



Supportive Services For Veteran Families (SSVF) & Homeless Veteran Reintegration (HVRP) Programs

St. James A.M.E. Zion Church – Zion House

521 Mack Avenue

Salisbury, MD 21801

(410) 742-4950

CARF Certified

What Is Supportive Services For Veterans Families (SSVF)?

Supportive Services For Veterans Families (SSVF) is a housing first initiative to provide direct services to veterans and their families to prevent homelessness and to rapidly re-house homeless veterans. Since 2013 we have served 502 Veterans & their family members .

Veterans are housed, then services are wrapped around them, based on need. SSVF provides financial assistance and links veterans to benefits to ensure family stability. Services provided include:

- Childcare
- Transportation Assistance
- Legal Services
- Moving Costs
- Rent/ Security & Utility Deposits/Payments
- Emergency purchases/automotive repair

Areas Served

St. James SSVF Program serves 8 of the 9 counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, including:

- Kent
- Queen Anne
- Talbot
- Caroline
- Dorchester
- Wicomico
- Somerset
- Worcester

Eligibility Criteria

- DD-214 – Other than dishonorable
- For rapid re-housing, must be literally homeless – in a location not meant for human habitation, shelter, hotel (paid by someone other than the veteran), in a vehicle, or on the streets. (Differs from HVRP where a veteran can be doubled up but in danger of losing their housing within 14 days)
- Very low income, less than 50% of the area median income for the county in which service is being provided.
- Extremely low income, 30% or less of area median income gets priority service.

Documents Needed For Intake/Assessment

- Photo Identification
- Social Security Card
- DD-214
- Proof of income/lack thereof
- Landlord agreements/Lease
- Utility bill(s)
- Rent receipt(s)
- Eviction Notice (financial assistance is “but for” this assistance, the Veteran would become homeless)

Service Model

- Mobile case managers that go where the Veterans are
- Street level outreach
- Connection to a wide range of community partners that can address every aspect of a person's need: food, clothing, shelter, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, legal issues, etc.
- Active landlord engagement
- Follow-up (Wellness checks)
- Engagement with employment counselors
- Provide needed financial resources to include emergency purchases

Best Practices

- COLLABORATION – COLLABORATION – COLLABORATION
- We serve in a leadership roll on two Continuum of Care (COC) organizations
 - Mid – Shore covers five counties (Kent, Queen Anne, Talbot, Dorchester, and Caroline)
 - Homeless Alliance of the Lower covers three counties (Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset)
 - I serve as co-chair of the joint Community Planning Committee taskforce to end Veteran Homelessness
 - Staff serve on various sub-committees including governance, chronically homeless, strategic planning, homeless prevention – homeless youth, and monitoring and ranking.
 - Partnering with HUD/VASH Coordinator
 - Partnering with VA Homeless Case Manager
 - Our coordinated assessment model is a “no wrong door” approach, where homeless individuals can enter through any agency and be referred for appropriate assistance.
 - All case managers are SOAR Certified to assist Veterans in getting SSI/SSDI benefits

Challenges

- Lack of affordable housing. The Eastern Shore of Maryland is referred to as “the land of pleasant living”. The six upper shore counties, above Dorchester has precious little affordable housing, if any.
- We are in close proximity to Ocean City and during peak season, hotels as far away as Dorchester county may not be available for emergency housing
- Shelter space is very limited
- Landlords have tightened requirements and charge market rate rents, for the most part. They now require an individual has triple the rent as income.
- Sustaining Veterans in housing, once they are placed
- Jobs that pay a living wage (there is a lot of retail, restaurant and service industry on the Eastern Shore, we have lost a lot of manufacturing jobs)

Additional Program to Meet the Challenges – Homeless Veterans Re-integration Program (HVRP)

- This is where we believed HVRP could be of assistance.
- We needed case managers who could concentrate specifically on employment assistance for Veterans and walk them through the application to placement and retention steps
- We needed assistance with transportation to job interviews and development of long-term transportation solutions with employers
- We needed additional resources for appropriate clothing, tools, training costs, etc.
- Without adequate employment, housing sustainability is impossible
- We now have these resources with the addition of the HVRP program

HVRP & SSVF System Integration

The answer to housing sustainability is income. Sources of income for Veterans:

- VA Benefits
- SSI/SSDI (Disability)
- Employment

- The most sustainable income is from employment.
- It is essential that Veterans be placed in positions that pay a living wage.

HVRP & SSVF System Integration

The service area for HVRP overlays the SSVF service area for our program. This was purposeful when determining the need for sustainability.

The homeless Veterans that qualify for SSVF also qualifies for HVRP.

The two programs are a natural progression of each other.

Veterans are referred between both programs on a consistent basis.

As the service area for HVRP is larger than for SSVF (11 counties as compared to 8 counties) we are able to refer Veterans to other SSVF providers in counties that our program does not cover. This builds relationships across boundaries and provides more comprehensive services to the Veterans.

HVRP & SSVF System Integration

Serving the Veterans in both programs keeps the Veterans positively engaged in improving their situation.

They have two case managers working with them at all times. This encourages the Veterans to focus on their needs and making an effort to self resolve where possible.

Due to the monitoring requirements for HVRP, the Veterans are aware that their progress will be followed for a period of time. They are also aware that the case managers are available to them as needed.

Integrating the programs also increases the housing retention rate.

Conclusion

- At St. James Zion House we believe in holistic service provision. Although we use the housing first model, we ensure that the veterans have resources or access to resources to help them to sustain their housing.
- Ending Veteran homelessness is our goal.
- Ensuring the Veterans receive support and sustain is our mission.