

John N

2013-06-25

**CLARK COUNTY
STAFF REPORT**

DEPARTMENT: Department of Community Services (DCS)

DATE: June 25, 2013

REQUEST: The Board of County Commissioners approves the recommended changes to the Policies and Procedures Manual for Administration of the Veterans Relief Fund of Clark County.

CHECK ONE: X Consent CAO

BACKGROUND

Clark County Code 2.29.070 states that relief and/or assistance for veterans are prescribed in the Clark County Policies and Procedures Manual for the Veterans' Assistance Fund shall be reviewed annually by the Veterans Resource Committee (VRC). The Committee's recommended changes require approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

The VRC developed the changes, which are shown in bold in the attached Policies and Procedures. The Prosecuting Attorney's office reviewed and approved the changes.

- Rent, utility, clothing/tools/licensing, and auto repair assistance will be available to a veteran only two times.
- General discharge under honorable conditions will be an allowable service type starting July 28, 2013.
- Income received while serving in a combat zone, and hazardous duty/imminent danger, VA educational benefits, and student loans/educational loans and Pell grants will be excluded from income eligibility calculations.
- In addition to the other requirements for auto repair assistance, the policies will require repairs be made by a licensed mechanic.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The changes were developed by a subcommittee of the VRC and were discussed and approved at the VRC's May 15, 2013 open meeting.

BUDGET AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The requested action falls within existing budget authority and will not impact current salaries/benefits.

FISCAL IMPACTS

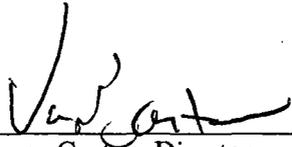
Yes (see attached form) No

ACTION REQUESTED

The Board of County Commissioners approve the recommended changes to the Policies and Procedures Manual for Administration of the Veterans Relief Fund of Clark County.



PRIMARY STAFF CONTACT: Pete Munroe, ext. 7801



Vanessa Gaston, Director
Department of Community Services

Approved: 
June 25, 2013

CLARK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SR 111-13



DISTRIBUTION

- Vanessa Gaston, Director, Department of Community Services
- Chris Horne, Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Pete Munroe, Veterans Program Manager
- Kelly Perez de la Cruz, Contracts Assistant

4. VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

- 4.1 General**
- 4.2 Certification**
- 4.3 Screening**
- 4.4 Community Resources**
- 4.5 Reporting**
- 4.6 Case Management**

5. APPEAL REQUEST PROCESS

- 5.1 Filing an Appeal Request**
- 5.2 Determination**
- 5.3 Due Process**

Attachment A – HUD Fair Market Rent Schedule

Attachment B – Appeal Form

References: RCW 73.08 Veterans Relief, Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, chapter 2.29 Veterans Relief, Veterans Resource Committee By-laws.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
VETERANS ASSISTANCE FUND**

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Overview:** This document has been developed to provide guidance for the use of the Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). The VAF was developed to provide assistance to indigent veterans and their families. The fund was developed in accordance with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 73.08 and Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel Chapter 2.29 Veterans Relief.

Assistance from the fund is provided through contracted service officers and community service organizations.

Contracting for the use of the VAF is the responsibility of Clark County through the Community Services Department with the advice of the Veterans Resource Committee. Clark County Board of Commissioners has statutory oversight for the use and expenditures of the fund.

- I.2 Source of Funds:** Washington State law and the Clark County code have established the Veterans Assistance Fund as a steady source of tax dollars to be utilized for the needs of indigent veterans and their families. A portion of property tax collected in Clark County is earmarked for the VAF.
- I.3 Clark County Veterans Resource Committee:** The Clark County Veterans Resource Committee (VRC) is an advisory group appointed by the Clark County Board of Commissioners to serve the veterans of Clark County. The committee is made up of members of Veterans organizations within Clark County. The purpose of the Veterans Resource Committee is to serve and act in the best interest of all veterans, in cooperation with Clark County and the State of Washington.

Members of the committee are registered with the Clark County Auditor through a veteran's service organization in October every two years. The registration for the committee is valid for two years from January through December. Each registered member has one vote on the committee.

- I.4 Contracted Services:** The County, with the advice of the VRC, selects contracted organizations through the County's procurement process at least once every three years. The County is responsible for all contracts issued through this process.
- I.5 Service Administration:** Eligible veterans may receive assistance through contracted agencies/individuals/organizations. Assistance must be provided to needy individuals without discrimination. Agencies/Individuals/organizations agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, and ordinances relating to nondiscrimination. Two types of services are provided:

- Direct emergency relief through a veteran's service officer.
- Ongoing support and assistance through contracted agencies/organizations/individuals that provide community services for indigent people.

2. ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 Use of Veterans Assistance Fund: Eligibility is required for any service provided through the VAF. Eligibility for use of the VAF is determined by the Veterans Service Officer or contracted agency/organization/individuals.
- 2.2 Service Requirements: "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007. **General discharge under honorable conditions will also be an allowable service type per HB 1806, effective July 28, 2013.**
- 2.3 Documentation of Veterans Status: Documentation includes DD-214, VA Statement of Service (SOS), or if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge. The Veterans Service Officer or agency staff will assist the veteran in completing a request to receive a certified copy of their DD-214 as necessary. Other forms of documentation include a valid VA identification card or a retired military ID card with a second form of ID. A HINQ (Hospital Inquiry) from the VA showing honorable discharge is also acceptable.
- 2.4 Family Member: A family member of a veteran is defined as a wife, husband, registered domestic partner, veteran's minor children (under 18 years of age, or under 23 if they are a full-time student and the veteran is the natural parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, a person who has signed an affidavit acknowledging paternity, or determination, finding, decree, or order for support by an agency of this or another state), widow, widower, or surviving domestic partner. In the case of a single parent, the veteran shall show proof that they are the custodial parent or paying child support in order to claim a child as a dependent for assistance through this fund.
- 2.5 Domestic Partner: a domestic partner is defined at Title 26, Domestic Relations, of the Revised Code of Washington 2008 and Second Substitute House Bill 3104 (2008).
- 2.6 Indigence: Eligible veterans are considered to be indigent if they meet the following definition: **One-Hundred Fifty Percent of Poverty: Receiving an annual (household/family) income, after taxes, not to exceed one-hundred fifty percent (150%) of the current federally established poverty level, Documentation to establish income may include but is not limited to copies of last three-month's check stubs, bank statements, and/or SSI determination letter, etc. Income excluded from the eligibility calculation includes: pay received while deployed in a combat zone, hazardous duty pay/imminent danger, VA education benefits, student loans/educational loans and Pell grants.**

- 2.7 Washington State Residency: Veterans or families of deceased veterans must show proof of residency in the State of Washington, for at least 12 consecutive months preceding the date of application for relief. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Drivers license, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements or bank statements.
- 2.8 County Residency: Applicants must reside in Clark County or show proof of moving into Clark County at the date of the application. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Drivers License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements or bank statements.
- 2.9 Falsification: Any person receiving assistance through the VAF, and found to have falsified any information or not disclosed all income for purposes of receiving assistance from the VAF, shall become ineligible for any assistance based on their current application for **four years**, and can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. If a veteran has been found to utilize the assistance in a manner it was not intended, this will also constitute falsification. **Funds provided to a veteran which they were ineligible to receive must be repaid. If a veteran does not repay the money that was wrongly received from the VAF, any funds he or she may later be eligible to receive will first be use to repay the funds which he or she wrongly received.**
- 2.10 Any applicant whose behavior is belligerent or appears threatening in any way to the Veterans Service Officer, other staff, or others in the vicinity of the Veteran's Assistance Office may be denied service.

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY RELIEF (through Veterans Service Officer)

- 3.1 Overview: Clark County utilizes a contracted Veterans Service Officer (VSO) as one method to provide assistance to eligible veterans. The Veterans Service Officer has access to information regarding community resources, and the Veterans Administration. The VSO is charged with assisting the veteran respectfully and in a timely manner, while ensuring that the funds are used only when other resources have been exhausted.
- 3.2 Method of Payment: Emergency Assistance is to be provided through a check payable directly to vendors/landlords/service agencies on behalf of the veteran. Checks/vouchers are issued within two business days of eligibility determination.
- 3.3. Documentation of Costs: Costs will be documented by invoice, purchase order, quote or bill.

- 3.4. Rent Assistance: Payment limited to one month's rent (either 3.4.2 or 3.4.3) or one security deposit as stated in 3.4.5 in a 24 consecutive month period. **This type of assistance shall only be available to a veteran twice.**
- 3.4.1 Rental Agreement: Veteran must have a document stating rental agreement with the property owner, property management firm, or lease holder. If the landlord is not the leaseholder, veteran must provide documentation from the property owner showing permission to sublet.
- 3.4.2 First Month's Rent: Qualified veteran can be assisted with first month's rent, but deposits are not allowed except as stated in 3.4.5. No move-in fees are allowed.
- 3.4.3 Eviction Prevention: Qualified veteran can be assisted with one month's rent. Veteran must show proof of imminent danger of eviction including but not limited to an eviction notice, or notice to vacate. If more than one month's rent is owed, veteran must provide documentation that property owner, property management firm or lease holder will not evict veteran for 30 days if only one month's rent is paid.
- 3.4.4 Rent Limit: The maximum monthly rental assistance may not exceed current Clark County HUD Fair Market Rent (Attachment A). Rental assistance will only be provided for the number of bedrooms that are appropriate for the household size.
- 3.4.5 Security Deposit: Security deposits may only be paid for a qualified veteran who has been accepted into a federally or state-recognized rental subsidy program (for example, VASH or Housing Choice). Proof of enrollment in a long-term rental assistance program must be provided. The Security deposit/rental agreement shall meet the requirements at RCW 59.18.260. The security deposit paid cannot exceed the amount equal to one month's fair market rent. Other fees necessary to access a permanent housing program may be paid, not to exceed \$100.
- 3.4.6 Shared Dwelling: In case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not a family member as described in Section 2.4) the rental amount will be prorated by the number of people living in the housing.
- 3.5 Utility Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$750 per 24 month period to be used for payments of utilities. Veteran must show evidence of denial of assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) between November 15 and March 15. **This type of assistance shall only be available to a veteran twice.**
- 3.5.1 Utilities Notice: Veteran must have a disconnect or final notice from a utility company in his or her name.

3.5.2 **Alternative Heating Methods:** In the case of wood, coal, or heating oil, a voucher can be issued for up to the maximum of \$750 per 24-month period.

3.5.3 **Shared Dwelling:** In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not a family member as described in section 2.4) the utility assistance costs will be prorated by the number of people living in the house **and must be in the veteran's name.**

3.6 **Food Assistance:** Food assistance will be provided in the form of a voucher and no alcohol, tobacco or games of chance products may be purchased. Personal hygiene items and household cleaning products are allowable. Food assistance is based on family size. Veteran may receive the following amount per 12-month period:

Single person	\$100
Two person family	\$125
Three person family	\$175
Four or more people	\$250

3.7 **Transportation Assistance:** Veteran must show that the transportation assistance is necessary to seek work, attend medical appointments, maintain employment or attend school. Veteran may receive a C-Tran Day Pass for documented appointments, up to 90 Day Passes per year. If more than 15 appointments in one month, veteran may be issued a one-month C-Zone bus pass (equivalent to 30 Day Passes). If veteran lives outside of the C-Tran bus service area, a gas voucher in the amount equal to the cost of a one-month bus pass may be issued, up to three times per year.

3.7.1 **Gasoline:** Veteran must show proof of vehicle ownership, state-required insurance, and a valid **Washington State** operator's license and/or endorsement.

3.8 **Prescription Coverage:** Veteran may receive up to \$200 per 12 month period to be used for doctor prescribed, medically necessary medication. Prescriptions must be prescribed through the VA if veteran is eligible for VA services.

Exclusions to the Prescription Coverage include:

- Biological sera, blood or blood plasma;
- Prescription medications used for cosmetic purposes, including, but not limited to: removal, inhibition or stimulation of hair growth; retardation of aging; or repair of sun-damaged skin;
- Growth hormones;
- Prescription medications used to inhibit and/or suppress drowsiness, sleepiness, tiredness or exhaustion;
- Insulin pumps and pump administration supplies;

- Prescription medications dispensed in connection with participation in a clinical trial;
 - Prescription medications for smoking cessation;
 - Prescription for over-the-counter medications;
 - Prescription medications for treatment of infertility; and
 - Prescription medications for erectile dysfunction.
- 3.9 Burial or Cremation Assistance: Families of qualified veterans may receive up to **\$800** to assist with the costs of burial or cremation of the veteran. The Veterans Fund can be used to supplement the cost of the burial or cremation only, if all other resources have been exhausted.
- 3.10 Clothing/Tools/Licensing Assistance: Purchase of clothing and/or tools necessary for a veteran to become or remain employed not to exceed \$200 per 24 month period. Assistance may also be used for licensing or for state-issued identification. **This type of assistance shall only be available to a veteran twice.**
- 3.11 Other Assistance: Veterans may receive the following assistance not covered under the above sections.
- 3.11.1 Auto Repair: **To obtain funds for auto parts or repair** necessary for the veteran to seek work, attend medical appointments, or maintain employment, **the Veteran must show proof of vehicle ownership, state-required insurance, and a valid Washington State operator's license and/or endorsement.** Up to \$500 per 12 month period. Auto repair assistance is only available **from a licensed mechanic** to veterans who live outside of the C-Tran bus service area. **This type of assistance shall only be available to a veteran twice.**
- 3.11.2 Dental Care: Assistance to address the veteran's urgent dental needs as recommended by the Free Clinic of SW Washington dentist. Assistance is limited to urgent care provided by the Free Clinic only, and excludes restorative and/or cosmetic dental procedures.

4. VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

- 4.1 General: The Veterans Service Officer (VSO) is hired under contract with a qualified Veterans service or state recognized organization that provides relief and services and support to area veterans. The VSO is responsible for determining eligibility and issuing vouchers/checks for emergency assistance.
- 4.2 Certification: The VSO shall be certified as such by a nationally recognized organization such as the Veterans Administration, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, or other veteran's organization that has the ability to provide certification.
- 4.3 Screening: The VSO shall screen each individual applying for assistance and determine eligibility and degree of need based on the eligibility and limits of

assistance described in this document. The screening/application form shall be developed by Clark County with the cooperation of the Veterans Service Officer.

- 4.4 **Community Resources:** The VSO will make every effort to collaborate and coordinate with other community services such as food banks, shelters, Veterans Service organizations, state-funded services and services at the Veterans Administration.
- 4.5 **Reporting:** The VSO shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, social security number, address, eligibility documentation, amount and use of relief funds. All records must be kept for a minimum of five years.
- 4.6 **Case Management:** When a veteran household has received \$800 of assistance in a 12-month period (not including rent), the veteran will be required to create a plan for self-sufficiency and make progress toward goals outlined in their plan before receiving additional assistance. This fund is intended for emergency relief only.

5. APPEAL PROCESS

- 5.1 **Filing an Appeal:** the Veterans Resource Committee is responsible for hearing any appeal or dispute of Veterans Service Officer's decision. The Veterans Service Officer shall determine if each application is in compliance with the Clark County Code and Policies and Procedures for the Veterans Assistance Fund. Any appeals or disputes of the VSO's decision must be made within 15 business days of the decision. Appeals shall be made in writing, include all supporting documentation and be mailed to:

Veterans Resource Committee (Appeals)
c/o Veterans Program Coordinator
Clark County Department of Community Services
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666-5000

- 5.2 **Determination:** A written determination as to the outcome of the appeal will be forwarded to the veteran within 15 business days of receipt. All committee's decisions on such appeals will be final. All copies of appeals and determination must be sent to the County Department of Community Services. The decision of the Veterans Resource Appeals Committee will be communicated to the appellant within seven business days of Appeals Committee action. (Appeal Form)

- 5.3 **Due Process:** Section 5.1 and 5.2 in no way limit an applicant's constitutional right of Due Process of Law. If an applicant desires to continue their appeal beyond the Veterans Resource Committee, they have the every right to pursue legal action within the judicial system; however the venue shall be Clark County.

Attachment A

HUD Fair Market Rent (FMR)

Rent (Monthly)	Studio	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fair Market Rent	\$659	766	912	1,344	1,615	1,857	2,100

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, effective February 7, 2013

2013 HHS Poverty Guidelines for Clark County

Annual Income by Family Size (after taxes)

Persons in Family	150 Percent of Poverty	
	Annual	Monthly
1	\$17,235	\$1,436
2	23,265	1,939
3	29,295	2,441
4	35,325	2,944
5	41,355	3,446
6	47,385	3,949
7	53,415	4,451
8	59,445	4,954

For each additional family member add \$4,020.

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 78, No. 16, January 24, 2013, p. 5182.

**Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund
Request for Appeal**

Date: _____

Submit Appeal to:

Veterans Resource Committee (Appeals)
c/o Clark County Department of Community Services
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666
Fax 360.759.6725
Email: vetfund@hsc-wa.org

Method: mail fax e-mail hand-deliver

Veteran/Client Statement – Please describe the decision being appealed (attach additional information if necessary):

County Veteran’s Assistance Officer Statement – Please describe the specific reason(s) including referencing sections of the Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures for which you have denied services (attach additional information if necessary):

Veteran Resource Appeals Committee Statement – Please describe the specific reason(s) for either denying or approving the veteran/client appeal and any follow-up action to be taken (attach additional information if necessary):

Decision: <input type="checkbox"/> approved <input type="checkbox"/> denied	
Date: _____	Reviewer Name: _____
Signature: _____	
Date Veteran Notified: _____	Check Number: _____ Amount: _____
County Veteran's Assistance Officer: Determines eligibility, provides veteran with appeal form, forwards appeal to county. County: Forwards to committee, tracks appeal Appeals Committee: Forwards decision to County and CVAO	