

NO. 17-0941

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER ADOPTING THE)
SPOKANE COUNTY VETERANS)
ASSISTANCE FUND POLICIES AND)
PROCEDURES MANUAL)

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of RCW 36.32.120(6), the Board of County Commissioners of Spokane County, Washington ("Board" or "Board of County Commissioners") has the care of county property and the management of county funds and business; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of chapter 73.08 RCW, the Board of County Commissioners shall establish a veterans' advisory board. Upon its establishment, the veterans advisory board shall advise the county legislative authority on the needs of local indigent veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, Cathrene Nichols, Director of the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center has recommended to the Board of County Commissioners that they adopt a document entitled "*Policies and Procedures Manual for the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) And the Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center*" which document, among other matters will establish a veterans' advisory board for Spokane County and other matters regarding the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Spokane County, Washington, pursuant to the provisions of chapter 73.08 RCW and RCW 36.32.120(6) as well as the recommendation of Cathrene Nichols, Director of the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center, that the Board of County Commissioners does hereby adopt that document entitled "*Policies and Procedures Manual for the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) And the Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center*" which document, among other matters, will establish a veterans' advisory board for Spokane County and other matters regarding the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 7th day of November, 2017.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Al French
AL FRENCH, Chair

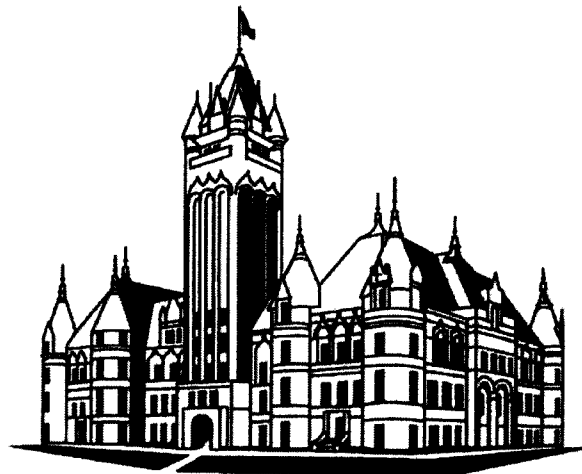
Josh Kerns
JOSH KERNS, Vice-Chair

ATTEST:

GINNA VASQUEZ
GINNA VASQUEZ, Clerk of the Board

Mary E. Kuney
MARY KUNEY, Commissioner

**Spokane County
Veterans Assistance Fund
(VAF)**



Spokane County
WASHINGTON

**Policies and Procedures Manual
for the
Veterans' Advisory Board
(VAB)
And the Spokane County Regional
Veterans Service Center**

This Policies and Procedures Manual is established by the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Office and the Spokane County Board of Commissioners and will be guided by the Veterans Advisory Board.

I. Definitions.

A. "Indigent" means a person who meets one or more of the following definitions:

(a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, pregnant women assistance benefits, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, Medicaid, medical care services, or supplemental security income and expenses for basic needs exceed income or available resources ; or

(b) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of up to one hundred fifty percent or less of the current federally established poverty level, or receiving an annual income not exceeding a higher qualifying income established by the county legislative authority and basic needs exceed income or available resources; or

(c) Unable to pay reasonable costs for shelter, food, utilities, and transportation, because his or her available funds are insufficient and expenses for basic needs exceed income or available resources.

(d) In crisis or emergency situation with insufficient resources or income to meet the crisis, emergency, or basic need.

B. "Family" means the spouse or domestic partner, surviving spouse, surviving domestic partner, and dependent children of a living or deceased veteran.

C. "Veteran" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 73.08.005 and includes a current member of the national guard or armed forces reserves who has been deployed to serve in an armed conflict, and who meet the additional requirements identified in Section III A below.

D. "Applicant" means any person for whom a request for assistance has been delivered to the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center. The Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center staff will review the information provided by the applicant or on behalf of the applicant to determine if the applicant meets the definition of an "Eligible Individual".

E. "Application" means specific form to request assistance submitted to the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center. If the application does not

contain the required information, the Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center staff may provide guidance to assist the applicant with the completion of the application.

- F. **“Qualified Applicant”** means an applicant who has provided a complete application and supporting documentation for assistance and has been determined to meet all the requirements for an “eligible individual”. The qualified applicant may be requesting assistance for other eligible individuals as well as themselves. The Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center must receive the required supporting documentation to validate and determine financial need.
- G. **“Resident”** Refer to WAC 388-468-0005 for guidance.
- H. **“Eligible Individual”** means a veteran or veteran’s family member who is a resident of Spokane County, is indigent and meets the criteria established in Section III below.
- I. **“Basic Needs”** means shelter, food, clothing, hygiene, utilities, and necessary transportation for work or basic health.

II. History and Statement of Purpose

A. History

It is estimated that Spokane County serves approximately 6000 veterans annually with the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) that has been in existence for several years and facilitated by the Spokane County Veterans Services Office, now re-organized as the Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center as of January 2017. The County Commissioners have agreed that services to Veterans shall be facilitated by the Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center.

Prior to this agreement, services were available through recommendation and approval by the Spokane County Veterans Services Office, with payment for services issuing from the Spokane County Auditor.

The Veterans’ Advisory Board (VAB) will consist of 9 voting members appointed by the Spokane County Board of Commissioners in accordance with RCW 73.08.035 for 2 year terms, from July 1, through June 30. Service on the board is voluntary. All members of the VAB must be current residents of Spokane County and must be honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. military, selected from either local branches of nationally recognized veterans’ service organizations or the veterans’ community at large and will represent as wide an array of military service components and as possible. Each commissioner will appoint two eligible

voting members from their respective district. The County Commissioners will appoint all voting members of the VAB to include three voting members to represent the veteran community at large. Members at large will be approved by the Chairman of the VAB. The Chairman of the VAB will be the Spokane County Administrator of Veterans Services.

B. VAB Selection Process

Potential voting members will submit a resume, bio, and letter of recommendation from their respective nationally recognized service organization and/or district county commissioner. County commissioners and VAB Chairman will review and/or interview potential candidates and commissioners will appoint selected VAB voting members.

C. Primary Functions

The primary function of the Veterans' Assistance Fund (VAF) is to provide services to eligible individuals.

The VAF provides timely service to eligible individuals when assistance from other agencies is considered insufficient or time requirements are constrained.

The intent of the VAF is to provide emergency or crisis relief, not to replace assistance from any other agency, and assistance is granted on a "case by case" basis only. The VAF is not intended to provide continuing assistance on a routine basis.

The VAB will provide guidance for the continuous improvement of the VAF to meet the veteran community need through research and gap analysis discussion on a quarterly basis to ensure the efficacy of the program in supporting positive outcomes for Spokane County Veterans.

Secondary Functions

The Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center Staff may also make referrals to other agencies; interview applicants in person or by telephone; provide basic counseling or job counseling; act as a liaison with landlords, utility companies, etc; establishing and maintaining a good rapport with vendors who accept vouchers from the VAF; cooperate with federal, state, county, and city officials in regards to veterans assistance to assure proper operation of the VAF in accordance with RCW 73.08.035 and guided by the VAB and Spokane County government.

D. Guidelines Review

The guidelines in this policy and procedures manual are subject to review annually by the County Commissioners and the VAB. It is the Spokane County

Veterans Service Center who is responsible for expenditures of the Spokane County VAF.

III. Eligibility

A. Requirements

Under the Revised Code of the State of Washington (RCW 73.08), veterans and their families are eligible for assistance. The Spokane County Commissioners have established the following as criteria for assistance:

1. Veteran must have served on active duty for a minimum of 180 days. A veteran who served less than 180 days and is honorably discharged for medical reasons listed as not existing prior to service (non-EPTS) may also qualify.
2. Veteran or other eligible individual must show an original or certified copy of a DD-214 or, if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge or other ID proving veteran status. Only veterans with an Honorable Discharge are eligible for assistance. An exception may be made for Veterans with a General Discharge (under honorable conditions) on a case by case basis. If a veteran has more than one discharge, the last discharge dictates eligibility.
3. Veterans or other eligible individuals must have been a resident of Spokane County for a continuous period of six months or more to qualify for assistance. Exceptions may be granted if the veteran recently moved to Spokane County for work, school, family emergency or other compelling reason. Proof of residency includes, but is not limited to; voter registration card, WA State Driver's License, WA State ID Card, or official correspondence, e.g., letters from the VA, Social Security, State or Local Government, or Utility Bills. If the above documentation does not clearly establish residency in either the State or County, additional documentation may be requested.
4. Veterans or other eligible individuals must be able to provide proper identification and documentation of eligibility of dependents and be the legal responsibility of the applicant.
5. Veterans or other eligible individuals must be indigent or have a crisis or emergency need as determined by the Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center staff based on validation of situation and need through supporting documentation of household income and expenses.

B. Identification

Veterans must be able to provide proper identification for themselves and other eligible individuals. Preferred identification is a Washington State Driver's License, or Washington State ID Card since these documents also help establish

residency. Other acceptable forms of identification are passports, US Department of Veterans Affairs ID and military ID cards.

C. Indigent Status

1. RCW requires that the VAF be used for indigent veterans and their families.
2. The Spokane County Veterans Service center staff shall make a "case-by-case" determination of indigent status for each request for assistance. Staff shall apply the definition of "indigent" so as to ensure each "eligible individual" is afforded the greatest opportunity for assistance and discernable positive outcome.

IV. Assistance

A. General Information

1. Assistance for qualified applicants and their other eligible individuals is provided by the VAF through the use of vouchers to vendors or direct supportive services such as bus passes, utility payments, clothing vouchers, or other purchased resources. Assistance may also be given through referrals, counseling, or by acting as a liaison or advocate for the applicant.
2. Financial assistance to eligible individuals will be provided in an equitable manner considering the severity of the situation and the availability of funding. If financial assistance is repeatedly requested by the same eligible individual, or suspicion arises of cyclical abuse of the program, or a significant written exception to this policy is requested, the VAB shall conduct a special assessment to determine if the VAF is being used in an effective manner.
3. Eligible individuals may receive assistance including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Food
 - b. Rent or Mortgage Payments
 - c. Utilities
 - d. Emergency Medical and Dental
 - e. Burial or Cremation
 - f. Miscellaneous, may include but is not limited to the following: transportation expenses, car repair to expedite employment or to attend medical appointments, clothing, educational expenses, certain legal fees, appliances or appliance repair.

4. Exclusions include, but are not limited to, alcohol, tobacco, lottery tickets, recreational drugs, and other non-essential items.

V. Application Procedures

A. Initial Applications

1. An eligible individual may be referred for assistance by a government or non-governmental agency, by an individual with knowledge of the eligible individual's indigence, or by self-referral.
2. The veteran or other eligible individual may contact any VAB member for assistance or referral. It is preferred that individuals contact the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Office directly for an application.
3. The applicant will be interviewed by Spokane County Veterans Services Office staff member(s) who will assist the applicant with preparation of the request for assistance and will determine eligibility for and amount of assistance necessary to meet basic needs or provide crisis relief.
4. The completed application package shall contain the following information:
 1. Completed Application Form
 2. DD 214 or similar proof of military service
 3. Proper identification for all eligible individuals
 4. Documentation of income and expenses.
 5. Documentation for vendor/need for which assistance is requested.
5. VAB chair will review any applications for exception or cases for review of cyclical programmatic abuse and present to the VAB for assessment. VAB chair will review any requests for assistance exceeding \$750.

B. Payment Process

1. Once all documentation for eligibility has been verified, the approved application, with or without modifications, voucher or payment will be issued by Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Center staff and a pledge will be made to the vendor if necessary to avoid further charges.
2. These payments will be paid out of the Veterans Assistance Fund balance through the Spokane County Auditor's office in accordance with approved accounting principles.

C. Appeals and Appeals Process

1. In the event an applicant does not agree with the decision of the eligibility determination or level of assistance, he or she shall have a right of appeal.
2. The applicant may initiate an appeal by submitting a letter to the VAB Chair stating the nature of the grievance and the desired remedial action. The applicant shall submit the letter of appeal within 7 calendar days of notification of the application decision being appealed.
3. The VAB Chair will convene an Appeals Board within 10 working days of receipt of an appeal. The Appeals Board shall consist of the VAB Chair and at least three other voting members of the VAB. The Appeals Board will review the application and the applicant's letter of appeal and will uphold or modify the decision.
4. The applicant will be notified of the Appeal Board's decision within 5 working days of the Board's decision.

VI. Records, Files, Forms and Reports

1. The Spokane County Auditor's Office will provide a Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) annual report in accordance with Spokane County procedure.
2. The Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Office shall maintain appropriate electronic records of assistance requested from and provided by the VAF. These records will be in the form of applications and other supporting documents.
3. The VAB will maintain electronic records of meeting minutes to include appeals decisions, motions, and votes taken.

VII. Outreach and Publicity

On behalf of the Spokane County Commissioners, the VAB, and the veteran community, the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Office shall broaden the scope of its outreach, engagement and training to include providing community education, training and outreach to include but not limited to postings on the County website, regular notices in print and online media, information and outreach materials for the Sheriff and Fire Departments, Chambers of Commerce, city and county offices, non-profit partners and service providers, appropriate Spokane County departments, veteran organizations or events, and medical or counseling facilities. Outreach information shall include, at a minimum, the availability of the VAF, and information for contacting the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services Office. It may also include information about the application process and eligibility requirements.

VIII. Continued Improvement and Best Practices

Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center Staff will participate in professional development activities, forums, trainings, and conferences in order to implement and champion the most successful process improvements and best practices for veterans services in Spokane County.

-----Last Item-----