

SSVF Homeless Prevention Screening Form Version 6

Guidance on Establishing an Initial Threshold Score

v.1 September 2021

Summary and Background

Stage Two of the *SSVF Homelessness Prevention (HP) Screening Form* is used to screen Veterans for specific housing barriers and vulnerabilities that indicate higher potential risk for literal homelessness and/or higher risk for prolonged literal homelessness, if not otherwise prevented. SSVF Grantees establish a threshold score that reflects local demand and available resources to meet the needs of Veterans in a housing crisis. The new *SSVF HP Screening Form Version 6 is effective as of October 1, 2021*. The newly revised screener has significant changes, including updated prioritization factors, point values and overall threshold point scale.

Grantees will need to revise their current threshold score to reflect these changes and will likely need periodic adjustments to their threshold scores as resources and local demand shift. Threshold score changes should be made in consultation with other local programs who serve Veterans, including SSVF grantees, who share geography, to ensure consistent Veteran access to SSVF assistance. Grantees can make the periodic adjustments to their threshold score by notifying their Regional Coordinator and briefly explaining the need for the change and the community process that went into making such a decision.

SSVF Core Principles: Reminder

- Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) remains the first service priority for SSVF. Literally homeless Veterans should be assisted to quickly end their homelessness before SSVF funds are allocated to HP assistance.
- Homelessness Prevention (HP) should target Veterans who will otherwise become literally homeless.
- SSVF HP threshold scores must take into consideration the annual demand for RRH assistance in the community first, in order to determine the expected remaining program funding and capacity for HP assistance, specifically Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA).
- The HP screening process should be responsive, Veteran-centered and consider the inherent stress caused by housing crisis, which may be further amplified by past experiences of trauma- [including racial trauma](#). Staff should be supported through ongoing training and supervision. Ongoing training and guidance will be provided by the SSVF Program Office.
- Veterans who do not pass the grantee's threshold score and therefore do not qualify for HP TFA can still benefit from housing problem solving and rapid resolution services, as well as connection to other community resources. All Veterans experiencing a housing crisis, regardless of eligibility or priority for TFA, should be offered timely and responsive housing problem-solving, information and referral assistance. This may include enrollment to SSVF after passing Stage 1 of the screener even if TFA cannot be provided on that Veteran's behalf.

Notable Revisions to Stage Two of the Screener

- The factors that make up the stage two scoring have been modified.
- The revised scored factors are research-based and include factors relating to 1) urgency, relative to imminent housing loss, 2) vulnerability to prolonged homeless, 3) higher risk for future homelessness, and 4) systemic inequities in housing and homelessness. The scoring is more heavily weighted toward factors that are predictive of homelessness and address longstanding, systemic inequities.
- The *SSVF HP Screener Version 5* was scored on a 65-point scale. This meant that if a Veteran received maximum points, they would score 65. The *SSVF HP Screening Form Version 6* is scored on a 100-point scale, meaning that if a Veteran received maximum points, they would score 100.

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Pilot Testing Process and Scoring Observations

A group of ten pilot communities took part in a pilot testing of the new tool during August and September 2021. During the pilot grantees tracked scoring using both the new and old threshold scoring.

- Grantees tracked the scores for all of the screenings done during the pilot.
- The graph below provides scoring data for the 88 screenings conducted during the pilot period.
- Note that the screener scores for version 5 of the HP screener have been adjusted to a hundred-point scale to provide a consistent scoring comparison.
- Even after that adjustment, Veterans appear to be scoring about seven points higher on the new screener.

Re-Establishing the Stage 2 Threshold Score

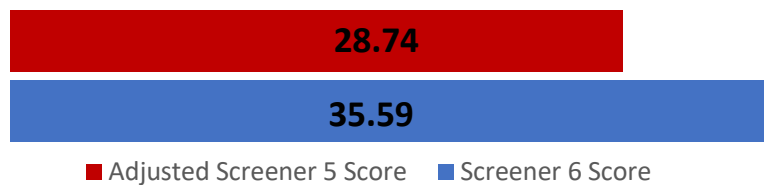
To establish a new threshold score, grantees should develop a coordinated approach that includes input from all programs serving Veterans including other SSVF grantees, who share

geography, VAMC, HUD-VASH, local stakeholders, which include Veterans with lived expertise, and local Continuum of Care staff . This approach must also take into account the overall demand for RRH resources, including accounting for anticipated inflows of newly homeless Veterans, any system disparities as noted through the disaggregation of local data, and the resources available (SSVF and otherwise) to re-housing those Veterans. In some communities, SSVF will only be able to provide RRH assistance due to demand. In others, a low or zero threshold score may be appropriate because there are enough resources to serve literally homeless Veterans and the anticipated inflow of new Veterans on a rolling basis. Grantees should be continually reviewing their local data and spending projections to identify when adjustments are needed to the HP threshold score. Below are two basic approaches Grantees might consider when establishing their new threshold score(s) in October 2021. These options are imperfect, and are not exhaustive of the various approaches available.

Example Approach #1: Convert the current threshold score from a 100-point scale. For example, if your current threshold is 10, divide 10 by 65 to convert to a percentage, or a score out of 100. In this case $10/65=15.38\%$, rounded to 15. Then add 7 to reflect scoring differences observed by the pilot communities. Your initial score would be 22. This approach is recommended if the grantee does not have an alternative strategy as of 10/1/2021, but a more thorough analysis of data on enrollment and resource availability is recommended at least monthly to inform threshold adjustments.

Example Approach #2: Working with your partners and HMIS team, review the new Stage 2 threshold scoring factors to determine how those factors would have scored for individuals who have recently been served by HP assistance OR those who have recently entered homelessness. By understanding how Veterans who are becoming homeless would generally score on the tool and overall resource availability, grantees can then make an educated decision on setting the new score.

Comparison Scores Screener Version 5 (adjusted) vs. Screener 6



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Next Steps for SSVF Grantees

- Grantees should discuss the new data elements* in HMIS and ensure their HMIS lead or vendor is prepared to have those data elements available following the September repository upload. *NOTE: While the Screener is effective October 1, 2021 some HMIS implementations may not have the data elements available until after the September repository upload are complete, meaning grantees would need to enter score for Veterans enrolled during the gap once the HMIS system is updated.
- The transition to the new screener provides an opportunity to re-assess available resources and spending. Grantees must coordinate threshold scores and overall HP outreach, access and enrollment plans with other grantees sharing geography, other local VA homeless programs, local stakeholders, which include Veterans with lived expertise, and the local Continuum of Care to ensure a no-wrong-door approach for any Veteran in need of or actively seeking housing crisis services. Threshold scores should generally be consistent across grantees who serve the same geography, though in some cases there may be deviation based on resources available or other factors such as grantee expertise, funding capacity and geographic focus.
- Grantees should notify their Regional Coordinator of their initial score for *SSVF HP Screening Form Version 6* on or soon after October 1, 2021.