

CLARK COUNTY STAFF REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Community Services

DATE: 12/15/15

REQUESTED ACTION: Board of County Councilors approval of recommended revisions to the Policies and Procedures Manual for Administration of the Veterans Assistance Fund of Clark County.

Consent Hearing County Manager

BACKGROUND

Clark County Code §2.29.070 requires that the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) annually review limitations on relief benefits. The Committee’s recommended revisions require approval by the Board of County Councilors.

The VAB reviewed the limitations on relief benefits and has developed the following recommended revisions which are highlighted in bold in the attached Policies and Procedures Manual. The Prosecuting Attorney’s office has reviewed and approved these modifications:

1. Policy 2.2 (Service Requirements). Replace the last sentence with “Any veteran who has been released because of a medical condition or any honorable discharge should be considered as having completed the term of service commitment or having completed his/her initial obligation. This includes National Guard and Reserve.”
2. Policy 3.7 (Transportation Assistance). Add at the end of the first paragraph “Gas vouchers may also be available within the C-Tran area if circumstances require it.”
3. Policy 3.10 (Clothing/Tools/Licensing Assistance). Add at the end of the paragraph “Assistance may also be used for licensing or for state-issued identification; this does not have to be work-related.”

COUNCIL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no known BOCC policy implications.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This action will refine an existing policy.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The changes were developed by a subcommittee of the VAB and were discussed and approved at the VAB’s August 13, 2015 open meeting.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

YES	NO	
X		Action falls within existing budget capacity.
	X	Action falls within existing budget capacity but requires a change of purpose within

		existing appropriation
	X	Additional budget capacity is necessary and will be requested at the next supplemental. If YES, please complete the budget impact statement. If YES, this action will be referred to the county council with a recommendation from the county manager.

BUDGET DETAILS

Local Fund Dollar Amount	\$0
Grant Fund Dollar Amount	\$0
Account	N/A
Company Name	N/A

DISTRIBUTION:

Board staff will post all staff reports to The Grid. <http://www.clark.wa.gov/thegrid/>

For questions please contact: Pete Munroe at 360-397-2130



 Pete Munroe, Program Manager



 Vanessa Gaston, Director

APPROVED: _____
CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON
BOARD OF COUNTY COUNCILORS

DATE: _____

SR# _____

APPROVED: _____
Mark McCauley, Acting County Manager

DATE: _____

BUDGET IMPACT ATTACHMENT – NONE

Part I: Narrative Explanation

I. A – Explanation of what the request does that has fiscal impact and the assumptions for developing revenue and costing information

Part II: Estimated Revenues

Fund #/Title	Current Biennium		Next Biennium		Second Biennium	
	GF	Total	GF	Total	GF	Total
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

II. A – Describe the type of revenue (grant, fees, etc.)

Part III: Estimated Expenditures

III. A – Expenditures summed up

Fund #/Title	FTE's	Current Biennium		Next Biennium		Second Biennium	
		GF	Total	GF	Total	GF	Total
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

III. B – Expenditure by object category

Fund #/Title	Current Biennium		Next Biennium		Second Biennium	
	GF	Total	GF	Total	GF	Total
Salary/Benefits						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Travel						
Other controllables						
Capital Outlays						
Inter-fund Transfers						
Debt Service						
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE
VETERANS ASSISTANCE FUND
OF
CLARK COUNTY

Approved by Clark County Board of Commissioners Resolution No: 2004-12-15
December 14, 2004

Most recent amendment approved by Clark County Board of Commissioners
Staff Report No: SR 115-14
June 10, 2014

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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 County 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. Any veteran who has been released because of a medical condition and any honorable discharge should be considered as having completed the term of service commitment **or having completed his/her initial obligation. This includes National Guard and Reserve.**
- 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 County 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 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 is: pay received while deployed in a combat zone, hazardous duty pay/imminent danger, VA education benefits, student loans/educational loans, scholarships 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 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 and home of record.

- 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. If a veteran does not repay the money that was received from the VAF under false pretenses, he or she will not be able to receive any additional assistance from the fund. HOWEVER, if restitution is completed the veteran may be eligible to apply for reinstatement.
- 2.10 Any applicant whose behavior is belligerent or appears threatening in any way to the County Service Officer, other staff, or others in the vicinity of the Veteran's Assistance Office may be denied service.

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY RELIEF (through County Service Officer)

- 3.1 Overview: Clark County utilizes a contracted County Service Officer (CSO) as one method to provide assistance to eligible veterans. The County Service Officer has access to information regarding community resources, and the Veterans Administration. The CSO 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, including late fees and utilities.

- 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 \$2,000 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. Assistance shall include late fees.
 - 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 \$2,000 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	\$200
Two person family	\$300
Three person family	\$350
Four or more people	\$500

- 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 180 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 six times per year. **Gas vouchers may also be available within the C-Tran area if circumstances require it.**

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 \$600 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 \$1,000 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 \$800 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. **Assistance may also be used for licensing or for state-issued identification; this does not have to be work-related.**

3.11 Other Assistance: Veterans may receive the following assistance not covered under the above sections.

3.11.1 Auto Repair: Repair or parts necessary for the veteran to seek work, attend medical appointments, or maintain employment. Veteran must show proof of vehicle ownership, state-required insurance, and a valid Washington State operator's license and/or endorsement. Up to \$1,000 per 12 month period. Auto repair assistance is only available from a licensed mechanic. 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. COUNTY SERVICE OFFICER

- 4.1 General: The County Service Officer (CSO) must be a veteran. The CSO is hired under contract with a qualified Veterans service or state recognized organization that provides relief and services and support to area veterans. The CSO is responsible for determining eligibility and issuing vouchers/checks for emergency assistance.
- 4.2 Certification: The CSO 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 CSO 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 \$1,000 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)

Bedroom Size	Studio	1	2	3	4
Monthly Limit	\$682	793	944	1,391	1,672

Source: http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2015_code/2015summary.odn

2015 HHS Poverty Guidelines for Clark County

Annual Income by Family Size (after taxes)

Persons in Family	150 Percent of Poverty	
	Annual	Monthly
1	\$17,655	\$1,471
2	23,895	1,991
3	30,135	2,511
4	33,375	3,031
5	42,615	3,551
6	48,855	4,071
7	55,095	4,591
8	61,335	5,111

For each additional family member add \$4,160 to annual limit.

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 80, No. 14, January 22, 2015, p. 3236.

**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