SSVF Operations and Compliance FAQs

Modified Service Delivery

1. As a precaution for Agency has decided to stop all face to face contacts and community work for staff. Is this allowable under SSVF Regulations?

SSVF is part of the critical social service infrastructure that must remain open and available for those in need. This needs to be done, and can be done, in a way that protects staff. Although SSVF is required to continue operations, grantees may use telework services and remote access to continue to serve Veteran families. There are several elements we are asking Grantees to consider when making decisions that will impact the delivery of services to homeless Veterans.

- What are the options to continue to have contact with Veterans currently enrolled with SSVF? (phones, laptop, telehealth systems, etc.)
- Will your Grant need to acquire the technology needed to ensure business can continue?
- How will your agency continue to enroll homeless Veterans? (phone, laptop, telehealth systems, etc.)
- What system will you have in place to ensure signatures are obtained for documentation when possible?
- Will there be local policies and procedures be developed or updated to address the expectations and functioning of the Grant during this crisis?
- Grantees will need to keep their SSVF Regional Coordinator updated with the plan to ensure services are being delivered and when changes are made.

2. Can Grantees accept verbal, email, or text consent and self-certifications if they are unable to get signed documents by the Veteran, landlord, etc.?

For Grantees who have been limited in their ability to meet face to face and/or complete community work in the traditional sense, it is allowable to obtain verbal or other interim forms of consent and self-certifications until signatures can be obtained. Grantees need to ensure there is clear documentation that consent was provided in the Veteran’s file. It is recommended as part of any policies and procedures being developed, these case files are identified as needing signatures when possible.

3. What do Grantees do if our office is closed and we are not able to obtain copies of necessary documents for enrollments and recertifications?

The SSVF Program Office anticipates many Grantees will temporarily move to a telework or limited access office situation. In this circumstance, it will be important for Grantees to do their best to get appropriate documentation for the case file. This may be in a non-traditional format (pictures of documents sent via text, showing document via face time apps, etc.), collected at a later date, or require a more frequent use of self-certification. It will be prudent for Grantees to continue to work to protect Veteran privacy throughout service provisions.

4. What are the flexibilities given the SSVF Grantee is not currently able to assist the Veteran to search for housing?

The SSVF Program Office understands the current crisis will impact the ability for SSVF Grantees to assist with housing search and inspections. We are asking that Grantees consider all options and modalities for connecting Veterans with housing units and utilizing landlord relationships to negotiate ongoing housing placements. The Program Office is also encouraging Grantees to consider these placements carefully in regard to inspections. How might an inspection take place? Does the landlord understand unit habitability expectations and their obligation to make corrections at time of placement and throughout tenancy?

5. Should a Grantee agency have several staff sick with COVID -19 and need to suspend services what should we do?


As we all work through the uncertainty of the current crisis, we would ask that SSVF Grantees keep their Regional Coordinator updated on events that impact service delivery. The Program Office will defer to the Grantees local policies and procedures and crisis planning regarding infections disease/health related issues. The health and wellbeing of SSVF Grantee and Agency staff is important to everyone involved.

6. Are SSVF Grantees considered essential staff as it relates to quarantine orders?

The SSVF Program is a part of the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System (VHA), and as a part of the VHA, it is expected that Grantees will continue to serve homeless Veterans. SSVF is part of the critical social service infrastructure that must remain open and available for those in need. This also needs to be done, and can be done, in a way that protects staff. Although SSVF is required to continue operations, grantees may use telework services and remote access to continue to serve Veteran families.

Emergency Housing Assistance and Expanded Emergency Housing Assistance

7. What happens if we utilize EHA for a vulnerable Veteran to be placed in a motel, but the Veteran does not have housing identified prior to this placement?

The SSVF Program Office understands the current crisis will impact the ability for SSVF Grantees to assist with housing search and inspections. Grantees will need to be strategic and forthcoming with Veterans about housing expectations and the limited time that this option is available to them. Grantees will also need to be strategic with the agreements they develop with motels around length of time, cost per night, and method of payment. Also, being mindful of any local or state laws around rentals, sheltering, and squatters’ rights.

8. Given the language in the memo regarding expanded EHA, is there a new pot of money available to make these placements or is that referring to our regular SSVF grant award?

The expanded EHA memo is meant to address the current needs of those most vulnerable to the COVID – 19 outbreak. While there is not an additional “pot of money” there may be opportunities in the coming weeks and months to access additional funding through disaster relief processes. The SSVF Program Office is requesting Grantees carefully assess the need within their community for expanded EHA and ongoing homeless needs and communicate with their Regional Coordinator to address those needs.

Homeless Prevention

9. Our local government has halted all evictions for 30 days/until April 1st, we are concerned this will impact our ability to negotiate with the landlords and/or the Veteran’s ability to meet the “at imminent risk” criteria within our HP screening process.

While the SSVF Program Office anticipates the likelihood of an increased demand for Homeless Prevention (HP) Assistance in the coming months, it is hard to determine exactly what it will look like right now. We will expect Grantees will do their best to address the needs of those presenting for assistance. Some Grantees may find they will need to modify their HP score and/or reconsider how these households will be prioritized. Grantees should anticipate being in regular communication with their Regional Coordinators to seek guidance and support as we navigate this continuously changing crisis.

10. Are SSVF Grantees able to request a RRH Waiver given the increased demand for HP assistance?

It is hard to determine how long the COVID – 19 crisis and economic impact will last. Because of this, we are asking Grantees to do the best they can to meet the needs of eligible Veterans and remain in communication with your Regional Coordinators about your local needs. We may find after the immediate surge of needs, spending will balance back out for some communities, while others will see a need for HP services for several more
months. The SSVF Program Office will take all of this into consideration as the fiscal year progresses and make accommodations accordingly.

11. Can Grantees serve more than 40% for Homeless Prevention should there be a need?

With the COVID – 19 outbreak being in the early phases, it will be difficult to project what types of services Grantee will need to provide. At this time, the SSVF Program Office is requesting Grantees to fulfill the need at the local level in relation to COVID -19 needs. There will be an opportunity for Grantees to explain any discrepancy in the Homeless Prevention ration at the end of the year.

12. Are SSVF Grantees able to omit or waive the HP threshold score for those deemed vulnerable to the COVID -19 outbreak?

The SSVF Program Office encouraged Grantees to consider the needs within their community and make a determination about the need to adjust their Homeless Prevention Threshold Scores as needed.

**General Housing Stability**

13. Due to children not attending schools or daycares and a decrease or lack of household income and/or local food banks being closed we are seeing an increase in the need to provide emergency assistance for food. What if we need to spend more than the allowable $500 for food items? What if we need to do this more than one time?

The SSVF Program Office would like to encourage Grantees to do their best to assist Veteran families with accessing food banks and SNAP benefits for long-term stability. However, there may be circumstances when food banks are not open, or the family is determined to not be eligible for SNAP benefits. In those instances, Grantees can assist with the purchase of food items for the household. Tracking of this expense and documentation of the need for expanded assistance would need to be clear. We would also expect Grantees would work with those Veteran families to develop a plan to address this need on a long-term basis.

14. Are we allowed to pay for alternative transportation (Uber/Lyft/Taxi) needs if a vulnerable Veteran needs assistance to get to medical appointments, mental health appointments, housing search, etc.?

SSVF Grantees will need to evaluate situations specific to the COVID - 19 environment and make appropriate decisions to ensure that you are taking the proper steps to meet community guidance to contain the potential of exposure. Should these decisions change the scope or method of current approved budgeted costs and require another avenue or mechanism to ensure the noted, they would be deemed allowable. Documentation and rationale should be noted for the costs and grantees should consider the most cost-effective ways to continue services.

**Rental Assistance**

15. Could SSVF Grantees provide additional rental assistance to those who have already exhausted all available TFA resources within the 2-year period?

The SSVF Program Office cannot waive regulatory statues at this time. We strongly encourage Grantees to assist those in need with referrals to other agencies that may be able to provide additional financial assistance and/or assist with negotiations and advocacy on the Veteran’s behalf to address a housing crisis.

**Other**
16. Are SSVF Grantees supposed to track how many Veterans they are serving who are diagnosed with COVID–19? Can Grantees pay for COVID testing?

The SSVF Program Office is not asking Grantees to track or report the number of COVID cases. We understand that this information is being tracked by local health departments and the CDC. SSVF Grantees are not allowed to pay for healthcare needs or testing, per regulatory standards.

17. Is it appropriate to continue to consider Returning Home cases?

Returning Home cases can continue to be approved on a case by case basis; however, we recommend that grantees review the CDC guidelines on travel in the United States before making this request to Regional Coordinators.