

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Training and On-Boarding Guide for SSVF Programs

A strong staff training plan is essential to running a successful SSVF program. Each SSVF Grantee should have a set of Policies and Procedures (P&P) which detail the on-boarding training for new staff, as well as continued professional development activities for staff that have been a part of the program's operations for some time. This document summarizes some of the training and supervision activities that can be undertaken by one person or be divided among several staff. The Guide is intended to be used with the SSVF Practice Areas and Standards and Core Concepts, and is relevant for any personnel responsible for training and/or staff supervision. The SSVF U also has more comprehensive information about training and orientation processes.

Supervision and Resources

- ✓ Ideally, every new staff member should be paired with an experienced 'mentor' to guide them through the onboarding process and provide insight. Shadowing is considered to be a "best practice."
- ✓ Staff will need particularly strong support and consultation from supervisors in all aspects of rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programming. As in any emergency response program, the staff is immersed in crises that often do not have simple resolutions.
- ✓ Any staff training plan should include references to SSVF University and other online and VA resources that can be used to support orientation and training.

Core Practice Areas and Training Considerations

- ✓ **Housing First:** Staff may have past training and experience in methods that are inconsistent with a Housing First approach. As a result, they may struggle with understanding the SSVF approach to Rapid Rehousing and Homelessness Prevention (be sure to include discussion of harm reduction).
- ✓ **Crisis Response:** Staff may not have experience or training in crisis intervention theory or practice. While staff will not be providing clinical services, they are providing a short-term intervention to people who are in the midst of acute or chronic stress.
- ✓ **Participant Choice:** This concept is normally acknowledged by staff as a value, but staff may find it difficult to put into practice in a Housing First, rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention program.
- ✓ **Targeting, Outreach and Screening:** The SSVF program focuses on targeting resources to those individuals and households with the greatest barriers to housing. The policies on targeting, outreach and screening are heavily reliant on the "But For" approach to finding program participants which will be new for many experienced practitioners.
- ✓ **Case Management in the SSVF Program:** As a crisis response program, the SSVF program requires that case management approaches vary significantly from programs that are either longer term or employ a "wrap around" system to their service delivery.
- ✓ **Housing Identification, Placement and Landlord Cultivation:** Unlike many other programs, SSVF focuses on finding permanent housing with private sector landlords even for those participants with zero income.
- ✓ **Temporary Financial Assistance in the SSVF Program:** The TFA component of SSVF services is closely tied to the "But For" approach to targeting and screening.

- ✓ **Data Collection, Management and Utilization:** SSVF believes that data is a tool to be used (not just collected) to inform program design and ensure that services are being provided in the most effective manner.

Local and Unique Considerations

- ✓ In addition to some of the core training areas noted above, staff need locally-relevant training (and continuing education) on topics/issues included in the Practice Areas, such as:
 - Landlord-Tenant laws, rights and responsibilities
 - Rental assistance resources (including wait lists, application processes, etc.).
 - Tenancy skills and tips on how to teach them in the participant's housing.
 - Federal and state income support programs (including VA, disability, unemployment, etc.)
 - Public and private community resources available to support housing success. Other resources such as child care, legal assistance, credit repair, etc.

Resources and Implementation

- ✓ The current SSVF Practice Standards and Core Concepts and their supporting resources on SSVF University provide much of what is needed to successfully train and on-board new staff. There are many strategies that can be used including:
 - Staff may review one or more of the Practice Areas on SSVF University (including the associated research, training materials and tools) as a part of their baseline training or when a performance problem emerges.
 - The content can be discussed in one-to-one supervisory sessions and in group staff meetings.
 - Ask staff to present key content of a Practice Area at a staff training session.
 - Supervisors may reference these standards and the core concepts during case consultation.
 - Supervisors can observe and/or test staff knowledge of the concepts and Practice Standards as part of staff performance evaluation.
 - Supervisors might ask one or more staff to critique specific program policies and procedures and recommend ways they could be improved to be more consistent.
 - A staff and their supervisor might role play how a situation could have been handled differently.
 - A staff member may bring a case to a group staff meeting and present a difficult client situation and request assistance with problem-solving.
 - A staff who has done an excellent job of implementing a participant choice or responding to a participant in crisis might present what he or she did and why.
 - Have new staff shadow experienced staff who model desired interventions. For experienced staff needing to be retrained, it may be necessary to have them visit other programs to integrate desired approaches.