



**Homeless Services Network of
Central Florida (HSN)
Supportive Services for Veteran
Families (SSVF)
Policy and Procedure Guide
Updated October 2024**

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I. INTRODUCTION

History

Established in 1993 by a small group of community advocates, HSN was first led by Helaine Blum. Ms. Blum also co-founded Grand Ave. Economic Development Corp., which provides an affordable home for hundreds of formerly homeless Central Floridians. Subsequently, Marilyn Gordon and Cathy Jackson led the organization as it began to grow and diversify services throughout the tri-county area.

As regional leaders made a renewed commitment to tackle chronic homelessness in Central Florida in 2015, Martha Are joined HSN as chief executive officer. Previously from North Carolina, Ms. Are brought expertise in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care Program and a successful track record of implementing evidence-based Housing First strategies to combat homelessness.

The Homeless Services Network of Central Florida is committed to the belief that everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

We are working to make homelessness in Central Florida rare and brief.

The Homeless Services Network of Central Florida is designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as the lead agency on homelessness for our region — including Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties and the cities of Orlando, Kissimmee and Sanford. We are also the lead agency for the region's Veteran's Administration Supportive Services for Veteran Families grant since 2012.

In addition, since 2019, we have served as the administrative staff for the [Central Florida Commission on Homelessness](#) — the group of government, business, nonprofit and faith leaders working together to set policy on the issue.

We fund programs that provide rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, emergency and long-term supportive services and ongoing case management for the men, women and children experiencing homelessness in our region.

As the lead agency, HSN coordinates the region's response to homelessness, provide training, recruit landlords for homeless housing, manage a coordinated entry system for all individuals seeking help, track data (see below), advocate for legislative and policy changes, and apply for and monitor grant funding to all nonprofit partners belonging to what HUD calls the [Continuum of Care FL-507](#). Those partners provide direct crisis aid, recovery assistance and housing services.

Because our region has one of the worst affordable housing shortages in the nation, there is no immediate housing for everyone experiencing homelessness. Under federal guidelines, we have to prioritize those least likely to regain housing on their own — and so mostly likely to die on the streets



without our help. This includes people considered chronically homeless, meaning they have been on the streets or in homeless shelters either repeatedly or for longer than a year, and they have a physical or mental-health disability. We also prioritize veterans, families with minor children, survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, and homeless youth and young adults without family support, ages 16 to 24.

Under our leadership, Central Florida has been able to more than double its grant funding from HUD and significantly increase state and local funding toward reducing homelessness. Dollars previously allocated to unsuccessful “housing-readiness” interventions are now fueling data-driven, best-practice interventions that provide housing as the first step, followed by wrap-around services to address education, job training, financial counseling, and physical and mental healthcare.

About the Data

HSN operates the region’s [Homeless Management Information System](#) (HMIS), a federally required database used to capture the information needed to link people experiencing homelessness with appropriate services and measure the outcomes. As the lead agency, HSN administers the contract with the CoC HMIS vendor ([eccovia®](#)) and provides oversight, quality assurance, HMIS training for all stakeholders, help desk support and required and requested reports.

II. OVERVIEW

Goal of the SSVF Program

The goal of the SSVF Program is to promote housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who reside in or are transitioning to permanent housing, with the effort of providing support services that include but are not limited to these core components:

- outreach
- case management;
- assistance in obtaining VA benefits;
- assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits;
- Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) and
- other SSVF supportive services

Please note that each of these core components will be explained in length in later sections of this guide.

HSN has incorporated the “Housing First” approach in addressing and ending homelessness, as supported by VA policy. Housing First establishes housing stability as the primary intervention in working with homeless persons. The Housing First approach is informed by research demonstrating that a homeless individual or household’s first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues impacting the household can and should be addressed as housing is obtained. Research supports this approach as an effective means to end homelessness. Under Housing First, housing is not



contingent on compliance with support services. Instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and support that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

SSVF Coordination with the Continuum of Care (CoCs)

HSN is the lead agency of the Continuum and works in coordinated partnership with other homeless service providers and continuums throughout the State. Through their work as the local continuum, HSN participates in regular outreach activities and the PIT count, as well as has been a direct participant in planning for and implementing the coordinated assessment. HSN, as a recipient of other federal funds for permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing, has added SSVF as yet another resource for finding the right type of assistance for Veterans and their families.

HSN does subcontract the direct services to several different community providers. Health Care for the Homeless provides healthcare navigation and street outreach positions. The Transition House and Aspire Health Partners and Christian Services Center provides the case management and TFA for RRH, RR, RH, SS, HP, other supportive services and HUD VASH assistance. The Community Legal Services of Mid Florida provides legal services to SSVF enrolled Veterans.

SSVF Coordination with VA Medical Centers

HSN works in coordinated partnership with its local Veterans Administration Medical Centers (VAMC). Each VAMC offers a range of housing programs including Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD), and Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), which offers both outreach and emergency housing.

III. IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS AND DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Outreach

Performing outreach is a critical component of HSNs' programs. Outreach plans will vary based on the community where services are provided specifically in areas that are considered rural where available resources are scarce.

There are two parts to the provision of outreach services:

1. Identifying very low-income Veteran families; and
2. Screening them to determine eligibility.

Identifying Veteran Families

Effective outreach should ensure that supportive services are provided to very low-income Veteran families who are "most in need" and who would otherwise be difficult to locate or serve. As part of providing outreach, SSVF will continue to:

- Develop and maintain relationships with local social services and public benefit agencies, shelters, and faith-based and community-based organizations serving low-income, at-risk, and homeless Veteran families;



- Maintain relationships with local VA facilities, including Vet Medical Centers and Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) offices;
- Host local informational events; and
- Participate in Stand Down, CHALLENGE meetings (or similar) events.

Maintaining contact with local organizations who serve Veterans will help in HSNs' desire to identify additional participants. Such organizations are able to provide referrals, which will simplify the process of recruiting new participants to the SSVF program. HSN will leverage the following sources to identify very low-income Veteran families in the area:

- Local VA facilities, including VBA Regional Offices and Vet Centers;
- Grant & Per Diem Programs;
- CHALLENGE network;
- Emergency shelters;
- Existing supportive housing programs;
- Department of Defense (DoD) Resources (e.g., Transition Assistance Program);
- VA Medical Center Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) / Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/ Operation New Dawn (OND) Care Management Teams; and

Community agencies serving low-income populations, including but not limited to:

- Board of Education (assistance in identifying children who have been absent from school);
- Churches and other places of worship;
- Domestic violence agencies
- Housing courts;
- Landlords;
- Legal aid organizations;
- Rental agencies;
- Food/clothing shelters; hot meals programs;
- Day/Temporary labor programs;
- Detoxification programs;
- Hospitals that offer uncompensated care; and
- Welfare offices.

SSVF Eligibility Requirements

It is the VA's expectation that SSVF grantees are able to make an eligibility determination and enroll Veteran families the same day they are screened. Prompt enrollment will reduce the significant risks to health and safety faced by homeless and at-risk Veteran families.

To determine eligibility the following conditions must be met:

1. **A member of a "Veteran family"**: Either (a) a Veteran; or (b) a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. (Note: The head of household should be identified by the Veteran family). *As described in Section V of the SSVF Program Guide (October 2023)*
2. **"Very low-income" Household**: Income does not exceed 80% of area median income. The median income for an area or community will be determined using the income limits most

recently published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for programs under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f), which can be found at: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2022/2022summary.odn>

3. **“Occupying Permanent Housing”**: A very low-income Veteran family is considered to be occupying permanent housing if it falls into one of three categories:

- (Category 1) Is residing in permanent housing (Homelessness Prevention (HP))
- (Category 2) Is homeless and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or (Rapid Rehousing (RRH))
- (Category 3) Has exited permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income Veteran family’s needs and preferences; eligible for (Rapid Rehousing (RRH))

Verifying Veteran Status

The term “Veteran” for purposes of SSVF means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released therefrom. Veteran excludes a person who received a dishonorable discharge from the Armed Forces or was discharged or dismissed from the Armed Forces by reason of the sentence of a general court-martial. The length of service restrictions under 38 U.S.C. 5303A does not apply.

A bad conduct discharge can result from a General court-martial or a Special court-martial. Anyone with a bad conduct discharge from a General court-martial is ineligible, anyone with a bad conduct discharge from a Special court-martial is eligible. If the person served has documented evidence that their BCD was from a special court martial then the person would be considered a Veteran for the purposes of SSVF. Otherwise, they would not be eligible for SSVF until the appropriate character of discharge has been established.

To prove a participant’s Veteran status, grantees should obtain ONLY ONE of the following documents:

- SQUARES 2.0 Printout
- Veteran Health Administration (VHA) Veteran’s Identity card
- VA Veterans Choice Card
- VA Photo ID Card
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Statement of Service (SOS)
- VISTA printout from VHA healthcare provider
- VBA award letter of service connected disability payment or non-service connected pension
- NA Form 13038
- DD Form 214 Certificate of Release Discharge from Active Duty
- Veteran Information Solution(VIS) Printout

If such documents proving eligibility are not immediately available, an Affidavit of Veteran Status signed by the Veteran can be used to allow SSVF to temporarily enroll Veterans who are Pending Verification of

Veteran Status and initiate supportive services. However, temporary financial assistance will not be provided until the SSVF Provider/Veteran can obtain documentation proving Veteran status.

If the Veteran is not in possession of his or her DD Form 214, the grantee should assist the Veteran in submitting an SF-180, Request Pertaining to Military Records, to confirm the individual's status.

Information on how to submit this form can be found on the National Archives website:

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records> Please note that grant funds cannot be used to help an individual change his or her discharge status.

Additional Helpful Links

- E-benefits enrollment: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits> Download documents
- Online application for VHA service: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez> Eligibility confirmation will be mailed to the Veteran
- DD214 online: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/> Put "Expedite: Homeless Veteran" in the comments section
- DD214 telephone application: call 314-801-0800 to request same day service. Form will be mailed to the Veteran

Determining Income Eligibility

The SSVF Program defines an eligible low-income Veteran family as one whose annual income, as determined in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609, does not exceed 80 percent of the median income for an area or community. The household size must be documented to verify that the Veteran family meets the income eligibility requirement for their household size.

Income Definition

The SSVF income definition contains income "inclusions" (types of income to be counted) and "exclusions" (types of income that are not to be counted) for SSVF purposes. Annual income means all included amounts that go to, or are on behalf of, a household member over a 12- month period, based on income currently received by the household. Note that annual income is assessed both at entry to SSVF and at recertification.

The following types of income **MUST** be counted (inclusions) when calculating annual income for SSVF eligibility purposes:

- Earned Income—Wages, Salaries, etc. for any adult member of the household (note: wages that are garnished are included as earned income)
- Self-Employment/Business Income
- Interest & Dividend Income
- Pension/Retirement Income
- Unemployment & Disability Income (excluding lump sum payments)
- TANF/Public Assistance, including the portion of the grant designated for child(ren)
- Alimony and Child Support Income
- Armed Forces Income



- Veteran Benefits Administration Service Connection & Non-service Connection Benefit
- The Post 911 GI Bill Subsistence Payment (Housing Stipend)
- Chapter 11 Transition Assistance

The following types of income are NOT counted (exclusions) when calculating current gross income for SSVF eligibility purposes (SSVF Program Guide (October 2023) see Exhibit A for details):

- Earned income of participant household members under age 18 years
- Inheritance and Insurance Income
- Medical Expense Reimbursements
- Income of Live-in Aides
- Student Financial Aid, including G.I. Bill Student Financial Aid
- Armed Forces Hostile Fire Pay
- Self-Sufficiency Program Income
- Other Income (i.e. temporary, non-recurring or sporadic income)
- Reparations
- Income from full-time students (excluding head of household)
- Foster Care Income
- Adoption Assistance Payments
- Deferred and Lump Sum Social Security & SSI payments
- Deferred and Lump Sum from VA Disability Compensation (Service Connected Benefits)
- Income Tax and Property Tax refunds
- Home Care Assistance
- Veteran Health Administration Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)
- Chapter 31 Program Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Subsistence Payment
- VA Aid and Attendance Benefit
- Federal stimulus payments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Other Federal Exclusions

For a detailed list with an explanation of these inclusions and exclusions, see Exhibit A of the Program Guide. *As described in Section V of the SSVF Program Guide (October 2023)*

Income Calculation

Note that gross income is used for the income calculations that are discussed below. However, there is one exception where net income is substituted for gross. This exception is when a household receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or Veteran Benefit Administration income benefits was overpaid by their public benefit office and, to rectify the overpayment, is subsequently receiving a monthly check with a deduction to it. Under this circumstance, the SSVF staff member can use net income to assess eligibility. In all other cases, gross income is used as outlined below. Furthermore, it is worth noting, as the question frequently arises, that garnishments or payments by the SSVF participant household for child support or owed to the Internal Revenue Service will not reduce the calculation of gross income. *As described in Section V of the SSVF Program Guide (October 2023)*

After determining and documenting specific sources of income that must be included in the income calculation for each household, the household's (not just the Veteran's) annual income must be calculated.

HSN will use the following method of calculating annual income:

- Calculating projected annual income by annualizing current income, OR
- Using information available to average anticipated income from all known sources when the sources are expected to change during the year

Annualizing Wages and Periodic Payments

When calculating income based on hourly, weekly, or monthly payment information, add the gross amount earned in each pay period for which there is documentation and divide by the number of pay periods. This provides an average wage per payment period. Depending on pay periods used by the employer or the schedule of periodic payments, the following calculations convert the average wage into annual income:

- Hourly Wage multiplied by hours worked per week multiplied by 52 weeks
- Weekly Wage multiplied by 52 weeks
- Weekly (every other week) Wage multiplied by 26 bi-weekly period
- Semi-Monthly Wage (twice a month) multiplied by 24 semi-monthly periods
- Monthly Wage multiplied by 12 months

Future income should be taken into account when determining whether a household has other financial resources.

Remember, program staff is encouraged to assess all circumstances and document that the household would be homeless *but for* the SSVF assistance.

As such, case managers should carefully evaluate the circumstances and probability of future income. Documentation of a Veteran family's annual income and the percent of AMI that income represents (not to exceed the SSVF maximum of 80% of AMI) must be maintained in the participant's file as documentation of eligibility.

Notes:

1. Once a participant household is categorized as ELI (Extremely Low Income or below 30 percent AMI), that household retains this designation until program exit, as long as the household continues to meet all other SSVF eligibility requirements. In other Section II. Program Overview VA Supportive Services of Veterans Families – Program Guide (Last Edited: October 2023) Page 17 words, an ELI household remains in the ELI category even if income exceeds 30 percent AMI at the point of recertification.
2. A participant household that enrolls in SSVF with income that exceeds 30 percent AMI but does not exceed 80 percent of AMI may also experience a decrease in their income and become ELI. At the point of recertification, such households will be eligible to receive the more extensive SSVF support services allowable under the ELI designation. This determination would be made by the grantee based on its own budgetary flexibility.

3. It is also important to remember that, in keeping with regulations that apply to all SSVF participants, any ELI participant household whose income exceeds 80 percent of AMI at the point of recertification would be exited from SSVF.

Categories of Housing Insecurities

Category 1- (Homelessness Prevention)

To qualify under **Category 1**, a Veteran family must be “residing in permanent housing.” This encompasses many different housing situations, including where a Veteran family is residing in (i) a leased unit, (ii) a house with a mortgage, (iii) a unit shared with others (i.e. doubled-up), or (iv) a hotel or motel not paid for by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations.

Be facing the imminent loss of their current primary nighttime residence (housing an individual or family owns, rents, or lives in with or without paying rent; housing shared with others; and rooms in hotels or motels paid for by the individual or family) within 30 days or less of applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance. Be at risk of becoming literally homeless **but for** SSVF assistance, meaning the Veteran family:

Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool

Apart from meeting SSVF eligibility requirements for Veteran status and income, applicant families must minimally meet the following Supportive Services for Veteran Families Homelessness Prevention Screening Form to receive SSVF homelessness prevention assistance.

The SSVF HP Screening Tool should be used by SSVF staff to determine and document whether a Veteran household applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance:

1. Is an eligible Veteran household that is within SSVF’s income limits and is at imminent risk of homelessness, including Veterans who have the potential to rapidly resolve their housing crisis through housing problem solving strategies and other flexible Rapid Resolution assistance (“Stage 1”); and
2. Is prioritized for more targeted Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) from SSVF that may be needed as part of more extensive homelessness prevention assistance, (“Stage 2”).

Lastly, a Veteran family must be assessed and scored for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Homelessness Prevention Screening Form and receive a score at or above the “targeting threshold” for the program. The targeting threshold score for HSN is 36, which has been approved by the VA. For those households that do not meet the targeting threshold but are at imminent risk of homelessness, “light touch” services may be offered. “Light touch” assistance includes case management, without temporary financial assistance, to prevent literal homelessness.

Those Veteran families that qualify under **Category 1** may require assistance to help them remain in their existing permanent housing or identify new housing that will better meet their needs and be sustainable. For example, the Veteran family may imminently lose their housing if rent arrears are not paid, and program staff may assist that Veteran family to pay the arrears and develop a housing stability



plan that will reasonably result in the Veteran family being able to afford the rent for that unit in the future. Alternatively, if that same Veteran family would not reasonably be able to afford that unit in the future, staff will assist the Veteran family to locate an alternate housing arrangement that is sustainable for the Veteran family.

Categories 2 and 3- (Rapid Re-Housing)

SSVF's rapid re-housing assistance is intended for eligible Veteran families who are literally homeless. Persons qualifying as "literally homeless" include persons who at the time of application or reassessment lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including Veteran families who are:

- Staying in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground; or
- Staying in a supervised publicly- or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); or
- Exiting an institution where s/he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution; or
- Are fleeing or attempting to flee a domestic violence situation.

To qualify under Category 3, a Veteran family must also:

- Have exited from permanent housing in the last 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the Veteran family's needs and preferences; AND
- Not otherwise be eligible under Category 1.

Recertification of Eligibility

To ensure that SSVF programs fully evaluate participants' needs and eligibility for services, SSVF requires recertification at least once every 90 days. While the intent of SSVF is to provide short-term intervention, it is acceptable for SSVF staff to provide lengths of service that are either shorter or longer than 90 days. A simple recertification step is required to determine whether the service timeframe warrants an exit from the program or continued provision of services.

Participants who are assessed and determined to no longer require or qualify for SSVF assistance should be exited from the program. Staff should recertify only those participant households that are both eligible for and in need of services. The recertification requirement applies to all participants regardless of whether or not temporary financial assistance is offered.

Note that, in situations where there is a break in assistance (e.g., the participant receives two months of assistance, is exited from the program, and later re-applies for assistance), the household must be reevaluated as if they were going through the initial certification process not a recertification.

Additionally, in the event that program staff is unable to reach a Veteran, the following will occur:



- Staff will make at least three attempts to call and schedule the Veteran for a meeting.
- Documentation of all attempts will be captured in HMIS under the case notes.
- If no response from the Veteran on the fourth attempt, a letter will be sent to the last known address of the Veteran. If there's an email on file, an email will also be sent to the Veteran. A copy of the letter and/or email will be kept in the file. The letter and/or email will also be copied and pasted in the case notes section in HMIS.
- If the Veteran is reached and still needing services, they are scheduled for a recertification appointment ASAP.
- If the Veteran is not reached it will be assumed they are no longer seeking services at this time and an exit letter will be sent to the Veteran's last known address.

The SSVF Housing Case Manager shall have primary responsibility for ensuring the recertification is completed on time with all required documentation. The reassessment areas of focus during the recertification period are:

1. **Income Eligibility:** At recertification, the participant's income must still be at or below 80% AMI. Income must be recalculated and documented household income as was done during the initial certification, given that circumstances may have changed in the intervening months. If a household is over 80% AMI at the time it is reassessed, that household is no longer eligible for SSVF assistance. If no longer eligible for SSVF, SSVF staff will provide other community resources and programs.
2. **Housing Status:** At recertification, the participant's initial SSVF housing status (Category 1, 2, or 3) is simply carried over from their initial certification regardless of changes that have transpired since then. For example, a participant enrolled as Category 2 upon initial certification will remain in this category at every recertification interval thereafter.
3. **Other Resources/Support Networks ("But For") Eligibility:** At recertification, participants must still meet the threshold of need in the "But For" assessment. This means SSVF staff must again assess and document whether the participant, without the help of SSVF, continues to lack the financial resources and support networks to either obtain new housing or remain in housing.
4. **Confirmation of Veteran Family Status:** At recertification, staff must confirm whether the participant remains part of a Veteran family. If the Veteran becomes absent from a household or dies while other members of the Veteran family are receiving supportive services, then services may continue to the remaining family members for a grace period established by the SSVF grantee. The grace period cannot exceed 1 year from the date of absence or death of the Veteran, and all other requirements for eligibility remain the same. The SSVF grantee is required to notify the Veteran's family member(s) of the duration of the grace period.

Eviction, denial of continued assistance, or denial of tenancy on the basis of being a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking is prohibited under VAWA.

Adjusting Assistance



During this period of recertification the SSVF staff will evaluate the appropriate level of supportive services and the amount of financial assistance based on the Veterans housing barriers to assist the household on being stably housed. Assistance levels for services or financial assistance can then be adjusted to be greater or less than included in the original plan. Veterans receiving Shallow Subsidy services should be assessed for case management needs or any dramatic changes in income or ability to pay rent, but generally their financial assistance support will remain the same over the course of the Shallow Subsidy period.

Program Exits

The goal of the SSVF Program is to promote housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who reside in or are transitioning to permanent housing. VA understands that every household exit is different; however, SSVF staff should strive to ensure that households being exited from SSVF into permanent housing are stable and have the resources/support to sustain housing. When it is determined that a participant household will be exiting SSVF, the grantee should review the final housing stability plan goals with the participant, review a final budget, review housing counseling elements such as lease requirements and home maintenance which contribute to housing stability, and make any last referrals to community resources. Staff can utilize the SSVF Program Exit Checklist to ensure the appropriate exit steps have been carried out once it is determined a household is going to be exited. For Veterans who may exit the program due to being unresponsive to the program, or discharged for other reasons (e.g. reunited with family, jail, relocated, etc.), program staff will follow the procedures for exiting those households. If the SSVF program staff is aware a veteran will be exiting, 30 days prior the SSVF Program staff will complete a Customer Satisfaction Survey using the link provided. <https://survey.forsmarshgroup.com/SE/?st=9ax6LLgYkRS8C0RApVhZfDmlvPns0LgD%2FQ1tRTkLxMk%3D&urlimport=1&questlist=GRANTEEID&GRANTEEID=18-FL-023>

IV. COORDINATED ENTRY

HSN uses the Coordinated Entry System (CES) when assessing all possible SSVF participants. CES allows HSN and SSVF providers to quickly screen, assess, and assist Veteran families in crisis. Additionally, through this staff is able to prioritize those eligible Veteran families who are in the greatest need and considered a priority for SSVF services.

Referral

The Veteran is referred to the CES either by calling 211, attending a HSN staffed HUB location, connecting with our Veterans' Senior Triage Specialist, being referred by the VA, or connecting with a SSVF direct service provider, either in person or on the phone. HSN uses CES to (a) confirm a very low-income Veteran family's eligibility for supportive services and (b) prioritize those families in the greatest need.



A Coordinated Entry enrollment in HMIS is the first step in the intake process. HSN utilizes outreach staff to connect with Veterans who might otherwise have barriers to accessing services. Outreach staff is equipped to complete a Coordinated Entry enrollment with a Veteran.

HSN has a Veterans' Senior Triage Specialist or Veteran's Specialist who is responsible for completing assessments with participant(s) who self-identify as Veterans over the phone and in person, entering information and data, verifying eligibility, and inputting services provided and referrals into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The Veterans' Senior Triage primarily interacts with Veterans who are experiencing homelessness and/or a housing crisis. The Veterans' Specialist is mobile and can meet Veterans where they are at and when they are available, as needed. This includes street outreach and visits to encampments, as needed.

HSN's Veterans' Senior Triage Specialist reviews Veteran CES referrals daily. Veterans who are initially identified as being candidates for Rapid Re-housing assistance are prioritized for assistance and are referred directly to a SSVF direct service provider, if the Veteran has not reached out directly to the SSVF service provider, to complete a Coordinated Entry enrollment, VI-SPDAT, and to be assessed for SSVF eligibility. If the Veteran is eligible for SSVF Rapid Re-housing services, the SSVF service provider can enroll the Veteran in SSVF that same day of initial contact. As a result of this new workflow, Veterans are connected to services rapidly, which simultaneously reduces the amount of times the Veteran has to explain their current situation. Quick immediate and trauma informed engagement ensures Veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and a one-time experience.

A member of the HSN Access team or the HSN Veterans' Senior Triage Specialist will contact Veterans who are initially identified as being candidates for SSVF Homelessness Prevention. HSN staff will complete a Coordinated Entry with the Veteran, either over the phone or in person, to determine initial eligibility. If the Veteran is still believed to be eligible for SSVF Homeless Prevention services after the Coordinated Entry is completed, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Veteran will be completed and documented in Client Track (HMIS). HSN monitors coordinated entry for Veterans daily to quickly identify emerging challenges to access and assessment. The goal of eligibility is to verify that potential participants meet all SSVF requirements for participation in the program.

The SSVF program accepts referrals from any community organization that serves Veterans. Counties served through SSVF include Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties.

Veterans can access services through the dedicated phone line. To determine eligibility for services, Veterans should call 211 or 1 (407) 743-5117.

When serving participants who are residing in permanent housing, it is helpful to remember that the defining question to ask is: "Would this individual or family be homeless **but for** this assistance?"



HSN will target SSVF Program funds towards those with an increased number of potential “risk factors.” Some factors are listed below and could indicate a higher risk of becoming (or remaining) homeless. The risk factors for homelessness that are considered priority are highlighted on the list below:

- **Eviction within two weeks from a private dwelling (including housing provided by family or friends);**
- **Discharge within two weeks from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 180 days (including prisons, mental health institutions, hospitals);**
- Residency in housing that has been condemned by housing officials and is no longer meant for human habitation;
- **Vets returning from Afghanistan or Iraq;**
- **Sudden and significant loss of income;**
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs;
- Mental health and substance abuse issues;
- Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues, including HIV/AIDS;
- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income for housing costs);
- **Dependent under the age of 6;**
- **Homeless in last 12 months;**
- Young head of household (under 25 with children or pregnant);
- Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care;
- Pending foreclosure of housing;
- **Extremely low income (less than 30 percent of area median income);**
- High overcrowding (the number of persons in household exceeds health and/or safety standards for the housing unit size);
- Past institutional care (prison, treatment facility, hospital);
- Recent traumatic life event, such as death of a spouse or primary care provider, or recent health crisis that prevented the household from meeting its financial responsibilities;
- Credit problems that preclude obtaining of housing; or
- Significant amount of medical debt

NOTE: Participants who receive HUD-VASH services shall have case management provided per HUD-VASH program guidelines to ensure no overlap of services.

Participant Eligibility Verification and Documentation

HSN is required to serve very low-income Veteran families occupying permanent housing as defined in 38 CFR 62.2 and 38 CFR 62.11(a). During this time of evaluation and eligibility the Veteran confirms Veteran status and income verbally. The SSVF staff will inform the Veteran once contacted by the SSVF CM they will need to provide documentation of Veteran status and income.



Rapid Resolution

Rapid Resolution is an intervention designed to assist Veterans upon contact with the crisis response system to attempt to avoid a homeless episode, or immediately after entry into the emergency shelter system with the goal of rapidly exiting the Veteran from homelessness. When a Veteran reaches out for assistance with a housing crisis, HSN and other SSVF staff start the process of engaging them in a conversation that explores alternatives to becoming or remaining homeless and any potential assistance needed to access those alternatives. Assistance can include supportive services to mediate with a landlord, resolve conflicts or concerns with a family member, or connect to support networks in other places, and limited financial assistance. Rapid Resolution financial assistance allows for limited, need based payments to be paid to family, friends, or other networks willing to provide temporary housing, with or without a lease in place, and where the minimum requirements are met: All payments are made to non-third party vendors. All payments are limited to one month or allowable amounts in Traditional SSVF. Any payments during the Rapid Resolution engagement time counts towards the allowable assistance allowable in traditional SSVF. Types of limited financial assistance can be payments directly to the host family, family or friends the Veteran is staying with, utilities payments, moving costs, general housing stability assistance (GHSA). Assistance can be provided with or without a lease in place. If no lease a written plan from the family to allow the Veteran to stay for at least 90 days is allowable.

Victims of Domestic Violence

Any household fleeing a domestic violence situation is considered literally homeless and therefore enrolled as a rapid re-housing household. This is a change to previous guidance. A participant household experiencing domestic violence receives special consideration in SSVF with regards to supportive services. This is a consideration designed for participants fleeing a domestic violence situation mid-stream during their SSVF participation such that the original participant household breaks apart. Under this policy, the victim of domestic violence (whether or not the victim is the Veteran), if forming a new participant household, will have the “tolling period” for SSVF’s temporary financial assistance reset back to the beginning. The “tolling period” refers to the limited timeline of months for paying temporary financial assistance within a 12-month or 2- year period (for details, see Section VI.F.). For these newly formed households, that timeline begins again at zero months. This includes households that separated and no longer have a veteran in the household.

Referral When Sufficient Resources are not available

When there are not sufficient resources to accommodate additional participants at a given time, HSN staff will make efforts to refer eligible Veteran families to other programs run by VA and/or public or private entities that will provide the assistance they require. Assistance from the VA can be obtained by contacting the VA National Call Center at 877-424-3838.



Referral of Ineligible Veteran Families

If program staff encounter Veteran families who do not meet the eligibility requirements of the SSVF Program, efforts will be made to refer such Veteran families to another program that will provide them with the assistance and services they require.

Screening

Depending on SSVF program capacity, HSN may conduct a pre-screening for potential SSVF program participants who have applied or been referred to the program. The goal of pre-screening is to do a rapid, low-cost determination of probable program eligibility and to screen out obviously ineligible applicants.

HSN's Veterans' Senior Triage Specialist or CES Intake staff will reach out to the Veteran to conduct a pre-screening within three business days of receiving the referral. The screening may be conducted by phone or in person. The screening results may be reviewed by HSN Veterans Program Advisor, when necessary, before referring the applicant to an SSVF Agency.

Based on screening results a determination will be made about whether participant is ineligible or to proceed to referral to SSVF or community provider. Participants who are ineligible will be provided with linkage to non-SSVF services that may help address their priority needs as determined in the pre-screen process.

Screening for all housing categories is predicated on determining Program Eligibility;

- Category 1, 2, or 3;
- Likelihood of achieving stable housing within 90 days of enrollment; and
- Relative need ("but for")

V. Supportive Services

The primary aim of the supportive services of the SSVF Program is to help Veteran families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. HSN distributes supportive services grant money to SSVF partnering agencies who provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families that fall within one of the three categories of occupying permanent housing. HSN will assist participant households by providing a range of supportive services designed to resolve the immediate crisis and promote housing stability.

SSVF financial and non-financial assistance should be conducted in a progressive assistance approach. SSVF CM should request financial support for only what it takes to get a Veteran into permanent housing or to maintain a Veteran in permanent housing during the period their case is open. At no time should the Veteran receive promises or indications of a set amount of financial assistance. All assistance depends upon urgency of the need and availability of funds.

HSN may find it necessary to change allocations throughout the fiscal year as needs and funding dictate. Veterans should contribute to their housing expenses when possible.

Funds will not be issued to vendors that have abused Veterans' rights or proven repeatedly uncooperative in the past or where getting appropriate documentation has been difficult. Additionally, vendors who misuse funds or who falsify information will not receive funds from HSN. Additionally, when necessary and appropriate, HSN leadership staff may seek legal counsel to recoup any misused funds from vendors.

The SSVF CMs and Program managers are responsible for tracking financial assistance, including leveraged resources, on the Financial Assistance Tracking Form. This form must be completed and maintained in the Veteran record.

Specific assistance amounts may vary based on program and availability of funds.

Role of SSVF CM in Coordinating Provision of Support Services

The SSVF CM will be the participant's primary point of contact within the SSVF program. In addition to assisting the participant to assess his/her needs, the SSVF CM will be responsible for coordinating the provision of supportive services that are offered by the grantee and provide referrals for other supportive services not offered by HSN (or more efficiently or effectively provided elsewhere). SSVF CM must be familiar with the area or and actively cultivate a working knowledge and connections to relevant area resources such as affordable housing; emergency, mental and physical health care professionals; public benefits offices; employment training and job placement programs, etc.

Service Level and Coordination

SSVF CM will provide intensive services to Veterans participating in the program from the time the Veteran is enrolled until they can successfully maintain housing. "Intensive services" indicates the Veteran and SSVF CM will be in contact at least weekly or more. At a minimum, SSVF CM will monitor rent and utility payments including contact with the Veteran's landlord, lease compliance, employment search or attendance, school enrollment for children, attendance at scheduled appointments with other community agencies, and offer advocacy and assistance as needed.

Veterans will be assisted to determine proper housing needs and provided with lists of appropriate housing options, with the SSVF CM acting as advocate when needed. Assistance to obtain needed documentation, appointments with other community agencies, and financial assistance will be provided. Veterans must keep their SSVF CM informed of their goal progress and, if leaving the shelter, provide contact information.

Aftercare services should be provided if needed. Unless problems exist, a phone call to check on the Veteran's welfare may be sufficient with face-to-face contact monthly.

Case Management Services

Case management is the central focus of HSN's program.

To effectively assist participant households in achieving housing stability, SSVF Program staff will provide ongoing case management services. The primary objective of case management is to ensure that participants receive the assistance needed to promote housing stability. Case management services may include consulting with participants to conduct needs assessments, working with participants to create individualized housing stability plans that include participant specific goals, monitoring participants from the time of intake until they exit the program, and ensuring that participants obtain needed supportive services.

Case management services including needs assessment, monitoring, follow-up, linkage and/or referral to supportive services, and overall coordination of services shall be provided primarily by SSVF Case Managers.

Case management services associated with outreach, education, eligibility determination, VBA/VHA benefit linkage, and veteran-specific issues shall be provided by SSVF Case Managers.

The SSVF CM will work with each Veteran to determine their target budget for sustainable living. In addition, the SSVF CM should work with Veterans to develop a household budget while receiving services to resolve any past debts and improve credit standing.

Veterans who have previous evictions or financial assessments due to damages will be considered. Excessive records need to be handled on a case -by-case basis depending on the circumstances. When possible, program staff will assist Veterans in negotiating a repayment plan. Veterans must be willing to cooperate with their SSVF CM to address these issues.

Veteran should be prepared and expected to pay a portion of their housing expenses, with either household resources or leveraged community resources.

Case management services associated with resource allocation shall be performed by HSN leadership staff.

Returning Home

Returning Home Initiative offers homeless Veteran households the option of returning to their community of origin or to a community where they have available support to facilitate housing placement. The initiative provides the Veteran family reunification opportunities and affordable permanent housing with the family or other social support in their community of origin. SSVF staff will work with Veteran that has identified a social support willing to provide housing or an affordable independent housing option awaiting Veterans, Prior to supporting any move, SSVF staff works with Veteran and receiving communities to confirm that adequate supports exist in the community where placement is made. This includes SSVF provider and VAMC in the receiving community, if indicated. If the Veteran would like to request this a returning home request questions need to be completed and submitted to HSN SSVF staff and will be emailed the regional coordinator for approval. Once approval is received, HSN staff will notify the SSVF case manager. The SSVF staff will connect with the SSVF receiving community provider in that community. The SSVF case manager will coordinate travel arrangements to



include, moving cost, U-haul, Pods rental, airplane tickets, bus tickets, train tickets or gas for the travel to receiving community. Also SSVF can assist with hotel accommodations if requiring an overnight stay. Once the Veteran arrives at the receiving community the departure community SSVF provider will assist the veteran until the receiving SSVF community provider is able to assist.

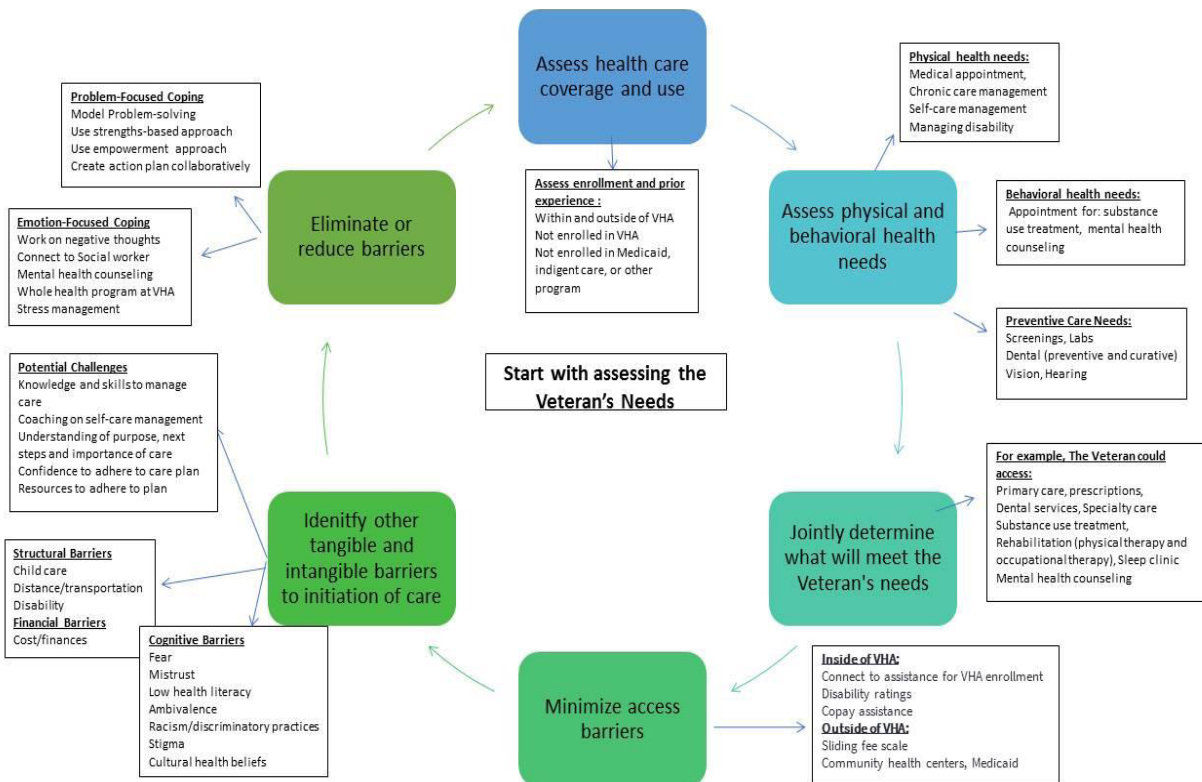
Healthcare Navigator

SSVF health care navigator (HCN) will work with Veterans or family members on a variety of issues to assist them in identifying and overcoming challenges to accessing the healthcare system or adhering to recommended health care plans. The Veteran may receive physical and behavioral health services from the VHA or a community provider. The HCN will help facilitate access to these services regardless of healthcare system. Health Care Navigator functions are Communication, Facilitate Access to Care (VA and non-VA Providers), Reduction of Barriers, Coordination of Care, Patient Education, and Advocacy. SSVF HCN are trained to assist Veterans with the following:

- Gaining access to health care
- Supporting health care plans by identifying barriers to care
- Providing education on wellness related topics
- Connect the Veteran to support groups or other programs at the VA or in the community to support their health goals

The HCN also works closely with the SSVF/VA Substance Use Disorder Specialist to complete referrals when identified. The SSVF case manager identifies a Veteran who have healthcare navigation needs then a referral for services is completed and emailed to the health care navigator. The health care needs could include but not limited to prioritize the intensity and urgency of navigation services based on health urgency and complexity, Veterans and families that are not already enrolled in health care, Veterans and families having complex illness and difficulty accessing care, and having mental health or substance use disorders.

The HCN goal is to build trust demonstrating respect and empathy with the Veterans and families. Communicate with SSVF case manager to coordinate services with Veteran and with VHA or other health settings with the Veterans and, with permission, on behalf of the Veteran. Communicate with the clinical team in order to support the Veteran in understanding the reason and next steps of their care plan. Communicating with Veterans and health care teams about appointments and conduct reminder calls to the Veteran for upcoming health services. When possible and with permission, communicate with the family/care givers and provide support to the Veteran and care givers.



Peer Support

The SSVF Peer Support Specialist will be responsible for providing additional support to Veterans to achieve community inclusion and participation, independence, recovery and resiliency. The Peer Support Specialist is an individual in recovery with a self-identified lived experience and journey in receiving services and supports from mental health, substance use disorder, and/or housing/homeless service providers. The Peer Support Specialist helps Veterans regain control over their lives and/or over their own recovery process, as they define it.

- Provide assertive outreach and engagement to Veterans.
- Provide extra support and assistance to Veterans with accessing and navigating community resources.
- Assist and support Veterans in maintaining cooperative and effective relationships with their case manager.
- Use experience with personal recovery (when appropriate) in assisting, role modeling, and supporting the team and Veterans.
- Enhance team decision making by assuring Veteran with Lived Experience voice and choice is included in planning.
- Accompany team members during outreach and engagement to build rapport with community provider.

- Assist Veterans in the development of life skills such as resolving interpersonal conflicts in their environment, maintaining housing, developing employability and work skills, safety skills, social skills, receiving and maintaining benefits.
- Adhere to Housing First and Harm Reduction model of peer advocacy.
- Utilize concepts of Motivational Interviewing to assist Veterans with positive change.
- Participate in staff meetings and trainings.
- Assist and role model for Veterans as needed with activities of daily living such as transportation, or other assistance as needed.
- Document engagements in Case notes in Client Track.

Housing Navigator

The housing navigators will work collaboratively with the HUD-VASH and SSVF teams. The housing navigators provide benefit to the goal of permanently housing Veterans. Housing Navigator services are dedicated to finding housing for Veterans co-enrolled in HUD-VASH and SSVF.

Housing Search and Placement

Services or activities necessary to assist program Veterans in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable permanent housing, include the following:

- Assessment of housing barriers, needs, and preferences;
- Development of an action plan for locating housing;
- Housing search;
- Outreach to and negotiation with landlords;
- Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases;
- Assessment of housing for compliance requirements for habitability, lead-based paint, and rent reasonableness (inspection);
- Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements; and
- Tenant counseling.

Appropriate Housing

- Housing should be mutually agreed upon by both the SSVF CM and the Veteran. At a minimum, housing should be clean, decent, well maintained, affordable, and in a neighborhood that meets the needs of the Veteran.
- Locating adequate housing is a mutual responsibility of the Veteran and SSVF CM and housing navigator. All resources should be used to find housing. If needed, transportation should be provided to help Veterans visit the units, complete the Housing Checklist, and complete the housing application. Financial assistance with application fees is available for Veterans. SSVF CM and housing navigators should keep abreast of current rental markets, landlords to avoid, and appropriately refer Veterans to partnering landlords. Referrals will not be made to landlords that have repeatedly proven uncooperative with HSN, have refused to reimburse due funds, do not adequately maintain properties, or have otherwise abused tenants' rights.

- Veterans should examine any potential housing units and ensure for themselves that it is in good repair, that all facilities are in good working order, and that it is located in suitable neighborhoods. SSVF CM will then complete a housing habitability standards inspection form.

Legal Services

To better serve our SSVF Veterans and their families, HSN contracts with Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida (CLSMF) to provide legal services to address a variety of legal issues. Legal areas covered by CLSMF are service connected disability benefits, non service connected pension benefits, discharge upgrade, surviving spouse benefits, overpayments of benefits, fiduciary, denial of medical care, public assistance benefits, children's rights, Family Law, Housing (evictions, discrimination, uninhabitable housing conditions, issues with landlord, consumer/credit issues, other issues such as domestic violence, bankruptcy, sealing and expungement, driver license reinstatement and employment issues. CLSMF covers Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. Once a veteran or family member is identified as needing legal services the SSVF case manager will complete a referral to CLSMF and email the form to veterans@clsmf.org. If the SSVF case manager is not sure send the referral to CLSMF to make that determination. CLSMF will reach out to the Veteran or family member requesting or needing legal services. CLSMF will complete an enrollment in client track to document the beginning of legal assistance. All communication will be documented in client track in case notes and services provided. CLSMF provides quarterly training to all SSVF staff.

Assistance in Obtaining VA Benefits

As part of participant intake, SSVF program staff should determine whether the participant household is already receiving services from VA. If the participant is already receiving services, the assessment should focus on what additional services the participant may need, want and be eligible for, to refer the participant to the appropriate VA office for assistance. If the participant is not already receiving services from VA, the program staff will make the participant aware of the services for which he/she may be eligible and offer to refer the participant to the nearest VA facility.

Potential VA benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- Income assistance
- Vocational and rehabilitation counseling
- Employment and training service
- Educational assistance
- Healthcare Assistance

Income assistance, employment, training, and educational resources are especially important for the target population of the SSVF Program. Participants will need to establish regular incomes to support the program's primary goal of housing stability. Health care benefits will offer participants mental and

physical health services that are not currently being addressed. VA offers health care services at over 1,400 locations nationwide, including hospitals, clinics, community living centers, domiciliary care facilities, readjustment counseling centers, etc.

- **Guidance on Administration of Benefits/Service**

If a participant has not yet enrolled in the VA health care system, the program staff will provide assistance in the enrollment process. Additional information on VA healthcare and benefits can be found on the following VA websites: <http://www.va.gov/health/index.asp> and: <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>.

If necessary, assistance provided to participants should also include helping Veterans locate an accredited claims agent or attorney and other services short of actual representation before VA. Although staff will assist participants in obtaining available benefits from VA, Veterans can only be represented in benefit claims before VA unless the individual providing representation is an accredited claims agent or attorney.

- **Using Community Linkages to Enhance Effectiveness**

HSN will maintain good working relationships with local VA facilities, State Veterans Affairs Offices and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). A list of State Veterans Affairs Offices can be found on the following VA website: <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>. VA also maintains a searchable database of VSOs that can be accessed online at: <http://www.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=search>.

Through these relationships staff will maintain lines of communication with VA facilities and will be able to stay aware of new benefits and services for which participants may be eligible and make or receive referrals as appropriate.

SSVF program staff will develop linkages in the community as a way to enhance services for SSVF participants. SSVF CM, will assist the Veteran in applying for all community benefits including but not limited to: TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, Social Security benefits, etc.

Assistance in Obtaining and Coordinating Other Public Benefits

SSVF staff are required to assist participant households to access both public benefits and mainstream community resources that are available from federal, state, local, or tribal agencies, or any eligible entity, in their communities. The terms “public benefits” and “community resources” are defined broadly to include healthcare (medical, mental health, and substance abuse services) and daily living services, affordable housing, employment and vocational services, income support (from public benefits), legal services, transportation, personal financial planning and credit counseling, VA fiduciary and representative payee services, and childcare. The goals for connecting with these external programs



are, first, to meet immediate housing-related and non- housing related needs and, second, to avoid a future housing crisis.

While all SSVF program staff deliver this connectivity component of supportive services, the work to link with each resource listed above may be organized by HSN using three possible approaches:

1. **Direct:** by SSVF program staff (Note: SSVF funds cannot pay for direct provision of healthcare or daily living services).
2. **Indirect:** refer out to external resources with grantee utilizing a conventional information and referral approach and building upon in-house knowledge of external resources.
3. **Both:** direct by SSVF program and indirect referred out to external resources with SSVF program staff utilizing a conventional information and referral approach and building upon in-house knowledge of external resources

Benefits that are required to assist participants to obtain (if available and appropriate) include, but are not limited to:

- Health care services (referral only);
- Daily living services (referral only);
- Medicaid and/or subsidized insurance applications;
- Personal financial planning services;
- Transportation services;
- Income support services (e.g. referrals to disability benefits, Social Security, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), unemployment assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or formerly, food stamps), etc.);
- SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery);
- Fiduciary and representative payee services;
- Legal services;
- Child care services;
- Housing counseling services; and
- Employment and vocational services.

By leveraging available public resources to keep participants in housing, HSN will ensure that participants are given the highest level of support possible while efficiently utilizing SSVF grant funds. Detailed descriptions of the above-noted public benefits are provided in 38 CFR 62.33.

Eligible Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)

SSVF Program Staff may choose to provide TFA to participant households. However, not all households require such assistance. Supportive services grant funds should only be used as direct financial assistance when “**but for**” criteria are met and, for homelessness prevention, when a participant meets or exceeds the targeting threshold score of 36. That is, after first considering readily available homeless and mainstream benefits (such as TANF, general assistance, and food stamps), the SSVF program staff must explore whether the household would become or remain literally homeless “**but for**” the provision of SSVF TFA. When SSVF program staff do choose to provide TFA, it should be used as a supplement to services provided to a participant as part of a plan to increase the participant’s housing stability.

These eligible forms of temporary financial assistance are:

- Rental (Traditional and Shallow Subsidy)
- Utility
- Deposits (security or utility)
- Moving costs
- General Housing Stability Assistance
- Emergency Housing Assistance
- Transportation (public transportation or car repair)
- Childcare
- Landlord Incentives (Special NOFA)
- Veteran Incentives (Special NOFA)

Traditional Rental Assistance

Rental assistance includes the payment of rent, mobile home lot rent when Veteran owns the mobile home, penalties or fees to help a Veteran remain in or obtain permanent housing.

Eligible for payments currently due or in arrears, and for the payment of penalties or fees that have been incurred by the Veteran and are required to be paid under an existing lease or court order. Such fees may include broker fees, inspections, background checks, application fees, etc. and included in the deposit assistance and not as part of the monthly rental assistance.

(Note: the number of months in arrears paid for through rental assistance counts towards the maximum allowable months of assistance)

- Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period
- Maximum of 6 months in a 12-month period
- Must be in compliance with rent reasonableness

(Note: Where a rental fee is inclusive of utilities, the entire amount will be considered “rental assistance” and will be subject to the applicable conditions).

Veterans and their families are required to share in the cost of rent payments as a condition of receiving assistance. Additionally, program staff will work with landlords to waive fees, security deposits and other fees. Program staff should determine the amount of assistance needed on a case-by-case basis, based on the minimum amount needed to prevent the Veteran or family from becoming homeless or returning to homelessness in the near future.

- **Rent Reasonableness**

SSVF CM must determine reasonableness of rent, penalties or fees prior to providing assistance by conducting an internet search of three comparable advertised rental units. Must be completed for Veterans receiving financial assistance and either staying in or moving into a new housing unit. Rent reasonableness is not required in SSVF files where participants are using a HUD-VASH voucher. However, for other subsidized housing placements (e.g. Housing Choice

Voucher (aka Section 8)), rent reasonableness is required either from the administering agency, or completed by SSVF staff. In general, the assisted unit must be comparable to rents charged during the same time period for similar units in the private, unassisted market.

- **Shared Housing**

Participation in shared housing arrangement must be voluntary. Rent charged for a participant must be proportional to the size of the participant's private space in comparison to other private space in the unit (i.e., excluding common space).

- **Cost-Sharing with Other Programs**

Rental assistance payments cannot be provided on behalf of participant households for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided by any and all other Federal, State, or local subsidized affordable housing programs such as HUD-VASH, public housing, and other subsidized programs. This restriction includes a tenant's own portion of rent owed when in subsidized housing. SSVF may not pay the tenant's portion of rent under these circumstances. When the cost type is different from what is paid by the housing subsidy, SSVF rental assistance may be used. This means SSVF may pay for a security deposit for a Veteran who is receiving HUD VASH or receiving another form of subsidized rental assistance. Furthermore, SSVF may be used to pay rent arrears for a Veteran who is receiving HUD-VASH rental assistance or receiving other forms of subsidized housing. These costs are both considered a different cost type.

- **Shallow Subsidy**

The SSVF Shallow Subsidy initiative provides rental assistance to very low-income and extremely low-income Veteran households who are enrolled in SSVF's Rapid Rehousing services or SSVF's Homeless Prevention services. It is likely that most participants will have already received rental assistance (this is not a requirement), but remain rent burdened and require the longer-term, shallow subsidy rental assistance to maintain permanent housing. Shallow Subsidy services allow Veterans to stabilize over a longer period without the risk of becoming ineligible for assistance due to increases in income. Under the SSVF Shallow Subsidy service provides up to 50% of the rent for an initial commitment of two years for Veterans at or below 30% of AMI and two years less the number of months of traditional rental assistance for Veterans at 31% to 80% of AMI. Veterans may be recertified for additional two years if needed to sustain permanent housing and if still eligible for the program.

- **Brokers Fee**

Reasonable amount for a realtor broker's fee. This may be paid once during a 2-year period. The reasonableness of this fee must be determined based on the condition of the local housing market.

Utility Payments

Utility payment of utility costs (i.e., heat, internet, electricity, water, sewer and garbage collection) to help Veterans and their families obtain or retain permanent housing. Utility assistance can be provided for amounts that are currently due or are in arrears. Veterans and their families are required to share in the cost of utility payments as a condition of receiving assistance.

Utility assistance may consist of payments for multiple types of utilities, including basic internet services, telephone, and cell phone service. Utility assistance can be provided for amounts that are currently due or are in arrears.

Utility payment assistance necessitates the development of a reasonable plan to address the Veteran or family's future ability to make utility payments. The SSVF staff will assist the Veteran or family to implement such a plan by providing necessary assistance directly or by helping the Veteran or family to obtain any necessary public or private benefits or services.

Deposit Assistance

Deposit payment assistance includes the payment of security or utility deposits to help the Veteran and their family obtain permanent housing. A deposit should be no more than two months' rent as this is typically considered to be the maximum reasonable level.

Deposit payment assistance may only be provided if the payment of such assistance will directly allow the Veteran and their family to obtain permanent housing. Program staff must work with the Veteran to develop a reasonable plan to stabilize housing so that additional deposits are not needed, and should assist the Veteran in implementing a housing stability plan by directly providing necessary assistance or to help the Veteran obtain necessary public or private benefits or services. If Program staff cannot help the Veteran and their family to develop a reasonable plan to address the Veteran's future housing stability, grant funds should not be used to provide deposit payment assistance.

Deposit payment assistance may be provided on behalf of eligible Veteran and do not count towards the monthly assistance restrictions for both rent and allowable utilities, and have the following restrictions.

Moving Assistance

Moving assistance includes costs associated with truck rental, hiring a moving company, or short term storage fees for a maximum of 3 months or until the participant is in permanent housing, whichever is shorter. Note: A one-time moving cost for truck rental means one episode of moving to permanent housing. A truck rental may be needed to move participant's belongings to storage unit and then moved again once permanent housing is secured. Relocation expenses are an allowable use, when a solid housing stability plan is in place. As a condition of providing moving costs assistance, SSVF program staff must help the participant develop a reasonable plan to address the participant's future housing stability and assist the participant to implement such a plan. SSVF program staff may require participants to share in the cost of moving as a condition of receiving assistance with moving costs.

General Housing Stability Assistance

General Housing Stability Assistance is limited to a total of \$2,022 per Veteran household. This category allows for the provision of goods or payment of expenses not included in other sections, but, which are directly related to support a Veteran's housing stability and is not available through existing mainstream and community resources.

Four Classes of Housing Stability Assistance

There are four classes of Housing Stability Assistance expenses, outlined below, that can be authorized up to a maximum of \$2,022 per participant household during any 2-year period.

- I. **Expenses associated with gaining or keeping employment:** Eligible items include but are not limited to uniforms, tools, driver's license fees, license/certification costs required for employment, documentation acquisition fees such as for Social Security Number or birth certificate, document court filing fees, and short term training leading to employment, where other funding is not available.
- II. **Expenses associated with moving into permanent housing:** Eligible items include but are not limited to furniture delivery costs, furniture bank fees, bed frames, conventional mattresses, air mattresses, box springs, bedding (sheets, pillowcases, and pillows), basic kitchen utensils, and cleaning supplies.
- III. **Expenses necessary for securing appropriate permanent housing:** Eligible items include but are not limited to fees for rental applications, background checks, housing inspections, credit score checks, credit counseling, criminal background check, tenancy screening reports, financial literacy class, document court filing fees, and documentation acquisition such as for Social Security Number or birth certificates.
- IV. **Items necessary for life or safety provided on a temporary basis to address an emergency:** Eligible items include food, baby formula, diapers, and winter clothing. These items are allowable up to \$500 per participant household in a 2-year period and are included in the overall \$2,022 cap.

Items that cannot be funded under General Housing Stability Assistance are: phone cards, gift cards of any kind, and furniture (except beds). Major appliances are also generally non-eligible with the rare exception of circumstances when the VA allows such an item for an individual case.

Emergency Housing Assistance

This assistance allows SSVF programs to provide temporary housing for eligible literally homeless participants who are awaiting permanent housing **if** no other shelter is available. As SSVF resources must be focused on securing and sustaining placement in permanent housing, grantees are expected to exercise great care in committing resources to emergency housing, ensuring no alternative VA resources (such as Grant and Per Diem or Healthcare for Homeless Veterans residential contract housing) or community resources exist.



Emergency housing may be provided to short-term commercial residences, not already funded to provide on-demand emergency shelter, that does not require the participant to sign a lease or occupancy agreement (private residences are not eligible).

Note that the *Emergency Housing Assistance Verification* is used to confirm eligibility.

If permanent housing, appropriate shelter beds, and transitional housing are not available and subsequent rental housing has been identified generally but is not immediately available for move in by the participant, then a grantee may place a participant in emergency housing, subject to the following limitations:

- Placement for a single Veteran may not exceed 60 days
- Placement for a Veteran and his or her spouse with dependent(s) may not exceed 60 days.
- The cost of the emergency housing must be reasonable in relation to the costs charged for other available emergency housing considering the location, quality, size, and type.

Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) may also be provided by the SSVF grantee under 38 CFR 62.34(f) to offer transition in place when a permanent housing voucher, such as one offered through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program (aka. Section 8), is available from any source, but access to the permanent housing voucher is pending completion of the housing inspection and administrative processes necessary for leasing. In such circumstances, the EHA payment cannot exceed what would otherwise be paid when the voucher is utilized. Note that the Emergency Housing Assistance Verification is NOT used for this request.

Transportation Assistance

SSVF Program Staff may provide transportation assistance if it will enhance housing stability. The use of public transportation is generally less expensive than the use of private vehicles and may be more sustainable in the long-term, SSVF program staff should consider providing public transportation tokens or vouchers before offering financial assistance for personal vehicles. If sufficient public transportation options are not locally available, program staff may provide car repair or maintenance assistance on behalf of a participant. Maximum of \$1,200 car repairs/maintenance in a 2-year period on behalf of a participant.

The provision of money or gift cards to a participant to pay for gasoline is **not** permitted with SSVF funds.

Childcare Assistance

Payments may be on behalf of a participant to an "eligible child care provider" providing child care services. Such child care payments should only be provided if the assistance will improve a participant's housing stability. Payment must be made directly to an "eligible child care provider." An "eligible child care provider" is a provider of child care services for compensation, including a provider of care for a school-age child during non-school hours, that: (1) is licensed, regulated, registered, or otherwise legally operating under state and local law, and (2) satisfies the state and local requirements applicable to the child care services the provider provides



- Maximum of 10 months in a 2-year period, per child in household
- Maximum of 6 months in a 12-month period, per child in household (Note: Household may include multiple children)
- Begins on the date SSVF first pays for child care on behalf of participant

Child care assistance can be provided for children under the age of 13, unless a child has a disability. Child care assistance can be provided for children with a disability under the age of 18.

As with all temporary financial assistance payments made under the SSVF Program, the provision of temporary assistance requires the development of a reasonable housing stability plan to address the participant's future ability to pay for all expenses related to obtaining and/or maintaining permanent housing.

Implementing this plan should consider assistance or helping the participant to obtain any necessary public or private benefits or services. If program staff cannot help participants develop a reasonable plan, child assistance should be limited to efforts to connect the participant with a program offering long-term assistance.

Landlord Incentives

All Veterans enrolled in SSVF services may be considered and prioritize for utilization of incentives to secure housing. All Veterans enrolled in SSVF could potentially access landlord incentives from these Supplemental Funds on their behalf; however, incentives are meant to overcome housing barriers for the Veteran and/or resolve landlord concerns. SSVF allowable up to 2-months rent equivalent payable to landlord. Where housing is already dedicated for homeless persons, for instance housing supported with project-based vouchers or tax-credits, such landlord incentives should not be necessary. So, SSVF staff must still demonstrate that the landlord incentive was used to further expedite permanent housing access for high-risk Veterans. Incentives may only be offered for one year lease agreements. Landlord incentives are meant to facilitate new lease ups for Veterans, but can be used with landlords who you have worked with in the past if the incentive helps to overcome a Veteran's barriers to be accepted into a unit. You may only provide the incentive one time per lease. The SSVF case manager needs to document in case notes the housing barriers and amount used but not to exceed \$2,500 with veteran moving into new units with 12 month lease. This payment is made at the beginning of the move in process once veteran has been approved for the housing unit.

Veteran Incentives

Veteran incentives are a new TFA category that can be made available to any Veteran enrolled in SSVF. These incentives may be a good way to engage Veterans who might otherwise not accept housing, but it is allowable to use the incentives for other Veterans who are moving into housing, budget permitting. The Veteran is eligible for \$1000 limit. This incentive is for Veterans entering a new unit/lease. Available to Veteran only after move in and will need to be used within 30 days of move in. The SSVF case manager will document in case notes the use of the incentives and the amount used.



Allowable items:

- Appliances (Microwave, Refrigerator, Dishwasher, Air conditioner, etc.)
- Furniture (Bed, Sofa, Dresser, Coffee Table, etc.)
- Electronic Equipment (Computer, Television, Laptop, electronic reading device etc.)
- Rugs and Carpets
- Recreational items such as bikes, sports or exercise
- Educational items such as books or items needed for Veteran household
- Hobby materials such as crafts, games.

Not Allowable:

- Food
- Art/Antiques
- Jewels and Gems
- Collections
- Weapons
- Other items prohibited by law

Restrictions on Payments

Temporary financial assistance payments cannot be paid to the participant and must be paid directly to a third party on behalf of a participant.

Ineligible Expenses:

- Mortgage costs or costs needed by homeowners to assist with any fees, taxes, or other costs of refinancing;
- Construction or rehabilitation of buildings;
- Credit card bills or other consumer debt;
- Extensive car repairs for participant households (beyond the eligible \$1,200 in repairs/maintenance);
- Car payments for participants;
- Medical or dental care and medicines for Mental health, substance use, or other therapeutic interventions designed to treat Axis I or II diagnostic conditions in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Addition;
- Home care and home health aides typically used to provide care in support of daily living activities (*Note: This includes care that is focused on treatment for an injury or illness, rehabilitation, or other assistance generally required to assist those with handicaps or other physical limitations.*);
- Food, including food provided at staff and other meetings or trainings (except as a qualified emergency supply);
- Pet care, including additional deposit for pet;
- Entertainment activities;

- Direct cash assistance to program participants;
- Purchase of gift cards for program participants;
- Court-ordered judgments or fines. (Note: late rent fees are an allowable expense);
- Court-ordered fees that are related to a court order/adjudication;
- Petty cash for program staff; or
- Gift cards of any kind.

No bulk purchases of items are allowed, unless each item is necessary for a specific identified Veteran family at the time of purchase. Any TFA purchases made must be tied directly to an eligible SSVF Veteran family. For example, an agency cannot buy bulk household goods with SSVF funds to be provided to Veterans as needed. An agency would have to purchase items with other agency funds, and reimburse themselves as SSVF Veteran family needs arise, or buy each item as needed. Funds may *not* be released directly to the participant. All funds are to be issued to a third party such as a landlord or utility company.

VI. SSVF Case Files and Documentation

Case files are maintained for each participant household. During the annual monitoring visit, case files will be inspected for the following forms:

	Homeless Prevention	Rapid Re-Housing
Intake Screening	X	X
Housing Stability Plan	X	X
Release(s) of Information	X	X
HMIS Release of Information	X	X
VA Release of Information	X	X
Grievance Procedure with Participant Signature	X	X
Case Notes	X	X
Program Agreement with Participant Signature	X	X
Approval/Denial Letter	X	X
ID & SS for ALL family members	X	X
DD214 and/or VA ID Card	X	X
Lease	X	X
Eviction Letter	X	

Utility Bill	X	X
Rental/Utility Deposit Statement	X	X
But FOR form	X	X
Housing Preferences Worksheet	X	X
HSN/SSVF Temporary Financial Assistance Form	X	X
Check Request	X	X
Copy of Check(s)	X	X
SSVF Exit Checklist	X	X
Homelessness Prevention Screening Form	X	
Critical Incident Report	As needed	As needed
Customer Satisfaction Survey (Electronic Record)	X	X

Official SSVF Forms		
	Homeless Prevention	Rapid Re-Housing
Staff Recertification of Continued Assistance	As needed	As needed
Pending Verification of Veteran Status	As needed	As needed
Income Verification Template and Self-declaration of Income**	X	X
Asset Income Calculation Worksheet	X	X
Income Calculation Worksheet	X	X

Literally Homeless Certification Template OR Self-declaration of Literal Homelessness**		X
Self-declaration of Housing Status**	As needed	As needed
Documentation Checklist 1: Participant Eligibility	X	X
Documentation Checklist 2: TFA and Housing Unit	X	X
Recertification Checklist 3: Participant Eligibility	Every 90 days	Every 90 days
Rent Reasonableness Checklist	X	X
Housing Habitability Standards	X	X
Emergency Housing Assistance Verification	As needed	As needed

VII. Documentation Standards

Program Staff is responsible for verifying and documenting the eligibility of all Veteran families prior to providing SSVF assistance. They are also responsible for maintaining this documentation in the SSVF participant case file once approved for assistance. For purposes of SSVF, VA allows various types of documentation, ranging from third-party written verification to participant self-declaration. Minimum acceptable types of documentation vary depending on the type of income or particular housing status and circumstance being documented. General documentation standards, in order of preference, are as follows:

Documentation Required

SSVF Program Staff must maintain records that justify the provision of temporary financial assistance. SSVF Program Guide (dated 03/2021) Section VIII.C outlines the case file documentation required to verify the eligibility of a temporary financial assistance payment. Program Staff must also maintain all back up documentation and invoices to support the costs paid with SSVF funds. This pertains to all funds drawn down under Services, TFA, and Admin. This documentation will be reviewed during annual monitoring visits.

- **Written Third Party:** Verification in writing from a third party (e.g. individual employer, Social Security Administration, welfare office, emergency shelter provider, etc.) either directly to SSVF staff or via the Veteran family is most preferred. Third party verification of income, such as a deposit slip for a paycheck, might show income after deductions have been made; grantees must document gross income, before any deductions. Written third party documentation may include completion of a standardized form, such as a verification of income statement.
- **Oral Third Party:** Verification from a third party (e.g. individual employer, Social Security Administration, Welfare Office, etc.) provided by the third party over the telephone or in person directly to SSVF staff. Oral third party verification is acceptable only if written third party verification cannot be obtained in time to resolve the housing crisis. SSVF staff must document reasons why third party written verification could not be obtained in the SSVF participant file.
- **Self-Declared:** An affidavit of income and/or housing status as reported by the household is allowable, but is only acceptable if written or verbal third party verification cannot be obtained. Self-declaration of housing status (e.g., eviction) should be rare. SSVF staff must document reasons why third party written or oral verification could not be obtained in the SSVF participant file. Self-declaration will always be used for families that are fleeing a violent situation.

SSVF Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF Assistance

The Staff Certification of Eligibility for SSVF Assistance Form should be maintained in each participant's file and is subject to review by VA. This form should be completed for each household deemed eligible for SSVF assistance. The form should be completed and signed by both the person determining eligibility and the Chief Program Officer for all households. While this form is completed at intake, a Staff Recertification of Continued Assistance Form should be completed at the time of recertification.

Documenting Domestic Violence

As discussed earlier, for all participant households newly created under circumstances of domestic violence, SSVF resets the tolling period for receiving temporary financial assistance. For participants for whom this policy applies, the SSVF staff must certify a participant's domestic violence situation using the *SSVF Domestic Violence Certification Form*. Note that this form only requires third party verification, from a social worker or legal service provider for example, in cases where performing this due diligence does not jeopardize the safety of household members. Where safety might be jeopardized, this form allows participants to provide a self-certification as to their circumstances.

Timeliness of Income Documentation

The definition of income for the SSVF program reflects a Veteran family's annual income at the time of Intake. Accordingly, documents and information collected to verify income should be recent and current at time of application for SSVF assistance.

Case Notes



SSVF and HSN recognize that intensive case management is the most important component of helping SSVF participants become or remain stably housed. As such, case notes are required as proof that case management and other supportive services are being provided to participants. If a service is not documented by a note, there is no way of verifying that it was provided. Accordingly, all staff and subcontractors are required to document services with a note in HMIS stating the date of service, nature of service, person and organization providing the service, and duration of service. HSN requires that all case notes be in the DAP format (Data, Assessment, Plan).

HSN recognizes that the assessment will not be a clinical one but more of an overall assessment of the participant at the moment.

Note that unsuccessful attempts to provide service, such as an unanswered call or e-mail or a missed appointment, must be documented by a note as well.

The Veterans' Program Advisor will randomly select random participant's HMIS profiles to review on a monthly basis to confirm that adequate case notes are included. If there are not adequate case notes, the respective Program Manager will be informed and a corrective action will be discussed.

VIII. Program Operations

Participant Agreements

The SSVF CM during intake will provide a certification and agreement for the SSVF program. These are written guidelines of the SSVF program clearly stated and consistently enforced.

Veteran(s) must be willing to actively partner with their SSVF CM for the time needed to attain housing, as well as time to establish linkages to community resources to ensure the ability to maintain housing.

Notification to Participants

Before providing SSVF assistance to a participant household, grantees must notify the participant that the assistance will be paid for, in whole or in part, by VA.

Participant Choice and Feedback

Program staff will ensure that Veterans are involved in decision-making processes, including planning for services and program quality improvement. This is accomplished by ensuring Veterans choose their own housing, computing successful exits, and by reviewing grievances and exit surveys. Additionally, Veterans are represented and have an active voice on the Lived Experience committee. To ensure that Veteran families receiving supportive services under the SSVF Program are receiving quality services, program staff must give a VA-designated satisfaction survey to each participant within 30 days of the participant's pending exit from the program.

Participant Safety and Critical Incident Reports

A critical goal of the SSVF Program is to ensure the safety of all participant households, supportive service coordinators, and their staff and to ensure that prevention, timely reporting, and remediation occurs for all critical incidents. All HSN and subcontractor staff shall be trained and responsible for adherence to applicable state and federal mandated reporting requirements.

SSVF staff and subcontractors shall report all potential critical incidents within one business day of occurrence. In the event there is a critical incident involving an SSVF program Veteran, staff are to notify the Veteran Program Advisor immediately. The Veteran Program Advisor will notify the Regional Coordinator within a timeframe not to exceed 24 hours after being made aware of the situation. The Critical Incident Protocol is designed to enhance security of confidential information. Critical Incident Reports will be faxed to the VA SSVF Program Office at 215-222-2591.

Work-related injuries should be handled using the guidelines established in the most current Employee Handbook. Additionally, staff is required to follow guidelines around establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries with Veterans who are assigned to them. This relates to giving Veteran(s) rides in their cars, loaning them or engaging in any other relationship that organization views as harmful. If program staff become aware of a health or safety issue related to the participant, including unsafe accommodations, staff must report the issue to the appropriate authorities. SSVF Program staff is expected to comply with all applicable laws. If a participant's actions pose a health or safety risk to that participant or another person, staff must notify the police or another appropriate authority.

Critical incidents include events such as or inappropriate staff involvement, participant and staff injury, assault on program staff, aggression, violence, violent crimes, attempted or completed suicide, and death.

Habitability Standards

Housing should be mutually agreed upon by both the SSVF CM and the Veteran. At a minimum, housing should be clean, decent, well maintained, affordable, and in a neighborhood that meets the needs of the Veteran. Locating adequate housing is a mutual responsibility of the Veteran and SSVF CM. All resources should be used to find housing. If needed, transportation should be provided to help Veterans visit the units, complete the Housing Checklist, and complete the housing application. Financial assistance with application fees is available for Veterans. SSVF CM should keep abreast of current rental markets, landlords to avoid, and appropriately refer Veterans to partnering landlords. Referrals will not be made to landlords that have repeatedly proven uncooperative with HSN, have refused to reimburse due funds, do not adequately maintain properties, or have otherwise abused tenants' rights. Veterans should examine any potential housing units and ensure for themselves that it is in good repair, that all facilities

are in good working order, and that it is located in suitable neighborhoods. To ensure a minimum inspection has been done and Veterans are willing to accept housing, a Housing habitability Inspection form is completed for each unit accepted. SSVF CM should caution Veterans not to accept housing that does not meet minimum standards even if the landlord verbally promises to fix these problems.

Housing Inspections

SSVF CM and the housing navigator must conduct habitability inspections when grant funds are used to provide rental assistance, security deposits or moving costs. Inspections are to be completed when Veterans are moving into a new housing unit. This habitability inspection does not require a certified inspector. A visual lead inspection must occur on units built before 1978 and housing a family with a child under 6 or a pregnant woman who is receiving financial assistance. Upon failure of the visual inspection, the unit must undergo appropriate lead-based paint abatement before financial assistance can be provided. Completed inspection forms should be maintained in the Veteran record files.

Veteran Records

The primary source for Veteran records will be in HMIS. In addition, each Veteran will have a paper file, with minimal information primarily related to eligibility and re-certification documentation. Paper files will be kept in a secure and locked (or capable of being locked) location to maintain confidentiality. Veteran files maintained in HMIS are kept permanently. Paper files are kept for a period of seven years. Program staff will utilize HMIS for data collection. When data is collected and utilized correctly it is efficient, cost effective and beneficial to the evaluation, review and improvement of the program. Data entered into HMIS will be according to HSN Policies & Procedures and include all required data elements.

Confidentiality

Program staff is required to maintain confidentiality of records kept on Veterans. Staff and subcontractors must comply with all applicable federal and local laws to assure the confidentiality and security of Veterans' physical and electronic records.

If family violence prevention or domestic violence treatment services are provided, staff must establish and implement additional procedures to protect Veterans by ensuring the confidentiality of:

1. Records pertaining to any Veteran provided services, and
2. The address or location where the services are provided.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) protocols include standards for the privacy and security of information entered into the HMIS system. These standards were developed by HUD based on Health Insurance and Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards for securing and



protecting Veteran information. HUD has defined baseline standards that are required of all organizations (such as a Continuum of Care, homeless assistance providers, Veteran service organizations, or HMIS software companies) that record, use, or process personal protected information on homeless Veterans for an HMIS. Some communities have elected to adopt additional laws, protocols or policies to further enhance the privacy and security of information collected through HMIS. Users of HMIS products must comply with the baseline HUD standards and must also comply with any additional federal, state and local laws that require additional confidentiality protections.

Releasing Participants from Program

If a Veteran refuses to comply with the SSVF Program Agreement, they may be terminated from the program. Veterans must receive written notification of reason for program termination, a copy must also be provided to the VA. In the event a participant violates a grantee's program requirements, a grantee may stop providing assistance to the participant. Grantees may resume assistance to a participant whose assistance was previously suspended. In terminating assistance to a participant, the grantee must first provide a formal process that recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance to due process in the termination decision. This process, at a minimum, must consist of:

1. Written notice to the participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination;
2. A review of the decision, in which the participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a SSVF staff member (SSVF Program Manager) other than the staff member (or a subordinate of that staff member) who made or approved the termination decision; and
3. Prompt written notice of the final decision to the participant.

The SSVF Program fully endorses use of a Housing First approach and encourages grantees to target assistance to those Veterans in most need. As such, dismissal or termination policies should avoid unnecessarily terminating assistance due to program violations, unless in extreme cases. Unless basic SSVF Program requirements are not being met, grantees should not otherwise terminate assistance due to program rule infractions if such termination can be avoided. Such instances provide an opportunity for further proactive, progressive service delivery. For example, terminating assistance solely because a Veteran is using substances, refuses treatment or is not fully in line with their housing plan would not be consistent with a Housing First approach.

Program staff may resume assistance to a Veteran whose assistance was previously terminated at the SSVF teams' discretion.

Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedure

It is the policy of HSN to give prompt and impartial consideration to the complaints and grievances of program participants without restraint, interference, coercion, or reprisal. The following procedures establish a uniform method by which program participants may report a complaint or grievance.

The SSVF Program encourages our Veterans and staff to attempt to resolve issues verbally before they get to the formal grievance level. However, when that is not possible, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure grievances are addressed:

1. Document the grievance in writing and address it to the manager/supervisor of the department in question. If the Veteran is unaware of the staff member's name, he/she may request a listing of SSVF Program staff.

Note: Veterans must have a current "Release of Information" form filed with the SSVF Program. The grievance must only involve the Veteran filing the grievance. SSVF Program staff will not discuss any other Veteran with the Veteran filing the grievance. No grievance will be filed over the telephone.

2. Once the grievance has been documented and delivered to the appropriate supervisor of the SSVF Program's staff member, that supervisor will contact the Veteran and request to meet with him/her to discuss the grievance face to face.

The supervisor will ask the Veteran if he/she would be willing to meet with the SSVF Program staff member in question to try to resolve the grievance. If the Veteran agrees to meet face to face, every attempt is made to resolve the grievance at this first level. If the Veteran does not agree, the supervisor will meet with the Veteran and attempt to resolve the grievance.

3. If after meeting face to face, the Veteran is still not satisfied, he/she may then request, in writing, to meet with the Executive Director of the agency.
4. If, after meeting with the Executive Director of the agency, the Veteran is still not satisfied, he/she may then request, in writing, to meet with the Veterans' Services Programs Advisor, of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida. The Veterans Program Advisor will contact the Veterans within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving the written request and all notes and documentation to set up a meeting with the Veteran. Every effort will be made to resolve the grievance at this meeting.
5. If the grievance is not resolved, the next step is for the Veteran to request a meeting with the Systems Operation Manager of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida. The Veterans' Program Advisor will ensure that a copy of the grievance and the notes from all previous meetings are available for review. The Veteran will be notified, in writing, as to when a meeting will take place.
6. If after the meeting with the System Operations Manager, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida, is still not satisfied, he/she will be directed to the Chief Operating Officer of Homeless Services Network of Central Florida and will be advised of the proper grievance documentation. This will be done 15 business days after the official final written grievance outcome from the provider agency.

In the event the grievance is against one of the above named individuals the Veteran would be directed to file the written grievance directly to the next individual listed.

IX. Fiscal Administration

Funding Sweeps

VA regularly reviews grantee expenditures to ensure that funds are being used in a manner consistent with programs goals and regulations. It is expected that grantee spending will be consistent across quarters as significant variance, particularly lower than expected spending, may indicate either a lower demand for services or difficulty in managing funds. Effective October 1, 2017, if during the course of the grant year the VA determines that grantee spending is not meeting the level expected at key milestones indicated below, VA may elect to recoup projected unused funds in order to be reprogrammed to address homelessness in other, higher need areas. HSN will review each provider contract and determine if funds need to be swept in order to relocate to other providers that are in higher need. A memorandum will be provided if the funds are swept back due to the provider not meeting the percentage allocated below. The percentages pre-quarter are as follows:

1. Provider must be at 25% by the end of the first quarter of the total contract award amount.
2. Provider must be 45% spent by the end of the second quarter of the total contract award amount.
3. Provider must be 65% spent by the end of the third quarter of the total contract award amount.
4. Provider must be 100% spent by the end of the fourth quarter of the total contract award amount.

Accounting Process

The SSVF sub-grantee(s) will submit their financial packets for reimbursement to the HSN Veteran grants accounting specialist by the 10th of each month. The HSN Veteran grants accounting specialist will thoroughly review the entire packet to ensure all backup documentation is present. If any documentation is missing, HSN Veteran grants accounting specialist will flag it and notify the agency. The HSN Veteran grants accounting specialist will re-review the packet for checks and balances and to ensure nothing is missing.

After review the packet will be turned back in to the HSN Contracts Compliance Manager to sign off on the check.

The HSN Grants Account Specialist will be the one to draw down the money from the PMS system. Once the money is drawn down a check will be mailed out to the SSVF sub-grantee(s) within 3 days.

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Review

HSN is responsible for mitigating risk of non-compliance with the financial rules, policies, and guidelines of the SSVF program. HSN will take the following steps to ensure the appropriate expenditure of funds:

- The HSN Grants Admin Specialist will reconcile all revenue and expenses monthly from the billings and invoices to the general ledger.
- The Sub-Recipients will send in programmatic documentation to ensure compliance and only eligible Veterans and allowable costs are being charged to the SSVF grant. For example, if there is a move-in the sub-recipient must submit a fully executed lease, the habitability inspection, the rent reasonableness form, the Staff Certification and any relevant re-certifications, as well as a completed W-9 form from the Landlord.
- The HSN Contracts Compliance Manager will review billings and approve them once completed and the Accounting Manager and CFO will approve expenses while closing out the finances on a monthly basis. The Accounting Manager and CFO are responsible for proper allocations of resources including staff time in a manner consistent with the SSVF policies and procedures.
- Drawdowns of SSVF may only be initiated when the Contracts Compliance Manager approves all billings and invoices and ensures all expenses are allowable and accurately charged to the grant.
- The Veterans' Program Advisor will randomly select Veterans who received TFA and ensure all documentation has been uploaded to HMIS and all relevant case notes have been completed. The Veterans' Program Advisor and the Contracts Compliance Manager will work together to reconcile all TFA requests with information uploaded into HMIS.
- Sub-Recipients are responsible for ensuring that VA-designated Satisfaction Surveys are completed at case closure. Sub-Recipients will submit quarterly report to Veterans' Program Advisor demonstrating that all Veterans' cases who were closed in previous quarter were provided Satisfaction Surveys.

X. Administrative Functions

Team Meetings

The SSVF team will meet regularly. The SSVF Team utilizes Decision Making Process. The group will function under a consensus-based decision making model. The purpose of these meetings includes, but is not limited to:

- Reviewing the status of all cases in the SSVF Program;
- Discussion of active incoming veterans in our by-name list;
- Reviewing and updating program and administrative procedures as needed.
- Program Supervisor/Manager(s) will engage in bi-weekly Manager Meetings with HSN;
- CoC SSVF Capacity Check-in and Policy Meeting weekly with SSVF Community Providers;
- Monthly Veterans Committee Meeting with community partners providing services to Veterans;

Agency Role and Responsibility

Each member of the SSVF team will operate in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in this manual. They will achieve the Program Outcomes for the SSVF program. The primary role is to provide direct services to enable those Veterans who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless obtain and sustain appropriate housing.

Sub-grantee(s) Contract(s)



HSN does subcontract the direct services to several different community providers. HSN maintains all the contracts and addendums for each sub-grantee.

Staffing

All SSVF Program Staff have written job position descriptions, with performance measures and program expectations.

Professional Development

All staff will be encouraged to attend professional development activities to enhance skills and keep current in the field.

Data Collection

Program staff will utilize HMIS for data collection. When data is collected and utilized correctly it is efficient, cost effective and beneficial to the evaluation, review and improvement of the program. Data entered into HMIS will be according to HSN's Policies & Procedures and include all required data elements.

Veteran Records

The primary source for Veteran records will be in HMIS. In addition, each Veteran will have a paper file, with minimal information primarily related to eligibility and re-certification documentation. Paper files will be kept in a secure and locked (or capable of being locked) location to maintain confidentiality. Veteran files maintained in HMIS are kept permanently. Paper files are kept for a period of five years.

Quality Assurance

Implementation of policies and procedures, as well as effectiveness, will be evaluated annually by program staff under the leadership of the HSN Veterans' Programs Advisor who will consider recommendations for improvements. Program staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the program through:

- Monthly monitoring reports;
- Quarterly indicator reports, and
- Program audits as needed.

As of October 2022, the following documentation is required to be submitted with each Sub-Contractor's monthly billing packet:

- Habitability Inspection Form for every Veteran that is moved into housing that month;
- Rent Reasonableness form for every Veteran moved into housing that month;
- All completed Re-Certifications for the month;
- Completed Staff certifications for all new intakes that month;
- Completed W-9 Forms; and
- The new 60/40 split drawdown spreadsheet.

Conflict of Interest

A Staff Certification form must be completed for each household deemed eligible for assistance. The Staff Certification should be completed and signed by the person determining eligibility and the sub-grantee(s) Program Supervisor/Manager. This form is completed at intake and at all reassessments. The form certifies that the household meets all eligibility criteria for assistance, that true and complete information was used to determine eligibility, and that no conflict of interest exists related to the provision of rapid re-housing assistance.

Prohibited conflicts, include but are not limited to: No person who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to activities assisted under the Rapid Re-Housing program, or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to activities assisted under the program, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from an assisted activity; have a financial interest in any contract, subcontract, or agreement with respect to an assisted activity; or have a financial interest in the proceeds derived from an assisted activity, either for him or herself or for those with whom he or she has family or business ties, during his or her tenure or during the one-year period following his or her tenure. The conflict-of-interest provisions of this section apply to any person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of HSN or any of our subcontractors.

Supervision

HSN Veterans' Programs Advisor oversees the overall strategy, management and administration of the SSVF Grant as it specifically applies to the Program Guide and the specifications as stated in the grant application. Further, they are responsible for the following:

- a) Provides program and administrative supervision to the program team in a manner that promotes growth and professional development;
- b) Ensures program staff is meeting specific program goals through weekly supervision and case/chart review;
- c) Facilitate development and expansion of SSVF program policies within HSN;
- d) Facilitate SSVF Team and social work meetings;
- e) Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve operations and work cooperatively and jointly to provide quality services; and
- f) Oversee training to direct-service staff in interpersonal communication skills, boundary issues, mental health awareness and other relevant topics.

XI. Client Track Transactions

This guide covers the most common SSVF Service Transactions created by the case management teams.

Four Important Notes:

1. Financial assistance Service Transactions are to be attached to the head of household and/or family.



2. Record each service on the date it was provided. If you meet with a Veteran five times, there should be a record for each date.
3. The date for financial assistance services should be the date the check was cut.
4. If a check is returned or not cashed, create a Client Note to document this, and amend the client's folder.

Taxonomy Terms	SSVF Services
Rent Payment Assistance / BH-3800.7000	Rental assistance (includes arrears, late fees, & payment assistance)
Utility Service Payment Assistance/ BV-8900.9300	Utility-fee payment assistance (includes arrears & payment assistance)
Utility Deposit Assistance / BV-8900.9150 Rental Deposit Assistance / BH-3800.7250	Deposits (utility) Deposits (security)
Moving Assistance / BH-5000	Moving costs truck rental, hiring a moving company, or short-term storage fees for a maximum of 3 months
Transportation Expense Assistance /BT-8300	Transportation (public transportation or car repair)
Housing Expense Assistance / BH-3800	General Housing Stability Assistance
Homeless Motel Vouchers / BH-1800.8500-300	Emergency Housing Assistance
Child Care Expense Assistance / NL-3000.1500	Child care
Case/Care Management / PH-1000	Case Management
Information and Referral / TJ-3000	Referrals to any community agency, VASH, VA, Mustard Seed, Legal Services, SOAR, etc.
Relocation Assistance	Relocation Assistance for Disaster Relief Funds Only

Landlord Incentives	Landlord Incentive
Veteran Incentives	Veteran Incentives

Legal Services Only

Taxonomy Terms	SSVF Services
Benefits Assistance (FT-1000) (for Service Connected)	Assistance in obtaining VA Benefits
Benefits Assistance (FT-1000) (for Social Security)	Assistance in obtaining or coordinating other public benefits
Landlord/Tenant Assistance (FT-4500)	Assistance in obtaining or coordinating other public benefits

XII. Training

SSVF Program Staff Training

The SSVF Program Office has developed a SSVF Grantee Orientation Guide which is posted to the SSVF website. The Guide offers a broad introduction to the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Each SSVF grantee is expected to share the orientation materials with new program staff as part of their organization's onboarding process. New staff should read all materials in their entirety and review the resources and materials that are included in the hyperlinks throughout the document. All New SSVF staff are registered with the Housing Skills Practice Center. HSN also provides community wide training on best practices for case managers and staff who will provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families. Grantees should confirm that new staff has read required all the required materials during their quarterly certification process. Grantees must attend VA-mandated training sessions. Training will be conducted by VA and its technical assistance providers. Information on training, including eligible training expenses, will be emailed to grantees. VA mandated training will be provided at no-cost to grantees.

XIII. Miscellaneous

Targeting Households That Require Long-Term Housing Supports

SSVF is designed to place Veteran families into permanent housing. Veterans should not be accepted into SSVF based on their placement on HUD-VASH or other permanent housing waiting lists of



indeterminate length, as there is a statutory requirement that Veterans accepted into SSVF can be placed into housing within 90 days.

Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) may also be provided by the SSVF grantee under 38 CFR 62.34(f) to offer transition in place of a permanent housing voucher, such as one offered through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program (aka. Section 8), is available from any source, but access to the permanent housing voucher is pending completion of the housing inspection and administrative processes necessary for leasing. In such circumstances, the EHA payment cannot exceed what would otherwise be paid when the voucher is utilized. Note that the Emergency Housing Assistance Verification is NOT used for this request.

Collaborative Delivery of HUD-VASH/SSVF Services

The VA has a variety of resources available to serve homeless Veterans. Housing First is the guiding approach to the delivery of these services, so it is critical that program resources are employed as supports to housing placement, not barriers. The ability of program staff to screen and assess effectively, will allow Veterans to access the intervention appropriate to their needs.

Based on guidance from the SSVF Program Office the following SSVF/HUD VASH Coordination Policy has been developed. The policy provides oversight for the coordination of all HUD-VASH in the HSN SSVF service area. The coordination guidance comes directly from the VA SSVF Program Office.

SSVF will assist HUD-VASH households in the following ways:

1. Targeted case management for non-Veteran household members
2. Temporary financial assistance (i.e. deposit(s), rental assistance, utility assistance, general housing stability (furniture)
3. Legal Services for non-veteran household members.

In order to receive SSVF assistance, Veterans in HUD-VASH must:

1. Be enrolled in HUD-VASH
2. Have income less than 50% of the local AMI
3. The Veteran's Social worker must submit the SSVF/ HUD VASH RRH Referral Packet to HSN for eligibility review.