



RESOLUTION _____, 2016

ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO POLICY 950 – VETERANS’ ASSISTANCE

THE BOARD OF CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS finds as follows:

1. Formal policies and procedures were developed and implemented in 2004 to ensure accountability in government and consistency of process.
2. Periodic updates are required as government rules and regulations change as well as current practices.
3. The proposed amendments to the policy were posted on the Intranet to allow staff time to review and comment. The Prosecuting Attorney’s office reviewed the policy
4. A public hearing was held April 19 to solicit testimony.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Clallam County Commissioners in consideration of the above findings of fact:

1. Amendments to Policy 950 – Veterans’ Assistance are adopted for inclusion in the Clallam County Administrative Policy Manual.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this nineteenth day of April 2016

BOARD OF CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mike Chapman, Chair

Mark Ozias

ATTEST:

Trish Holden, CMC, Clerk of the Board

Bill Peach

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Policy 950**

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APPENDIX A - SCHEDULE OF ASSISTANCE

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VETERANS' ASSISTANCE

.1 PURPOSE

To provide emergency financial assistance to indigent/low income eligible veterans and eligible dependents, in accordance with RCW 73.08 now or as amended.

1.1 Source of Funds

Funding for the Veterans' Relief Fund is provided in accordance with RCW 73.08.080 and applicable County ordinances. The Veterans' Relief Fund is a Special Revenue Fund budgeted and approved by the Clallam County Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners is responsible for uses and expenditures from the fund. As such, the County maintains final approval and/or denial authority on all claims and expenditures.

1.2 Policy

Through the administration of said funds, the Clallam County Veterans' Relief Fund intends to provide timely services to eligible veterans and certain dependents. The purpose of these policies are to limit organizational and personal conflict of interest and to provide, to the maximum extent possible, fair and equal treatment to all applicants requesting assistance through this program. The basis for any assistance request must be an emergency and provide for reasonable, basic, subsistence needs.

1.3 Verbal and/or Physical Abuse Policy

The Clallam County Veterans' Relief Fund has a zero tolerance policy of verbal or other forms of abuse directed towards veterans, the County Employee/Contractor ~~Veterans' Coordinator or Assistant~~, volunteers, or any other staff. Any form of verbal or physical abuse may be deemed sufficient cause to deny service, the client will be told to leave the office immediately.

If the County Employee/Contractor ~~Veterans' Coordinator or Assistant~~ (or designated officer) deems the abuse to be severe, the client may be denied service from the Veterans' Relief Fund for a period of time deemed appropriate by the decision of the County Employee/Contractor ~~Veterans' Coordinator~~ for up to 5 years. Anyone under the influence of alcohol and/or any other drugs will be denied service and told to leave the premises. The decision of the County Employee/Contractor ~~Veteran Coordinator's decision~~ is final.

.2 ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Service Requirements

To be eligible for assistance, veterans must, at the time they seek assistance, meet the definition in RCW 41.04.007, as now enacted or as amended. This also includes any current member of the National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves who has been deployed to serve in an armed conflict. Whether a veteran was drafted or volunteered is irrelevant to this determination; discriminating against a veteran because of how the veteran obtained eligibility is prohibited.

2.2 Residency

Veterans or families of deceased veterans must have been residents of the state of Washington, for at least 12 consecutive months preceding the date of application for assistance. Applicants must reside in Clallam County at the date of application and provide proof of said residency. Limited Clallam Transit passes may be made available for work search and work transportation without meeting the residency requirement.

.3 REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

3.1 Discharge

Documentation includes DD-214, VA Statement of Service (SOS), or if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge. Staff will assist the veteran in completing a request to receive a certified copy of their DD-214 as necessary. No assistance will be considered without the required documentation.

All veterans will be encouraged to record their original or certified copy of their discharge with the County Auditor's Office. This service is free in accordance with RCW 73.04.030.

Questionable Copies of Discharge - Any copy of a discharge that appears to have been altered in any way, or is deemed questionable will not be accepted. A certified copy of the document in question must be produced before any assistance will be provided.

3.2 Residency

Residency may be documented by a Washington state driver's license, state I.D. card, rent/lease agreement(s), utility bill(s) or other form of verifiable documentation deemed

However, please note that there may be situations in which this information is available to the public under Washington State's Public Records Act. See RCW 42.56.440

acceptable. Documents must prove 12-month residency in the State of Washington and current residency in Clallam County.

3.3 Family – Dependents

The definition of family for this policy shall mean the spouse, domestic partner, and dependent children of a living or deceased veteran. Documents must be provided to verify marriage, birth of children or other form of dependency, and death. (Marriage certificate, birth certificate, death certificate, etc.) Children who have reached the age of 18 are not considered dependents unless the dependent is they are severely disabled and dependent on parents for basic survival needs or currently enrolled full-time in school or an institution of higher education and under the age of 24. Proof of enrollment will be required. For the purposes of a married couple who are both veterans, they each can be considered for the fund based on the eligibility requirements set forth in this policy (i.e. annual limit would be \$2,400 for a married veteran household and the lifetime limit would be \$7,200).

3.4 Income Verification

All household income and source(s) must be documented. Acceptable documents may be pay stubs, VA Disability/Pension award letters, Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) documents, Social Security grant/award letters, Labor and Industry payment letters, unemployment check stubs/award notices, or any other documents deemed necessary.

If an applicant claims they have no income in the recent past or currently have no income, the applicant will be required to show how current rent, utilities, food, and other bills are being paid. Self-employed applicants must bring valid income accounting records, business tax I.D. number, business license, (if applicable), or other documentation deemed acceptable.

3.5 Unemployed Veterans – Work Search Requirement

Unemployed veterans, who are able to work and have not been determined by the state and/or federal government to be fully disabled and unemployable, must be registered with the Veteran's Job Service Section at a local WorkSource office. They must show proof of the registration process and if eligible, applied for unemployment compensation.

3.6 Indigent Definition

"Indigent" means a person who is defined as such by the County legislative authority using one or more of the following definitions:

- a. Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, general assistance, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, Medicaid, or supplemental security income;
- 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; or
- c. Unable to pay reasonable costs for shelter, food, utilities, and transportation because his or her available funds are insufficient.

3.7 Income Limits/Guidelines

All household income must be at or below the 150 percent level of the Federal Poverty Level Income Guidelines established and published by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Said guidelines are adjusted and revised annually.

3.8 Rent, Lease Agreement, or Mortgage Payment

Rental or lease agreements must have the landlord, owner, or legal agent of owner's name, address, and telephone number on the document; the rental address, and monthly rent amount. This agreement must be dated and signed by the renter and the landlord or legal agent. Sublet agreements written by a shared roommate will not be accepted and the applicant's name must be on the legal agreement between the landlord and the primary renter.

Prior to providing mortgage assistance, ownership of property must be verified and documents submitted verifying existence of any loan and/or payment.

3.9 Disabled Applicants

If applicant is disabled to the degree that s/he is unable to do any kind of work, appropriate disability documentation is required. A Veteran's Administration, Social Security, DSHS, or Labor and Industry document is acceptable.

.4 APPLICATION AND ASSISTANCE PROCESS

The County ~~Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator will develop and maintain forms necessary for administration of the Veterans' Assistance Program. Form content and format is at the discretion of the County.

4.1 Delegation of Veterans Assistance Program Veterans' Coordinator's Tasks

The Veterans Assistance Program Veterans' Coordinator shall be run by a County employee County Employee/Contractor designated by the Board of Clallam County Commissioners. The designee Veterans' Coordinator is responsible to determine and document eligibility, approve or deny claims, ~~process vouchers,~~ ensure payment, provide for records of all claims, and provide reports of payments of claims. All, or part, of the Veterans' Coordinator's duties may be delegated, in writing, to a designated Veterans' Assistant employed by the County. The County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Assistant position is paid for by funds from the Veterans' Relief Fund. ~~Veterans may initiate claims by contacting the Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant.~~

Final approval of claims is the responsibility of the County Employee/Contractor ~~Clallam County Veterans' Coordinator~~ and the signature approval of designated members of the Clallam County Veterans Association based upon submission of complete and accurate claims and documentation. ~~Incomplete or undocumented claims may be returned to the Veterans' Assistant or Veteran applying for relief and are a sufficient reason for denial of claim.~~

4.2 Appointment Procedures

All applicants will be pre-screened for basic eligibility by the County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Assistant by walk-in contact at the Clallam County Veterans Center located at 216 South Francis Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362; 360.797.1791 ~~417-0293~~. If the Veterans' Assistant is unavailable, applicants can contact the Veterans' Coordinator located at the Clallam County Commissioners Office, 223 East 4th Street, Room 150, Port Angeles, WA 98362, for more information. Emergency requests for assistance will be evaluated by the County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

4.3 Application for Assistance

Request for assistance is made by completion of a Clallam County Veterans' Relief Fund "Application to apply for relief funds" form. Signature of affirmation and verification of information authorization is mandatory. Refusal to sign will preclude applicant from receiving assistance.

All applications will be evaluated on the merits of the request.

All required documentation must be provided and failure to provide all required documentation will result in an automatic denial of the application.

4.4 Payment Procedures

The County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator shall cause payment to be made after all documentation has been received and the applicable approval process has been completed. No warrant will be made payable to the Veteran, spouse, domestic partner, or dependent. Payment will be made directly to the vendor or service provider listed on the original approval form ~~voucher~~.

4.5 Denial of Assistance

The County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator may deny assistance in accordance with these policies. False information provided by an applicant for assistance or other fraudulent actions taken for the purpose of receiving financial assistance from this program, will be grounds for denial of assistance and may be referred to the Clallam County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for possible legal action.

Failure to meet program eligibility requirements, income over guideline amounts, inadequate required documentation, or no clearly definable and/or verifiable emergencies are other valid reasons for denial of service. The County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator will make the determination for the basis of denial of assistance, considering all facts and policies relevant to each request.

(1) Divorce – Remarried Spouse or Widow

A divorced spouse of a living or deceased veteran, is ineligible for assistance. A widow(er) of a deceased veteran who has remarried is also ineligible for assistance.

(2) Fraud and/or Abuse

If the County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant ~~suspects~~ suspects fraud, criminal intent/activity or abuse of the system by an applicant, the matter may be referred to the Executive Committee of the Clallam County Veterans Association ~~Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee~~. The Association ~~Committee~~ may, at its discretion, refer the issue to the Prosecuting Attorney's office for investigation and possible legal action. If fraud or criminal activity is legally established, the applicant will be prohibited from receiving any future assistance from this fund.

5 DENIAL OF SERVICE – APPEAL PROCESS

5.1 Complaints or Appeals

If a Veteran feels s/he was treated improperly or denied assistance unfairly, s/he has the right of due process and may appeal the ~~County Employee/Contractor's~~ Veterans' Coordinator's decision to the ~~Clallam County Veterans Association~~ Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee. All appeals will be heard and adjudicated by the ~~Clallam County Veterans Association~~ Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee.

5.2 Non-Appealable Issues

The following circumstances or facts are not appealable:

- a. Less than 12-month residency in Washington state
- b. Not a current resident of Clallam County
- c. ~~Annual or lifetime limitations have been reached~~ Does not comply with required time interval since date of last assistance
- d. No "legal" Veteran's status

5.3 Appeal Process – Procedures

The applicant must submit, in writing, a dated and signed statement on an appeal form, provided by the ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant describing in detail any alleged or perceived discrimination, improper treatment and/or reasons they feel they were unjustly denied assistance by the ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant (or designated official). The appeal form may be submitted by mail or in person at the Commissioners' Office. Upon receipt of said appeal, the ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator will contact the ~~President~~ Chair of the Clallam County Veterans Association ~~Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee or another executive committee member~~ or other two-committee members, if the aforementioned is unavailable, to notify them of receipt of the appeal. The ~~association~~ committee members will contact the appellant, in a reasonable and timely manner, to arrange an appeal hearing before the ~~association~~ committee, with the ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator present, as soon as feasible.

At the appeal hearing, the appellant may provide oral and/or written testimony in support of their appeal. After the appeal hearing, the ~~association~~ committee will consider the written appeal, oral statements by the appellant and all documentation pertinent to said appeal. After taking evidence and considering all facts of the appeal, policies and applicable laws, the ~~association~~ committee will contact the appellant with their decision of the appeal both by telephone, if possible, and by U.S. Mail. The decision of the ~~association~~ committee regarding the disposition of the appeal will be binding and final regarding Clallam County and the Veterans' Relief Fund Program.

5.4 Further Appeal (Due Process)

Section 5.3 above in no way limits an applicant's constitutional right of due process of law, as described in the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution thereof.

.6 AUTHORIZED USE OF FUNDS

6.1 Assistance Defined

The intent of the original and subsequent legislation regarding the Veterans' Relief Fund, precedent procedures, and interpretations by other counties, actions by the Clallam County Board of Commissioners and a long-standing consensus of the veterans' organizations in this County have defined the use of the Veterans' Relief Fund as an Emergency Assistance Program. Accordingly, each application for assistance will be evaluated in the context of an emergency need by the County Employee/Contractor and designated representatives of the Clallam County Veterans Association.

The Veterans' Relief Fund is intended to be used to provide emergency assistance. It is not intended to be on-going or regular payments to veterans. It is not intended as a supplemental income source or an annual entitlement. ~~Assistance is generally limited to once every 12 months and any exceptions are at the sole discretion of the County.~~

6.2 Eligible Items/Services for Assistance

Food, shelter, limited emergency medical care, necessary utilities, limited transportation, mental health evaluations to ensure the safety of a veteran, and burial assistance, in accordance with RCW 73.08.070. ~~O,~~ and other reasonable emergency needs may be considered on a case by case basis. These requests that may arise are all legitimate expenditures of the Relief Fund and must be approved by three designated signers of the Clallam County Veterans Association. The County Employee/Contractor~~Veterans' Coordinator~~ should use prudence and discretion in determining an emergency need and ~~voucher~~ appropriate amounts provided for such relief.

The County Employee/Contractor~~Veterans' Coordinator and Veterans' Assistant~~ will not accept "lost or stolen cash," as an emergency to qualify for voucher assistance. Individuals are responsible for the security of their personal funds, just as anyone else would be.

6.3 Maximum Allocation

The maximum financial benefit for emergency assistance for an indigent veteran or family member will not exceed \$1,200 during a 12-month period and \$3,600 over a lifetime. Exceptions to these limits may be made with three signatures from designated members of the Clallam County Veterans Association. This exception is not to exceed

20 percent of the annual and lifetime limitations outlined above. Burial and cremation services do not apply to the restrictions in this paragraph.

6.4 Primary Service Location

All warrants are issued at the Clallam County ~~Veterans Center~~ Commissioners' Office, located at ~~216 South Francis~~ 23 East 4th Street, Room 150, Port Angeles, WA 98362.

6.5 Schedule of Assistance

A schedule of authorized assistance benefits and maximums for each is maintained as Appendix A to this policy. Recommendations for modification will be made to the Clallam County Board of Commissioners who shall have final authority for approval of uses of the fund and maximum benefits.

.7 COUNTY EMPLOYEE/CONTRACTOR VETERANS' COORDINATOR/VETERANS' ASSISTANT POSITION AND DUTIES

7.1 Defined

The ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator shall be the primary program operations manager for the overall daily operation of the Veterans' Relief Fund Program. ~~The Veterans' Coordinator will be an employee of Clallam County.~~

7.2 County Employee/Contractor's ~~Veterans' Coordinator's~~ Decisions and Actions

The ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator and ~~Veterans' Assistant~~ shall interpret and apply when appropriate, these Policies and Procedures as liberally as possible when evaluating a veteran's request for assistance. The benefit of doubt may be applied in favor of the veteran, at the ~~County Employee/Contractor's~~ Veterans' Coordinator's discretion, when circumstances regarding emergent need and eligibility are borderline and/or questionable.

It is the position of the County, that all veterans, who have served our country honorably, deserve to be treated equally, with respect, dignity, compassion, and fairness.

The ~~County Employee/Contractor~~ Veterans' Coordinator and ~~Veterans' Assistant~~ will use sound judgment and reason in making all decisions regarding applications for assistance from this program and shall consult the Clallam County Veterans Association on any issue which may be deemed questionable regarding policy interpretation.

7.3 Relationship with Veterans' Organizations

The ~~County Employee/Contractor~~Veterans' Coordinator and Veterans' Assistant will strive to maintain positive working relationships with the representatives of approved Veterans' Organizations Post/Chapter and with members of the Clallam County Veterans Association~~Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee~~.

7.4 Confidentiality~~Veterans' Assistant~~

The County considers information contained within an individual applicant's file confidential. General information, such as monthly reports, spreadsheets, or other data collection documents are not confidential and must be produced in accordance with the Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). The County Employee/Contractor shall require that all staff, and/or designated representatives working with Veteran's Relief recipients, sign a confidentiality agreement preventing release of protected information.

The agreement shall notify all parties that, for the protection of applicants and recipients, they are prohibited from disclosing the identity, contents of any records/files, papers and communications, except for purposes directly connected with the administration of the Veteran's Relief Program.

Unauthorized disclosure of public assistance documents or information relating to specific individuals is prohibited and, according to RCW 74.04.060, a gross misdemeanor.~~may employ a Veterans' Assistant to work with the Veterans' Coordinator. If a Veterans' Assistant is employed the position shall be funded by the Veterans' Relief Fund. The position and daily activities shall be supervised and directed by the Veterans' Coordinator.~~

The Employee/Contractor must take steps to ensure confidentiality of information contained in individual files. Failure to do so may result in immediate termination of the contract or other any other remedies available to the County.

APPENDIX A – SCHEDULE OF ASSISTANCE

RELIEF CATEGORIES for applications are detailed below. All requests are classified into one of the following categories: food, rent, utilities, medical, burial, and miscellaneous. These applications will be accepted only on an emergent basis.

FOOD

1. There is no limit to the number of times an applicant can receive assistance for food (unless the annual/lifetime limits have been reached); however, the intent of the assistance is to be used on an emergent basis.

2. Assistance is to be used for necessities only. No alcohol, ~~or tobacco products, gift cards, or gambling products~~ may be purchased, ~~and the warrant envelope will state this.~~ Sundries may be purchased but should be for necessary items like paper products and toiletries. When picking up the gift card the veteran will be required to sign that the purchases will be in accordance with the policy and the receipt of said purchases will be provided to the County Employee/Contractor to be placed in the veterans file. Purchases of prohibited or questionable items or failure to produce receipts for goods purchased will be documented in the veteran's record and will be considered grounds for termination of assistance.
3. Proper identification must be presented to the vendor at the time of the purchase. No cash, coupon, or credit of any type is to be given.
4. Food vouchers shall be issued as follows:

Single veteran	\$150
Spouse of deceased veteran	\$150
Single veteran with children dependent minor child	\$150+\$100 for each non-emancipated,
Married veteran dependent minor child	\$250+\$100 for each non-emancipated,
Spouse of deceased veteran w/children dependent minor child	\$150+\$100 for each non-emancipated,
Surviving children of deceased veteran child	\$100 for each non-emancipated, dependent minor
5. The County Employee/Contractor will maintain a list of grocery vendors who accept warrants from the County and t. The veteran will be given a choice of any of the grocers on the list.

RENT

1. Rental payments are used to assist a veteran to remain in a domicile or to provide temporary shelter. Rent assistance is usually given only once a year but in an emergency situation, may be granted more than once.
2. Veteran must be listed on a rental agreement with the property owner, property management firm, or leaseholder.
3. Rent is not paid to relatives of the applicant.
4. Veteran must show proof of imminent danger of eviction including but not limited to an eviction notice, or landlord statement verifying notice to vacate to verify that the tenant is behind in rent payments.
5. Rent assistance depends upon the circumstances of the applicant and is determined by the County Employee/Contractor Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant.
6. Use of assistance for rental deposits, such as damage and security first and last month and damage deposit, is not allowed. This is not allowed as there is no accountability of returning said deposit when the veteran vacates premises. ~~and must be returned to the Relief Fund if the Veteran vacates the rental and a deposit is refunded. This will be stated on the warrant.~~

UTILITIES

1. Utility assistance is granted for electricity, water, and bottled gas such as propane, fuel oil, and firewood. Assistance for electricity, water, and bottled gas is only paid to avoid a shut-off and requires proof of a delinquency shut-off notice. The delinquency notice must be dated less than 30 days from the date the veteran requests assistance for that utility. As provided in section 3.6 (c) of this policy if the veteran is unable to pay reasonable costs for utilities because his/her available funds are insufficient the request may be considered without the required delinquency notice. It is the responsibility of the County Employee/Contractor/Veterans' Coordinator or Veterans' Assistant to contact the utility company and verify the amount of assistance required preventing a shut-off after a completed application is received.
2. Telephones are not considered a necessity and **do not** qualify except when a medical necessity exists, in which case, assistance with local telephone costs can be considered.
3. Use of assistance for utility deposits is not allowed. This is not allowed as there is no accountability when a veteran vacates premises. and must be returned to the Relief Fund if the Veteran vacates the rental and a deposit is refunded. This will be stated on the warrant.

MEDICAL/MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE

1. Medical assistance may be granted to aid qualified applicants for the purchase of medical necessities only on an emergency basis.
2. Assistance may be provided for:
 - Prescriptions
 - Overdue medical/dental bills (billed within the last 12 months)
 - Eye glasses, denture repair, other medical appliances, as approved
 - Mental health evaluations to ensure the safety or stability of the veteran

BURIAL

Up to \$800 (but not less than \$300 – RCW 73.08.070) may be paid to the indigent spouse, dependent children, family member or friend who pays for burial expenses of an indigent veteran, his/her spouse, or child. This allowance is to assist with burial expenses and requires a copy of the death certificate and internment or cremation billings. If the person requesting assistance has applied and/or received reimbursement from the Veterans Administration (VA) for funeral costs, that amount will be deducted prior to the assistance being considered.

Before this authorization is allowed, the County Employee/Contractor will connect the indigent veteran, his/her spouse, or dependent with a local veteran's service organization in order to establish qualification for VA burial benefits.

MISCELLANEOUS

Miscellaneous assistance includes travel, clothing, and tools under the following circumstances:

- a. Travel expenses are allowed for unusual medical purposes. Assistance is granted either by purchase of a ticket for public transportation or by providing a gift card~~voucher~~ to purchase adequate amounts of fuel to perform travel.
- b. Purchase of clothing and/or tools necessary for a veteran to become or remain employed. This benefit is not extended to non-veteran spouses and/or dependents.
- c. Clallam County Transit bus passes for job search and/or transportation to and from employment.

