

# SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF) PROGRAM

## NATIONAL WEBINAR

### END OF PUBLIC HEALTH DECLARATION AND STAFFORD ACT FLEXIBILITIES

March 9, 2023

[Link to Audio](#)

# HOUSEKEEPING

- This call will last for 90 minutes.
- Slides and handouts are in the “handout” section.
- The recording, handouts and slides will be sent via email following the call.
- Submit questions in the question box or any time by email to [ssvf@va.gov](mailto:ssvf@va.gov).

# AGENDA

- I. VHA Homeless Programs Office Leadership Remarks
- II. Celebrate Success
- III. SSVF After the Stafford Act
- IV. Case Examples
- V. Transition Planning
- VI. Questions

## PRESENTERS AND FACILITATORS

- Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VA Homeless Program Office
- Nikki Barfield, Acting National Director, SSVF Program Office
- Jennifer Colbert, Supervisory Regional Coordinator, SSVF Program Office
- Cynthia Spencer, Supervisory Regional Coordinator, SSVF Program Office
- Rico Aiello, Acting Compliance Officer, SSVF Program Office
- Joyce Probst MacAlpine, TA Team, Abt Associates
- Douglas Tetrault, TA Team, Technical Assistance Collaborative

## OPENING REMARKS



**Monica Diaz**

Executive Director, VA Homeless Program Office

# AN END TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH DECLARATION AND RESULTING STAFFORD ACT FLEXIBILITIES

# CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Since 2012, over 730,000 Veterans have been served by SSVF. In the same timeframe, over half a million Veterans moved into permanent housing through SSVF.
- In fiscal year (FY) 2021, 66% of Veterans served reported having at least one disabling condition, showing SSVF's effectiveness in supporting Veterans with complex needs.
- SSVF represented a pillar of success prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), even without the flexibilities allowed by the Stafford Act, setting the standard for Rapid Rehousing (RRH) as a program intervention and model for integration into the coordinated entry and community planning efforts.
- During the COVID-19 (PHE) health emergency, SSVF placed more than 32,000 Veterans in hotels or motels. This was a lifesaving intervention.

# SSVF AFTER THE STAFFORD ACT



## MAJOR CHANGES

- Limits on the number of months of rental assistance are going back into effect.
- Limits on the number of months of utility assistance are going back into effect.
- Limits on Emergency Housing Assistance timelines are going back into effect.
- The two-year cycle limitation on certain payments is going back into effect.
- The \$500 limit on food as part of General Housing Stability Assistance (GHSA) is going back into effect.

## TIMELINE

- March 2020: The COVID-19 PHE was declared, creating new flexibilities for SSVF and other programs via Stafford Act.
- May 11, 2023: The COVID-19 PHE declaration expires, sunseting Stafford Act flexibilities for SSVF.
- While there will be no 90-day grace period, the timeframes for Veterans in the program will be “reset.” This will allow full, traditional support as if they had just enrolled, based on their income level at their next recertification.

# RECERTIFICATIONS

- Follow the standard recertification process, every 90 days.
- After May 11, 2023, the level of assistance Veterans receive will be based on their income as of their next normal recertification.
- Veterans receiving Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) as of May 11, 2023, will have their TFA limits reset, with an effective date of June 1, 2023.
- All new enrollments after May 11, 2023, will fall under traditional guidelines and TFA limitations.
- Shallow Subsidy enrollments will not need to be recertified until month 24 of service.

# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>Rental Assistance</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For Extremely Low Income (ELI) Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in any 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Utility Assistance</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For Extremely Low Income (ELI) Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in any 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Security Deposits or Utility Deposits</b>	Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period for a security deposit. Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period for utility deposit	Original Regulation
<b>Moving costs</b>	Maximum of 1 time in a 2-year period.	Original Regulation

# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>General Housing Stability Assistance</b>	Maximum of \$1,948 during a 2-year period (includes \$500 for emergency supplies).	Updated Regulation
<b>Childcare</b>	Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. For Extremely Low Income (ELI) Veterans, a maximum of 12 months in a 2-year period; 9 months in a 12-month period.	Original Regulation
<b>Transportation</b>	For tokens, vouchers, etc., no limit. For automobile repairs or maintenance, a maximum of \$1,200 during a 2-year period.	Original Regulation
<b>Emergency Housing Assistance</b>	Limited 60 days. Limited to one instance in a 2-year period	Updated Regulation

# SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Type	Time Limit	Regulation
<b>Rapid Resolution Targeted Assistance</b>	One time host payments or other costs, with conditions.	New Permanent TFA Category (2019)
<b>Shallow Subsidy Assistance</b>	Requires a 2-year commitment once the Veteran certified into service. Maximum 50% of unit rent. Veteran households between 30-80% Area Median Income (AMI) can receive 2 years of rental assistance minus X months of traditional rental assistance received. Veterans at or below 30% AMI are eligible for a full two years of rental assistance.	New Permanent TFA Category (2021)
<b>Landlord Incentives/Resources to Secure Permanent Housing</b>	Up to 2 months value of lease rent for high barrier Veterans and where necessary for Veterans to access permanent housing.	New Permanent TFA Category (2022)
<b>Tenant Incentives/Miscellaneous Move In Costs</b>	Up to \$1,000 in goods for items of Veterans' choosing that create normal comforts of permanent housing; above and separate from General Housing Stability Assistance.	New Permanent TFA Category (2022)

## SSVF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Up to 60-day limit for any enrollment (updated from 3 days for individuals and 45 days for families pre-PHE).
- Only available once during a two-year period.
- Emergency housing through SSVF must be a last resort.
- VA policy prioritizes Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), Grant and per Diem (GPD) and community beds first. Read the [Emergency Housing Assistance Guidance](#).
- EHA limitations reset for Veterans in hotels or motels as of May 11, 2023. Time limitations will apply moving forward.

## OTHER PERMANENT SERVICE ADDITIONS

- Shallow Subsidy:
  - Shallow Subsidies should continue to be explored for all Veterans.
  - A maximum of 50% of unit rent. Veteran households between 30-80% AMI receive 2 years of rental assistance minus X months of traditional rental assistance received. Veterans at or below 30% AMI are eligible for a full 2 years of rental assistance.
- Health Care Navigation (HCN) Services required:
  - HCN is available to all Veterans who need or want health care access support.
  - This position must be embedded directly into the program.
- Contracted or Direct Legal Services required:
  - Direct legal representation for Veterans related to non-criminal housing issues can be either direct hire or subcontracted but must be paid for by SSVF.



## OTHER ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Veterans now eligible up to 80% AMI if local capacity allows:
  - Extremely low-income Veterans with income of 0-30% AMI eligible for high level of TFA.
  - Veterans with income of 31-80% AMI eligible for more limited TFA.
- Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and SSVF:
  - Veterans eligible for HUD-VASH but housed through SSVF remain eligible for HUD-VASH while enrolled (even if housed) if transfer needed later based on local capacity, Veteran choice, and Veteran’s clinical service needs.
  - SSVF should not be used as “bridge” to HUD-VASH except in certain cases, but can use progressive assistance to identify Veterans who need/want HUD-VASH after first attempting stable housing with SSVF traditional or Shallow Subsidy service.
- Veterans in Shallow Subsidy can remain enrolled for two-year period as long as they are income eligible at beginning of Shallow Subsidy service or most recent recertification.

# SSVF HUD-VASH PACKET

- Revised for March 1, 2023, implementation.
- Packet revisions included:
  - De-emphasis on COVID response and HUD-VASH bridge models.
  - Revised some data points for clarity.
  - Added ability to:
    - Request landlord incentives in line with local prioritization protocol and subject to resource availability.
    - Request tenant incentives in line with local prioritization protocol and subject to resource availability.
    - Provide basic enrollment information for HUD-VASH SSVF Housing Navigation services in Supplemental Award communities.

# CASE EXAMPLES

## CASE EXAMPLE #1 TRADITIONAL RRH

- A Veteran enrolled in SSVF in early 2021, was permanently housed in 2022 and is receiving ongoing traditional rental assistance and services from SSVF.
- Their next recertification after May 11, 2023, is July 1, 2023. At that time, their income will be at 60% AMI.
- With Stafford Act expiration, the Veteran was determined to be eligible on July 1, 2023, for a maximum of 10 months of a TFA in 2-year period; no more than 6 months in any 12-month period. This limit applies to their June rent payment even though recertification was on July 1, 2023.
- The Veteran could be recertified into Shallow Subsidy and receive a two-year commitment.
- If eligible prior to entering SSVF, Veteran could transfer to HUD-VASH if needed and local capacity exists.

## CASE EXAMPLE #2 EMERGENCY HOUSING ASSISTANCE (EHA)

- A Veteran entered EHA in February 2023, but placement into permanent housing has been challenging.
- As of May 12, 2023, Veteran has up to 60 days in EHA with documentation of a housing plan and need for EHA.
- However, the Veteran cannot remain in EHA beyond the 60-day limit, so SSVF increases focus on a permanent housing plan which may include traditional SSVF services, Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing, and other programs Veteran desires.
- If no housing placement is possible in the timeframe, other safe arrangements must be made (e.g., VA shelter or transitional housing, local shelter beds, friends, family).

## CASE EXAMPLE #3 SHALLOW SUBSIDY

- A Veteran was permanently housed with traditional SSVF services.
- The Veteran begin receiving Shallow Subsidy in January 2023.
- The two-year initial commitment remains regardless of May 11, 2023, expiration.
- Their next recertification will be on January 2025.

# PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION

## SSVF CORE CONCEPTS AND COMMITMENTS

- SSVF remains fully committed to Housing First and ensuring access to the most vulnerable and highest-barrier Veterans.
- SSVF remains a crisis intervention, providing same-day access and rapid connections to housing services, particularly for literally homeless Veterans.
- SSVF remains committed to ensuring Veteran choice is at the center of our services – Veterans choose the services and housing pursuits that best meet their needs and desires.
- SSVF remains committed to ensuring service delivery furthers equity for historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups.
- SSVF was incredibly successful before the Stafford Act flexibilities and will continue to be under the traditional rules, especially given new tools and services developed during the public health declaration (e.g., health care navigation, legal, services, housing navigation, incentives).



## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS AND PRIORITIES

- Ensure local VA, Continuum of Care, and coordinated entry partners are aware of upcoming changes.
- Socialize the new and returning requirements with staff, especially those hired after March 2020.
- Ensure communication with all Veterans about new limitations.
- **Veterans in EHA** with no viable housing pathway may need priority focus to ensure no Veteran ends up on the street after Stafford ends
- **For long-term housed Veterans**, long-stayer planning should be prioritized for suitable exit (exit with no ongoing finance supports, relocate to a more affordable unit or shared housing, HUD-VASH, Shallow Subsidy, other community affordable housing).
- **Do not** begin exiting Veterans arbitrarily without a plan to ensure housing and safety need are met, using all remaining flexibilities during this transition.
- *\*Please note: Veterans do not have to receive TFA to remain enrolled during transition planning.*

## TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

- SSVF Directors and Managers must begin acclimating staff to reverted requirements.
- Grantee Fiscal staff must develop a system to track TFA limitations.
- SSVF guidance will continue to evolve and be communicated to grantees.
- SSVF Program Office, Regional Coordinators and technical assistance staff are available to help throughout this transition.
- Compliance questions to [SSVF@VA.gov](mailto:SSVF@VA.gov) or your Regional Coordinator.
- Planning and service design questions to your Regional Coordinator.

# QUESTIONS

