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THURSTON COUNTY  
VETERANS' ASSISTANCE FUND  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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## VETERANS' ASSISTANCE FUND – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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### 1.0 General Provisions

#### 1.1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Thurston County Veterans' Assistance Fund, hereinafter called Veterans' Assistance Fund, is to provide for the relief of indigent veterans, their families, and the families of deceased indigent veterans as defined in RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007. The intent of the veterans' assistance program is to provide model programs that benefit veterans and family members facing financial hardship.

#### 1.2 Funds Generated

The Veterans' Assistance Fund is generated from a tax levied by the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners. Use of the fund is governed by RCW 73.04.070, 73.04.080, and 73.08.005 through 73.08.090, and these policies and procedures.

#### 1.3 Program Assistance to Individuals

Only eligible veterans and eligible family members of veterans may receive assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund. The eligible veteran or eligible family member must have a financial need and must provide documentation proving their need to receive assistance from the fund.

There is no automatic annual entitlement to assistance and the provision of assistance is subject to the availability of funds. The assistance provided may include financial assistance for certain purposes, including homeless shelter services, case management services, referral services and other programs that benefit eligible veterans and eligible family members.

#### 1.4 Veterans' Advisory Board

The Thurston County Veterans' Advisory Board established by Thurston County Code Chapter 2.112 provides advice to the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners 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.

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### 2.0 Service Providers

#### 2.1 Nationally Recognized Veterans' Service Organizations

Nationally recognized veterans' service organizations located in Thurston County that have a memorandum of agreement currently in effect with the Public Health and Social Services Department may appoint representatives from their organization to assist veterans or eligible family members in applying for assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

The representative of the veterans' service organization shall assist the veteran or eligible family member in completing the application for assistance, compiling required documentation and, as needed, provide information regarding veterans' benefits and services.

The assisting veterans' service organization shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Public Health and Social Services Department outlining the responsibilities of the organization and the county. The agreement shall be signed by the Director of the Public Health and Social Services Department or the director's designee. The memorandum shall include an agreement to participate, the location and schedule of services, the duration of the agreement which may be up to five years and approval of a confidentiality statement.

#### 2.2 Other Service Providers

Other service providers may be authorized by a written agreement or contract with Thurston County to assist veterans or eligible family members in applying for assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

#### 2.3 Veterans' Assistance Fund Staff of Public Health and Social Services

In the absence of a representative from a nationally recognized veterans' service organization or other service provider, the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff of the Public Health and Social Services Department shall assist applicants in applying for assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund. The Veterans' Assistance Fund staff shall report to the veterans' advisory board on the frequency of staff assistance needed due to the absence of veterans' service organization representatives or other service providers.

#### 2.4 Meeting Place Rental

As authorized by RCW 72.04.080, nationally recognized veterans' service organizations located in Thurston County that have a memorandum of agreement in effect with the Public Health and Social Services Department and assist veterans applying for assistance from the fund may be reimbursed up to \$360 annually for their current year's regular meeting place rent.

An authorized meeting place rent form and a receipt showing the eligible veterans' service organizations' annual rental fee has been paid must be submitted to the Veterans' Assistance Fund by the end of the current year. Any post, camp or chapter that owns the building used for their regular meeting space or is furnished quarters by the state or by any municipality does not qualify for meeting place rent.

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### 3.0 Financial Assistance to Individuals

#### 3.1 Eligibility

In order to receive assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund, the veteran or family member must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this section. Veterans or eligible family members must provide documentation verifying eligibility for assistance.

##### 3.1.1 Veteran and Family Member Status

An applicant for assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund must be a veteran or the family member, as defined in RCW 73.08.005, of a veteran who meets the definition of veteran set forth in RCW 41.04.005 or RCW 41.04.007.

##### 3.1.2 Residency

Applicants must have been residents of Washington State for at least six months immediately prior to obtaining assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

Applicants must have been residents of Thurston County for at least 31 days immediately prior to obtaining assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund. Post office boxes can not be used to establish residency.

##### 3.1.3 Indigence

Applicants must be indigent. One or more of the following definitions shall be used to determine if an applicant is indigent:

- 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. Income received during the 31 day period prior to the date of application shall be annualized to determine an annual income.

Income includes all funds received by the applicant and their spouse or domestic partner, and all other individuals who will benefit from the assistance.

Examples of included income which must be reported on the Veterans' Assistance Fund application for the purpose of determining income eligibility are as follows:

- money, wages and salaries after any deductions;
- net receipts from self-employment;
- savings;
- worker's compensation;
- alimony;
- veterans' compensation and disability
- military family allotments or other regular support from an absent family member or someone not living in the household;
- retirement, pension (including veterans' pension) and annuities;
- insurance payments;
- dividends, interest, and periodic receipts from estates or trusts;
- labor and industries payments;
- unemployment compensation;
- child support;
- social security other than supplemental security income;
- foster child payments;
- tax refunds, gifts, loans, lump-sum inheritance, one-time insurance payments or compensation for injury or death;
- dependency and indemnity compensation for service-connected death;
- educational assistance benefits (including veterans' educational assistance benefits not paid directly to the school for tuition and books), vocational rehabilitation subsistence allowance, and work-study benefits (including veterans' work-study benefits).

Note: grants, loans and veterans' educational assistance for tuition and books paid directly to the training institution are not included income.

Applicants who report no income for the previous 31 days must provide additional documentation showing their means of support and verification showing they have applied for assistance from other government agencies and social service programs deemed appropriate by the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff of the Public Health and Social Services Department.

### 3.2 Application Procedures

The applicant must complete a Veterans' Assistance Fund application and provide supporting documentation proving eligibility for assistance. The application shall be completed and documentation reviewed by one of the following: a representative of a nationally recognized veterans' service organization with a memorandum of agreement currently in effect with the Public Health and Social Services Department; a representative of an authorized service provider; or a Veterans' Assistance Fund staff member of the Public Health and Social Services Department.

### 3.2.1 Application Time Period

Applications are valid for 90 days. It is the applicant's responsibility to report any changes in status during this 90 day period of time. After 90 days a new application must be completed.

### 3.2.2 Assistance Provided

All applications for assistance require approval by the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff of the Public Health and Social Services Department. Upon approval, the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff will issue vouchers and/or payments to vendors for the assistance provided. A decision on a payment may be delayed in order to obtain further eligibility verification. Lost or stolen payments may not be reissued.

### 3.2.3 Certification

Applicants applying for assistance are required to sign a statement certifying that the information provided is complete and accurate and that if discovered to be otherwise the applicant shall be denied assistance from the fund. The veteran or eligible family member shall also authorize the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff of the Public Health and Social Services Department to verify the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

## 3.3 Financial Assistance

Financial assistance may be provided to eligible veterans and eligible family members to assist with basic needs such as rent, food, transportation and utilities.

### 3.3.1 Maximum Allocation

Eligible veterans or family members with no other family members in the household may receive up to \$500 in financial assistance in a twelve month period of time.

If there are two or more family members in the household, up to \$800 in financial assistance may be provided in a twelve month period of time.

### 3.3.2 Limitations

Eligible veterans or family members who receive financial assistance for two consecutive years may not draw upon the fund for one complete twelve month period of time before again being eligible to receive assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

Eligible veterans or family members who have received financial assistance from the fund prior to January 1, 2009 may draw upon the fund for an additional two consecutive years before not drawing upon the fund for one complete twelve month period of time.

The maximum allocation that will be paid to an eligible veteran or family member who has received assistance from a veterans' assistance fund in another Washington county within the past 12 months will be reduced by the dollar amount received from the other county.

### 3.3.3 Types of Financial Assistance

#### A. Rent or Mortgage Assistance

Eligible veterans or family members may receive assistance with past due rent, first and last month's rent, past due mortgage payments, or nonrefundable deposits on the applicant's residence.

The applicant must provide a written rental agreement or documents proving ownership of the property. The veteran or eligible family member must be able to sustain rent or mortgage payments in the months to come.

Payments for rental assistance will be paid directly to the property owner, property management company or the owner's legal representative. Payments will not be made to family members.

Past due rent will be paid only for the applicant's primary residence. Veterans or eligible family members who share a residence with the property owner may receive a maximum of \$250 for their share of the rent in a twelve month period of time.

Mortgage payments will be made directly to the mortgage lender and will only be paid for the applicant's primary residence.

#### B. Motel Stays

Motel and hotel stays will only be paid if a physician or discharging hospital provides a written statement as to why providing housing at a local shelter is not medically recommended. The facility must be located in Thurston County.

#### C. Utilities

Eligible veterans or family members may receive assistance with utilities, including power, water, garbage, propane and wood. Other utility services such as cable or internet services will not be paid.

The applicant must provide a utility bill, a shut-off notice or letter of impending disconnection from the power, water or garbage company showing the current amount owed. Payment shall be made directly to the utility company and may include shut-off and reconnection fees.

Payment shall be made to an account in the veteran or eligible family member's name only. Utilities shall only be paid for the residence where the veteran or eligible family member currently resides.

Telephone services shall only be paid when a physician provides written documentation that the telephone is needed for a medical emergency.

The veteran or eligible family member may be required to first utilize other energy assistance programs prior to the approval of veterans' assistance funds.

D. Food/Hygiene

Veterans or eligible family members may receive assistance with food and certain personal hygiene items. All food and personal hygiene items will be purchased utilizing a Veterans' Assistance Fund voucher with a vendor who has agreed to participate in the voucher system process.

The voucher shall state the allowable food and personal hygiene purchases. Further assistance may be denied to any veteran or eligible family member who does not adhere to the requirements set forth on the food and personal hygiene voucher and these policies and procedures.

A maximum amount for the purchase of food and personal hygiene items in a month will be determined based on need and other resources available.

E. Clothing

Clothing may be provided to a veteran or eligible family member. All clothing will be purchased utilizing a Veterans' Assistance Fund voucher with a vendor who has agreed to participate in the voucher system process.

F. Transportation

Daily or monthly bus passes may be provided for transportation within Thurston County. Bus passes may be provided for transportation outside the county for visits to United States Department of Veterans Affairs' medical facilities in Washington State.

G. Other Requests

Other requests for financial assistance not listed in these policies and procedures shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to provide assistance with basic needs.

3.3.4 Waiver

On a one time basis the Director of the Public Health and Social Services Department or the director's designee may waive the eligibility requirements, time periods and/or the amount of financial assistance set forth in these policies and procedures, excluding state law requirements. This shall be done only when there is a specific, documented need or circumstance which establishes the individual's need for financial assistance.

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### 4.0 Other Assistance

The following types of assistance may be provided by the Veterans' Assistance Fund staff of the Public Health and Social Services Department. These may be in addition to the assistance described in Section 3.

#### 4.1 Burial or Cremation Services

Up to \$800 may be provided for the burial or cremation of any deceased indigent veteran or deceased family member of an indigent veteran who dies without leaving means sufficient to defray funeral expenses.

Documentation showing the burial or cremation expenses incurred must be provided prior to receiving assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund. Family members or friends of the deceased who paid the funeral expenses may be reimbursed for payments made for burial or cremation services up to the maximum allowed. In order to be eligible for reimbursement from the Veterans' Assistance Fund the request for assistance must be submitted within six months of incurring the costs for burial or cremation services.

#### 4.2 Homeless Shelter Services

Shelter costs may be paid for eligible, homeless veterans or eligible, homeless family members, but only when the shelter has a current contract in effect with the Public Health and Social Services Department to provide shelter services. Eligible homeless veterans or homeless family members must have been residents of Washington State for at least six months immediately prior to obtaining shelter services. There is no Thurston County residency requirement for shelter services.

#### 4.3 Program Activities

Other programs and services approved by Thurston County may be fully or partially funded in an effort to provide programs that benefit indigent veterans and their family members. Veterans' Assistance Funds may be combined with other funding sources. Donations may be made to the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

Funds may be provided to support community activities that benefit eligible veterans and their families if approved by the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners. Alternatively, if recommended by the Thurston County Veterans' Advisory Board, the Director of the Public Health and Social Services Department may approve activities if the duration is not more than one year and the cost is not more than \$10,000. Examples of community activities that may be funded include information and referral fairs and veteran stand down activities.

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### 5.0 Denial of Services

Thurston County may refuse service to disorderly or disruptive individuals including those who intimidate or threaten a public servant or attempt to do so.

Applicants who have been denied assistance may request a review of the denial by the Director of the Public Health and Social Services Department or the director's designee. The director or the designee may request additional information in order to make an informed decision and shall issue a decision within 10 days of receiving the information. The director or designee's decision is final.

### 6.0 Complaints

For complaints of discrimination, applicants may file a complaint pursuant to the Complaint Resolution Procedure for Public Service.

### 7.0 Fraud, Criminal Activity or Misuse of Funds

If it is determined that the applicant provided false information or that fraud, criminal activity or misuse of funds has occurred, the veteran or family member may be ineligible to receive assistance from the Veterans' Assistance Fund for up to 10 years. Thurston County will seek to prosecute individuals where there is evidence of fraudulent claims for assistance.

### 8.0 Severability

If any provision of these policies and procedures or their application to any particular person or circumstance is held to be invalid, illegal or unenforceable, the remaining provisions and their application to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.