevention hotline for training on how to build connections and empathy over the phone.

#### Cost

Cost is an important consideration for grantees and communities. The SSVF Program office has long supported, through SSVF grants, the ability for grantees to attend and acquire training that will help staff better serve Veterans. Grant size, year-to-date spending and other budget considerations are unique to each grantee. Regardless, grantees should pursue ways to minimize training costs. Grantees should negotiate with the training agency to make sure the training is tailored, practical, and cost effective. Additionally, grantees are encouraged to share the cost with other grantees that serve the CoC, other CoC partner organizations, and

the CoC itself. Grantees are also encouraged to pursue additional funding through community resources or identify free or low-cost trainings to supplement more formal engagements. This includes free or low cost online or web-based trainings that can help supplement training needs and reinforce key practices over time.

### Other Training Topics and Needs

This document provides a list of core skill domains that should help SSVF grantees identify training needs for Rapid Resolution, but this is not a complete list. As you implement Rapid Resolution, you may see other skills needs and find trainings not listed here that would be helpful to your community. Grantees should discuss these trainings with their Regional Coordinators and make a plan to provide them to their staff.

## Section III: Self-Assessment

SSVF grantees need to assess what types of training their staff needs in order to most effectively provide Rapid Resolution services. The previous section described three core skill domains that VA believes will contribute to effective Rapid Resolution interventions along with other topics for consideration. As part of the continuing implementation of Rapid Resolution, the VA would like SSVF grantees to conduct a self-assessment of what their staff needs with regards to training and what the staff has already completed. This section will walk you through that self-assessment.

Grantees should complete the SSVF Staff Core Skill Proficiency Assessment form. From this assessment, grantees should have a better understanding of their training skills, strengths and gaps. In Section II, grantees are provided with some ideas on what to look for in a training, such as the costs associated with procuring training, the training’s practical application, and the tailoring of trainings to meet identified gaps. SSVF grantees are encouraged to take this information, work with their Regional Coordinators for training approval, and begin to schedule trainings that best meet any identified gaps in core skill proficiency. SSVF grantees should use the SSVF Staff Core Skill Proficiency Assessment Form to prioritize which trainings to pursue and develop a plan for future training provision. Grantees’ goal should be that all staff conducting Rapid Resolution conversations have the required core skill set, either through natural proficiency or through recent training. Grantees may also share the Assessment Form with their CoC and VA partners if such an assessment would be helpful to them as well.

## System Coordination

The VA anticipates that Rapid Resolution is most successful when it is incorporated into coordinated entry and utilized across the local homeless system.

Ideally, organizations participating in your CoC would attend the same Rapid Resolution skills trainings as SSVF grantees. SSVF grantees should work with their CoC to include skills training needed for Rapid Resolution in local training initiatives. The CoC could become involved either by providing the trainings, working with SSVF grantees to jointly provide the trainings, or, at a minimum, publicizing the trainings to the CoC members. VA encourages grantees to share this document and the Assessment Form with other partners as your community assesses training needs, gaps and opportunities.

## Section IV: Requesting Approval to Use Grant Funds for Training

The VA understands that SSVF grantees may need to secure additional training to fully implement Rapid Resolution in their program. SSVF grantees can use the existing Training and Travel requirement in GIFTS to request approval for training expenditures over \$200 (per the SSVF Program Guide). SSVF grantees should provide specific details describing the needed trainings, whether or not they are for SSVF staff or include community partners from the CoC, costs associated with the training, and plans to share training costs with other organizations.

*Note: The SSVF Program Office, in partnership with the SSVF Technical Assistance team, is currently planning for ongoing training opportunities related to Rapid Resolution to be offered to SSVF grantees similar to the traditional Regional Meeting structure and through online formats. VA will communicate those training opportunities as they arise.*