

San Juan County Veterans Assistance Fund
Policies and Procedures Manual for the Veterans’
Advisory Board

Date Adopted: February 12, 2008

**This Policies and Procedures Manual is established by the San Juan
County Council and the San Juan County Veterans’ Advisory Board.**

I. History and Statement of Purpose

A. History

It is estimated that San Juan County (SJC) has approximately 2,500 veterans, for whom the SJC Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) has been in existence for several years. The San Juan County Council has agreed that services to Veterans shall be provided by the San Juan County Veterans' Advisory Board, established in November, 2007 by Ordinance 46-2007. Prior to this agreement, services were available through recommendation and approval by a San Juan County American Legion Post, with payment for services issuing from the San Juan County Auditor.

The Veterans' Advisory Board (VAB) consists of 9 members appointed by the San Juan County Council for 2 year terms, from January 1, through December 31. Members of the VAB must be current residents of San Juan County and must be honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. military, selected from among the San Juan County Veterans' community, and will represent as wide an array of military service as possible.

B. Primary Functions

The primary function of the VAF is to provide emergency services to indigent veterans, their dependents, widows, widowers, and/or orphans. The VAB provides timely service to eligible individuals when assistance from other agencies is considered inappropriate or time requirements are constrained.

The intent of the SJC VAF is not to replace assistance from any other agency, and assistance is granted on an emergency basis only. The VAF is not intended to provide continuing assistance on a routine basis.

C. Secondary Functions

The VAB may also make referrals to other agencies; interview applicants in person or by telephone; provide basic counseling or job counseling; act as a liaison with landlords, utility companies, etc; establishing and maintaining a good rapport with vendors who accept vouchers from the VAF; cooperate with federal, state, county, and city officials in regards to veterans assistance to assure proper operation of the VAF as established by the VAB and SJC government.

D. Guideline Review

The guidelines in this policy and procedures manual are subject to review annually by the VAB. It is the VAB and the SJC Council who are responsible for expenditures of the SJC VAF.

II. Eligibility

A. Requirements

Under the Revised Code of the State of Washington (RCW 73.08.010), veterans and their dependents are eligible for emergency assistance. The VAB and the SJC Council have established the following as criteria for assistance:

1. Veteran must have served on active duty for a minimum of 180 days. National Guard, State Guard, or Inactive Reserve whose active duty was for training purposes only are not eligible.
2. Veteran must show an original or certified copy of a DD-214 or, if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge or other ID proving veteran status. Only veterans with an Honorable Discharge or a General Discharge (under honorable conditions), are eligible for assistance. If a veteran has more than one discharge, the last discharge dictates eligibility.
3. Veteran must have been a continual resident of the State of Washington for a period of one year immediately prior to application and a resident of SJC at the time of application. Proof of residency includes, but is not limited to; voter registration card, WA State Driver's License, WA State ID Card, or official correspondence, e.g., letters from the VA, Social Security, State or Local Government, Utility Bills.

4. Veterans must be able to provide proof of their identification and documentation of eligibility of dependents and be the legal responsibility of the applicant.
5. Veterans must be indigent.

B. Identification

Veterans must be able to provide proof of their identification and documentation of eligibility of dependents. A preferred ID is a WA State Driver's License or WA State ID Card since these documents also help establish residency. Other acceptable picture IDs are passports and military ID cards.

C. Indigent Status

1. The RCW's require that the SJC VAF be used for indigent and needy veterans. Under the federally-established poverty guidelines, the gross income of the veteran and all members of the household must be at or below 150% of the poverty guidelines established by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Veterans making above the 150% and who do not have an emergency financial situation will not be eligible for assistance.
2. An applicant may have a source of income above the aforementioned 150% and still be considered indigent on an emergency basis.
3. Lack of funds because of bad financial management of an adequate source of income does not make the applicant indigent.

III. Assistance

A. General Information

1. Assistance for qualified applicants is provided by the SJC VAF through the use of vouchers to vendors but may be given in the form of direct relief in emergency situations. Assistance may also be given through referrals, counseling, or by acting as a liaison for the applicant.

2. The maximum allocation to a veteran and family should not normally exceed \$1,500 per year except under unusual circumstances to be further reviewed by the VAB and will not normally be given more than 2 years in a row.
3. There is no limit on the number of times an eligible veteran and dependents can receive assistance for food.
4. Veterans and dependents may receive emergency assistance for the following:
 - a. Food
 - b. Rent
 - c. Utilities
 - d. Medical
 - e. Miscellaneous, which could include, among other items: transportation expenses, car repair to expedite employment or to attend medical appointments, clothing, educational expenses, mortgage interest, certain legal fees, appliances or appliance repair.
5. Exclusions will include, but are not limited to, alcohol, tobacco, lottery tickets, non essential grocery-store items, and mortgage payments.
6. An amount of \$500 is available to assist with burials or cremation and is not counted as part of the annual \$1,500 allowance.

IV. Application Procedures

A. Initial Applications

1. Any veteran or dependent may be referred for emergency assistance by any government or non-governmental agency, by an individual with knowledge of the veteran's indigency, or by self-referral.
2. The veteran should apply for assistance to any VAB member.
3. The applicant will be interviewed by a VAB member(s) of that island district, who will make a determination of eligibility, and will forward a recommendation to the VAB Chair.
4. The VAB Chair, in turn, will quickly poll all VAB members by email or telephone, and a final determination

of assistance will be made by a simple majority vote of the VAB.

B. Payment Process

1. Once all documentation for eligibility has been verified by the VAB, the approved application will be sent to the SJC Auditor and the auditor will arrange payment in the most expeditious manner possible.
2. In unusual or emergent situations, the VAB may authorize the SJC Auditor to issue a check directly to the veteran, as per VAB decision.

C. Appeals and Appeals Process

1. In the event that an applicant does not agree with the decision of the VAB, he or she will have a right of appeal which shall be initiated expeditiously:
2. The VAB Chair will convene an Appeals Board, consisting of the Chair, the VAB Vice-Chair, the County Administrator, County Auditor and either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the County Council. This Appeals Board will review the application and will uphold or modify the VAB's decision.
3. The applicant will be notified of the Appeal Board's decision within 7 days of initiating his or her request for appeal.

V. Records, Files, Forms and Reports

1. It will be the responsibility of the VAB Chair, or designee, acting in concert with the SJC Auditor, to establish and maintain a record for each applicant receiving assistance from the VAF.
2. The VAB will provide the necessary forms and reports attendant to decisions and record-keeping for clientele, e.g., voucher forms for vendors, initial applications, and VAB decisions.

VI. Outreach and Publicity

The VAB will broaden the scope of its outreach to include postings on the County website, regular notices in SJC print and online media, information with the Sheriff and Fire Departments, SJC Chambers of Commerce, the offices of the Town of Friday Harbor, appropriate SJC departments, veteran organizations, and medical or counseling facilities.

This outreach information will include, at a minimum, the availability of the VAF, and information for reaching the VAB. It may also include information about the application process and eligibility requirements.