



**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ASSISTING VETERANS IN NEED**

in

KITSAP COUNTY

Approved by Kitsap County Board of Commissioners

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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 is home to a significant number of veterans of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserve components, 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.

The priority is helping veterans with emergent basic needs.

Emergent needs are generally limited to basic needs to survive, such as housing, heat, medicine and food. Needs secondary to those necessary for life are important, but might not necessarily be addressed by the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF).

The VAF should not be viewed as a veteran benefit or entitlement program.

This document has been developed to provide guidance in assisting all veterans in need and direction for the use of the Kitsap County 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 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 VAF 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 is an advisory group appointed by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners to serve the veterans of Kitsap County. The Veterans Advisory Board is made up of veterans from the community at large and representatives from congressionally chartered veteran's organizations within Kitsap County.
- 1.4 Contracted Services:** If contract services are needed, the County, with the advice of the Veterans Advisory Board, 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 73.08.005 as; A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service; a member of the women's air forces service pilots during World War II; a United States documented merchant mariner with service aboard an oceangoing vessel operated by the war shipping administration; the office of defense transportation, or their agents, from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946; or a civil service crewmember with service aboard a United States army transport service or United States naval transportation service vessel in oceangoing service from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946 who meets one of the following criteria:

(A) Served on active duty for at least one hundred eighty days and who was released with an honorable discharge;

(B) Received an honorable or general under honorable characterization of service with a medical reason for separation for a condition listed as non-existent prior to service, regardless of number of days served; or

(C) Received an honorable discharge and has received a rating for a service connected disability from the United States department of veterans affairs regardless of number of days served;

(ii) A current member honorably serving in the armed forces reserve or national guard who has been activated by presidential call up for purposes other than training;

(iii) A former member of the armed forces reserve or national guard who has fulfilled his or her initial military service obligation and was released with an honorable discharge;

(iv) A former member of the armed forces reserve or national guard who was released before their term ended and was released with an honorable discharge.

(D) At the discretion of the county legislative authority and in consultation with the veterans' advisory board, counties may expand eligibility for the veterans assistance fund as the county determines necessary, which may include serving veterans with additional discharge characterizations (i.e. general discharge under honorable conditions).

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 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, domestic partner, veteran's minor and/or dependent children, widow or widower.
- 2.6 Income Guidelines:** The applicant's net family household income for the last 90 days must equal or fall below 150% of current federal poverty rate published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at time of application.
- 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 Family Income:** Family 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.
- 2.6.2.1.2** An applicant may have up to \$3,000 in cash, savings, CD and checking to remain eligible for the VAF.
- 2.6.3 Deductions:** Deductible expenses incurred in the past 90 days will be deducted from the applicant's household income. The following deductions will be taken from the income from the following sources which are taxed at the time of payout:
- Earned income – 20%.
 - Retirement income – 10%.
 - Unemployment benefit income – 10%.
 - Medicare deduction from social security.
 - Actual payments for child support and spouse maintenance will be deducted from the payer's income for purposes of income determination.
 - Verification must include:
 - Either a court support order, or written declaration by both parties when no court order exists; and
 - Documentation of actual payments made during the period considered to determine eligibility (for example, canceled checks, a collateral statement from spouse or child's guardian, pay stub deductions).

- 2.7 County Residency:** Applicants must have resided in Kitsap County for at least 90 days 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.
- 2.8 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.

Exceptions to this paragraph include one or more of the following:

- Enrolled in a Workforce Investment Act training program or other accredited educational institutions.
- Currently collecting Unemployment Insurance
- Collecting Social Security
- Temporarily disabled for 30 days or longer (documented by a physician)

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

- 3.1 Overview:** The goal is to help veterans and their families with emergent needs. Kitsap County uses local chapters of nationally recognized veterans organizations, community service providers 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.

Emergent needs are generally limited to basic needs to survive, such as housing, heat, medicine and food. Needs secondary to those necessary for life are important, but might not necessarily be addressed by the VAF.

The VAF should not be viewed as a veteran’s benefit or entitlement program.

- 3.2 Maximum Allocation:** Maximum financial benefit for direct individual assistance for an indigent veteran or family member will not exceed \$1,100 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, unless they have completed a financial training program or are experiencing hardship through unforeseen circumstances (covered under paragraph 3.12 below). Burial and cremation services do not apply to the restrictions in this paragraph.
- 3.3 Method of Payment:** Individual 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 Housing Assistance:** The purpose of this paragraph is to ensure the veteran has shelter for at least 30 days (excluding 3.5.5) after the date of application review by the contractor.
- 3.5.1 Property:** Veteran must have a written rental agreement.
- 3.5.2 Eviction:** Veteran must show proof of eminent danger of eviction including but not limited to a late or delinquent payment letter, eviction notice or notice to vacate.
- 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.
- 3.5.5 Temporary Lodging Assistance:** If no shelter beds are available, applicants may receive up to five days temporary lodging. Applicants must be homeless and too ill to stay in the elements; or a new enrollee in a transitional or permanent housing program waiting for placement. Transitional/permanent housing enrollees must be referred by the agency offering the housing placement.
- 3.6 Energy or Utilities Assistance:** Veteran may receive funding, not exceeding \$500 per 12 month period, to be used for payments for heating, electricity, telephone, water or sewer.
- 3.6.1 Utilities Notice:** Veteran must demonstrate that 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. Toiletries may also be purchased under this section. Alcohol, recreational marijuana and tobacco products are excluded.
- 3.8 Transportation Assistance:** Veteran may receive transportation assistance to and from work, for appoints, 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, one bus pass may be issued per month.

3.8.2. Transportation Home. If veteran is seeking assistance to travel to his or her home state or city where his parents or relatives reside; and they are willing to accept the veteran if he or she returns, the veteran may receive up to \$300 for public transportation to the nearest town or city. Veteran must be able to demonstrate that he or she is homeless and unable to pay for his or her transportation.

3.9 Medical, Dental and Prescription Coverage: Veteran may receive assistance to be used for medical, dental, or long-term medical needs, or medication prescribed by a licensed medical professional, providing the veteran is enrolled in a VA or other health care insurance plan. 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 \$600 to assist with the costs of burial or cremation of the veteran. The VAF 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. Limited to not more than \$500 per 12 month period. Veteran must prove ownership and have valid insurance for at least 30 days.

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, or to clothe veterans who are currently unsheltered. Veteran must prove emergent need.

3.11.4 Occupational certification: Funds may be used to pay for occupation certification test fees and/or occupation license fees for otherwise qualified applicants. Veteran must prove emergent need.

3.11.5 Union dues: Funds may be used to pay for delinquent union dues for otherwise qualified applicants if applicant can prove assistance guarantees employment.

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 Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator for review and approval per Section 7.2.6.

4. VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS/VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER (VSO)

4.1 Veteran Organizations/Service Officers: Local chapters of nationally recognized veteran organizations and their volunteer veteran service officer are natural conduits of information about assisting veterans. They understand veterans' needs and can help them apply for benefits on the federal and state level. They are also familiar with county veteran programs and services.

4.2 Annual Contact: Every August, August, the County Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator, or a member of the Veterans Advisory Board, will contact the local posts or chapters of veteran service organizations to determine if any changes are needed in the Policy and Procedures Manual for Assisting Veterans in Need in Kitsap County; and to ensure correct information regarding the names and availability of service officers willing to be the first point of contact for veterans seeking assistance through the county program.

4.3 Assisting in the Application Process: Collectively, service officers are the ideal first point of contact because of their geographical location throughout the county, their experience in working with veterans and their familiarity with veteran programs. In addition, community service providers who are familiar with the Policies and Procedures Manual and received training in the VAF application process by the Kitsap County Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator or designee, may assist the veteran. By guiding a veteran through the county veterans assistance application packet, the VSO can ensure the veteran has all the proper documentation prior to scheduling an appointment with the contract service provider.

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

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 that 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 and data collection: The contracted agency shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, last four of 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 a monthly disposition summary report on all applicants in accordance with the contract to the Veterans Assistance Program Coordinator, Veterans Advisory Board, and the 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 Assistance Program Coordinator:

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

6.2 Responding to a Grievance or an Appeal: The Veterans Assistance Program 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 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 Human Services provides administrative assistance to the Veterans Advisory Board, including the following:
 - 7.2.1 Procurement Process:** Prepare Requests for Proposals for the VAF, 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 VAF. 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 Assistance Program Coordinator:** The coordinator is a Department of 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 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.