

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Community of Practice (CoP)
“At Risk” Criteria Feedback Session
Thursday, January 25, 2024, 3 – 4 p.m. ET**

NVTAC Staff

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Attendance

33 attendees

Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - This session reviewed current HVRP “at risk” eligibility criteria and opened a discussion among HVRP grantees to provide feedback on the policy.
- **Review of “At Risk” Eligibility Criteria**
 - “At risk” criteria
 - The current HVRP participant eligibility criteria defines two categories of “at risk of homelessness” veterans:
 - Veterans who, at program entry, are at risk of homelessness within 15-60 days.
 - Veterans recently released (within the last 12 months) from incarceration who are at risk of homelessness.
 - In addition to fitting **one** of the above categories, the veteran must also meet **both** of the following criteria:
 - Has an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the geographical area.
 - Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the “homeless” definition.
 - The veteran must also meet **one** of the following criteria:
 - (A) Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance; OR
 - (B) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; OR

- (C) Has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; OR
- (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals; OR
- (E) Lives in a single room occupancy (SRO) or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half persons per room; OR
- (F) Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care; OR
- (G) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness.

“At Risk” Criteria Feedback Discussion

- **Question:** Do you feel that the current HVRP criteria for the “at risk of homelessness” category effectively captures individuals who are at risk of homelessness? Why or why not?
 - **Response:** The current “at risk” eligibility criteria are well-defined and provide clear definitions and guidance for grantees implementing the policy.
 - **Response:** The removal of the 10 percent cap on enrollment of “at risk” veterans has increased enrollments and allowed grantees to serve more veterans.
 - **Response:** Collecting documentation to prove “at risk” status is difficult, especially for individuals in specific circumstances such as “couch surfing.”
- **Question:** What impact has the 30 percent of median income threshold had on your ability to enroll veterans who are at risk of homelessness?
 - **Response:** Increased grantees’ ability to enroll veterans “at risk” in the community.
 - **Response:** The policy is clear and objective as written.
 - **Response:** Most veterans assessed for “at risk” status have been within Area Median Income (AMI). One grantee commented this may be because Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation is not counted as income for HVRP as with other veteran programs.
 - **Response:** It is challenging to collect income verification documentation.
 - **Response:** It is difficult to operationalize what documentation to request to prove a veteran is within 30 percent of AMI, especially in specific or unique circumstances (i.e., a veteran previously had income, but now has zero income upon program entry).
- **Question:** Are there any additional factor or life events that you believe should be taken into consideration for the “at risk of homelessness” criteria?
 - **Responses:**
 - Homeownership/foreclosure
 - Unexpected health complications

- Loss of job/income
 - Divorce
 - Loss of significant other or child
 - Debt
 - Natural disaster – flood, fire, etc.
- **Question:** In your experience, what has been working well with the current definition?
 - **Response:** The current definition of “at risk” of homelessness and the removal of the 10 percent cap on enrollees classified as “at risk” has increased enrollments and allowed grantees to serve veterans they may not have before.
 - **Response:** In the experience of some grantees, it has allowed their program to collaborate more closely with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) staff at the American Job Centers (AJC).
- **Question:** Are there any promising practices or approaches you have utilized when applying the at-risk of homelessness definition?
 - **Response:** Train their intake team or call center staff to identify veterans who may be “at risk” of homelessness by using the eligibility criteria as part of their comprehensive assessment.
 - **Response:** Use the Eligibility frequently asked questions (FAQ) created by NVTAC as a training tool.
 - **Response:** Ensure the “at risk” veteran is aware at time of assessment or enrollment that HVRP staff with advocate and help connect them to resources (i.e., housing, Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing [HUD-VASH]).

General Grantee Discussion

- **Question:** Is a Reservist with active duty for training (ADT) eligible for HVRP? SSVF allows this eligibility for boot camp as active duty.
 - **Answer:** Per [38 U.S.C. § 101](#), “active duty for training” pertains to the reserve component of the Armed Forces. Therefore, time spent in basic training by National Guard and Reserve members, as well as any other active or inactive duty for training, would not meet the definition of “veteran.” However, any period of inactive duty or active duty for training during which National Guard and Reserve members received a service-connected disability resulting from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty does meet the definition of “veteran” (see [38 U.S.C. § 101\(24\)](#)). SSVF’s definition of veteran aligns with HVRP’s definition of a veteran. SSVF eligibility criteria is available for reference in the [SSVF Program Guide \(va.gov\)](#).
- **Question:** What should be used to document income for participants who are unemployed? Is a notarized self-attestation preferred?
 - **Answer:** Some examples of documentation include, but are not limited to, bank statements, a termination letter, and unemployment documentation. If no documentation exists, self-attestation can be used in rare circumstances to

document a participant’s “at risk of homelessness” status (see [HVRP Eligibility FAQ](#)). A self-attestation does not need to be notarized to be a valid case document.

Conclusion

HVRP grantees shared their experiences implementing “at risk” eligibility criteria described in [Veterans’ Program Letter No. 02-23](#). During the open discussion, grantees noted that the new “at risk” policy provides clearer guidance that reduces confusion about which veterans are considered “at risk.” Grantees stated that the new definition, and the removal of the 10 percent cap on enrollment of “at risk” veterans has increased enrollments and helped grantees reach their program goals. The most common concerns grantees had about the current “at risk” criteria were difficulty operationalizing and securing the documentation needed to prove “at risk” status. Grantees noted circumstances in which it is especially time-consuming to get documents proving income or housing status. Some participants also suggested additional criteria that should be considered in “at risk” status, such as debt or foreclosure.

Grantees shared their best practices for applying the “at risk” of homelessness definition, including training assessment/intake staff, and using the [HVRP Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document as a training tool.

You can review the presentation recording here: [January 2024 Community of Practice](#)