

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) COVID-19 Consolidated Program Guidance

The Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program has historically prioritized its efforts on rapidly rehousing literally homeless Veterans followed by a priority to deliver homelessness prevention services to Veteran families at imminent risk of homelessness. With the onset of the COVID-19 public health crisis, VA modified its regulatory and policy requirements to give SSVF grantees far broader flexibility in delivering SSVF services. SSVF's primary mission is to provide services and assistance that lead to permanent housing outcomes; however, given the public health crisis at hand and this infusion of resources, VA is also prioritizing other types of services that were traditionally more scarce. The following priorities and program guidelines are in effect until further notice; VA will communicate any changes to this regulatory relief as needed. *Note: the outline below identifies major policy or regulatory changes. SSVF Grantees must continue to attend periodic office hours, review FAQ documents and communicate with their Regional Coordinator about more nuanced or specific questions. Please visit SSVF Website for more information:* <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp>

VA Priorities During the COVID-19 Crisis

- Connect all Veterans to **permanent housing, whenever possible**, either via SSVF or other resources
- **Maintain enrollment for eligible Veterans** so SSVF can continue to provide assistance, and re-introduce assistance should the Veteran family become at risk of housing loss
- **End unsheltered homelessness for all Veterans** and ensure **Veterans at risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 are not living in congregate shelter or transitional housing settings**. Veterans should not be in settings where the risk of contracting COVID-19 are high or otherwise more likely than in the general population.
- **Prevent homelessness** for those Veterans at risk of losing their housing due to the COVID-19 crisis or otherwise
- **Support HUD-VASH placements** for veterans needing Housing Search Support or financial assistance
- With these changes **SSVF has become an emergency response** and permanent housing program combined

VA Policy and Regulatory Updates Due to the COVID-19 Crisis

Existing Policies Remaining in Effect

- SSVF Program Eligibility: Veteran status and income limitation of 50% AMI still in effect
- Veterans still limited to one security deposit over a 2-year period
- General Housing Stability Assistance limitations remain in effect (food not included in GHSA)
- Due diligence in record keeping and allowable costs still important

SSVF Budgeting Guidance

- 40% grant limit on Homelessness Prevention Temporary Financial Assistance waived
- 50% budget cap on Temporary Financial Assistance waived
- Current budget (CARES Act) represents a 53% increase in total grant intended to be spent in 90 days
- Once these resources have been expensed, SSVF grantee will revert back to their remaining FY20 budget resources

Rental Assistance and Utility Support

- Limits on number of months for rental and utility assistance suspended, including for Homelessness Prevention arrears
- Time limits on number of months for Rental Assistance, Utility Assistance, and EHA have been waived
- Enrolled and newly enrolled Veterans may maintain enrollment with financial support regardless of caps established in traditional SSVF regulations.
- Veterans who had previously exhausted TFA limitations may be re-enrolled in the program without limitations as long as they meet the basic eligibility requirements of SSVF (Veteran and income status; homeless or at-risk)

Emergency Housing Assistance

- 45 day limit for families in emergency housing in motels/hotels suspended
- 72 hour limit for individuals in emergency housing in motels/hotels suspended
- Expanded emergency housing assistance capacity, including hotel/motels

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- One time emergency housing assistance for Rapid Resolution enrollments has been suspended.
- Use to provide safe shelter for vulnerable Veterans
- Place unsheltered Veterans even if not CDC “vulnerable”
- Place sheltered Veterans from congregate settings who exhibit any form of vulnerability to COVID-19
- Can be used for Veterans who need to quarantine prior to entry into VA congregate settings
- EHA Referral Form not required
- Veterans in congregate Grant & Per Diem and HCHV/VA Contract beds eligible. SSVF strongly encouraged to coordinate with other VA programs to ensure all Veterans are safe

Homelessness Prevention

- Can serve Veterans, even with eviction moratorium in place, if SSVF can document that the Veteran is accumulating significant debt that will result in rapid housing loss once the moratorium is lifted
- Stage 2 of the Prevention Screener no longer required but Veteran must meet Stage 1 (imminent homelessness)
- Homelessness Prevention Veterans may remain enrolled and receive ongoing rental assistance, in addition to the arrears paid, to ensure ongoing housing stability
- Demonstrating risk can include letter from landlord or invoice indicating past due rent if eviction notice is not available

HUD-VASH Coordination

- Can assist with housing navigation and placement services for HUD-VASH participants
- Rental Assistance allowable when there are delays for new HUD-VASH participants and until PHA begins subsidy payments
- Engage with HUD-VASH on needs of SSVF Veterans to ensure longer term housing plan developed as quickly as possible in the event an SSVF enrolled Veteran may need longer term services and housing assistance.

Food and Phones

- \$500 Food limit waived where other food options or hotel food services not available. Food assistance does not count toward the General Housing Stability Assistance limit
- Ability to purchase prepaid cell phones or prepaid phone minutes to facilitate the delivery of supportive services remotely

Documentation

- Verbal and electronic documentation, including self-certifications are allowable as long as SSVF grantees shows due diligence in obtaining documentation. Full documentation to be collected later
- Recertification still required but SSVF staff can document inability to recertify Veterans in person due to the COVID-19

Services

- Services can be delivered remotely to support Veteran in hotel, Rapid Resolution situation or housing as needed
- Case Management plans should reflect the housing needs of the household, knowing that some will need intensive support while others may only need periodic check ins or services while receiving temporary financial assistance
- Coordination among partners, including health officials, is critical
- Permanent Housing plans should continue to be prioritized and individualized to each Veteran, including house search, placement and stabilization services

Coordinated Entry: SSVF continues to be committed to participating in local Coordinated Entry Systems. However, in this crisis SSVF is acting as an emergency response resource. No Veteran, especially those in unsheltered situations or congregate settings, should have their care or enrollment delayed due to CES policies and procedures. Coordinated Entry partners and VA Medical Centers should work with SSVF to identify the long term housing needs of each Veteran if SSVF is unable to facilitate that Veteran’s movement to permanent housing in whole or in part. However, the emergency needs of the COVID-19 crisis require expedited and rapid service delivery which SSVF is funded and equipped to provide.