

SSVF Guidance on Exclusion of Service-Connected Disability Income

The SSVF Program Office is issuing the following guidance in relation to the HUD-VASH Operating Plan Requirements released August 13, 2024. Under Section 3(b) of the USHA of 1937, the definition of income specifically excludes “deferred disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs that are received in a lump sum amount or in prospective monthly amounts” and “any expenses related to aid and attendance under [section 1521 of title 38, United States Code](#), to Veterans who are in need of regular aid and attendance.”

SSVF Grantee Guidance:

- VA service-connected (SC) disability benefits are excluded for purposes of determining income eligibility for SSVF enrollment.
- The SC disability benefit is included as annual income when calculating the family's adjusted income, and for purposes of calculating rent share, shallow subsidy portion, and other budgeting or Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) allowances.
 - For a small percentage of homeless Veterans, the amount of VA service-connected benefits received due to the severity of their disabilities results in the Veteran being over the low-income limit. Please note, this exclusion is in addition to the income exclusions outlined in the SSVF Program Guide and 24 CFR 5.609(b).
 - By aligning this income exclusion for enrollment purposes with the most recent HUD-VASH operating requirements, Veterans who may otherwise be over income due to service-connected disabilities will remain eligible for both SSVF and HUD-VASH and allow grantees and VA Medical Center's to continue to collaborate and co-enroll to best meet each individual households needs.

Service Implications:

- SSVF Grantees should consider each case and the needs of that household. A progressive engagement approach should be used. This means offering minimal assistance and assessing progress continuously. As SSVF can provide several layers of services, grantees should take caution not to lead with financial assistance, rather supporting Veterans through an array of services when the household has adequate income to sustain housing.
- Length of service should be dependent on the individual needs of the Veteran to ensure long term success. The max financial assistance in any category would be equivalent to those in the higher income category (50-80% Area Medium Income). If a Veterans income exceeds 80% AMI when calculating TFA allowances, the household would only be eligible for services only and not TFA.
 - If a Veteran has a need for one-time financial assistance (deposit, landlord incentive, rental assistance, utility assistance...etc..) to prevent homelessness or to achieve permanent housing then the grantee will provide documented justification for financial assistance in the case file.

The one-time financial assistance can include any or all of SSVF financial assistance.

- For Veterans who are co-enrolled in HUD-VASH, it should be noted that HUD is aware that this may increase the likelihood of eligible HUD-VASH families not being eligible for a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), and an initial HAP is required to execute a HAP contract. The family would also need to select a unit with a gross rent that is above the family Total Tenant Payment (TTP) in order to lease a unit with the tenant-based HUD-VASH voucher.

Examples of documentation needed to justify one-time financial assistance and how this assistance would prevent literal homelessness:

- Formal written notice that terminates housing, foreclosure or eviction letter (typed or handwritten) and copy of the lease, deed or mortgage.
- Review of current account balances in checking and savings accounts held by participant household.
- Assessment summary or other statement indicating that participant lacks financial resources and support networks to obtain other appropriate subsequent housing or remain in their housing.
- Barriers to sustain or retain permanent housing.