

**MASON COUNTY**  
**VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD**  
**OPERATING POLICY &**  
**PROCEDURES**

*These Amendments are adopted and effective this 9<sup>th</sup> day of February*

**Mason County, Washington**

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Randy Neatherlin, Chair

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Kevin Shutty, Commissioner

ATTEST:

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McKenzie Smith, Clerk of the Board

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Sharon Trask, Commissioner

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## I. Organizational Policies

- a. All RCWs (Revised Code of the State of Washington) within Chapter 73.08 RCW VETERAN'S RELIEF, with other RCWs and Mason County Resolutions will be used and referred to throughout this policy.
- b. The purpose of the Mason County Veteran's Assistance Fund (VAF) is to provide relief as set forth in RCW 73.08.010 to indigent and suffering veterans, their families and the families of deceased indigent veterans.
- c. Any honorably discharged veterans or veterans with a General Discharge Under Honorable Conditions or a General Discharge with Other than Honorable Conditions (Administrative Discharge), as outlined in RCW 41.04.005 and RCW 41.04.007, and meeting the criteria in I-b may apply. Accepted documents include the following: DD-214 showing Honorable, General Under Honorable or Other Than Honorable (OTH); DD215 Correction to Military Record DD-214; Honorable or General Under Honorable Discharge Certificate; Reserve Discharges & Certificates; National Guard Discharge NGB22, DD256 & Certificates.
- d. These policies and procedures are subject to review annually by the VAB.
  - 1) If a revision is made, it is so noted and a narrative of revision is put in VAB minutes.
  - 2) If no revisions are made, the date of review is noted, and put in VAB minutes.
  - 3) Post Commanders will be advised concerning any revisions and reviews recommended by the VAB.
  - 4) MCC has final approval of all revisions.
- e. The VAB will meet the second Wednesday of each month at 8:30am at the Memorial Hall on 2nd. and Franklin St., in Shelton, WA.
- f. A quorum must be met to conduct any business that may come before the board.
- g. If a quorum is not met, the Chair may contact other members via phone/text messaging or by e-mail.
- h. Upon reaching a member, and member agrees to be part of the meeting, thus creating a quorum, the Chair must remain in contact with the member throughout the meeting.

## II. Financial Policies

- a. The funds for creating a Veterans' Assistance Fund (VAF) RCW 73.08.080, is generated from a tax levied by the Mason County Commissioners (MCC), use of the fund is governed by same RCW.
- b. Approval of the one thousand two hundred (\$1,200) dollars for assistance shall be granted only for the following:
  - 1) Past Due Rent or Mortgage
  - 2) Past Due Utilities:
    - i. Electric
    - ii. Water
    - iii. Natural Gas
    - iv. Wastewater (sewer)
  - 3.) Miscellaneous Items:
    - i. Necessity Items (refer to list - Attachment A)
      - a. Single \$150.00
      - b. Married \$200.00
      - c. + \$50.00 per dependent
    - ii. Needed Fire Wood or Propane
  - 4) Other Items
    - i. Obtain state ID card (one time only)
- c. Exclusions will include, but not limited to alcohol, tobacco, lottery tickets.
- d. Purchases in excess of the amount written on the check are the responsibility of the applicant.
- e. No cash back will be given to the applicant if purchases are less than the amount written on the check.

- f. All requests for assistance will be approved by the Veterans Service Officer (VSO), with final approval by the MCC.
- g. If it is determined an applicant is in need of assistance due to any event, catastrophic illness or other significant change in circumstance which comes into being unexpectedly and is beyond the applicants' management or control, the VSO may request in writing that Mason County consider approval of an amount not to exceed a one thousand (\$1,000.00) dollar lifetime limit per applicant.
- h. The intent of the VAF is not to replace assistance from any other agency, and assistance is granted on a "Case by Case" basis only.
- i. The VAF is not intended to provide continuing assistance on a routine basis.
- j. The VAF shall not duplicate other available assistance for the purposes as noted in II. (b)

### III. Policy Establishing Board

- a. RCW 73.08.035 states each county must establish a Veteran's Advisory Board (VAB), the board shall advise MCC on the needs of local indigent veterans, the resources available to local indigent veterans, and programs that could benefit the needs of local indigent veterans and their families.
- b. The VAB is comprised of veterans from the community "at large", and representatives from nationally recognized veterans' service organizations within Mason County. Per said RCW, no fewer than a majority of the board members shall be members from a nationally recognized veterans' service organization and only veterans are to serve on the board. Service on the board is voluntary.
- c. Mason County Resolution NO. 05-15 allows for appointment of two members residing in Mason County from each Nationally Recognized Veterans' Service Organizations to be appointed to the Veteran's Advisory Board (VAB), and two members "at large".
- d. The VAB will consist of a ten (10) member board; members are appointed as follows:
  - 1) American Legion (2 members)
  - 2) Veterans of Foreign Wars (2 members)
  - 3) 40 et 8 (2 members)
  - 4) Disabled American Veterans (2 members)
  - 5) Two (2) Mason County resident veteran (at large)
- e. Commanders of these organizations will not be members of the VAB .
- f. Commanders will appoint the members from their organization to serve on the VAB for the purpose of overseeing the VAF.
- g. These members may be appointed or removed at the discretion of their commander.
- h. The first appointment of members shall be three (3) members for a three (3) year term, and four (4) members for a two (2) year term.
- i. Thereafter all terms will be two (2) year terms.
- j. The MCC reserves the right to disallow VAB appointee for cause.

### IV. Eligibility Policies

- a. RCW 73.08.005 and other provisions in RCW Title 73 shall govern eligibility assistance to indigent and suffering veterans and/or families.
- b. The county defines "indigent and suffering" to mean the current poverty level as defined by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) found at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

- c. Family members entitled to apply for assistance shall be defined as spouse or domestic partner, surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner, and dependent children of a living or deceased veteran.
- d. Applicants must be a resident of Mason County for at least ninety (90) days.
- e. Applicant and anyone over the age of 18 in the household must present proof of residency and income. If no income, an affidavit must be signed by both the veteran and household member. (Att. B)
- f. An applicant may use hotel/motel receipts as proof of residence, provided that:
  - 1) All receipts show a minimum of a 90 (ninety) day stay with in Mason County.
  - 2) The 90 (ninety) day stay must be continuous.
  - 3) All receipts must be in the applicant's name.
  - 4) All receipts must be original (no copies).
- g. Under the federally-established poverty guidelines, the gross income after taxes and deductions for medical insurance premium, including Medicare, of the veteran and all members of the household must be at or below 150% of the poverty guidelines established by the HHS.
- h. Veterans making above the 150% and who do not have an emergency financial situation will not be eligible for assistance.
- i. An applicant may have a source of income above the aforementioned 150% and still be considered indigent on an emergency basis.
- j. Lack of funds because of bad financial management of an adequate source of income does not make the applicant indigent.

## V. Referral to Other Services

- a. As per RCW 73.08.070 the county shall assist indigent veterans with burial or cremation costs of three hundred (\$300.00) dollars minimum or up to one thousand (\$1,000) dollars.
- b. The burial assistance is in addition to prior twelve hundred thousand (\$1,200.00) dollars limitation as outlined in II-b.
- c. In an effort to maximize dollars and provide for as many as possible applicants, and when appropriate, the veteran may be referred by the VSO to other veteran services and to other community resources for services.

## VI. Appeal and Resolution Policy

- a. If an applicant has either by accident or on purpose falsely filed a claim, or has misused monies from the Veterans' Assistance Fund, the following will apply:
  - 1) A letter is given to the applicant, from the County, denying further use of this fund, until the false claim is resolved.
  - 2) A copy of that letter will be sent to the Veterans' Service Office, to be placed in the offending applicant's file.
  - 3) The applicant's file will then be "Red Flagged", and denied further use until the problem is resolved.
- b. To resolve the claim, the applicant can clear their name by:
  - 1) If applicant feels this is unjustified, they may appeal in writing to the Veterans' Advisory Board within fifteen (15) days of notification.
  - 2) The appeal will be reviewed by the VAB at the next regular scheduled meeting and a decision will be made no later than the next regular scheduled meeting.
  - 3) Approval or Disapproval requires a "Super Majority" vote by the entire VAB.

- 4) The applicant may file an appeal, in writing, with the Mason County Commissioners. A decision in regard to appeal may take up to 30 days.
- c. The applicant may repay any and all monies that have come into question, and may not have access to these funds for one (1) year after payment.
- d. If the applicant elects not to do VI. b. or VI. c. there will be a two (2) year probationary wait period. After the wait period is over, the applicant must "in writing" request to receive these funds once more, a decision will be forthcoming.
- e. If it is found that the applicant has done this two (2) times, they will be permanently denied from using this fund.

## VII. Application Procedures

- a. Upon arriving at the VSO office the applicant will be asked to sign-in.
- b. The applicant is then screened about their assistance needs, residence, income, and their eligibility, an "Assistance Fund Application (AFA) (Att. C) and a Rental/ Mortgage Verification" (Att. D) form must be filled out as part of the application process.
- c. If the applicant does not have all needed information or documentation, they will be given a form "Veterans' Assistance Fund Documents Checklist" (Att. E) to help them gather the needed information and return form to VSO.
- d. If an applicant cannot show proof of service, a "Standard Form 180" (Att. F) will be given to them to be filled out and sent in, they can also go to the VA at American Lake to get proof of service.
- e. If two or more applicants are sharing the same physical residency, then all income is considered as one.
- f. Only one application may be used for any single physical residency.
- g. If an applicant has a "Sub-Lease Agreement", then VII (j) will apply.
- h. When an applicant has requested assistance for past due rent or mortgage payment, II. (b)(1), and has gone through the screening process. The VSO will call the landlord to inform them that the veteran has applied for assistance, and that a letter of "Recommendation for Payment" (Att. G) will be forthcoming.
- i. The applicant will then be given a form "Rental/Mortgage Verification" (Att. D) to be given to the landlord. This form must be filled out by the landlord or lien holder, notarized and sent back or taken to the VSOs' office. The VSO will then verify all information on the form.
- j. Shared Dwelling:
  - 1) In the case of a veteran sharing a dwelling with another person who is not a family member as defined in Operating Policy item IV (c), the rental amount will be prorated by the number of people living in the dwelling.
  - 2) In the case of a veteran sharing a dwelling with another person who is not a family member as defined in Operating Policy item IV (c), the utility expenses will be prorated by the number of people living in the dwelling.
  - 3) In the case of a veteran sharing a dwelling with another person who is not a family member as defined in Operating Policy item IV (c), the firewood/propane expenses will be prorated by the number of people living in the dwelling.
- k. When an applicant has requested assistance for past due utilities (electric, water or natural as) II (b)(2), and has gone through the screening process. The applicant must have a "Past Due" pink slip(s) stating that service will be discontinued.
- l. Some utilities companies, i.e. Shelton Utilities, do include garbage within the water bill, in this situation where the bill is "combined", the whole bill is paid.

- m. The VSO will call the utilities company to verify the current amount to be paid, and inform them that the veteran has applied for assistance and that a letter of "Recommendation for Payment" (Att.G) will be forthcoming.
- n. When an applicant requests assistance for firewood or propane and has gone through the screening process, the VSO will call a vendor to confirm prices and amount needed. The VSO will inform the vendor, the veteran has applied for assistance and that a letter of "Recommendation for Payment" (Att.G) will be forthcoming, VII (J)(3) also applies.
- o. The VSO will then fill out a "Purchase Order" (Att.H) to be sent with "Assistance Fund Application" (AFA) (Att. C) for approval from MCC.
- p. When an applicant requests Miscellaneous Items or Other Items and has gone through the screening process, the VSO will, to the best of their ability, determine the needs of the applicant.
- q. The VSO will fill out the "Assistance Fund Application" (AFA) (Att. C), determine the amount, the vendor, and have the applicant sign the application with a full understanding of the request.
- r. Necessity Items check(s) are issued in fifty dollar increments. The applicant will be given an itemized list of authorized items that may be purchased. (Att. A)
- s. After all needed information and documentation is gathered from the applicant and outside sources, the AFA is then completely filled out and the packet is complete.
- t. It is the VSOs' responsibility to ensure all information in the packet is correct and verified.
- u. When the completed packet is sent on to MCC, it will have a copy of "Recommendation for Payment" as a cover sheet (Att.G) or "Assistance Fund Application" (Att. C).
- v. The VSO reserves the right to refuse service to disorderly or abusive individuals. Service will be refused to individuals under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Applicants who are disorderly or abusive to Mason County employees or volunteers will be not be provided assistance and will be asked to leave the building.

## VIII. Processing of Packet Procedures

- a. Once the packet is received at the MCC office, it is date stamped and reviewed to ensure all information is correct and all supporting documentation is there.
- b. Applications submitted to the MCC for processing and have been determined to meet the necessary guidelines will have checks issued within three business days.
- c. Applicants who pick up his/or her check(s), must have proper picture ID, and must sign for check(s). Check(s) are sent out by mail the next business day following approval.
- d. Necessity Item check(s) that are issued will be stamped with: "No Alcohol or Tobacco", "No Cash Back".
- e. Some delays may result if a legal holiday falls within the time period or if there are insufficient funds to release the check.
- f. A weekly list of "Approval of Expenditures" is sent to the VSO's office from the MCC office.
- g. A monthly list of "Approval of Expenditures" is sent to the MCC.

## IX. Records, Files, Forms and Reports

- a. It will be the responsibility of the VAB Chair, acting in concert with the VSO's to establish and maintain a record of each applicant requesting and /or receiving assistance from the VAF.
- b. The VSO will provide forms and reports of attendants, decisions, and record-keeping for clientele, e.g., forms for vendors, initial applications, and VAB decisions.
- c. Each October, the VAB, acting in concert with the VSOs shall produce an annual report for the MCC, containing the following information:
  - 1) The number of requests for assistance received during the calendar year.
  - 2) The number of requests for assistance for which assistance was given.

- 3) The number of requests for assistance for which assistance was not provided and a narrative description of the reasons assistance were not provided.
  - 4) The total dollar value of assistance provided on a monthly basis.
  - 5) A narrative description of non-monetary assistance provided by the VAB.
  - 6) Meeting minutes as an attachment.
  - 7) A copy of appeals as an attachment.
- d. If any section of these policies or procedures is determined to be in conflict with federal, state, or county laws, ordinances or directives, then said section will be void and the aforementioned laws, ordinances or directives shall prevail.

## **X. Attachments (Att.)**

**A. VAF Necessity Itemized List**

**B. Affidavit of Income**

**C. Assistance Fund Application (AFA)**

**D. Rental/Mortgage Verification**

**E. Veteran's Assistance Documents Checklist (S&S form)**

**F. Request Pertaining to Military Records (Standard Form 180)**

**G. Recommendation For Payment**

**H. Mason County Veterans Service Office-Purchase Order**