

Agenda Summary Report (ASR)

Franklin County Board of Commissioners

DATE SUBMITTED: 02-17-2021	PREPARED BY: Niria Lucatero
Meeting Date Requested: 03-09-2021	PRESENTED BY: Kyle Sullivan
ITEM: (Select One) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Agenda <input type="checkbox"/> Brought Before the Board Time needed:	
SUBJECT: New Policies and Procedures for the Franklin County Veterans Advisory Board	
FISCAL IMPACT: There is no impact on current budget	
BACKGROUND: The Department of Human Services recommends changing the current Policies and Procedures from no more than 5 board members to no more than 7 board members.	
RECOMMENDATION: Recommending that the Franklin County Board of Commissioners approves the updated policies and procedures for the Veterans Advisory Board.	
COORDINATION:	
ATTACHMENTS: (Documents you are submitting to the Board)	
HANDLING / ROUTING: (Once document is fully executed it will be imported into Document Manager. Please list <u>name(s)</u> of parties that will need a pdf)	

I certify the above information is accurate and complete.




 Name, Title

RESOLUTION

Franklin County Resolution No. _____

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON:**

**IN THE MATTER OF EXECUTION OF UPDATE TO FRANKLIN COUNTY VETERANS
RELIEF FUND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ALLOW FOR INCREASE OF ADVISORY
BOARD MEMBERS FROM NO MORE THEN 5 BOARD MEMBERS TO NO MORE THEN 7
BOARD MEMBERS.**

WHEREAS, The Benton County Department of Human Services currently administers the Franklin County Veterans Relief Fund, and

WHEREAS, in response to the assemble of the new Franklin County Veterans Advisory Board, the Department of Human Services recommends changing the current Policies and Procedures from no more than 5 board members to no more than 7 board members.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Franklin County Board of Commissioners hereby accepts the proposed changes to the policies and procedures;

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2021

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Chair

Member

Member

ATTEST: _____
Clerk of the Board



FRANKLIN COUNTY

VETERANS RELIEF FUND

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Prepared by Benton and Franklin Counties
Department of Human Services

Effective:
May 26, 2020

INDEX

FRANKLIN COUNTY
VETERANS RELIEF FUND
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION I.	<u>POLICY</u>
1.1	Purpose
1.2	Source of Funds
1.3	Policy
1.4	Veterans' Advisory Board
SECTION II.	<u>SERVICE PROVIDERS</u>
2.1	Definition of a Service Organization
2.2	Veterans Organization Participation
2.3	Use of Funds for Assistance
SECTION III.	<u>ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY</u>
3.1	Relief for Individuals Who Administer the Fund
3.2	Equal Opportunity
3.3	Technical Assistance
3.4	Administrative Costs
3.5	Fiscal Policy
3.6	Fraud and Abuse
3.7	Complaint Process
SECTION IV.	<u>ELIGIBILITY UNDER STATE LAW</u>
4.1	Status as a Veteran
4.2	Documentation of Service
4.3	Family Members Entitled to Apply
4.4	Documentation for Family Members
SECTION V.	<u>ELIGIBILITY POLICY FOR VETERANS</u>
5.1	Frequency of Applications
5.2	Residency
5.3	Income Requirements
5.4	Waivers

5.5 Reporting

SECTION VI. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- 6.1 Processing by Service Officers
- 6.2 Approval by Human Services
- 6.3 Referral to Other Resources
- 6.4 Refusal of Service

SECTION VII. VOUCHER PROCESS

- 7.1 Verification with Human Services
- 7.2 Completing the Voucher
- 7.3 Voucher Documentation

SECTION I

POLICY

SECTION I.

POLICY

1.1

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Franklin County Veterans Relief Fund (“Veterans’ Relief Fund” or “Fund”) is to provide assistance to eligible indigent veterans, their families, and the families of deceased indigent veterans pursuant to Chapter 73.08 RCW.

1.2

SOURCE OF FUNDS

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners (“Board of Commissioners”) shall bi-annually adopt a revenue and expenditure budget for the Veterans’ Relief Fund. Fund revenues shall be generated from a property tax levy authorized by RCW 73.08.080. The levy rate shall be established by the Board of Commissioners based on the estimated demands of the Fund and the statutory limitations for the levy. Current year funding not expended is carried forward to be used in subsequent years.

There is no automatic entitlement to assistance and the provision of assistance is subject to the availability of funds, among other limitations.

1.3

POLICY

The Veterans’ Relief Fund is administered by the Benton and Franklin Counties Department of Human Services. (“Human Services”). In administering the Fund, Human Services intends to provide policies and procedures for determining eligibility, processing claims, and issuing checks. In addition to limiting organizational and personal conflict of interest and providing assistance to the maximum extent possible, fair and equitable treatment will be given to all applicants applying for assistance. For contracted services any expenditures denied by Human Services, due to non-conformance with this policy, shall become an obligation of the Service Organization submitting the claim.

1.4

VETERANS’ ADVISORY BOARD

The Franklin County Veterans’ Advisory Board (“Advisory Board”) consists of representatives of local chapters, camps, post, or branches of nationally recognized veterans’ Service Organizations and veterans from the community at large, who are appointed to the Advisory Board by the Board

of Commissioners.

The purpose of the Advisory Board is to advise the Board of Commissioners and the Department of Human Services 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. Individual applications for Veterans' Relief Fund services are not processed or reviewed by the Advisory Board. Individual Service Officers may be consulted concerning applications for assistance, in their capacity as Service Officers.

The Veterans Advisory Board may use electronic voting when necessary. All voting will be majority rules. The board will conduct their meetings with basic meeting agendas and minutes. The board can elect a chairman, co-chair, treasurer and secretary. The board will consist of no more than 7 Veterans. If a Veteran wants to become a board member, they must submit a copy of their DD214 and a Veterans Advisory Board Application to the Department of Human Services for review and a determination of eligibility. The current board will hold a vote, with majority rules, to determine whether the applicant will be selected as a board member.

SECTION II
SERVICE PROVIDERS

SECTION II. SERVICE PROVIDERS

2.1 DEFINITION OF A SERVICE ORGANIZATION

A Service Organization is any chapters, camps, post, or branch of a national organization of veterans chartered by an act of Congress that shall undertake the relief of indigent veterans and their families.

2.2 VETERANS ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION

In order for a Service Organization, specifically a chapter, camp, post or branch, to participate in the Veterans' Relief Fund, it must register with Human Services by sending a Letter of Intent to Participate. The letter of intent must include the printed names and signatures of the authorized Service Officers that will screen and approve veterans and their families for assistance through this fund. This letter must be updated annually or anytime a change in participate through the Service Organization, specifically a post or branch, has been made.

As authorized by RCW 73.04.080, nationally recognized veterans' Service Organizations, specifically a post or branch, which have a current registration in effect with Human Services and assist veterans applying for assistance from the Fund, may be reimbursed up to \$360.00 annually for their current year's regular meeting place rent.

Service Organizations, specifically a chapter, camp, post or branch, in Franklin County that are registered with Human Services may appoint representatives from their organization to assist veterans or eligible family members in applying for assistance from the Veterans' Relief Fund.

The representatives of the Service Organizations, specifically a chapter, camp, post or branch, shall assist veterans and qualifying family members in completing applications for assistance, in compiling required documentation, and, as needed, by providing information regarding veteran' benefits and services, regardless of whether the individual seeking assistance meets the requirements for assistance from the Veterans' Relief Fund.

2.3 USE OF FUNDS FOR ASSISTANCE

The Fund is intended to aid eligible indigent veterans, their families and the

families of deceased indigent veterans by providing the following direct services. This is not an exclusive list and more services may be added to the policies and procedures by recommendation of the Veterans Advisory Board:

- Rental Assistance/Deposit Assistance
- Application Fees for housing/Background Checks for housing or pre-employment screening
- Up to 1 week of motel voucher assistance for homeless Vets
- Gas Vouchers/Bus Passes through the Ben Franklin Transit
- Utility Assistance
- Food Assistance
- Burial Expenses not to exceed \$1,000.00
- Necessary safety equipment required by employer to gain employment
- Dental Assistance – once in a lifetime assistance capped at no more than \$2,000.00
- Childcare Assistance

SECTION III
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

SECTION III. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

3.1 RELIEF FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ADMINISTER FUND

Any service officer of a Service Organization may apply for assistance from the Fund, but the Application Form must be authorized by a Service Organization other than the one the service officer represents and approved by Human Services as appropriate.

3.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

This policy is to assure fair treatment of all applicants in aspects of personnel administration.

Any applicant who thinks he or she is being treated unfairly because of race, sex, marital status, color, creed or religion, national origin, age, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or sexual orientation may follow the procedure set forth in Section 3.6.

3.3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Human Services is available to provide technical assistance to Service Organizations on the proper completion of forms and appropriate procedures for the approval and distribution of funds.

3.4 ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Pursuant to RCW 73.08.080, the direct and indirect costs incurred in administering the Veterans' Relief Fund will be computed annually in January for the preceding calendar year based on a time and effort log with itemized explanations maintained by Human Services. The Fund will then be billed for these computed costs up to an amount not exceeding eight percent (8%) of the Veterans' Relief Fund budget for the year.

3.5 FISCAL POLICY

Human Services shall be responsible for ensuring that Fund expenditures do not exceed the balance in the Fund, conducting a cash flow analysis, reconciling the account for preparation of the annual budget, and making any recommendations within the limits established by law. Administrative

costs will be identified as a separate line item, justified in the annual budget proposal, and deducted from the Fund in accordance with RCW 73.08.080.

Allowable administrative costs may be charged to the Fund based on the current Cost Allocation Plan for Human Services.

The limits of disbursement of funds are as follows:

(1) Up to \$1,200.00 per applicant in a twelve-month period for an applicant with no dependents residing in the veteran's household. Up to \$1,500.00 per applicant in a twelve-month period for an applicant with one or more dependents residing in the veteran's household and additional \$200.00 per applicant in a twelve-month period for each additional dependent residing in the veteran's household. In extreme cases of hardship, the Board of Commissioners may exceed the applicable limit of disbursement for an applicant based on a Waiver Request. The length of each Waiver will be dependent on the specific circumstances and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

If the County declares a State of Emergency or there is an overwhelming financial crisis, The Board of County Commissioners can temporarily increase benefit amount by way of Resolution.

(2) Pursuant to RCW 73.08.070, burial expenses may be provided for deceased indigent veterans and their family members (as defined in Section 4.4) who die without leaving means to defray funeral expenses. Funds will be disbursed upon proof of death, when such proof is requested by the Service Organization, for burial expenses that are supported by documentation of actual expenses incurred. The amount of payment from the Veterans' Relief Fund for any single burial shall not exceed \$1,000.00.

3.6

FRAUD AND ABUSE

If Human Services or a registered Service Organization suspect fraud, criminal activity, or abuse of the system, the matter may be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

If found guilty of fraud or criminal activity associated with services or an application for services with the Veterans' Relief Fund, the applicant will be refused services under the Fund.

Individuals who misuse financial assistance provided by the Fund, including, but not limited to, using financial assistance for purposes other than those specified in a voucher or other grant, may be required to repay the Fund. In addition, misuse of financial assistance or failure to repay the Fund for misused financial assistance may result in the individual being refused further services from the Veterans' Relief Fund.

3.7

COMPLAINT PROCESS

Applicants who have been denied assistance may file a written complaint with Human Services. When a complaint is received, the applicant's information is verified, and the claim is approved or disapproved by Human Services. Human Services will have 15 days to respond to the complainant in writing. If disapproved, a written explanation will be provided.

If an applicant is not satisfied with a written explanation from Human Services disapproving a complaint, the applicant may appeal the disapproval in writing to the Board of Commissioners within 15 days from the date Human Services sent the applicant its written explanation. After receiving the appeal, the Board of Commissioners will issue a decision. At its discretion, the Board of Commissioners may: (1) issue its decision based on the information already before the Board; or (2) request additional information from the applicant and/or Human Services and either issue its decision after conducting a quasi-judicial hearing on the matter, or issue its decision without a hearing.

SECTION IV

ELIGIBILITY UNDER STATE LAW

SECTION IV. ELIGIBILITY UNDER STATE LAW

4.1 STATUS AS A VETERAN

An applicant for assistance from the Veterans Relief Fund must be a veteran who qualifies as a veteran under the definition set forth in RCW 73.08.005(5).

4.2 DOCUMENTATION OF SERVICE

Applicants must provide documentation of service deemed acceptable by Human Services. Such documentation typically includes a veteran's DD-214, VA Statement of Service, or if discharged prior to 1950, a certificate of discharge. Documentation must include a statement of the character of service. Examples of documentation can include: a HINK print out, a letter from a HUD VASH case worker stating the veteran's discharge or other correspondence with the VA stating the character of discharge.

Any documents that appear to have been altered or that are deemed questionable may be refused by Human Services. Human Services may, at its discretion, require certified copies of documents in question, and may choose to require additional documentation to determine eligibility for services.

4.3 FAMILY MEMBERS ENTITLED TO APPLY

Family members entitled to apply for assistance are those family members who meet the definition provided in RCW 73.08.005(2). This definition includes the spouse, domestic partner, surviving spouse, surviving domestic partner, and dependent children of a living or deceased veteran or a service member who was killed in the line of duty regardless of the number of days served.

4.4 DOCUMENTATION FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

If the applicant is a minor child, a birth certificate must be provided. If the applicant is a widow or widower, marriage and death certificates must be provided.

SECTION V
ELIGIBILITY POLICY
FOR VETERANS

SECTION V. ELIGIBILITY POLICY FOR VETERANS

5.1 FREQUENCY OF APPLICATIONS

Veterans must reapply for the grant each time they seek assistance to the grant during the twelve-month period of time. Also, applicants may receive the maximum allotment of assistance at any time within a twelve-month period.

5.2 RESIDENCY

Applicants must have been residents of Franklin County for at least 90 days. Applicants must present proof of residency. An exception can be made if the veteran has been discharged from military service in the last 90 days and has moved to Franklin County during that 90-day period.

5.3 INCOME REQUIREMENTS

An applicant must be indigent to be eligible. Indigence is defined as income at or below 150% of Federal Poverty Guidelines or is food stamp eligible. The Department of Human Services can look up the Veterans food stamp eligibility with the Veterans consent. An indigent applicant is in need of assistance when he and his family have exhausted their resources and other sources of assistance are necessary for their relief. Such other sources include, but are not limited to, unemployment compensation, veterans' administration grants and pensions, public assistance, private insurance coverage, or other available sources of income. If a Veteran is homeless and has a HUD VASH housing voucher, the income can be waived one time only without having to apply for a waiver. Proof of homelessness and HUD VASH assistance is required.

5.4 WAIVERS

In extraordinary circumstances, Human Services may request the Board of Commissioners to waive the income guidelines, the limit of disbursement, or residency requirements. This will only be done when there are specific circumstances that warrant such a waiver. The Waiver Request Form shall be completed by the applicant or service officer and then submitted to the Board of Commissioners for a decision. If granted, the waiver is good for one year.

5.5

REPORTING

Human Services will provide participating Service Organizations with a list of all the applicants who receive assistance. This will be done regularly for verification and tracking purposes.

SECTION VI
APPLICATION PROCEDURES

SECTION VI. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

6.1 PROCESSING BY SERVICE OFFICERS

Applicants can go to a Veterans Service Organization that work with Human Services with the Veterans Relief Fund to apply for assistance. All voucher requests will be forwarded to Human Services with the appropriate required forms and documentation for payment. Food and Gas vouchers will be given directly to applicants when the Service Organization reviews and verifies that the applicant is eligible. Applicants may choose to go to Human Services directly for assistance.

6.2 APPROVAL BY HUMAN SERVICES

After a Veterans Service Organization forwards voucher requests to Human Services, Human Services will review and make sure the applicant is eligible and then process the voucher. Human Services will enter all vouchers paid in the Veterans Relief Fund spreadsheet for tracking purposes. If Human Service's staff are unable to make a determination on eligibility, the attorney for the Veterans' Relief Fund will be consulted and will give his/her opinion on eligibility.

If proper documentation is provided, relief will be available based on need and policy as defined previously. If proper documentation is not provided, the applicant will be required to obtain the missing information prior to disbursement of funds.

6.3 REFERRAL TO OTHER RESOURCES

When appropriate, eligible and ineligible applicants will be referred to other community resources for services.

6.4 REFUSAL OF SERVICE

Service officers and employees of Human Services will refuse service to disorderly or abusive individuals. Services may also be refused to individuals under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

SECTION VII
VOUCHER PROCESS

SECTION VII. VOUCHER PROCESS

7.1 VERIFICATION WITH HUMAN SERVICES

Before a voucher is issued, the service officers shall verify that the applicant has not reached the maximum amount available for a twelve-month period by referring to the tracking spreadsheet provided by Human Services. If no verification is made and Human Services determines that the applicant is not eligible, the Service Organization submitting the claim becomes responsible for the payment.

7.2 COMPLETING THE VOUCHER

The initial voucher request will be noted on the application form. Human Services will submit proper documentation to the auditor's office for payment and file both voucher and application. Vouchers cannot be made out to the applicant.

The voucher consists of the vendor's name and address, the applicant's name, the date of the invoice, and the amount it is being issued for.

Human Services will sign off on all voucher requests and forward to the Auditors office for payment.

7.3 VOUCHER DOCUMENTATION

Claims against the Veterans' Relief Fund are submitted by completing a voucher and providing proper backup documentation. At a minimum, documentation supporting each claim shall consist of the following:

- 1) Rental/Deposit/Application Fees Assistance - A completed Rental Assistance Form, a lease agreement, and an eviction notice (if applicable).
- 2) Hotel/Motel Voucher for homeless Veterans - A homeless status verification from a third party is required for assistance. Voucher will only pay up to 1 week at selected hotel/motel of the Department of Human Services. This assistance is one time only. Once a Veteran has used this service, they cannot use it again.
- 3) Transportation Assistance – Gas Vouchers are available to Veterans that need gas assistance for transportation. Bus passes

through Ben Franklin Transit are available to veterans in need of assistance.

- 4) Utility Assistance - A monthly statement for water, sewer, electrical, or gas used. Human Services can call the utility company to verify the amount owed if the applicant does not have their bill with them.
- 5) Background Checks – Letter or statement from employer is needed or a housing application.
- 6) Food Assistance - A food voucher will be given directly to the applicant requesting it. The applicant will then submit the voucher to the authorized grocery vendor upon purchase. A receipt detailing purchases, and a billing invoice will be sent to Human Services by the grocery vendor for payment. Section 3(k) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (the Act) and SNAP regulations at 7 CFR § 271.2 define eligible foods. Any food items that food stamps (SNAP) can cover, the Veterans Relief Fund can pay for.

Food vouchers cannot be used to buy:

- Alcoholic beverages;
- Tobacco or cigarettes;
- Household supplies, soaps, or paper products;
- Medicine or vitamins;
- Any other nonfood item;
- Pet foods or supplies

Food vouchers can be used to buy:

- Foods for human consumption; and
- Seeds and plants which produce food

7) Burial Expense. The veteran's or acceptable family member's death certificate and a receipt from the funeral home with details of the balance owed. Not to exceed \$1,000.00. This assistance can be given on top of the regular amount of assistance stated in section 3.5 (1).

8) Safety Equipment. A letter or statement from the employer will be required.

9) Dental Assistance. This is a once in a lifetime assistance. Once the applicant has used this service, they cannot use it again. The applicant will sign a declaration of understanding acknowledging they know they cannot utilize this service again. The amount of assistance is capped no more than \$2,000. Per applicant will be

5/2020

given. This assistance can be given on top of the regular amount of assistance stated in section 3.5 (1).

10) Childcare Assistance. A W-9 is needed from the childcare provider to pay the provider. Human Services will verify with the childcare provider the amount owed.

By their signatures below, Franklin County acknowledges the Policies and Procedures for the Franklin County Veterans Assistant Fund.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2020

Chair
Franklin County Commissioners

Attest:

Clerk of the Board, Franklin County

Approved as Content:

Approved as to Form:

B/F Counties Dept. of Human Services



Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE OF APPROVED VETERANS RELIEF FUND LOCATIONS

MONDAY: 509-734-5972

WorkSource Columbia Basin
815 N Kellogg St., Ste. D
Kennewick, WA 99336
10am – 4pm (closed 1-2 lunch)

TUESDAY & THURSDAY: 509-545-6558

Veterans Opportunity Center -DAV Chapter 26
1600 N 20th Ave. Ste A
Pasco, WA 99301
10am – 4pm

WEDNESDAY: 509-737-3987

Benton & Franklin Counties Dept. of Human Services
7102 W Okanogan Pl., Ste. 201
Kennewick, WA 99336
8am – 4pm (closed 12-1 lunch)

MONDAY – FRIDAY: 509-588-5853

Benton City American Legion Post 115
909 Dale Ave.
Benton City, WA 99320

MONDAY – THURSDAY: 509-529-4920

Blue Mountain Action Council
1520 Kelly Place, Ste. 140
Walla Walla, WA 99362
8am – 4pm (closed 12 – 1 lunch)
Friday 8:30am – 4pm

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY: 509-542-4880

Student Veterans Only

CBC Veterans Center
2600 N 20th Ave.
Pasco, WA 99301
7am – 4:30pm
Thur 9am – 4:30pm
Fri 7am – 12 noon