

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting infusion of U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) homeless program resources, partnerships and [coordination opportunities](#) provides for unprecedented opportunity to make gainful progress toward [ending homelessness among Veterans](#). Communities are given the opportunity to strategically use all available housing and service resources to prevent and end homelessness for Veterans. In particular, the availability of HUD-VASH and [SSVF’s new Shallow Subsidy](#) services provide a unique opportunity for communities to target longer-term, more robust resources to those Veterans needing more housing assistance than traditional SSVF Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Homelessness Prevention (HP) supports. Communities are encouraged to consider how to implement a progressive, coordinated approach to allocating housing and service packages based on available resources, provider capacity, and Veteran needs and desires.

VA Program Progressive Assistance Considerations

Progressive Assistance (sometimes referred in SSVF as “[Progressive Engagement](#)”) approaches recognize the inherent challenge in accurately predicting the level of assistance a household may need to end their homelessness. In this approach, participants are initially offered more limited assistance first, including use of [Housing Problem Solving](#) approaches and [SSVF Rapid Resolution services](#) prior to planning for longer term service packages. Systems using a Progressive Assistance approach ensure assistance is provided on an “as-needed basis” to keep a participant housed and programs offer more intensive support, additional rental assistance, or step-up referrals to a project that offers a deeper subsidy or longer-term services as needed.

Homeless response systems, including SSVF and HUD-VASH partners, can and should use a progressive approach to ensure resources are targeted, effective, and based on individual household needs. Only when it becomes clear that the Veteran household requires longer-term or more intensive services and subsidies are those resources incorporated into the household’s housing plan. Examples of Progressive Assistance across services types may include:

- All Veterans are engaged in Housing Problem Solving, Diversion and Rapid Resolution service attempts at the point of their housing crisis and throughout service planning.
- Veterans in traditional SSVF Homelessness Prevention (HP) or Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services are identified as needing a longer-term subsidy to maintain housing, and then begin SSVF Shallow Subsidy services.
- Veterans in traditional SSVF HP or RRH services OR who have started receiving SSVF Shallow Subsidy services are identified as needing more intensive clinical supports and are referred into HUD-VASH for enrollment.

Comparison of Assistance Types Between SSVF and HUD-VASH

Domain	Traditional SSVF RRH/HP Services*	SSVF Shallow Subsidy Services	HUD-VASH Services
Subsidy Length	General maximum of 7 to 9 months of subsidy based on income at enrollment, unless transferred to SSVF Shallow Subsidy	Two-year housing subsidy commitment to household via SSVF financial assistance; ability to re-enroll if still under 50% AMI	Permanent, deep subsidy committed to the household in form of housing voucher; PHA may have income requirements
Subsidy Design	Subsidy amount is highly flexible and based on each individual Veteran household’s unique housing plan and needs	Subsidy is based on unit rent (if reasonable), so no increase on Veteran portion of rent if income increases	Subsidy 30-40% of Veteran’s gross income; generally, Veteran portion of rent increases as income increases
Income Review	Income is recertified every 90 days. Veterans whose income increases over 50% AMI are no longer eligible for the program	No income recertification during two-year period ensuring no disincentive to increase income.	Annual income recertification and interim income change reports
Service Design	Highly flexible case management and supportive services ranging from light to touch to intensive non-clinical services based on Veteran needs	Generally, provides light case management services, which may be increased if a crisis or unanticipated need arises	Intensive, clinically focused housing and supportive services
Progressive Assistance Context	Use of Housing Problem Solving strategies and Rapid Resolution services in effort to end the immediate housing crisis and provide stabilization services, followed by robust housing planning via traditional SSVF service and financial assistance packages.	Veterans can receive traditional RRH or HP support and begin Shallow Subsidy services if/when it is recognized they need longer-term subsidy assistance to maintain permanent housing.	The most intensive resource available with potential targeting to Veterans for whom other VA homeless program interventions has shown to be insufficient

*Note, as of this publication some SSVF assistance limitations have been temporarily lifted due to the COVID-19 National Emergency Declaration and [resulting flexibilities allowed under the Stafford Act](#).

Planning and Data Considerations

SSVF, VA and CoC stakeholders are expected to review local community and VA data about the number of homeless Veterans in the community, barriers to housing including average cost burden, system disparities and local market rents, and share information about their current available resources and how that informs targeting and priorities. This review should be linked to or further evolve local equity efforts and data needs to ensure VA homeless program assistance overall is furthering equity and addressing disparities at the local level. As part of the ongoing review of local data, planning partners should closely consider the resources available in the community and the Veterans that can be best served by, or should be targeted for, each project or service type. This includes programs that address Veteran interim housing and service needs like GPD and HCHV Contract Beds, as well as permanent housing programs such as SSVF (both traditional and Shallow Subsidy services) and HUD-VASH. Considering all this information, general targeting parameters should be set based on the service packages and capacity.

Service and Housing Case Coordination

All local stakeholders focused on ending Veteran homelessness, including HUD-VASH and SSVF, are to work together to establish or refine their documentation, [case conferencing](#) and decision-making protocol to incorporate SSVF's new Shallow Subsidy services. Some of these considerations may have changed significantly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The protocol should include:

- A phased, progressive assessment and service approach to inform program linkages allowing providers to better understand the level of housing assistance and support Veteran needs through ongoing information gathering, establishing Veteran-driven goals and emerging information/needs.
- Assessing whether a Veteran requires a different type of intervention after they have been housed, and through progressive engagement, provide assistance to the Veteran to obtain the appropriate intervention.
- Promoting income growth or income stability based on the household's unique needs, preferences and housing goals including engaging in partnerships with HVRP and other employment services providers.
- Engaging in regular case conferencing with all local providers to increase coordination and to maximize resources for Veteran households. In particular, the active use of a by-name list that includes all homeless Veterans in the community is a critical tool for ensuring Veterans are offered housing options that best fit their unique circumstances and choices, including clear protocol for service transitions between providers or programs.
- Understanding that creative housing solutions, such as shared housing solutions, can be used for both Shallow Subsidy and HUD-VASH.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption and harm, particular for individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Despite these challenges, communities are continuing to refine innovative, thoughtful practices that leverage emerging investments and promising interventions to most effectively and equitably allocate resources and operate program services. For questions or further guidance, please reach out to your SSVF or HUD-VASH Point of Contact. Please continue to review published guidance and information about [SSVF and HUD-VASH Coordination Opportunities](#)