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CLARK COUNTY
STAFF REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Community Services

DATE: July 21, 2020

REQUESTED ACTION: County Council approval of recommended revisions to the Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures Manual.

__X__ Consent ____ Hearing _____ County Manager

BACKGROUND

A. Clark County Code §2.29.070 requires the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) to annually review limitations on relief benefits for veterans. On July 9, 2020, the VAB reviewed the limitations and unanimously approved the following addition to the housing policy section. The new proposed policy is highlighted in the attached Policies and Procedures Manual. The Prosecuting Attorney's office has reviewed the revisions.

3.4.7. Emergency Declarations: During a state or federal declaration of emergency, limitations on rental assistance due to accommodations made by governmental bodies to restrict evictions will not interfere with providing rental assistance to those Veterans who otherwise are eligible. Veterans can be assisted with up to six months of rental arrears during an emergency declaration.

COUNCIL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The council reviews and approves proposed changes to the policies and procedures of the Veterans Assistance Fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

These changes to the Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures have been recommended by the Clark County Veterans Advisory Board. If the changes are approved, the Clark County Veterans Assistance Center will begin implementing the new policies to allow rental assistance of up to six months during an emergency declaration.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Veterans Advisory Board meetings are open to the public. The meetings are virtual, recorded and available online. Accommodations for people with disabilities and interpretation services are provided.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

YES	NO	
X		Action falls within existing budget capacity.
	X	Action falls within existing budget capacity but requires a change of purpose within existing appropriation
	X	Additional budget capacity is necessary and will be requested at the next supplemental. If YES, please

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		complete the budget impact statement. If YES, this action will be referred to the county council with a recommendation from the county manager.

BUDGET DETAILS

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

Primary Staff Contact: Michael Torres ext. 7801

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

Michael Torres 7/13/2020
Michael A. Torres, Program Manager II

Vanessa Gaston 7/13/2020
Vanessa Gaston, Director

APPROVED: Eileen Quiring
CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON
CLARK COUNTY COUNCIL
DATE: July 21, 2020
SR# 097-20

APPROVED: _____
Kathleen Otto, Interim County Manager

DATE: _____

CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON 1844

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BUDGET IMPACT ATTACHMENT – NONE

Part I: Narrative Explanation

I. A – There is no budget impact.

Part II: Estimated Revenues

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

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

Part III: Estimated Expenditures

III. A – Expenditures summed up

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

III. B – Expenditure by object category

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

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE

VETERANS ASSISTANCE FUND

OF CLARK COUNTY

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

Most recent amendment approved by Clark County Council June 18, 2019

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References: RCW 73.08 Veterans' Relief, Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, chapter 2.29 Veterans Assistance, Veterans Advisory Board By-laws.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
VETERANS ASSISTANCE FUND

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview: This document has been developed to provide guidance for the use of the Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). The VAF was developed to provide assistance to indigent Veterans and their families. The fund was developed in accordance with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 73.08 and Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel Chapter 2.29 Veterans Assistance.

Assistance from the fund is provided through contracted service officers and community service organizations.

Contracting for the use of the VAF is the responsibility of Clark County through the Community Services Department with the advice of the Veterans Advisory Board. Clark County Council has statutory oversight for the use and expenditures of the fund. Financial assistance is based on funding availability and service officer determination of need.

1.2 Source of Funds: Washington State law and the Clark County code have established the Veterans Assistance Fund as a steady source of tax dollars to be utilized for the needs of indigent Veterans and their families. A portion of property tax collected in Clark County is earmarked for the VAF.

1.3 Clark County Veterans Advisory Board: The Clark County Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) is an advisory group appointed by the Clark County Council to serve the Veterans of Clark County. The board is made up of members of Veterans organizations within Clark County. The purpose of the Veterans Advisory Board is to serve and act in the best interest of all Veterans, in cooperation with Clark County and the State of Washington.

Members of the board are registered with the Clark County Auditor through a Veteran's service organization in October every year. The registration for the board is valid from January through December. Each organization shall appoint a primary and alternate member. Each organization shall have one vote on the board. Members at large may be appointed by a vote of the VAB.

1.4 Contracted Services: The County, with the advice of the VAB, selects contracted organizations through the County's procurement process. The County is responsible for all contracts issued through this process.

1.5 Service Administration: Eligible Veterans may receive assistance through contracted agencies/individuals. Assistance must be provided to needy individuals without discrimination. Agencies/Individuals agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, and ordinances relating to nondiscrimination. Two types of services are provided:

- Direct emergency relief through a Veteran's service officer.
- Ongoing support and assistance through contracted agencies/individuals that provide community services for indigent people.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Use of Veterans Assistance Fund: Eligibility is required for any service provided through the VAF. Eligibility for use of the VAF is determined by the County Service Officer or contracted agency/individuals.

2.2 Service Requirements: "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW 73.08.005. General discharge under honorable conditions will also be an allowable service type per HB 1806. Any Veteran who has been released because of a medical condition and any honorable discharge should be considered as having completed the term of service commitment or having completed his/her initial obligation. This includes National Guard and Reserve.

2.3 Documentation of Veterans Status: Documentation includes DD-214, VA Statement of Service (SOS), or if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge. The County Service Officer or agency staff will assist the Veteran in completing a request to receive a certified copy of their DD-214 as necessary. Other forms of documentation include a valid VA identification card or a retired military ID card with a second form of ID. A HINQ (Hospital Inquiry) from the VA showing honorable discharge or a Washington driver's license or ID showing Veteran status is also acceptable.

2.4 Family Member: A family member of a Veteran is defined as a wife, husband, registered domestic partner, Veteran's minor children (under 18 years of age, or under 23 if they are a full-time student and the Veteran is the natural parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, a person who has signed an affidavit acknowledging paternity, or determination, finding, decree, or order for support by an agency of this or another state), widow, widower, or surviving domestic partner. In the case of a single parent, the Veteran shall show proof that they are the custodial parent or paying child support in order to claim a child as a dependent for assistance through this fund.

2.5 Domestic Partner: a domestic partner is defined at Title 26, Domestic Relations, of the Revised Code of Washington 2008 and Second Substitute House Bill 3104 (2008).

2.6 Indigence: Eligible Veterans are considered to be indigent if they meet the following definition: Receiving an annual family income, after taxes, not to exceed two hundred percent (200%) of the current federally established poverty level. For housing or dental assistance, income shall not exceed 250% of poverty. Documentation to establish income may include but is not limited to copies of last month's check stubs, bank statements, and/or SSI determination letter, etc. Income excluded from the eligibility calculation is: pay received while deployed in a combat zone, hazardous duty pay/imminent danger, VA education benefits, student loans/educational loans, scholarships and Pell grants.

2.7 Washington State Residency: Veterans or families of deceased Veterans must show proof of residency in the State of Washington, for at least 12 consecutive months preceding the date of application for relief. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Drivers license, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements or bank statements.

The Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund may waive the residency requirement for those Veterans who have been accepted into a permanent rental subsidy program or who are qualified as a "covered individual" under the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 by meeting the following criteria: currently domiciled in Clark County, Washington State; has enrolled in a Washington state college or university within three years of discharge from an active duty service period of 90 days or more; and using the GI bill benefits at a Washington state college or university.

2.8 County Residency: Applicants must reside in Clark County or show proof of moving into Clark County at the date of application. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, Washington Drivers License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements or bank statements and home of record.

2.9 Falsification: Any person receiving assistance through the VAF, and found to have falsified any information or not disclosed all income for purposes of receiving assistance from the VAF, shall become ineligible for any assistance based on their current application for four years, and can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. If a Veteran has been found to utilize the assistance in a manner it was not intended, this will also constitute falsification. If a Veteran does not repay the money that was received from the VAF under false pretenses, he or she will not be able to receive any additional assistance from the fund. HOWEVER, if restitution is completed the Veteran may be eligible to apply for reinstatement.

2.10 Any applicant whose behavior is belligerent or appears threatening in any way to the County Service Officer, other staff, or others in the vicinity of the Veteran's Assistance Office may be denied service.

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY RELIEF (through County Service Officer)

3.1 Overview: Clark County utilizes a contracted County Service Officer (CSO) as one method to provide assistance to eligible Veterans. The County Service Officer has access to information regarding community resources, and the Veterans Administration. The CSO is charged with assisting the Veteran respectfully and in a timely manner, while ensuring that the funds are used only when other resources have been exhausted.

3.2 Method of Payment: Emergency Assistance is to be provided through a check payable directly to vendors/landlords/service agencies on behalf of the Veteran. Checks/vouchers are issued within two business days of eligibility determination.

3.3. Documentation of Costs: Costs will be documented by invoice, purchase order, quote or bill.

3.4. Housing Assistance: Payment limited to one month's rent (either 3.4.2 or 3.4.3) or one security deposit as stated in 3.4.5 in a 24 consecutive month period. Additionally, up to $1,000 in a 12 month period is available to assist a Veteran household in attaining or maintaining housing; other than rent assistance.

3.4.1 Rental Agreement: Veteran must have a document stating rental agreement with the property owner, property management firm, or lease holder. If the landlord is

not the leaseholder, Veteran must provide documentation from the property owner showing permission to sublet.

3.4.2 First Month's Rent: Qualified Veteran can be assisted with first month's rent, but deposits are not allowed except as stated in 3.4.5. No move-in fees are allowed.

3.4.3 Eviction Prevention: Qualified Veteran can be assisted with one month's rent. Veteran must show proof of imminent danger of eviction including but not limited to an eviction notice, or notice to vacate. If more than one month's rent is owed, Veteran must provide documentation that property owner, property management firm or lease holder will not evict Veteran for 30 days if only one month's rent is paid, including late fees and utilities.

3.4.4 Rent Limit: The maximum monthly rental assistance may not exceed 130% of the current Clark County HUD Fair Market Rent (Attachment A). Rental assistance will only be provided for the number of bedrooms that are appropriate for the household size.

3.4.5 Security Deposit: Security deposits may only be paid for a qualified Veteran who has been accepted into a permanent rental subsidy program (for example, VASH or Housing Choice). Proof of enrollment in a long-term rental assistance program must be provided. The security deposit/rental agreement shall meet the requirements at RCW 59.18.260. The security deposit paid cannot exceed the amount equal to one month's fair market rent. Other fees necessary to access a permanent housing program may be paid, not to exceed $100.

3.4.6 Mortgage Assistance: Payment limited to one month's mortgage payment (up to 130% of FMR) in a 24-month period if Veteran can demonstrate ability to maintain their housing. Veteran cannot be more than two months in arrears.

3.4.7 Shared Dwelling: In case of Veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not a family member as described in Section 2.4) the housing assistance will be prorated by the number of people living in the housing.

3.4.8 Emergency Declarations: During a state or federal declaration of emergency, limitations on rental assistance due to accommodations made by governmental bodies to restrict evictions will not interfere with providing rental assistance to those Veterans who otherwise are eligible. Veterans can be assisted with up to six months of rental arrears during an emergency declaration.

3.5 Utility Assistance: Veteran may receive up to $2,000 per 24-month period to be used for payments of utilities. Veteran must show evidence of denial of assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) between November 15 and March 15. Assistance may include late fees.

3.5.1 Utilities Notice: Veteran must have a disconnect or final notice from a utility company in his or her name.

3.5.2 Alternative Heating Methods: In the case of wood, coal, propane or heating oil, a voucher can be issued for up to the maximum of $2,000 per 24-month period.

3.5.3 Shared Dwelling: In the case of Veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not a family member as described in section 2.4) the utility assistance costs will be prorated by the number of people living in the house and must be in the Veteran's name.

3.6 Food Assistance: Food assistance will be provided in the form of a voucher and no alcohol, tobacco or games of chance products may be purchased. Personal hygiene items and household cleaning products, as well as the purchase of pet food for certified service animals are allowable. Food assistance is based on family size. Veteran may receive the following amount per 12-month period:

Single person	$200
Two-person family	$300
Three-person family	$350
Four or more people	$500

3.7 Transportation Assistance: Veteran must show that the transportation assistance is necessary to seek work, attend medical appointments, maintain employment, look for housing or attend school. Veteran may receive a C-Tran Day Pass for documented appointments, up to 180 day passes per year. If more than four appointments in one month, Veteran may be issued a one-month C-Zone bus pass. Gas vouchers are available to Veterans whose circumstances require it; a gas voucher in the amount equal to the cost of a one-month bus pass may be issued up to six times per year.

3.7.1 Gasoline: Veteran must show proof of Washington State registration in Veteran's name, state-required insurance, and a valid Washington State operator's license and/or endorsement.

3.8 Prescription Coverage: Veteran may receive up to $600 per 12-month period to be used for doctor prescribed, medically necessary medication. Prescriptions must be prescribed through the VA if Veteran is eligible for VA services. Exclusions to the Prescription Coverage include:

- Biological sera, blood or blood plasma;
- Prescription medications used for cosmetic purposes, including, but not limited to removal, inhibition or stimulation of hair growth; retardation of aging; or repair of sun-damaged skin;
- Growth hormones;
- Prescription medications used to inhibit and/or suppress drowsiness, sleepiness, tiredness or exhaustion;
- Insulin pumps and pump administration supplies;
- Prescription medications dispensed in connection with participation in a clinical trial;
- Prescription medications for smoking cessation;
- Prescription for over-the-counter medications;
- Prescription medications for treatment of infertility; and
- Prescription medications for erectile dysfunction.

3.9 Burial or Cremation Assistance: Families of qualified Veterans may receive up to $1,000 to assist with the costs of burial or cremation of the Veteran. The Veterans Assistance Fund can be used to supplement the cost of the burial or cremation only, if all other resources have been exhausted.

3.10 Work Related Assistance: Purchase of clothing and/or tools necessary for a Veteran to become or remain employed not to exceed $800 per 24-month period. Assistance may also be used for licensing or for state-issued identification (does not have to be work-related).

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

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

3.11.2 Dental Care: Assistance to address the Veteran's urgent dental needs as recommended by the Free Clinic of SW Washington dentist. Assistance is limited to urgent care provided by the Free Clinic only and excludes cosmetic dental procedures.

3.11.3 Storage: Assistance to address a Veteran's storage fees for personal property to prevent auction and loss of items. Up to $750 per 24-month period to cover costs of past due storage rental and associated fees. Veteran must have a notice stating property will be sold or auctioned.

3.11.4 Communication: Assistance of up to $200 in a 12-month period for a Veterans' communication needs (phone, internet), only if circumstances require it.

3.11.5 Textbooks: Assistance of up to $500 in a 12-month period for textbooks required for Veteran's college, university or approved trade school in Washington State.

4. COUNTY SERVICE OFFICER

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

4.2 Certification: The CSO shall be certified as such by a nationally recognized organization such as the Veterans Administration, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, or other Veteran's organization that has the ability to provide certification.

4.3 Screening: The CSO shall screen each individual applying for assistance and determine eligibility and degree of need based on the eligibility and limits of assistance described in this document. The screening/application form shall be developed by Clark County with the cooperation of the County Service Officer.

4.4 Community Resources: The CSO will make every effort to collaborate and coordinate with other community services such as food banks, shelters, Veterans Service organizations, state-funded services and services at the Veterans Administration.

4.5 Reporting: The CSO shall maintain all records for each Veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, social security number, address, eligibility documentation, amount and use of relief funds. All records must be kept for a minimum of five years.

4.6 Case Management: When a Veteran household has received $1,000 of assistance in a 12-month period (not including housing or auto repair), the Veteran will be required to create a plan for self-sufficiency and make progress toward goals outlined in their plan before receiving additional assistance. This fund is intended for emergency relief only.

5. APPEAL PROCESS

5.1 Filing an Appeal: The Veterans Advisory Board is responsible for hearing any appeal or dispute of County Service Officer's decision. The Service Officer shall determine if each application is in compliance with the Clark County Code and Policies and Procedures for the Veterans Assistance Fund. Appeals to county code (Veteran status, residency requirements or income limits) cannot be considered. Any appeals or disputes of the CSO's decision must be made within 15 business days of the decision. Appeals shall be made in writing, include all supporting documentation, and be mailed to:

Veterans Advisory Board (Appeals)
c/o Veterans Program Coordinator
Clark County Community Services
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666-5000

5.2 Determination: A written determination as to the outcome of the appeal will be forwarded to the Veteran within 15 business days of receipt. All committee decisions on such appeals will be final. All copies of appeals and determination must be sent to the County Department of Community Services. The decision of the Veterans Advisory Appeals Committee will be communicated to the appellant within seven business days of Appeals Committee action. (Appeal Form)

5.3 Due Process: Section 5.1 and 5.2 in no way limit an applicant's constitutional right of Due Process of Law. If an applicant desires to continue their appeal beyond the Veterans Advisory Board, they have every right to pursue legal action within the judicial system; however, the venue shall be Clark County.

Attachment A

Housing Assistance

Unit Size	Number of Bedrooms						
	Studio	1	2	3	4	5	6
130% Fair Market Rent	$1,550	$1,676	$1,944	$2,804	$3,413	$3,925	$4,437

2020 HHS Poverty Guidelines for Clark County
Annual Income by Household Size

Persons in Household	200 Percent of Poverty		250 Percent of Poverty	
	Annual	Monthly	Annual	Monthly
1	$25,520	$2,127	$31,900	$2,658
2	$34,480	$2,873	$43,100	$3,592
3	$43,440	$3,620	$54,300	$4,525
4	$52,400	$4,367	$65,500	$5,458
5	$61,360	$5,113	$76,700	$6,392
6	$70,320	$5,860	$87,900	$7,325
7	$79,280	$6,607	$99,100	$8,258
8	$88,240	$7,353	$110,300	$9,192
For each additional, add:	$8,960	$747	$11,200	$933

Source: Federal Register. January 17, 2020

Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund
Request for Appeal

Date: _____

Submit Appeal to:
Veterans Advisory Board (Appeals)
c/o Clark County Department of Community Services
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666
Fax 360.759.6725
Email: vetfund@ccvac.net

Method: ☐ mail ☐ fax ☐ e-mail ☐ hand-deliver

Veteran/Client Statement – Please describe the decision being appealed (attach additional information if necessary):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

County Veteran's Assistance Officer Statement – Please describe the specific reason(s) including referencing sections of the Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures for which you have denied services (attach additional information if necessary):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Veteran Advisory Board Appeals Committee Statement – Please describe the specific reason(s) for either denying or approving the Veteran/client appeal and any follow-up action to be taken (attach additional information if necessary):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Decision: ☐ approved ☐ denied

Date: _____ Reviewer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date Veteran Notified: _____ Check Number: _____ Amount: _____

County Service Officer: *Determines eligibility, provides Veteran with appeal form, forwards appeal to county and Committee.* ***County****: Tracks appeal* ***Appeals Committee****: Forwards decision to County and CSO.*