

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF) PROGRAM

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes the procedures for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program and sets forth mandated procedures for the administration, monitoring, and oversight of the SSVF Program. The authority for administration, monitoring, and oversight of the SSVF Program is title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 2044 and its implementing regulations.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES: None.

3. RELATED ISSUES: None.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The VHA Homeless Programs Office (10NC1) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be referred to the Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs at (202) 461-1635.

5. RESCISSIONS: VHA Handbook 1162.07, Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) Program, dated October 27, 2011, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of January 2023. This directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

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SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF) PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

The goal of the SSVF Program is to promote housing stability for very low-income Veteran families. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes the policy and procedures for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program and sets forth mandated procedures for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administration, monitoring, and oversight of grant recipients. **AUTHORITY:** Title 38 U.S.C. 2044, and 38 CFR Part 62.

2. BACKGROUND

a. The SSVF Program provides supportive services to very low-income Veteran families in, or transitioning to, permanent housing. Funds are granted to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that assist very low-income Veteran families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability.

b. Homelessness, a significant national problem, has many causes. Homeless individuals are often unemployed, unable to work, or have such low incomes that they cannot afford housing. Homeless Veterans are more likely to experience health and health care related disparities. Some homeless individuals have disabling mental health, substance use disorders, or physical conditions that lead to, or compound, their homeless situation. Homeless families are a growing part of the homeless population in America.

c. VA is in a unique position to address social and economic determinants that impact health and wellbeing as an integrated system that combines benefits and health care. VA has developed several programs that offer a continuum of services to eligible homeless Veterans, such as the Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program, the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program, the Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs (RRTP), and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – VA Supportive Housing (VASH) Program. The SSVF Program is an integral part of the VA's continuum of homeless services, offering both rapid re-housing for homeless Veteran families and prevention services for those at imminent at risk of homelessness.

3. POLICY

It is VHA policy to provide a fully integrated national system of homeless programming and supportive services to ensure that our Nation's homeless Veterans and those at-risk for homelessness have timely access to safe, affordable housing, health care, and other supports that promote the highest level of independence, self-sufficiency, and community reintegration. This directive establishes VA Central Office (VACO) responsibilities concerning the oversight, monitoring, and support of the SSVF Program.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health has overall responsibility for compliance to this directive.
- b. **Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management is responsible for consulting on program modifications submitted by the SSVF Program Directors as deemed necessary by the Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office.
- c. **Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office.** The Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office, is responsible for directing and overseeing the integrated national system of VHA Homeless Programs. This includes, but is not limited to, the SSVF Program implementation and delivery across VHA.
- d. **National Director, SSVF Program.** The National Director is responsible for directing and overseeing the SSVF Program and analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of services provided to homeless Veterans throughout the country. This includes, but is not limited to, developing both programmatic and fiscal strategic planning documents, reports, and information on all initiatives under SSVF Program, establishing training curriculum for SSVF providers, ensuring that eligible Veterans have timely access to SSVF services and there is adequate community integration in the delivery of SSVF services. SSVF service providers must provide quality care and be in compliance with policy and procedures referenced in this directive for the SSVF Program.
- e. **SSVF Program Office.** Through the SSVF Program, VA aims to improve the housing stability of very low-income Veteran families. Grantees must provide outreach and case management services, and must assist participants in obtaining VA benefits and other public benefits that are further defined in 38 CFR 62.33 and 62.34. The SSVF Program Office is responsible for:
- (1) Developing regulations, notices of funding announcements, application materials and distribution of materials for grant opportunities offered under authority of the program.
 - (2) Awarding supportive services grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives in accordance with the threshold, evaluation, and selection criteria stated in 38 CFR Part 62.
 - (3) Overseeing and monitoring processes for reimbursement in connection with the program. The SSVF Program Office must work with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System to provide funding disbursement oversight (see section 9). Funding disbursement oversight responsibilities of the SSVF Program Office include:
 - (a) Reviewing and approving draw-down requests, as appropriate, that fail to meet the SSVF Program's automated reasonable tests;
 - (b) Contacting grantees whose draw-down requests are not approved; and

(c) Responding to inquiries from grantees regarding draw-down requests and approvals.

(4) Evaluating whether grantees are meeting the terms of their grant agreement along with the regulations governing SSVF in 38 CFR part 62, and applicable Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). This evaluation includes, but is not limited to, inspections (see paragraph 9), audits, and a review of performance data.

(5) Recommending corrective action, based on the findings of the evaluations. When a grantee fails to comply with the terms, conditions, or standards of the supportive services grant, providing notice to the grantee of intent to withhold further payment, suspend the supportive services grant, or prohibit the grantee from incurring additional obligations of supportive services grant funds pending corrective action by the grantee or a decision to terminate the grant (see paragraph 5-8).

(6) Providing subject matter expertise, consultation, and training and supervision to the VA SSVF program staff.

f. **SSVF Regional Coordinators.** SSVF Regional Coordinators are responsible for:

(1) Providing grantees with support and guidance, based on relevant laws, rules, regulations, and analysis of collected data to ensure that appropriate services and case management are provided to Veterans.

(2) Assisting grantees in providing quality supportive services that are in compliance with existing laws and regulations.

(3) Ensuring grantees are operating in accordance with their supportive services grant agreement.

(4) Reviewing participant satisfaction surveys and providing feedback based upon those surveys to grantees, as appropriate. Surveys are distributed electronically to all households enrolled in SSVF services and are reviewed by the SSVF Program Office on a monthly basis.

(5) Providing grantees with timely responses to submission of questions, requests to modify a supportive services grant for any proposed significant change that alters the supportive services grant program and corrective action plans, as applicable.

(6) Educating community partners about SSVF, SSVF eligible Veterans, and SSVF services and resources, along with the statutes and regulations governing SSVF.

5. COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS WITH PROGRAM OFFICES

SSVF is a community driven program that relies heavily on non-VA providers. The unique structure of SSVF requires careful coordination among grantees, community providers, Continuums of Care (CoCs), VA Homeless Programs, and other VA and VHA

services and departments in order to ensure SSVF services are delivered efficiently and effectively. SSVF Program Office communicates with VHA Homeless Program Office, Homeless Programs leads, Network Homeless Coordinators and VHA Homeless Programs staff on monthly and quarterly calls. These calls provide SSVF Program nationwide updates related to best practices towards ending Veteran homelessness, situational awareness of current efforts, community partnerships and operational improvements, performance outcomes, community coordination and planning, etc. VHA staff at medical center, network, and national levels can access program performance data on the VHA Homeless Programs Operational Planning Hub.

6. ELIGIBLE VETERAN FAMILIES

a. To receive supportive services under this program, a recipient must be a member of a Veteran household, occupy permanent housing, and either meet very low or extremely-low income guidelines as defined in 38 CFR 62.2 and 38 CFR 62.11.

b. **Occupying Permanent Housing.** A very low-income Veteran family is considered to be occupying permanent housing if they fall into one of three categories. The following table describes the three categories of occupying permanent housing as well as the time restrictions related to each.

Category of Occupying Permanent Housing	Time Restriction
<p>Category (1)</p> <p>If a very low-income Veteran family is residing in permanent housing.</p>	<p>A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within category (1) so long as the participant continues to meet the definition of category (1).</p>
<p>Category (2)</p> <p>If a very low-income Veteran family 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.</p>	<p>A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within category (2) so long as the participant continues to meet the definition of category (2), even if the participant does not become a resident of permanent housing within the originally scheduled 90-day period.</p>

<p>Category (3)</p> <p>If a very low-income Veteran family 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.</p>	<p>A grantee may continue to provide supportive services to a participant within category (3) until the earlier of the following dates:</p> <p>(a) The participant commences receipt of other housing services adequate to meet the participant's needs; or (b) Ninety days from the date the participant exits permanent housing.</p>
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7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As part of the initial designation and annual re-designation, the SSVF Program Office employees are required to comply with the provisions of the Confidential Filer regulation and submit to the Office of General Counsel Form 450, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report, to ensure there is no actual or apparent conflict of interest between the Coordinator and the grantee. See 5 CFR Subpart 2634 Subpart I. The form is located at <https://vaww.ogc.vaco.portal.va.gov/law/ethics/SiteAssets/OGE%20Form%20450%20b0th.pdf>. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.

8. PROGRAM INSPECTIONS

a. **Inspections.** At a minimum, the SSVF Program Office must conduct annual inspections of grantees' programs. Additional inspections may be conducted by the SSVF Program Office as deemed appropriate. These additional inspections may occur to review the implementation of a grantee's Corrective Action Plan (CAP). CAPs are triggered when inspections document specific findings that must be remedied by the grantee. Inspections assist the SSVF Program Office in gathering some of the information necessary to evaluate the grantees' performance. In particular, through inspections, the SSVF Program Office can evaluate whether:

- (1) Supportive services provided to participants are within the framework of professional health care delivery standards and operational or clinical authority;
- (2) The supportive services grant program is implemented and conducted in accordance with 38 CFR part 62 and the supportive services grant agreement;
- (3) Recordkeeping and participant files conform to 38 CFR 62.36 and 62.72, the grantees' written policies and procedures;
- (4) Grantees' reports to VA are accurate and reflect current program operations; and
- (5) Participants are satisfied with the supportive services they are receiving from grantees.

b. **Vehicle Lease Funding.** If a grantee receives funding to lease vehicles to provide transportation to participants, the SSVF Program Office must review vehicle usage during annual inspections to ensure activities associated with the vehicle(s) are as designated in the supportive services grant agreement.

9. FUNDING DISBURSEMENT

a. **Overview of the Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System.** Supportive services grant funds are currently disbursed through the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS) in the manner described in this paragraph. PMS is an internet-based system supported by staff from the HHS Division of Payment Management (DPM). Reports provided by PMS to VA aggregate accounting transactions and grantee-provided financial information, facilitating grant management and timely and accurate financial statement reporting.

b. **Fund Disbursement Process.** Grantees may draw down supportive services grant funds in accordance with the timeframes and manner set forth in the NOFA. Draw-down requests are submitted and processed online by the request functions of the PMS platform. Once a draw-down request is approved, disbursement is completed by electronic funds transfer to the grantee's bank account the following business day. If a draw-down request fails to meet the SSVF Program's automated reasonableness tests (e.g., the request amount exceeds remaining grant funds), the grantee's account is flagged and funds are disbursed only after an SSVF Program liaison at HHS manually approves the transaction.

c. **Required Documentation.**

(1) **PMS Registration.** To establish PMS access for a new grantee, grantee must submit Standard Form (SF)-1199A, Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form, and the primary contact information for each grantee to DPM. The SF-1199A registers the grantee for direct deposits and includes the name of the grantee, contact information, and a valid bank account number, among other items. VA notifies DPM that VA authorizes the grantee's registration. The SSVF Program Office works with grantees to ensure completion of PMS Registration.

(2) **Change of Account Information.** To change a grantee's bank account information after a grantee has received system access, the grantee must submit a new SF-1199A to VA and DPM.

(3) **Draw-Down Documentation.** For each draw-down request, the grantee must provide the following information:

- (a) Payment due date;
- (b) Expected disbursement amount (total amount requested);
- (c) Cash on hand (SSVF Program funds remaining since last draw down); and

(d) Payment request amount (total amount requested).

10. PROGRAM MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND OPERATIONS

a. **Goals.** SSVF grantees are monitored by the SSVF Program Office. The goals of the program evaluation are to:

(1) Monitor supportive services provided;

(2) Determine program and grantee effectiveness;

(3) Ensure SSVF Program accountability;

(4) Examine utilization and impact of SSVF on vulnerable Veteran groups along the lines of available data (e.g. racial or ethnic; gender; age; geographic location; and

(5) Identify ways to improve the SSVF Program.

b. **Grantee Program Changes.**

(1) In accordance with 38 CFR 62.60, the SSVF Program Office must approve significant changes to a grantee's program, and a grantee must receive VA's approval prior to implementing such changes. Significant changes include, but are not limited to:

(a) A change in the grantee or any subcontractors identified in the supportive services grant agreement;

(b) A change in the area or community served by the grantee;

(c) Additions or deletions of supportive services provided by the grantee;

(d) A change in category of participants to be served; and

(e) A change in budget line items that are more than 10 percent of the total supportive services grant award.

(2) Requests for such changes must originate with a grantee and be sent to the SSVF Program Office for approval or denial. If VA approves such change, VA must issue a written amendment to the grantee's supportive services grant agreement. VA must approve changes only if the grantee's amended application retains a high enough rank to have been competitively selected for funding in the year that the application was granted and that each supportive services grant modification request must contain a description of the revised proposed use of supportive services grant funds.

c. **Grantee Reporting Requirements.** Grantees are required to enter data into a Homeless Management Information System Web-based software application. These data consists of information on the participants served and the types of supportive services provided by grantees. Grantees must treat the data for activities funded by the SSVF Program separate from that of activities funded by other programs. Grantees are

required to export client-level data for activities funded by the SSVF Program to VA on a monthly basis. Grantees are also required to submit quarterly, annual financial and performance reports. The grantee is expected to demonstrate adherence to the grantee's proposed program concept, as described in the grantee's application.

d. **Participant Satisfaction Surveys.** The grantee must provide each participant with a satisfaction survey, which the participant can submit directly to VA, within 30 days of such participant's pending exit from the grantee's program.

e. **Operations Oversight.**

(1) **Participant Eligibility.** Grantees are expected to provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families occupying permanent housing. The SSVF Program Office may request documentation from grantees confirming participant eligibility at any time. Grantees are expected to verify participant eligibility at least once every three months. Grantees must verify and document each participant's eligibility for supportive services and classify the participant under one of the occupying permanent housing categories. Household income is to be calculated by the grantee in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609.

(2) **Limitations on and Continuations of the Provision of Supportive Services to Certain Participants.** Grantees are expected to adhere to the limitations on, and continuations of, the provision of supportive services to certain participants described in 38 CFR 62.35. The SSVF Program Office may request documentation from grantees demonstrating the grantees' adherence to these policies at any time.

(3) **Temporary Financial Assistance Payments.** In accordance with any additional requirements or limitations included in a NOFA, grant funds may be used for temporary financial assistance paid directly to a third party on behalf of a participant if the grantee can reasonably determine that the payment would help the participant remain in permanent housing or obtain permanent housing as scheduled. In circumstances where a family member is fleeing domestic violence, these payments can be increased as described in 38 CFR 62.35. Eligible temporary assistance payments include:

- (a) Child care assistance;
- (b) Transportation assistance;
- (c) Rental assistance, including the payment of rent, penalties, or fees;
- (d) Utility payments;
- (e) Security or utility deposits;
- (f) Moving costs;
- (g) Emergency housing assistance;

- (h) General housing stability assistance;
- (i) Expenses related to employment; and
- (j) Broker's fees.

(4) **Allegations of Impropriety.** All allegations of impropriety by the grantee, VA employees, or the participants must be addressed immediately and documented through use of the appropriate VA mechanism (i.e., SSVF Program Office or Office of Inspector General (OIG)).

(a) Information about actual or possible violations of criminal laws related to VA programs, operations, facilities, or involving VA employees, where the violation of criminal law occurs on VA premises, must be reported by VA management officials to the VA police component with responsibility for the VA station or facility in question. If there is no VA police component with jurisdiction over the offense, the information must be reported to Federal, state, or local law enforcement officials, as appropriate.

(b) Criminal matters involving felonies must be immediately referred to OIG, Office of Investigations. VA management officials with information about possible criminal matters involving felonies must ensure, and be responsible for, prompt referrals to OIG. Examples of felonies include, but are not limited to:

1. Theft of government property over \$1000;
2. False claims;
3. False statements;
4. Drug offenses;
5. Crimes involving information technology systems; and
6. Serious crimes against a person, i.e., homicides, armed robbery, rape, aggravated assault, and physical abuse of a VA patient.

(5) **Corrective Actions.** In accordance with 38 CFR 62.60(b), if a grantee's actual supportive services grant expenditures vary from the amount disbursed for a given quarter or actual supportive services grant activities vary from the grantee's program description provided in the supportive services grant agreement, the SSVF Program Office may require that the grantee initiate, develop, and submit to VA for approval a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The CAP must identify the expenditure or activity source that caused the deviation, describe the reason(s) for the variance, provide specific proposed corrective action(s), and provide a timetable for accomplishment of the corrective action. After receipt of the CAP, the SSVF Program Office sends a letter to the grantee indicating that the CAP is approved or disapproved. If disapproved, the SSVF Program Office makes beneficial suggestions to improve the proposed CAP and

requests a resubmission, or the SSVF Program Office takes other actions in accordance with 38 CFR Part 62.

(6) **Withholding and Suspension of Funds.** In accordance with 38 CFR 62.80, when a grantee fails to comply with the terms, conditions, or standards of the supportive services grant, VA may, on 7 day notice to the grantee, withhold further payment, suspend the supportive services grant, or prohibit the grantee from incurring additional obligations of supportive services grant funds, pending corrective action by the grantee or a decision to terminate. VA will allow all necessary and proper costs that the grantee could not reasonably avoid during a period of suspension if such costs meet the provisions of the applicable Federal Cost Principles.

(7) **Funding Recovery Process.** VA will recover any supportive services grant funds that are not used in accordance with 38 CFR Part 62. The recovery of funds process, as described in 38 CFR 62.80, is as follows:

(a) VA issues a notice of intent to recover supportive services grant funds to the grantee. The notice outlines the aspects of the grantee's program that are not in compliance with 38 CFR Part 62 and indicates that VA must recover supportive services grant funds if the grantee cannot provide documentation to VA demonstrating why supportive services grant funds should not be recovered;

(b) The grantee has 30 days upon receipt of the notice to submit documentation to VA demonstrating why supportive services grant funds should not be recovered;

(c) The SSVF Program Office reviews the response from the grantee for adequacy and may, if necessary, request additional information; and

(d) After review of all submitted documentation, VA determines whether action will be taken to recover the supportive services grant.

(8) **Supportive Services Grant Termination.** A supportive services grant may be terminated in whole or in part in accordance with 38 CFR 62.80 if any of the following three conditions applies:

(a) By VA, if a grantee materially fails to comply with the terms and conditions of a supportive services grant award and 38 CFR Part 62;

(b) By VA with the consent of the grantee, in which case VA and the grantee agree upon the termination conditions, including the effective date and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated; or

(c) By a grantee upon sending to VA written notification setting forth the reasons for such termination, VA written notification setting forth the reasons for such termination, the effective date, and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated. However, if VA determines in the case of partial termination that the reduced or modified portion of the supportive services grant will not accomplish the purposes for which the supportive services grant was made, VA may terminate the supportive

services grant in its entirety if any of the other conditions for termination are met as set forth in subparagraph 10f, and subparagraphs 8a and 8b.

(9) Deobligation of Funds.

VA may deobligate all or a portion of the amounts approved for use by a grantee if:

(a) The activity for which funding was approved is not provided in accordance with the approved application and the requirements of 38 CFR Part 62;

(b) Such amounts have not been expended within a 1-year period from the date of the signing of the supportive services grant agreement; or

(c) Other circumstances set forth in the supportive services grant agreement authorize or require deobligation.

(10) Administrative Files. The SSVF Program Office must maintain adequate administrative documentation associated with oversight activities. The SSVF Program Office must maintain an administrative file for each grantee. Items in the Administrative File must include, but are not limited to:

(a) A copy of the supportive services grants application and agreement;

(b) Changes in site, scope or budget;

(c) Critical incidents;

(d) Inspection reports;

(e) Quarterly, annual fiscal and program reports;

(f) Minutes from meetings;

(g) Any interim reviews of goals and objectives; and

(h) Other administrative correspondence.

11. REFERENCES

a. 38 U.S.C. 2044.

b. 5 CFR Subpart 2634.900

c. 24 CFR 5.609

d. 24 CFR 576.2

e. 38 CFR Part 62

- f. 38 CFR Part 62.11
- g. 38 CFR Part 62.2
- h. 38 CFR Part 62.33-62.36
- i. 38 CFR Part 62.60
- j. 38 CFR Part 62.60(b)
- k. 38 CFR Part 62.72
- l. 38 CFR Part 62.80