

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Case Review: Indicators for Closure or Continuation

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About this Resource

INTRODUCTION TO TOOL FOR CASE CLOSURE/CONTINUATION DECISIONS

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program is a short-term response to the crisis of homelessness or imminent homelessness among Veteran families. Veterans served by SSVF are very low-income, and many have housing barriers such as a poor credit, rental or criminal history. They are unable to resolve their crisis with their own resources or support systems. The program offers supports based on each household's barriers, until the housing crisis is resolved.

But determining when the housing crisis is ended is not a simple task. SSVF is not a program of guaranteed duration, nor is it possible to clearly define the precise outcomes. "Resolving the crisis" can vary from household to household and require a combination of financial supports, landlord mediation, linkage to benefits or employment programs, childcare, etc. However, despite the differences in the precise amount and sequence of assistance, SSVF assistance is intended to be not only effective but also efficient. ***SSVF programs should offer only what the household needs and wants and only as long as necessary to achieve the overarching goal: end the housing crisis and avoid literal homelessness or a near-term return to homelessness.*** So program staff must constantly assess whether the crisis is resolved enough to move on to the next household.

Each program must determine its own process for deciding when to end SSVF assistance to a household. The process may include:

- **A review of the case whenever a significant change has occurred in the household's circumstances.** The change may be positive or negative: a new job or a new tenancy crisis. But specific events could be triggers for either closing the SSVF case or continuing to assist the household (and revising the Housing Plan to reflect the new situation).
- **A review of the case at specific time intervals.** The SSVF program requires that, at minimum, each household be re-evaluated and formally recertified as eligible every 90 days. However, a program may choose to review specific indicators more often, such as monthly.

The attached table provides possible indicators a program may consider as they develop policies and procedures for reviewing the need for continued assistance vs. SSVF case closure. Not all indicators are of equal weight: a household reviewed at 90 days may now have income above the maximum limit and assistance is no longer allowable. Conversely, another potential indicator for case closing is that the household has decided they no longer need or want assistance. In looking at indicators for continued assistance or case closure, programs should develop their own processes for decision-making:

1. What are the "triggers" for review? What circumstances and/or intervals?
2. Should all indicators be reviewed whenever a trigger occurs?
3. If not, which indicators are most important?
4. Who gathers the information on the selected indicators? How?
5. Who makes the final decision?

The determination, whether to continue assistance or begin to exit a participating household, is both important and difficult. Program decisions should be transparent—clear to both staff and program participants—and implemented through policies and procedures, staff training and supervision, and review of program performance/quality.

Deciding Whether to Continue Assistance/Recertify the Household or Close the SSVF Case

TRIGGER/STATUS CHANGE and/or SCHEDULED REVIEW	INDICATOR(S) FOR CONTINUATION OF ASSISTANCE / RECERTIFICATION	INDICATOR(S) FOR CASE CLOSURE
<p><i>90-day recertification process must include income and “But For” review (REQUIRED)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less than 50% AMI</i> • <i>No resources</i> • <i>No support system</i> 	<p>Review verifies that household income does not exceed eligibility requirements and household has insufficient housing options, resources or support systems and would become literally homeless (i.e., require emergency shelter) if case is closed. Without continued support, a housing crisis is imminent.</p>	<p>Review identifies alternative housing options, resources and support systems that would prevent literal homelessness and/or household income is above eligibility maximum.</p>
<p>Program staff contacts landlord for update on tenancy status of program participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord indicates the household is in violation of their lease, the subject of significant complaint(s) and/or has rental arrears • Landlord was promised longer-term landlord/tenancy supports <u>and</u> program can only offer these supports if case remains open (<i>note</i>: case may remain open for landlord/tenancy supports even if Temporary Financial Assistance is not provided) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord reports tenant is in good standing—not in violation of lease or subject of significant complaint(s) or in arrears • Mutually-agreed level of landlord and/or tenancy supports, if promised, can be continued even after case closure

TRIGGER/STATUS CHANGE and/or SCHEDULED REVIEW	INDICATOR(S) FOR CONTINUATION OF ASSISTANCE / RECERTIFICATION	INDICATOR(S) FOR CASE CLOSURE
<p>Program reviews participant’s total income vs. housing costs (rent, utilities)</p>	<p>Housing cost burden is excessive and, absent program TFA, household will be unable to pay next month’s rent under any circumstance; no increases in income will be immediately available and participant has no emergency reserves. Note that most very low-income households can and do sustain housing when severely rent burdened (“severely rent burdened” is defined as a rent burden exceeding 50% of income).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant is paying 100% of housing costs without assistance • Household has secured a long-term housing subsidy. <p>While rent burden may be severe, the household can continue to pay for housing and other essentials (food, medical care, etc.) for at least the next 30-90 days</p>
<p>Review any changes in participant’s current situation</p>	<p>New challenges have arisen that could result in housing loss (job loss, medical problem, eviction notice, etc.) and participant needs/wants additional time or assistance to resolve</p>	<p>No material changes that jeopardize housing <i>or</i> participant has plan or resources to resolve challenge(s) without program assistance</p>
<p>Program reviews status of community/VA referrals essential for retaining housing: income, legal assistance, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant not yet accepted for assistance by referral resource(s) and needs continued advocacy to obtain essential benefits or services. • Income not yet secured; current income can’t pay for housing • Referral accepted but that agency reports participant is in jeopardy of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant has been enrolled, assistance is being provided, and agency reports no problems that could lead to termination of essential assistance • Participant can self-advocate from this point forward

TRIGGER/STATUS CHANGE and/or SCHEDULED REVIEW	INDICATOR(S) FOR CONTINUATION OF ASSISTANCE / RECERTIFICATION	INDICATOR(S) FOR CASE CLOSURE
	<p>being terminated from assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant cannot self-advocate for assistance 	
<p>Program requests participant’s evaluation of whether continued assistance is wanted/needed</p>	<p>Participant can describe additional assistance needed (and need is justified or verified)</p>	<p>Participant believes housing crisis is ended and requests (or agrees with) case closure</p>
<p>Program assesses participant’s overall utilization of assistance and progress on Housing Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Essential</i> goals in the Plan are not yet met Participant is maintaining some level of Program contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant has entered long-term (over 90 days) institution: prison, treatment, care center. Participant has moved to a different geographic region and has connected with alternative assistance there (if needed/desired) Participant has been a no-show for appointments and has failed to respond to numerous attempts at contact (<i>Note:</i> Program policies/procedures should define methods, timing, and frequency of contact attempts and the level of approval necessary to close a case for no-contact, particularly if a rental subsidy will be terminated.)

