

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

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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 RELIEF FUND

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Overview: This document has been developed to provide guidance for the use of the Clark County Veterans Relief Fund (VRF). The VRF 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 VRF 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 Relief 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 VRF.

- I.3 Clark County Veterans Resource Committee: The Clark County Veterans Resource Committee 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. The Resource Committee is also the elected relief committee for each of the veteran's organizations.

Members of the committee are registered with the Clark County Auditor through a veteran's service organization in October of each year. The registration for the committee is valid for the year 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 Relief Fund: Eligibility is required for any service provided through the VRF. Eligibility for use of the VRF is determined by the Veterans Service Officer or contracted agency/organization/individuals.
- 2.2 Service Requirements: "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW 41.04.007
- 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 Family Member: A family member of a veteran is defined as a wife, husband, 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.
- 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 most recent income tax returns.
- 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 shall 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 Veterans Resource Fund, and found to have falsified their personal income or not disclosed all income for purposes of receiving assistance from the VRF, shall become ineligible for any assistance based on their current application for one year, and can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

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. Each Veterans Service Officer has access to information regarding community resources, other counties veteran's relief fund programs 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. (Attachment B – Application)
 - 3.1.1 Assistance through other Contracted Agencies: Veterans may not receive assistance through the Service Officer if they are receiving assistance from any other contracted agency through the Veterans Relief Fund.
 - 3.2 Method of Payment: Emergency Assistance is to provide 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, receipt 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.
 - 3.4.1 Rental Agreement: Veteran must have a document stating rental agreement with the property owner, property management firm, or lease holder.
 - 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 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.
 - 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 12 month period to be used for payments for utilities. Veteran must show evidence of denial of assistance through Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or other energy assistance program when available.
 - 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 12-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.
- 3.6 Food Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$250 per 12 month period to be used for emergency 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.
- 3.7 Transportation Assistance: Veteran may receive one all zone bus pass (not an express pass) or up to the equivalent value in gasoline per month (not to exceed three months in a 12 month period) to be used for transportation assistance.
 - 3.7.1 Gasoline: Veteran must show proof of vehicle ownership, insurance, and a valid operator's license.
 - 3.7.2 Public Transportation: If the veteran does not own a vehicle, bus passes may be issued.
- 3.8 Prescription Coverage: Veteran may receive up to \$700 per 12 month period to be used for doctor ordered medication. Prescription must be in veteran's name with a price quote from a licensed pharmacy.
- 3.9 Burial or Cremation Assistance: Families of qualified veterans may receive up to \$1,400 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 \$250 per 12 month period. Assistance may also be used for licensing or for state-issued identification.
- 3.11 Other Assistance: Veterans may receive the following assistance not covered under the above sections up to \$500 per 12-month period.
 - 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, insurance, and a valid operator's license.

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

- 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 describe 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.

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 Relief 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 Clark County Department of Community Services Veterans Program Coordinator
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 written decision of the Veterans Resource Appeals Committee will be mailed 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 | \$604 | 656 | 809 | 1,178 | 1,415 | 1,627 | 1,840 |

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, April 27, 2009

2009 HHS Poverty Guidelines for Clark County

Annual Income by Family Size (after taxes)

| Persons in Family | 150 Percent of Poverty | |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------|
| | Annual | Monthly |
| 1 | \$16,245 | \$1,354 |
| 2 | 21,855 | 1,821 |
| 3 | 27,465 | 2,289 |
| 4 | 33,075 | 2,756 |
| 5 | 38,685 | 3,224 |
| 6 | 44,295 | 3,691 |
| 7 | 49,905 | 4,159 |
| 8 | 55,515 | 4,626 |

For each additional family member add \$3,740.

Source: Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 14, January 23, 2009, p. 4199.

