

Skagit County Veterans Assistance Program

Policies and Procedures Manual

Date Adopted: August 1, 2025

Supersedes All Previous Versions

This Policies and Procedures Manual is issued by Skagit County Public Health in partnership with the Skagit County Veterans Advisory Council.

I. Legal Authority

The Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) is authorized under Washington State law and must operate in compliance with all relevant statutes. These include [RCW 73.08.005](#) (Definitions), [RCW 73.08.010](#) (County veterans' assistance programs for indigent veterans and families), [RCW 73.08.035](#) (Veterans' advisory boards), [RCW 73.08.070](#) (County burial of indigent deceased veterans), [RCW 73.04.080](#) (Meeting place rental for veterans' organizations), and [RCW 40.14.070](#) (Records retention and destruction).

II. Purpose and Mission

The Veterans Assistance Program exists to provide emergency financial relief to veterans and their families. It also offers case management and stability planning for veterans with complex needs. In addition, the fund supports veterans in accessing local, state, and federal benefits. Its mission is to strengthen outcomes for vulnerable veterans while ensuring that Skagit County veterans receive services with dignity, efficiency, and accountability.

III. Organizational Structure

A. Program Administration

The Veterans Assistance Fund is administered by Skagit County Public Health at Vets Connect. Public Health ensures compliance with RCWs, fiscal accountability, and provides program oversight.

B. Staffing Model

The staffing consists of a Lead Veterans Services Specialist, who is a Veterans Service Officer (VSO). This position provides program leadership, directs staff, ensures policy compliance, and serves as liaison to the Commissioners and the Veterans Advisory Council. The Veterans Specialist, also a VSO, provides direct client service, assistance with claims, and navigation of benefits. The Case Management Contractor (9Line) provides case management, supporting

high-needs veterans and administering flex funding. The Staff Assistant provides reception, client intake, scheduling, and general administrative support.

C. Partner Agencies

Several partner agencies are co-located at Vets Connect, including the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program, the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and Community Action of Skagit County (CASC) through its Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. The Veterans Assistance Program collaborates with these organizations to provide integrated services to veterans and their families.

IV. Services Offered

A. Flex Fund Assistance

Flex Fund Assistance is administered through the case manager to ensure holistic support and accountability. The fund may be used to cover essential expenses such as housing, utilities, transportation, food, medical or dental needs, and employment-related costs. Each veteran household is limited to \$3,000 per year unless an exception is approved by the Veterans Advisory Council. The case manager also partners with other entities to provide resources and accepts donations to serve eligible veterans. It is the responsibility of the case manager and the Lead Veterans Specialist to ensure management of these flex funds to ensure availability throughout the year. These funds are for emergency use only when no other source of assistance is available.

B. Housing Services

The program supports veterans through housing-related assistance. Public Health manages a by-name list of veterans and works collaboratively with VOA, Community Action, and the VA to identify homeless veterans and match them to all available housing resources in a timely and efficient manner.

C. Case Management

Case management is offered to veterans experiencing housing and/or behavioral health issues. Case managers are expected to leverage VA, state, and other community resources to address veterans' needs.

D. VA Claims and Benefits Assistance

The Veterans Specialist files claims for VA benefits. This service helps veterans secure back pay and long-term income stability by ensuring that claims are processed effectively and fairly.

E. Burial Assistance

Burial assistance is provided in accordance with [RCW 73.08.070](#). This service supports indigent veterans and qualifying family members. Payments for burial or cremation services may not exceed \$300.

F. Veterans Organization Support

The program may provide assistance to veterans' organizations for meeting hall rental, as authorized under [RCW 73.04.080](#). Each veterans' organization may receive up to \$500 annually for this purpose.

V. Eligibility

A. Veteran Status

Applicants must meet the statutory definition of "veteran" as outlined in [RCW 73.08.005](#).

B. Residency

Applicants must be current residents of Skagit County or, if homeless, demonstrate intent to remain in the county. Proof of intent may be shown through a Coordinated Entry intake or similar documentation.

C. Financial Need

Applicants must meet the indigence criteria established under [RCW 73.08.005\(3\)](#). This includes veterans receiving public assistance, those with income up to fifty percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), or those who demonstrate an inability to pay for basic needs.

D. Eligible Family Members

Spouses, domestic partners, dependent children, and surviving spouses or partners of eligible veterans may also qualify for assistance.

VI. Procedures for Receiving Flex Funds

Veterans begin by completing a Household Intake Form and providing required documentation, including a DD-214 or other discharge paperwork, government-issued identification, proof of income or benefits, and bills or documentation related to the requested assistance. Staff will assist veterans in obtaining documentation as needed. Intake staff verify eligibility, and case managers develop an assistance plan when applicable. In emergency situations when documentation is not available, the veterans should be assisted while working on obtaining documentation.

Payments are made directly to landlords, utility companies, or vendors whenever possible. Direct disbursement to veterans is permitted only in limited emergency circumstances and

distributed as gift cards. Each household is limited to \$3,000 in annual support unless an exception is approved, and additional support is contingent upon active participation in case management.

VII. Appeals and Exceptions

The Lead Veterans Specialist may submit written requests for exceptions to program rules, such as cases involving over-income hardship, funding needs that exceed policy limits, or unique circumstances. These requests must be reviewed and approved by the Veterans Advisory Council Executive Board.

Veterans who are denied services may appeal in writing to the Veterans Advisory Council. The Council must review appeals within thirty days and issue a written response. This appeals process ensures fairness and accountability in decision-making.

VIII. Governance

The Veterans Advisory Council (SCVAC) advises the Commissioners on program priorities and services. The Council also reviews appeals and exception requests. Membership requirements are set by [RCW 73.08.035](#), which specifies that a majority of members must be veterans from nationally recognized service organizations.

Skagit County Public Health administers the program, manages operations, supervises staff and contractors, and ensures compliance with RCWs and county policies.

The Board of County Commissioners approves the program budget, contracts, and policies, and maintains overall oversight of the fund.

X. Conduct Standards

Staff and council members must disclose potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves when appropriate. Any suspected fraud, abuse, or criminal activity must be reported to law enforcement. Services may be denied to individuals who are disorderly, abusive, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs during service engagement. They may be invited to return at another time.

XI. Records and Reporting

Client records are maintained in compliance with RCW 40.14.070 regarding public records retention. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is used for housing-related

cases. Public Health provides monthly and annual reports on activities, budgets, and outcomes to both the Board of County Commissioners and the Veterans Advisory Council.
