

**San Juan County
Veterans Assistance Fund
(VAF)**



**Policies and Procedures Manual
for the
Veterans' Advisory Board
(VAB)**

January 23, 2017

**(Updated from version dated February 5, 2008)
(Updated from version dated November 5, 2013)**

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

I. Definitions.

A. "Indigent" means a person who meets one or more of the following definitions:

(a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, pregnant women assistance benefits, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, Medicaid, medical care services, or supplemental security income; or

(b) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of up to one hundred fifty percent or less of the current federally established poverty level, or receiving an annual income not exceeding a higher qualifying income established by the county legislative authority; or

(c) Unable to pay reasonable costs for shelter, food, utilities, and transportation because his or her available funds are insufficient.

B. "Family" means the spouse or domestic partner, surviving spouse, surviving domestic partner, and dependent children of a living or deceased veteran.

C. "Veteran" Has the same meaning as defined in RCW 73.08.005 and includes a current member of the national guard or armed forces reserves who has been deployed to serve in an armed conflict, and who meet the additional requirements identified in Section III A below.

D. "Applicant" means any person for whom a request for assistance has been delivered to the VAB. The VAB will review the information provided by the applicant or on behalf of the applicant to determine if the applicant meets the definition of an "Eligible Individual". The VAB may assist the applicant to identify or locate the required information.

E. "Application" means any form of written request for assistance submitted to the VAB. If the application does not contain the required information, the sponsoring VAB member or members may assist the applicant with the completion of the application.

F. "Qualified Applicant" means an applicant who has provided a complete application for assistance and has been determined to meet all the requirements for an "eligible individual". The qualified applicant may be requesting assistance for other eligible individuals as well as themselves.

G. “Resident” Refer to WAC 388-468-0005 for guidance.

H. “Eligible Individual” means a veteran or veteran’s family member who is a resident of San Juan County, is indigent and meets the criteria established in Section III below.

II. 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 voting 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. The majority of the VAB members shall be from nationally recognized veterans’ organizations.

The County Auditor or the Auditor’s representative will be a non-voting member of the VAB and shall be invited to all VAB meetings.

B. Primary Functions

The primary function of the Veterans’ Assistance Fund (VAF) is to provide services to eligible individuals.

The VAB provides timely service to eligible individuals when assistance from other agencies is considered insufficient 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 a “case by case” basis only. The VAF is not intended to provide continuing assistance on a routine basis. There shall be no limits on the number of times an eligible individual may receive assistance for food.

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.

C. Guidelines 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.

III. Eligibility

A. Requirements

Under the Revised Code of the State of Washington (RCW 73.08), veterans and their families are eligible for 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. A veteran who served less than 180 days and is honorably discharged for medical reasons listed as not existing prior to service (non-EPTS) may also qualify.
2. Veteran or other eligible individual 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. Veterans or other eligible individuals must have been a resident of San Juan County for a contiguous period of six months or more to qualify for assistance. Exceptions may be granted if the veteran recently moved to San Juan County for work, school, family emergency or other compelling reason. 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, or Utility Bills. If the above documentation does not clearly establish residency in either the State or County, additional documentation may be requested.
4. Veterans or other eligible individuals must be able to provide proper identification and documentation of eligibility of dependents and be the legal responsibility of the applicant.
5. Veterans or other eligible individuals must be indigent as determined by the VAB.

B. Identification

Veterans must be able to provide proper identification for themselves and other eligible individuals. Preferred identification is a Washington State Driver's License or Washington State ID Card since these documents also help establish residency. Other acceptable forms of identification are passports and military ID cards.

C. Indigent Status

1. The RCW and Ordinance 46-2007 require that the SJC VAF be used for indigent veterans and their families.
2. The VAB shall make a "case-by-case" determination of indigent status for each request for assistance. The VAB shall apply the definition of "indigent" so as to ensure each "eligible individual" is afforded the greatest opportunity for assistance.

IV. Assistance

A. General Information

1. Assistance for qualified applicants and their other eligible individuals is provided by the SJC VAF through the use of vouchers to vendors but may be given in the form of direct relief. Assistance may also be given through referrals, counseling, or by acting as a liaison for the applicant.
2. Financial assistance to eligible individuals will be provided in an equitable manner considering the severity of the situation and the availability of funding. If financial assistance is repeatedly requested by the same eligible individual, the VAB shall conduct a special assessment to determine if the VAF is being used in an effective manner.
3. There is no limit on the number of times an eligible veteran and dependents may receive assistance for food.

4. Eligible individuals may receive assistance for the following:
 - a. Food
 - b. Rent or Mortgage Payments
 - c. Utilities
 - d. Medical and Dental
 - e. Burial or Cremation
 - f. Miscellaneous, may include but is not limited to the following:
transportation expenses, car repair to expedite employment or to attend medical appointments, clothing, educational expenses, certain legal fees, appliances or appliance repair.
5. Exclusions include, but are not limited to, alcohol, tobacco, lottery tickets, recreational drugs, and other non-essential items.

V. Application Procedures

A. Initial Applications

1. An eligible individual may be referred for assistance by a government or non-governmental agency, by an individual with knowledge of the eligible individual's indigence, or by self-referral.
2. The veteran or other eligible individual may contact any VAB member for assistance. It is preferred that residents of an island district attempt to work through the VAB member(s) from their island district.
3. The applicant will be interviewed by a VAB member(s) who will assist the applicant with preparation of the request for assistance and will present the request to the VAB Chair for review. If the application is complete, the VAB Chair will present the application to the full VAB for review and approval.
4. The completed application package shall contain the following information:
 1. Completed Application Form
 2. DD 214 or similar proof of military service
 3. Proper identification for all eligible individuals
 4. Documentation of expenses for which assistance is requested
5. Normally the VAB will review applications for assistance at the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting. If the VAB Chair determines the requested assistance must be provided prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting, the VAB Chair shall consult with at least one additional VAB member and the County Auditor. If both VAB members and the Auditor agree to provide support, the VAB Chair may provide interim assistance without the consent of the full VAB.

6. If the VAB subsequently fails to approve the decision made by the VAB Chair, all un-dispersed funds for assistance will be subject to further review and approval by the VAB.

B. Payment Process

1. Once all documentation for eligibility has been verified by the VAB, the approved application, with or without modifications, will be sent to the Auditor. The Auditor will arrange payment in the most expeditious manner possible.
2. The VAB may authorize the County Auditor to issue a check directly to the eligible individual, as per VAB decision.

C. Appeals and Appeals Process

1. In the event an applicant does not agree with the decision of the VAB, he or she shall have a right of appeal.
2. The applicant may initiate an appeal by sending a letter to the County Auditor or VAB Chair stating the nature of the grievance and the desired remedial action. The applicant shall submit the letter of appeal within 7 calendar days of notification of the VAB decision being appealed.
3. The VAB Chair will convene an Appeals Board within 10 working days of receipt of an appeal. The Appeals Board shall consist of the VAB Chair, the VAB Vice-Chair, the County Administrator, County Auditor and either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the County Council. The Appeals Board will review the application and the applicant's letter of appeal and will uphold or modify the VAB's decision.
4. The applicant will be notified of the Appeal Board's decision within 5 working days of the Board's decision.

VI. Records, Files, Forms and Reports

1. The SJC Auditor will provide a Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) annual report in accordance with San Juan County procedure.
2. The VAB shall maintain appropriate records of assistance requested from and provided by the VAF. Normally these records will be in the form of meeting minutes, applications and other supporting documents.

VII. Outreach and Publicity

The VAB shall 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 shall 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.

-----Last Item-----