



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ASSISTING VETERANS IN NEED

in

Kitsap County

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References:

RCW 73.08 Veterans Assistance, Kitsap County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, Chapter 2.92 Veterans Assistance

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR
VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Purpose:** Kitsap County has over 37,000 veterans of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine who have faithfully served their country. Kitsap County recognizes and honors their service and is dedicated to helping veterans and their families who may be experiencing difficulties.

The overarching goal is to assist all veterans-in-need back into mainstream society by ensuring they understand all the programs available to them.

This document has been developed to provide guidance in assisting all veterans in need and direction for the use of the Kitsap County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). The VAF was developed to provide assistance to indigent veterans and their dependent families. The fund was developed in accordance with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 73.08 and Kitsap County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, Chapter 2.92 Veterans Assistance.

Assistance from the fund can be provided through contracted vendors.

Contracting for the use of the VAF is the responsibility of Kitsap County through the Department of Personnel and Human Services with the advice of the Veterans Advisory Board. Kitsap County Board of Commissioners has statutory oversight for the use and expenditures of the fund.

- 1.2 Source of Funds:** Washington state law and the Kitsap 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 Kitsap County is earmarked for the VAF.
- 1.3 Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board:** The Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) is an advisory group appointed by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners to serve the veterans of Kitsap County. The VAB is made up of veterans from the community at large and representatives from congressionally chartered veterans organizations within Kitsap County.
- 1.4 Contracted Services:** If contract services are needed, the County, with the advice of the VAB, selects contracted organizations through the County's procurement process completed at least once every three years. The County is responsible for all contracts issued through this process.
- 1.5 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 assistance
- Ongoing support and assistance through contracted agencies/organizations/ individuals that provide community services to 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 contracted agency/organizations/individuals or the department of personnel & human services.
- 2.2 Service Requirements:** "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW 41.04.005 and RCW 41.04.007.
- 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.
- 2.4 Spouses, Domestic Partners and/or Dependent Children:** Spouses, domestic partners and/or dependent children of deceased veterans may apply for any/all benefits. Spouses must not have remarried and dependent children must not have reached their 18th birthday (or 23rd birthday if they are a full-time student).
- 2.5 Family Member:** A family member of a veteran is defined as a spouse, veteran's minor and/or dependent children, widow or widower.
- 2.6 Income Guidelines:** The applicant's net household income for the last 30 days must equal or fall below 50% of the Median Family Income (MFI) guidelines established and published by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- 2.6.1 Family/Household Size:** The applicant's household size includes the veteran and/or his or her legal dependents. See Section 2.4 and 2.5
- 2.6.2 Household Income:** Household net income equals monthly net income after deductions.
- 2.6.2.1** Applicants must provide proof of all household income. Eligibility cannot be determined until all required documentation is received and substantiated. Documentation that appears to be altered will not be accepted.
- 2.6.2.1.1** Applicants who claim no income must provide statements that verify no receipt of benefits. If the client claims no source of income and has maintained a residence for six or more months, household income will be calculated at 100% of monthly rental obligation.
- 2.6.3 Deductions:** Deductible expenses incurred in the past 30 days will be deducted from the applicant's household income. These expenses include those that support the health, the dependents, and the /or the education of a veteran:

1. **Garnishments:** Garnishments include deductions from the IRS, bankruptcy proceedings, benefit overpayments. Required documentation may include check stubs.
 2. **Payment of child and spousal support:** Support payments include delinquent support payments. Required documentation may include cancelled checks, bank statement with proper documentation, check stubs, print-out from DSHS support enforcement.
 3. **Medical expenses:** Medical expenses include, but are not limited to medical or dental procedures, doctor visit co-pays, durable medical equipment (e.g. cane, crutches, walker, wheelchair), dental equipment (e.g. dentures), optical equipment (e.g. glasses), insurance premiums, and prescription costs. [Note: Pharmacies will provide a statement, free of charge, stating the amount paid for prescriptions in the previous 30 days.] Required documentation may include copies of paid receipts, a letter from the medical provider.
 4. **Educational expenses:** Educational expenses include, but are not limited to tuition and schoolbooks. Clients will be required to provide proof of enrollment in school. Proof may include a copy of the class schedule, official school records, official student ID, or a letter from the school showing the person's enrollment. Required documentation may include copies of paid receipts from the school for tuition, receipts from bookseller.
 5. **Daycare expenses:** Daycare expenses include licensed daycare facilities and kinder-care. Clients that receive a subsidy from DSHS for childcare will be required to provide a letter from DSHS that shows the monthly co-pay. Required documentation may include: copies of paid childcare receipts, a letter from the daycare provider stating the client's name, the name of the child, and the amount paid.
 6. **Legal expenses:** Legal expenses include, but are not limited to court fees and lawyer fees. Clients will be required to provide proof of legal involvement of the veteran or veteran's dependent, which may include court papers, letter from the legal agency. Required documentation may include copies of paid receipts, a letter from the legal agency stating the veteran's or dependent's name and the amount paid.
- 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 assistance. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Driver's License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements and bank statements.
- 2.8 **County Residency:** Applicants must reside in Kitsap County or shall show proof of moving into Kitsap 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, and bank statements.
- 2.9 **Unemployed Veterans – Work Search Requirement:** Unemployed veterans who are able to work and have not been determined by the state and/or federal government to be

fully disabled and unemployable, must be registered with the Veteran's Job Service Section at a local WorkSource office, or with a contractor approved by the Olympic Workforce Development Council, and have applied for unemployment compensation.

Veterans who are enrolled in Workforce Investment Act training programs or other educational institutions may be exempt from this requirement. Sole primary care givers of veteran family members may also be considered for exemption.

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

3.1 Overview: The goal is to help veterans and their families. Kitsap County uses local chapters of nationally recognized veterans organizations and a contracted community agency to provide service. Veterans who do not qualify for VAF assistance are directed towards other resources provided by the contractor and other programs that help the indigent.

Regardless if the veteran does or does not meet VAF criteria, the contractor is charged with assisting all veterans respectfully and in a timely manner,

Funds can be used only when other resources have been exhausted.

3.2 Maximum Allocation: Maximum financial benefit for direct emergency assistance for an indigent veteran or family member will not exceed \$1,200 of total aggregate services during a twelve month period for all assistance under Chapter 3 and all of its subsections. An individual veteran or family member cannot receive funding for direct emergency assistance more than two years in a row. Burial and cremation services do not apply to the restrictions in this paragraph.

3.3 Method of Payment: Emergency assistance is provided through a check payable directly to vendors/landlords/service agencies on behalf of the veteran. Checks are issued at the time eligibility is confirmed.

3.4 Documentation of Costs: Costs may be documented by invoice, purchase order, receipt or bill.

3.5 Rent or Mortgage Assistance: Payment of one month's rent or mortgage

3.5.1 Property: Veteran must have a written rental agreement or prove ownership.

3.5.2 Eviction: Veteran must show proof of eminent danger of eviction including but not limited to a foreclosure notice, eviction notice or notice to vacate. The assistance cannot be used to delay eviction; the veteran must be able to sustain rent in the months to come.

3.5.3 Shared Dwelling: In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not immediate family as described in Section 2.5) the rental amount will be prorated by the number of people living in the house.

3.5.4 First Month's Rent Assistance: Veteran may receive first-last-month's rent and deposit, or a portion there of, funding to move into housing. The veteran must be able to sustain rent in the months to come.

- 3.5.5 Temporary Lodging Assistance:** A veteran may receive up to ten days temporary lodging per three month period.
- 3.5.6 Mortgage Assistance:** Veteran may receive mortgage assistance or insurance assistance if lack of insurance jeopardizes the loss of the veteran's home. The veteran must be able to sustain mortgage in the months to come.
- 3.6 Energy or Utilities Assistance:** Veteran may receive funding to be used for payments for heating, electricity, telephone, water or sewer,
- 3.6.1 Utilities Notice:** Veteran must demonstrate the he or she is in eminent danger of losing utility or energy source. Telephone assistance is only for basic service. Long distance calls, call waiting, voice mail, or other types of 'extra' services are not eligible for assistance.
- 3.6.2 Shared Dwelling:** In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with other adults (not immediate family as described in Section 2.5) the utilities assistance costs will be prorated by the number of adults living in the house.
- 3.7 Food Assistance:** A single veteran may receive up to \$100 per month; a family with children may receive more based on need and circumstances. Food also includes toiletries. Alcohol and tobacco products are excluded.
- 3.8 Transportation Assistance:** Veteran may receive up to \$75 per month to be used for transportation assistance for appointments for medical or treatment services, social services (SSI, SSDI, DSHS) or job interviews.
- 3.8.1 Public Transportation:** If the veteran does not own a vehicle or vehicle is inoperable, bus passes may be issued.
- 3.9 Medical and Prescription Coverage:** Veteran may receive may receive funding to be used for emergency medical needs, or doctor ordered medication. Prescription must be in veteran's name with a price quote from a licensed pharmacy.
- 3.10 Burial Assistance:** Families or friends of qualified veterans may receive \$500 to assist with the costs of burial or cremation of the veteran. The Veterans Fund can only be used to supplement the cost of the burial, if all other resources have been exhausted.
- 3.11 Other Assistance:** Veteran may receive other 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.
- 3.11.2 Appliances:** Purchase of necessary appliances or repair thereto (refrigerators, furnaces, ranges etc.). Veteran must provide ownership documentation of appliances.
- 3.11.3 Clothing:** Purchase of occupation-required clothing necessary for a veteran to become or remain employed.
- 3.11.4 Driver license or state approved identification card:** Appropriate documents. Funds may be used to pay for document fees and postage to

obtain primary, supporting, or alternative documents required by the Washington Department of Licensing to prove identity of a veteran for obtaining a Washington state identification card or Washington state driver license.

3.11.4.a Suspended driver license: If the veteran has a suspended Washington state driver's license due to inability to pay fines, funds may be used to pay enrollment fee in a structured, legitimate program to restore the veteran's driver license. Funds may not be used to pay any fines, insurance fees, collection agency fees, or other costs.

3.11.5 Occupational certification: Funds may be used to pay for occupation certification test fees and/or occupation license fees for otherwise qualified applicants.

3.11.6 Union dues: Funds may be used to pay for delinquent union dues for otherwise qualified applicants

3.12 Unforeseen Circumstances: If an applicant is in need of assistance in an area not covered under Chapter 3, the contractor may forward the request directly to the VAB Coordinator for review and approval per Section 7.2.6.

4. VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS/VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER (VSO)

4.1 General: Local chapters of nationally recognized veteran organizations and their volunteer veteran service officer are natural conduits of information about assisting veterans. They will be considered the first (but not the only) point of contact for any veteran seeking assistance.

4.2 Certification: Every January, local veteran organizations must register with the Veterans Advisory Board by written letter. The letter must include the names of VSOs and the times and days of the week that VSOs will be available to assist veterans. The certification letter should be sent to:

Veterans Assistance Program
c/o Kitsap County Department of Personal and Human Services
Veterans Program Coordinator
614 Division Street, MS-23
Port Orchard, WA 98366

4.3 Role of Veteran Service Officer: The VSO shall assist all veterans applying for assistance. Assistance includes helping the veteran or family member complete appropriate forms, compiling information and required documentation, regardless if the individual does or does not meet the requirements for financial assistance from the VAF. The VSO must be sponsored by a local chapter of a nationally recognized veterans organization.

4.4 Referral to Contract Service Provider: When the application packet is completed, the VSO shall refer the veteran and the application to the nearest office of the contract service provider.

4.5 Reporting: The contract service provider shall inform VSOs of determination and outcomes of applicants, including those who do not qualify for VAF assistance but may have entered, or not entered, programs funded by other sources.

5. SERVICES THROUGH CONTRACTED AGENCY

5.1 Overview: Kitsap County utilizes contracts with area agencies to provide assistance to eligible veterans.

5.2 Eligibility: Agency staff will insure that a veteran meets the eligibility criteria outlined in Chapter 2.

5.3 Basic Agency Requirements: A contracted agency must have the following:

- Washington State Tax Registration Number
- Employer Identification Number/Social Security Number
- Business License
- Proof of professional/general liability and employee fidelity insurance
- Process to conduct criminal background checks on staff who have contact with the public
- Proof that agency's facility/program location is American Disabilities Act compliant
- Provide for security of veterans information
- Policies and procedures approved and adopted by the agency's board of directors
- A copy of the most recent financial statement, audit, or review (including the management letter from a Certified Public Accountant) or alternately, if the agency does not receive an annual audit or review, the most recent financial statements for the agency
- Information on ability to repay any disallowed costs
- A list of all members on organization's governing board
- A copy of the agency's bylaws
- The primary employee providing service to veterans shall also be a veteran.
- Demonstrate access to other resources that would be available to all veterans including those who do not meet the criteria for VAF assistance
- Grievance procedure to handle veteran complaints

5.4 Reporting: The contracted agency shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, social security number, address along with address of service, type and amount of service and other information as described by contract.

5.4.1 Disposition Reports: The contractor will provide individual reports as described under Section 4.5 reporting and a monthly disposition summary report on all applicants to the Advisory Board and VSOs.

5.4.2 Denied Applications: Veterans or family members whose application to the VAF is denied will be informed of the decision in writing by the contractor. The correspondence will include the reason(s) why the application was denied, and the appeal process.

6. GREIVANCE /APPEAL PROCESS

6.1 Filing a Grievance or an Appeal: The contractor will have an in-house grievance or appeal procedure for veterans. If the issue is not resolved internally, the veteran can file a written grievance or appeal to the Veterans Advisory Board Coordinator:

Veterans Advisory Board Coordinator
c/o Kitsap County Department of Personal and Human Services
614 Division Street, MS-23
Port Orchard, WA 98366

6.2 Responding to a Grievance or an Appeal: The Veterans Advisory Board Coordinator generally will acknowledge receipt of the correspondence within three business days by writing to the veteran.

6.3 Review and Determination: The grievance or appeal generally will be reviewed and determined within 30 calendar days of receipt. A written determination will be mailed to the veteran.

7. KITSAP COUNTY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Fiscal Management: Department of Personnel and Human Services acts as the fiscal agent for the Veterans Advisory Board and provides the following assistance per county policy and procedures:

- 7.1.1 Monthly Reimbursements:** Process monthly reimbursements to the contracted agencies, for the cost of assistance provided to the veterans.
- 7.1.2 Oversight:** Provide oversight to ensure accountability of funds, including audits as described in service provider contract.
- 7.1.3 Annual Review:** Work with the County Auditor's Office to schedule and perform an annual review of the Veterans Assistance Fund.
- 7.1.4 Annual Budget:** Develop an annual budget, and process budget adjustments through the Supplemental Appropriation hearing process if necessary.
- 7.1.5 Tracking and Reporting:** Compile revenue and expenditure tracking and reporting; perform internal auditing of vouchers and other expenses for compliance with state law and fiscal agency policies and procedures.
- 7.1.6 Financial Statements:** Provide fiscal information to the Veterans Advisory Board, as requested, but at a minimum provide quarterly and annual financial reports.

7.2 Administrative Assistance: The County Department of Personnel and Human Services provides administrative assistance to the Veterans Advisory Board, including the following:

- 7.2.1 Procurement Process:** Prepare Requests for Proposals for the Veterans Assistance Fund, following the County's procurement procedures. Ensure that all documentation is on file with the County's Purchasing Department. Assist with developing proposal rating sheets.

- 7.2.2 Contracting:** Prepare contracts, reviewed by the Veterans Advisory Board, that allocate funds to assistance organizations awarded contracts through the County's procurement process.
- 7.2.3 Review:** Review contractor performance following the County's risk assessment process. Ensure oversight, documentation, and audits of organizations that make assistance determinations and process costs charged to the Veterans Assistance Fund. Review includes ensuring that direct service providers have standard performance practices in accordance with county code, state and federal laws.
- 7.2.4 Planning:** Assist the Veterans Advisory Board with its planning process and coordination with federal, state and local agencies and related organizations.
- 7.2.5 Evaluations:** Assist the Veterans Advisory Board with evaluations regarding the effectiveness of programs.
- 7.2.6 Veterans Advisory Board Coordinator:** The coordinator is a department of personnel and human services employee. The coordinator will provide staff support to the board, which can include recording meeting minutes, arranging facilities for meetings, and providing other services that fall within the realm of a county advisory board. The coordinator will also serve as administrative reviewer of grievances from applicants; review and approve applications not covered under Chapter 3, and oversee contracts with outside agencies.
- 7.2.7 Stand Downs and Other Programs:** The Department of Personnel and Human Services will be responsible for coordinating the County's involvement in producing and executing Stand Downs and other programs with the intent of providing or improving services to indigent veterans.