



Legal Services for Homeless Veterans and Veterans At-Risk for Homelessness (LSV-H) Grant Program

New Grantee Onboarding Day 1
September 26, 2023

Recording: <https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/ldr.php?RCID=6f6d33df8c886c24514ca04ed75da426>

Password: Homeless1!



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Legal Services for Veterans Team



Sean Clark, JD
Veterans Justice Programs
National Director



Justin Dandois, JD
Legal Services for Veterans
Compliance Officer



Jessica Blue-Howells, LCSW
Veterans Justice Programs
National Deputy Director



Coral Baker
Legal Services for Veterans
Grants Management Specialist



Madolyn Gingell, LCSW
Legal Services for Veterans
National Coordinator



Heather Monroe, LCSW
Legal Services for Veterans
Grants Management Specialist



Agenda

- I. Legal Background
- II. Eligibility
- III. SQUARES Overview
- IV. SQUARES Demo
- V. Military Discharge Upgrades
- VI. Compliance FAQs
- VII. Questions and Closeout



Legal Background



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Legal Background

- Authority: Section 4202 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 ([Public Law 116-315](#))
- Codified at: [38 U.S.C. § 2022A](#)
- Implemented by: [38 C.F.R. Part 79](#)



Eligibility



Eligible Veterans

- A Veteran’s eligibility for the LSV-H Grant is determined by a two-prong test. First, the individual must be found to be a ‘Veteran’ pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 101(2). Second, the individual must be found to be homeless or at-risk for homelessness pursuant to 38 CFR § 79.15.
 - Regarding the first element: The definition of “Veteran” found in 38 U.S.C. 101(2) is to be used (“A person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom **under conditions other than dishonorable.**”). Additionally, the length of service requirements set forth in 38 U.S.C. 5303A apply to this grant program.
 - Regarding the second element: 38 CFR 79.15 states “To be eligible for legal services under this part, an individual must be a: (1) Homeless veteran or (2) Veteran at-risk for homelessness.”
 - Homeless: means a Veteran who is homeless as that term is defined in subsection (a) or (b) of section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302).
 - At Risk for Homelessness: 38 CFR 79.15(b)(1-9) goes on to provide a list of conditions of which at least one must be met to be considered ‘at-risk for homelessness’.



Eligible Veterans – Multiple Discharges

- Note: Generally, a discharge under dishonorable conditions will not bar a former service member from receiving VA benefits **if** that service member has another period of service which ended under honorable conditions for which the statutory bars would not apply—as VA benefits would be predicated on that honorable period of service. If you have questions about this, please contact the LSV Program Team at LSVGrants@va.gov.



Determining Eligibility

To determine if a Veteran is eligible to receive covered legal services under the LSV-H Grant, the VA recommends the following four-step process:

1. Check the DD-214:
 - a. If you can verify Discharge Status and Length of Service, the individual is an eligible Veteran for LSV-H.
 - b. If you can't verify eligibility, conduct a basic SQUARES query.
2. Conduct a Basic SQUARES query:
 - a. If you can verify Discharge Status and Length of Service, the individual is an eligible Veteran for LSV-H.
 - b. If you can't verify eligibility, conduct an advanced SQUARES query.
3. Conduct an Advanced SQUARES query:
 - a. If you can verify Discharge Status and Length of Service, the individual is an eligible Veteran for LSV-H.
 - b. If you can't verify eligibility, you'll need to reach out to VA for assistance. VA is currently working on identifying an internal point of contact for this scope of work.
4. Contact LSVGrants@va.gov. When reaching out the LSVGrants@va.gov do not provide the name of the Veteran you are trying to determine eligibility for. Simply let the LSV Program Staff know that you have a Veteran whom you are unable to determine eligibility status for. The LSV Program Staff will have someone reach out to you to help determine eligibility. Please note, that in order to determine eligibility, the VA will likely need to know some data elements of the Veteran in question. These would likely include; Name, SSN, and DOB. The LSV Program Staff will not have visibility into this information and the VA will not store this information.





Presented By
Leisa Davis, SQUARES Administrator, VHA Homeless Programs Office

September 26, 2023

Agenda

- **Overview**
- **SQUARES Website
(Training and Application Instructions)**
- **VA Grantees (External Managers/Users)**
- **Business Rules**
- **Search Options**
- **Live Demo**
- **Questions and Answers**



SQUARES

Using Data to End Veteran Homelessness

www.va.gov/homeless/squares

Status Query and Response Exchange System (SQUARES) is a web-based application that returns unique information regarding the Veteran's particular eligibility status for healthcare and/or homeless program services in a secure environment. Depending on the SQUARES outcomes, VA employees and homeless service partners are provided with an eligibility determination so they can begin the enrollment or referral process to assist Veterans with accessing VA healthcare and homeless programs--Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), Grant and Per Diem (GPD) and Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH).

For more information, watch the following videos: **SQUARES Overview** and **SQUARES Search Tools**.



The words “homeless” and “Veteran” should not be in the same sentence. VA remains committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation’s duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home.

Achieving the goal of ending homelessness requires a collective effort by VA, homeless service community partners, criminal justice partners (police/sheriff departments, courts, and jails) and local, state and federal agencies. Many of our partners may be the first to encounter a Veteran experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness.

The successes realized by SQUARES teach us that for services to be effective, they must be easy to access, streamlined and meet unique needs.

With its speed and ease of use, SQUARES vastly improves access to homeless program services and health care. As of September 25, 2023, there were over 3,200 users nationwide.



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 13



SQUARES

Using Data to End Veteran Homelessness
www.va.gov/homeless/squares



Veterans who are not **eligible** are assisted with referrals to local community resources.

Over 3,200 Total Users
(Internal VA Users: Over 800)
(External VA Users: Over 2,400)

Over 394,000 queries were conducted to obtain Veteran eligibility information.

SQUARES Website (Training/Application Instructions)

come to VA Insi...

IAMA...

Select One

- ▶ For Veterans
- ▶ For Family Members & Spouses
- ▶ For Employees
- ▶ For Business
- ▶ Forms & Publications
- ▶ Jobs
- Volunteer or Donate
- Public & Intergovernmental Affairs

VA » VA Homeless Programs » SQUARES

VA Homeless Programs

SQUARES

[Training](#) | [Apply](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Executive Summary](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Status Query and Response Exchange System (SQUARES) is a VA web application that provides VA employees and external organizations (homeless service community partners, law enforcement partners (police departments, sheriff departments, courts, and jails) local, state and federal agencies with reliable, detailed information about Veteran eligibility. Users submit identity attributes for homeless individuals (name, date of birth, social security number, gender) and SQUARES returns information regarding the Veteran's status, eligibility for healthcare and homeless programs. For a general overview of how SQUARES is making a major impact in the community, please watch the following videos: [SQUARES Overview](#) and [SQUARES Search Tools](#).

Using Data to End Veteran Homelessness



SQUARES Website (Training/Application Instructions)

If you have business need for SQUARES and would like to become an authorized user, please click on the tab below to obtain instructions on how to apply for access (based on your specific access level).

Review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) and contact the [SQUARES Help Desk](#) if you need assistance and if you would like to add a FAQ to the list.

- Training
- VA Users Only
- Non VA Users Only
- VA Grantees Only
- Non-VA Grantees (All Other Organizations)

**LSV Regular Users
(Click on NonVA Users Only
Button)**



**LSV SQUARES Managers
(Click on the VA Grantees
Button) – Please Apply
Before NonVA Users**



(Note: Register with your business email using Chrome)

SQUARES Website (Training/Application Instructions)

Non VA Users Only

If you **are not a VA Employee** and have a business need for SQUARES, please click on the link below to obtain instructions on how to apply to become an authorized user. (Note: Your organization must designate a SQUARES Manager before you apply for access.) Contact the SQUARES Help Desk to see if your organization has an active account.

[Apply](#)

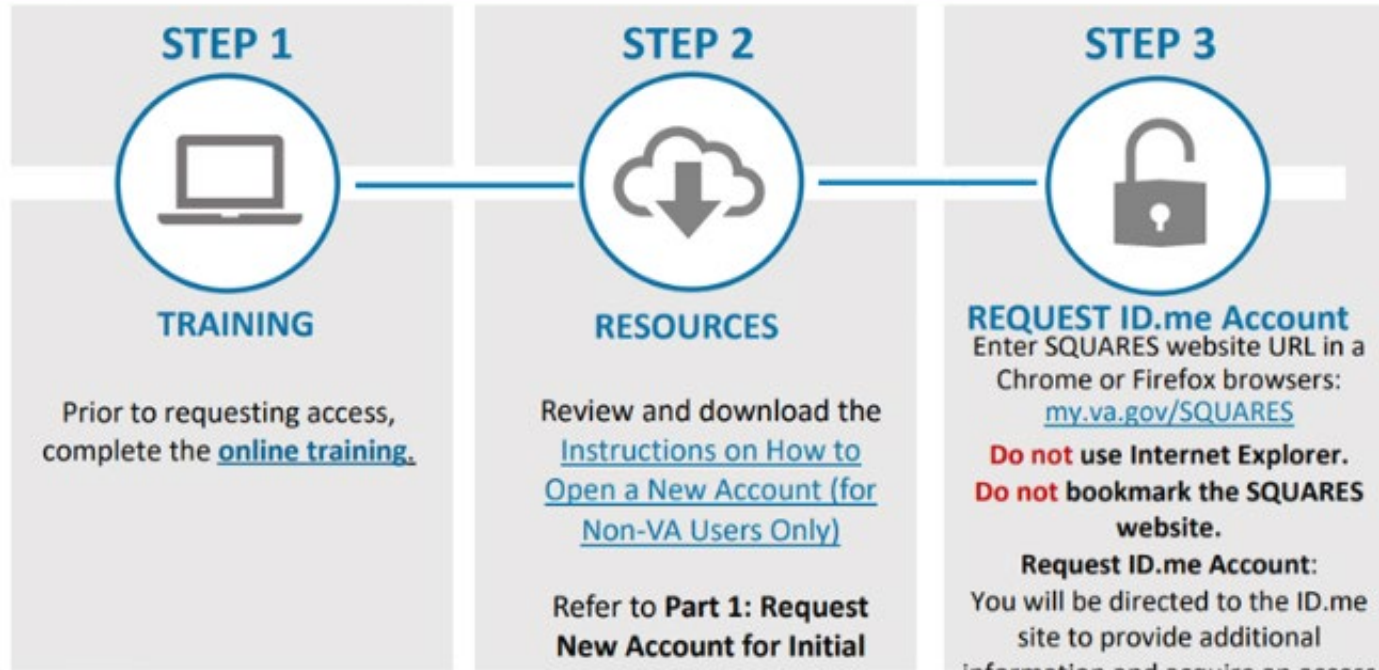
VA Grantees Only

If you **are a VA Grantee** and have a business need for SQUARES, please click on the link below to obtain instructions on how to apply to become an authorized user. (Note: Your organization must designate a SQUARES Manager before standard users can apply for access.) Contact the SQUARES Help Desk to see if your organization has an active account.





Non-VA Users: Getting Started with SQUARES



Complete the steps in sequential order.

Please watch training video before applying for access.

Please register with your business email and use Chrome.

Your request will be routed to the organization's SQUARES Manager for approval.

Login monthly to retain your access.



Choose VA

VA



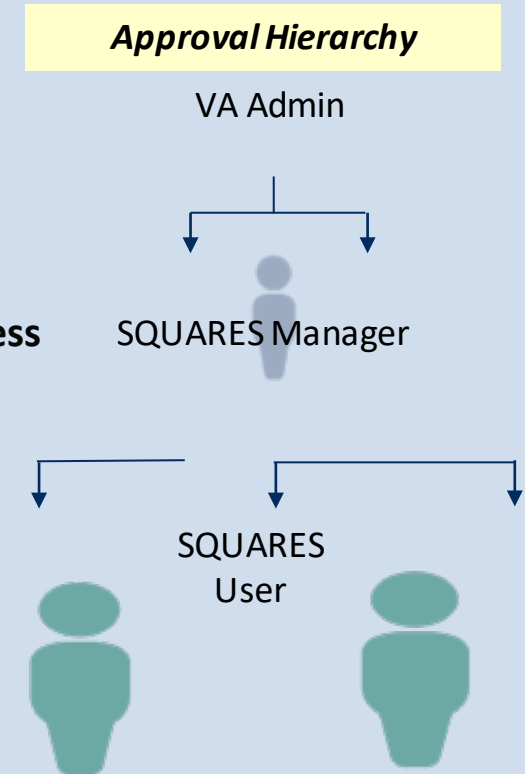
U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 18

NonVA Users (External SQUARES Users)

NonVA Users: Standard Users need to independently apply for access and SQUARES Managers will approve their access.

Write down your SQUARES Manager's contact info (found in the bottom right corner of the site when you're logged into SQUARES).

Please Note: External Organizations that have a business need to verify eligibility for homeless programs include VA Grantees, Federal, State and Local Government and Law Enforcement (criminal justice agencies such as police departments, sheriff departments, courts and jails). VA Grantee Organizations are preloaded in the system; however, **all new Managers/Users need to independently apply for access.**



Business Rules NonVA Users

- **Non VA Users**

- Register with business email **(using instructions for NonVA Users posted online) for Homeless Only (Not SSG Fox)**
- Make your business email the primary one for ID.Me (if you have multiple ID.Me Accounts)
- Login every 30 days to retain access
- Write down your SQUARES Manager's contact information (bottom right corner of the page when you're logged into SQUARES)
- Volunteer to participate in at least one Monthly User Acceptance Test (contact SQUARESAdmin@va.gov for additional info on the Nov 7 and Dec 5 User Acceptance Tests)





New Managers/VA Grantees: Getting Started with SQUARES

STEP 1



TRAINING

Prior to requesting access, complete the [online training](#).

STEP 2



RESOURCES

Download

[Instructions to Managers - Quick Reference Guide](#)

Part 1: Complete the Registration Form. (Skip this step if you are a VA Grantee and your organization is listed in the organization drop-down box. Contact the [Help Desk](#) if your organization is not listed in

STEP 3



REQUEST ID.Me Account

Enter the SQUARES website URL in a Chrome or Firefox browser: my.va.gov/SQUARES

You will be directed to ID.me to provide additional information and acquire an access code. If you have an existing ID.me account, please use your

Complete the steps in sequential order.

Please watch training video before applying for access.

Please register with your business email and Chrome.

Your request will be routed to SQUARESAdmin for approval.

Login monthly to retain your access.



Choose VA

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 21

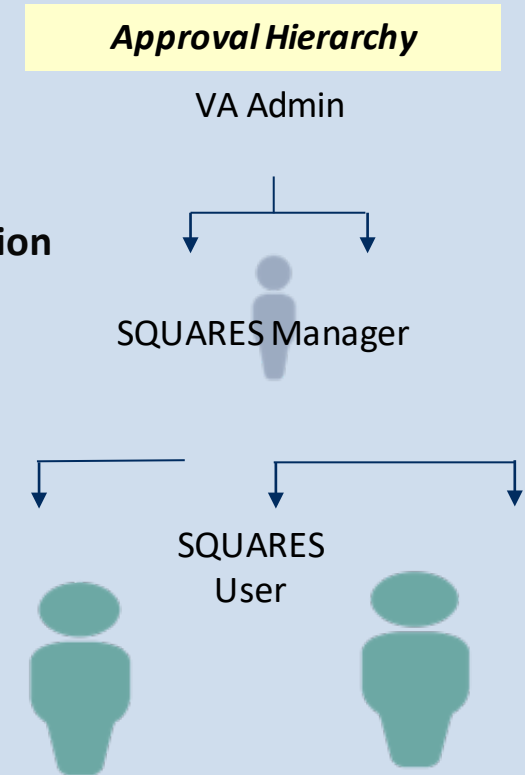
SQUARES Managers (VA Grantees)

VA Admin: Approve SQUARES Managers (after they register for a manager-level account as VA Grantee on the [SQUARES Website](#))

SQUARES Managers: Designated Approving Officials of External Organizations approve users from their organizations when application requests are automatically routed to them.

- Each organization must designate a SQUARES Manager and add the name in eGMS.
- Managers need to apply for access (prior to their users)
- Managers need to provide their users with the application instructions (posted on the [SQUARES Website](#) for NonVA Users) and the organization's information (as it appears in the SQUARES System)

Please Note: External Organizations that have a business need to verify eligibility for homeless programs include VA Grantees, Federal, State and Local Government and Law Enforcement (criminal justice agencies such as police departments, sheriff departments, courts and jails). VA Grantee Organizations are preloaded in the system; however, all new Managers/Users need to independently apply for access.



Business Rules for SQUARES Managers

- **SQUARES Managers**

- Register with business email (**using instructions for VA Grantee posted online**) for Homeless Only (Not SSG Fox) to establish account (prior to your users)
- Make your business email the primary one for ID.Me (if you have multiple ID.Me Accounts)
- Login every 30 days to retain access
- Designate a Backup Manager when you acquire access that we can contact if you're out for an extended period of time or leave the organization so we can grant them manager-level access.
- Review **Manager's Guide**
- Provide NonVA Users with application instructions (noted online) for Homeless Only (Not SSG Fox) and your account info so they can be aligned to the correct organization
- Grant access to only authorized users (within 24-48 hours) upon receipt of the automatic email notifications
- Provide justification for accounts that are denied access
- Deactivate accounts when users leave the organization
- Keep organization portal up-to-date
- Participate in the Semi Annual Recertification Process (March/September) (Forward an email to SQUARESAdmin@va.gov if you are the only Manager/User. We will recertify all Managers.
- Volunteer to participate in at least one Monthly User Acceptance Test (contact SQUARESAdmin@va.gov for additional info on the Nov 7 and Dec 5 User Acceptance Tests)

Please Note:

- LSV are not required to complete a Data Use Agreement because they are a VA Grantee
- Contact [SQUARES Help Desk](#) for assistance if you want to have multiple SQUARES Managers/Accounts



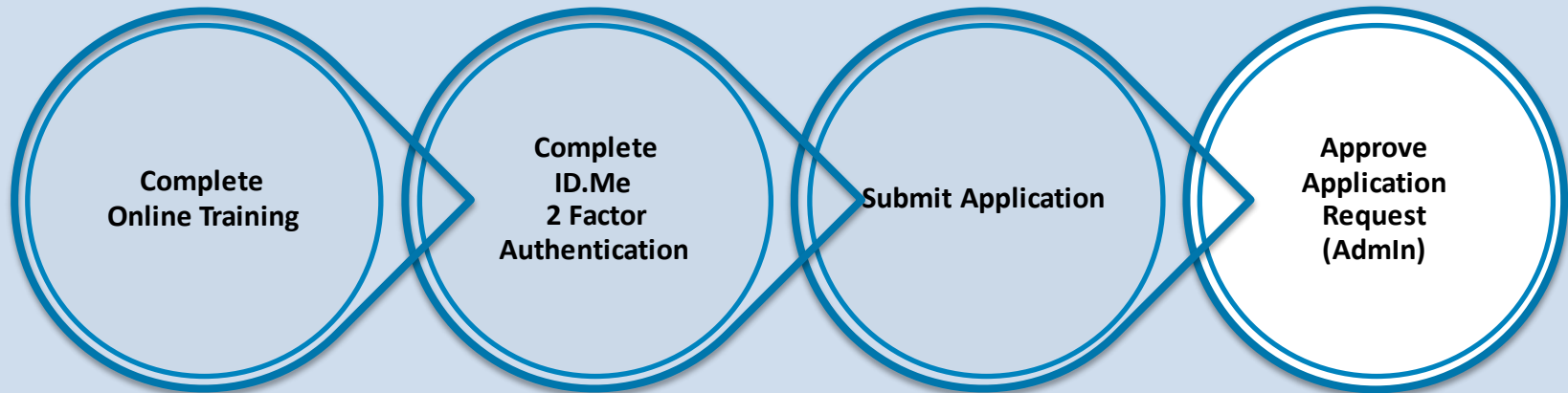
Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 23

Automated Application Steps for VA Grantees (External SQUARES Managers)



External Organizations that have a business need to verify eligibility for homeless programs are required to designate a SQUARES Manager (Approval Official) so they can approve standard users (after the organization account is set up). **It is extremely important that SQUARES Managers insert their names in eGMS, apply for access (before users), review their Manager's Guide, keep their organization's portal up-to-date by approving users within 24-48 hours, deactivating/reactivating accounts (as needed), and participating in the Semi- Annual Recertification Process (March/September).**

If you are the only Manager/User for your organization, forward an email to SQUARESAdmin@va.gov to notify us, so we can recertify your account. We recertify all Managers.

Approval Protocols/Backup SQUARES Managers

- **Approvals**
 - Review **Manager's Guide**
 - SQUARES Admins approve SQUARES Managers (within 24-48 Hours)
 - SQUARES Managers approve Users (Within 24-48 Hours)
 - Accounts that are not approved will be in pending status until they are approved by the organization's SQUARES Manager
 - Weekly Reminders are forwarded to SQUARES Managers via email to approve pending accounts
 - Select a reason for deactivating accounts
- **Backup SQUARES Managers**
 - Review **Manager's Guide**
 - SQUARES Managers are required to designate a Backup Manager from their User's List that we can contact if the SQUARES Manager is out for an extended period of time or leaves the organization so we can grant them manager-level access
 - Only the Main SQUARES Manager will have access to the organization portal
 - Backup Managers will acquire access to the portal if their access is promoted to SQUARE Manager

Deactivations/Semi Annual Recertifications

- **Deactivations**

- Review **Manager's Guide**
- Accounts that have 30+ days of inactivity will be deactivated.
- Users will receive email notifications before/after the account is deactivated.
- Please contact SQUARESAdmin@va.gov if you need assistance and include users' names/emails

- **Semi Annual Recertifications**

- Review **Manager's Guide**
- All SQUARES Managers are required to participate in the Semi Annual Recertifications (March and September). Accounts that are not recertified will be automatically deactivated by the end of the recertification month.
- SQUARES Managers, contact SQUARESAdmin@va.gov if you haven't completed the recertification.
- If you are the only Manager/User for your organization, please contact SQUARESAdmin@va.gov. We will approve all Managers.

SQUARES Search Options

- **Single: Results for One Record**
- **Advanced: Drill Down Results**
- **Bulk: Results for Multiple Records**

Demo on the SQUARES Search Tools



Live SQUARES Demo



VA |  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs


Using Data to End Veteran Homelessness

SQUARES
Using Data to End Veteran Homelessness
www.va.gov/homeless/squares



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 28

Questions and Answers



SQUARESAdmin@va.gov
[SQUARES Help Desk](#)
[SQUARES Resources Website](#)

For more information, watch the following videos: [SQUARES Overview](#) and [SQUARES Search Tools](#).

Military Discharge Upgrades



Military Discharge Upgrades

- The LSV Program Office acknowledges that the current definition of Veteran in 38 CFR 79.5 limits those individuals who are eligible for legal services under the grant program, including legal services relating to requests to upgrade the characterization of a discharge. However, we are unable to revise the definition. While it is typically within VA's discretion to define or interpret vague terms in a statute, Title 38 has already provided a definition for Veteran in section 101(2). Unless otherwise indicated by Congress in a statute, we must abide by the definition in section 101(2) for this grant program. We're exploring a change through legislative avenues but such changes take time.



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Military Discharge Upgrades – DADT

- On Sept. 20, 2023, DOD announced it will proactively review military records of veterans whose military records indicate their administrative separation was the result of their sexual orientation and who received a less than honorable conditions discharge.
- [Don't Ask Don't Tell Resources \(defense.gov\)](https://www.defense.gov/Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell-Resources)



Compliance FAQs



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 33

Compliance FAQs

- **Change in Eligibility During Representation:**
 - **Grantee Question:** What if a Veteran’s eligibility changes during the course of representation?
 - **LSV Program Team Response:** VA expects Grantees to complete their scope of representation to a Veteran client in the event their eligibility status has change during the representation.
 - **Example:** Grantee is representing an eligible Veteran client who was at-risk for homelessness with a driver’s license revocation issue. During representation, Veteran became permanently housed. Grantee should complete work on the driver’s license revocation issue. At the end of this scope of work, the Veteran would not be eligible for additional legal services under LSV-H



Compliance FAQs

- **Requirement to Document Homelessness Status:**
 - **Grantee Question:** How do we document if a Veteran is Homeless or At Risk for Homeless in our casefile?
 - **LSV Program Team Response:** VA is **not** requiring documentation determining if a Veteran is Homeless or At Risk for Homeless in the Grantee's casefile. Some Grantees have let the VA know that they will document this using a memo-to-file in their casefile. VA does not object to this and may adopt this in future grant years. But again, for this grant year (August 1, 2023 – July 31, 2024) VA is **not** requiring documentation determining if a Veteran is Homeless or At Risk for Homeless in the Grantee's casefile.



Compliance FAQs

- **Incorrect Eligibility Determination:**

- **Grantee Question:** What if after we screen a Veteran we learn that the Veteran was ineligible for legal representation under LSV-H?
- **LSV Program Team Response:** Legal services must be provided by competent legal professionals who conduct themselves in good faith. If this situation arises, please contact the LSV Program Team at LSVGrants@va.gov. Most likely, we will advise to complete the scope of representation for the Veteran client but refrain from taking on additional legal needs.

* Note: As a reminder, generally, a discharge under dishonorable conditions will not bar a former service member from receiving VA benefits **if** that service member has another period of service which ended under honorable conditions for which the statutory bars would not apply—as VA benefits would be predicated on that honorable period of service.



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 36

Compliance FAQs

- **Providing Legal Services to Current Veteran Client:**
 - **Grantee Question:** We have a current Veteran client who meets the eligibility requirements for LSV-H but we screened the client and began representation prior to the start of LSV-H (August 1, 2023). Can we provide representation to this Veteran under LSV-H?
 - **LSV Program Team Response:** Yes!...with caveats. If the Veteran client is eligible for representation under LSV-H the VA will pay for those legal services as long as:
 - The services began on or after August 1, 2023.
 - Another entity/funding source is not already paying for this Veteran's representation.
 - **Example:** On June 1, 2023 Grantee begins providing legal services to a Veteran for a debt collection issue. On August 1, 2023, LSV-H begins and, upon screening Veteran against LSV-H eligibility criteria, Grantee determines that Veteran is eligible for LSV-H. Grantee continues work on the debt collection issue until it is resolved on September 30, 2023. Grantee can submit payment request for services rendered for this Veteran from August 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023. **VA will not provide back pay for representation from June 1, 2023 through July 31, 2023.**



Compliance FAQs

- **Question about Trainings:**

- **Grantee Question:** We're planning on delivering a training to a Veterans group. Can we bill the time for the preparation of the training as well as the training itself?
- **LSV Program Team Response:** Training Veterans is an allowable activity under this grant. Such trainings should be captured on the 'Group Training' Tab of the Caseload Tracking Tool. The hours associated with a training should include preparation, travel (if applicable), and the actual training.
- **Hypothetical:** Legal Services of Jefferson is giving a one-hour training at an American Legion an hour away from their office. Legal Services of Jefferson will be sending an attorney and a paralegal to give this training and they spent two hours each working on the training content/materials. As the American Legion is an hour away from the office, Legal Services of Jefferson can bill ten hours for this training (two hours for prep work, two hours for roundtrip travel and one hour for the training for both the lawyer **AND** the paralegal $((2+2+1) \times 2)$).



Compliance FAQs

- **Question about Family Law:**

- **Grantee Question:** 38 CFR 79.20(b) allows for Legal services relating to family law, including assistance in court proceedings for child support and custody, divorce, estate planning, and family reconciliation. Can we provide legal services to a Veteran's family members?
- **LSV Program Team Response:** The LSV-H Grant provides covered legal services to eligible Veterans; not Veteran Families. Services provided to a Veteran Family will not be covered by the VA under this grant. While the legal services provided to eligible Veterans may result in a net benefit to that Veteran's family, the Veteran must be the client.



Compliance FAQs

- **Question about Retainer Fees:**

- **Grantee Question:** We will be subcontracting out a portion of the work under this grant to local attorneys. Can we pay these subcontractors a retainer fee?
- **LSV Program Team Response:** While 2 CFR 200.459 allows the use of retainer fees to third-parties in limited circumstances, we strongly advise against their use for the LSV-H Grant. If you believe you need to utilize a retainer fee with a subcontractor, please contact the LSV Program Team at LSVGrants@va.gov to discuss.



Compliance FAQs

- **Question about Income Cap:**

- **Grantee Question:** Is there an income cap that Veterans must be under in order to qualify for LSV-H?
- **LSV Program Team Response:** There is no income cap requirement for LSV-H. The income cap referenced in Paragraph 1 of 24 CFR 576.2 does not apply. 38 CFR 79.15(b) references Paragraph 1 of 24 CFR 576.2 only as it applies to places where Homeless Veterans sleep:
 - “At risk for homelessness” in this part means an individual who does not have sufficient resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter **or another place described in paragraph (1) of the definition of “homeless” in 24 CFR 576.2.**



Questions and Closeout



Onboarding Agenda – Days 2 & 3

- Day 2: Wednesday, September 27th
 - Allowable services
 - Reporting
 - Electronic Grants Management System (eGMS)
- Day 3: Thursday, September 28th
 - Outreach
 - Partnerships



Veterans Crisis Line

- Veterans
- Service Members
- Family Members
- Friends



Confidential crisis chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text **838255**



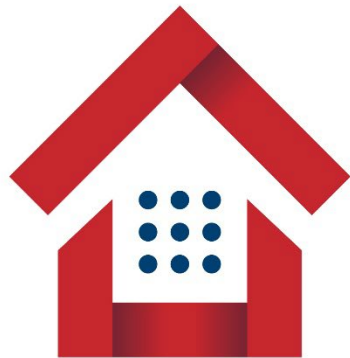
Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs 44

Veterans Homeless Hotline



National Call Center
for Homeless Veterans

877-424-3838

va.gov/homeless

- The Call Center can provide immediate resources, but the local VA facility will need to reach out for more permanent assistance, usually within a few days.
- Be sure to provide a phone number or location to speak with the Veteran for follow-up.



Choose **VA**

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Thank you



Choose VA

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs