

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) *Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide*

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Principles of SSVF Homelessness Prevention	2
SSVF HP Screening Form Parts	2
Minimum Staff Core Competencies and Training	4
SSVF HP Screening Form Discussion Pointers	5
Appendix A Key Terms and Glossary	15

## Introduction

The revised **SSVF Homelessness Prevention (HP) Screening Companion Guide v6** supports SSVF Grantee staff in effectively administering the **SSVF HP Screening Tool v6** released in September 2021 and effective October 1, 2021. The goal of the updated **HP Screening Tool** is to document the screening process and eligibility for Veterans applying for homelessness prevention assistance and to help target limited financial resources most effectively. The revised tool and companion guidance were developed with the support of a working group comprised of representatives from the Department of Veteran Affairs, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, SSVF grantees, persons with lived expertise, researchers, and technical assistance providers.

The **SSVF HP Screening Tool** should be used by SSVF staff to determine and document whether a Veteran household applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance:

- 1) Is an eligible Veteran household that is within SSVF's income limits and is at imminent risk of homelessness, including Veterans who have the potential to rapidly resolve their housing crisis through housing problem solving strategies and other flexible Rapid Resolution assistance ("Stage 1"); and
- 2) Is prioritized for more targeted Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) from SSVF that may be needed as part of more extensive homelessness prevention assistance, based on available grantee and community resources ("Stage 2").

The **HP Screening Tool** ensures consistent screening across SSVF grantees aligned with SSVF program requirements and priorities. Grantee staff should use the tool to document initial screening to determine Veteran eligibility and should keep the completed form in Veteran client files, along with other supporting documentation.

*The **HP Screening Tool** is only used for initial screening and is not an assessment tool or conversation guide. SSVF Staff are strongly discouraged from reading the questions/prompts verbatim to Veterans. Instead, staff should use trauma-informed initial engagement and screening strategies, briefly described below, and use the tool to support initial eligibility determinations before engaging in deeper assessment, housing problem-solving, and/or other SSVF assistance as indicated.*

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) *Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide*

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

## Principles of SSVF Homelessness Prevention

SSVF services assist Veterans who are at-risk of or are experiencing literal homelessness by providing a range of supportive services and financial assistance designed to facilitate safe, sustainable housing solutions. SSVF's [core concepts](#) include a commitment to Housing First practices, ensuring client choice and service orientation, responding to housing crises using trauma-informed, crisis-oriented interventions, and ensuring services are provided as-needed and in a progressive, individualized manner.

Homelessness and housing instability can cause significant stress and effects similar to other traumatic experiences. Many Veterans facing homelessness have also experienced other trauma related to their military service and/or other personal situations. Consequently, SSVF services should be grounded in basic principles and practices consistent with evidence-based, trauma-informed care, such as establishing a welcoming, safe space and being explicit about the purpose of screening and why certain questions are being asked. This is especially important during the initial engagement with a Veteran during SSVF program screening and intake. ***It is essential to ensure that the screening does not cause further stress to Veterans during a housing crisis.*** Therefore, SSVF staff should understand and demonstrate basic competency in conducting trauma-informed screening and assistance before they begin providing initial screening for Veterans and administering the ***HP Screening Tool***.

Homelessness prevention service are not the same as eviction prevention – SSVF aims to identify those Veterans who will become *literally* homeless (i.e., will need shelter or transitional housing to avoid being unsheltered) within the next month “but for” SSVF assistance, even if that assistance is only focused on coordinating other resources or mediating landlord/familial relationships. At minimum, however, SSVF grantees should assist every Veteran seeking housing assistance with immediate, trauma-informed engagement, screening, and basic housing problem-solving support, and help to access other assistance to address housing needs from SSVF and/or other VA and community resources.

SSVF grantees must be prepared to engage, screen, and provide same day enrollment and assistance for all eligible Veterans who anticipate becoming literally homeless in the next 31 days, with additional focus and immediate support for those facing homelessness in the next 72 hours. This means some Veteran households who are determined eligible (per Stage 1, described below) can be immediately enrolled in SSVF HP services even if they are not a priority for other, more limited SSVF temporary financial assistance (as determined per Stage 2, described below). This ensures all Veterans who meet basic eligibility are supported in resolving their immediate housing crisis and can be assisted in addressing longer term housing stabilization needs, whether through SSVF or another Veteran or community resource.

Grantees are encouraged to read other research and guidance related to Homelessness Prevention, such as [HUD's Homelessness Prevention](#) guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## SSVF HP Screening Form Parts

The initial screening process for SSVF homelessness prevention includes two “Stages” as reflected in the ***HP Screening Tool***:

- **Stage 1: Initial Eligibility and Enrollment**
  - *Initial screening* should occur first with a focus on establishing eligibility required for SSVF HP enrollment specific to three factors: *Veteran status, household income, and imminent risk of literal homelessness within 31 days*. Imminent risk may be established based on the Veteran's initial self-reported

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

## Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

circumstances that indicate imminent housing loss (within 31 days), and their perceived lack of resources and safe, appropriate housing options, with the understanding the Veteran believes they may experience literal homelessness in 31 days or less “but for” SSVF assistance.

- SSVF may enroll an eligible Veteran immediately if basic eligibility criteria are met based on the initial screening and minimal required documentation, as described in the [SSVF Program Guide](#). **For imminent risk of homelessness within 31 days, SSVF Programs may rely on a Veteran’s initial self-report of their housing circumstances and available options and resources for initial Stage 1 eligibility documentation purposes.**
- Immediate enrollment should occur even if only relatively light touch services and assistance is needed or available, including mediation and basic services, Rapid Resolution services, legal services, housing case management, benefit assistance, health care navigation assistance, and/or information and assistance accessing other types of financial assistance or housing supports in the community.
- *Housing Problem Solving strategies and, depending on Veteran circumstances, SSVF Rapid Resolution services*, should immediately follow initial Stage 1 eligibility screening. These immediate interventions use an explorative, organic process to better understand the nuances of a Veteran’s housing situation, viable housing options and resources, and allow staff to determine if targeted mediation, conflict resolution and referral services and/or financial assistance can resolve the presenting housing crisis. While housing problem solving is called out specifically here, the conversation and Veteran-centered planning strategies are not linear and should continue over the course of completing the screening and throughout the Veteran’s interactions and enrollment in SSVF. Veterans who are enrolled based *only* on meeting Stage 1 eligibility (i.e., do not meet Stage 2 threshold score) may be provided all forms of SSVF HP assistance apart from temporary financial assistance (TFA).

### ● **Stage 2: Prioritization and Threshold Screening**

- The second part of the **HP Screening Tool** is used to screen Veterans for specific housing barriers and vulnerabilities that indicate higher potential risk for literal homelessness and/or higher risk for *prolonged* literal homelessness and greater harm, if literal homelessness is not otherwise prevented.
- SSVF Grantees must be able to fully meet local demand for Rapid Rehousing assistance among literally homeless Veterans and use remaining funding for Homelessness Prevention assistance. Stage 2 of the **SSVF HP Screening Tool** allows grantees with limited resources for HP to prioritize temporary financial assistance for more vulnerable at-risk Veterans.
- The Stage 2 Threshold Score is determined locally based on local RRH demand and the grantee’s remaining capacity to serve at-risk Veterans, particularly with robust TFA (arrear, rental assistance). For more information, please see the link to SSVF Homeless Prevention Screener Threshold Guidance September 2021
- Veteran households who pass the Grantee’s Stage 2 Threshold Score may be provided, as needed and where the grantee has capacity, the full suite of SSVF HP services, including TFA.
- In some situations, a Veteran may not pass the grantee’s Threshold Score at the first screening but may later pass the threshold score as conditions change or more becomes known about the Veteran. Grantees are allowed and encouraged to review changing conditions, update the Stage 2 screening, and provide the full suite of HP services should the Veteran household pass the Stage 2 threshold score at a later date if circumstances change.

**Regardless of whether a Veteran qualifies for services, it is essential to engage in a conversation to explore potential resources that may be available to support them in resolving their housing crisis.** Staff conducting the screening should have extensive knowledge of local community resources, the local coordinated entry system and process, and provide individualized assistance to access available resources (“warm handoffs”) when needed and desired. *No Veteran*

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

experiencing a housing crisis should be turned away from SSVF without support to access other community resources, including local coordinated entry processes for homeless assistance when necessary and to avoid unsheltered homelessness.

## Minimum Staff Core Competencies and Training

When conducting the initial screening, SSVF protocols and staff approaches must adhere to trauma-informed care principles that support Veteran safety; are transparent and build trust; foster Veteran choice, autonomy, and empowerment; and are [culturally](#), historically and gender-identity appropriate. For an overview and discussion of these principles, see [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#) (p. 15).<sup>1</sup>

To conduct SSVF screening and assessment consistent with trauma-informed principles, staff should receive training and demonstrate competency in the following basic crisis intervention skills:

- **Establishing rapport and demonstrating empathy** – This includes identifying who you are, using initial statements to help Veterans feel at-ease (e.g., “How can I help you today?”), minimal encouragers, and supportive statements that convey attention, understanding (e.g., “I hear you.”), and sensitivity indicating you are trying to understand how each Veteran is doing currently and how they are experiencing the housing crisis.
- **Calming skills** – These are things you can do if the Veteran is showing extreme fear or panic or is too upset, agitated, or disoriented to talk, including helping the Veteran focus and providing a supportive environment (e.g., offering something to drink).
- **Active listening, paraphrasing, and validating feelings** – This involves using specific verbal and nonverbal means to communicate listening, attention, openness, and safety (e.g., occasional head nodding, facial expressions indicating concern and interest, and avoiding physical barriers such as desks that create a feeling of formality). This also includes paraphrasing Veteran statements to show understanding of what Veterans are expressing verbally and non-verbally without interpretation or speculation, and reassuring Veterans that their reactions and feelings are normal and understandable.
- **Transparency, engagement, and closing skills** – This includes helping Veterans understand basic SSVF screening and assessment process, as well as helping Veterans predict and prepare for what will happen following screening and assessment by providing a clear and easily understandable explanation of specific next steps that need to happen to access and receive assistance to resolve the housing crisis as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup>

### Understanding Military Culture and Military-Related Trauma

- [Military Culture: “What NOT to do”](#)
- [https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/military\\_white\\_paper\\_final.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/military_white_paper_final.pdf)
- [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd\\_basics.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd_basics.asp)
- <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/mst/MST-Overview-for-Civilian-Providers.pdf>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome/index.asp>

### Racial Trauma and Trauma-Informed Services

- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Racial Trauma and Trauma-Informed Services](#)

### Crisis Intervention Skills

- [LMS Training Series](#) (to be developed)  
Staff should receive training and demonstrate competency in the following basic crisis intervention skills through completion of the corresponding LMS videos<sup>3</sup>
  - *Establishing rapport and demonstrating empathy*

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

- Calming skills
- Active listening and validating feelings
- Transparency, engagement, and closing skills
- Mediation Skills

## Housing Problem Solving, Rapid Resolution Enrollment and Services

- [SSVF Rapid Resolution Compliance Guide](#)
- [HUD Housing Problem Solving Overview](#)
- [SSVF Rapid Resolution Compliance and Allowable Costs](#)
- Housing Problem Solving, Rapid Resolution and Diversion trainings on [SSVF University](#) and the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#).

To ensure that new and existing SSVF staff are prepared to successfully administer the SSVF **HP Screening Tool**, training and guidance should be reviewed or completed before administering this tool. This outline is not exhaustive and will be updated over time; however, SSVF grantees must ensure a proactive approach to staff training is embedded throughout all aspects of the program.

**Note:** Training materials and expectations will be distributed and delivered to SSVF Grantees on an ongoing basis.

## SSVF HP Screening Form Discussion Pointers

The information contained in this section is not comprehensive and additional training is anticipated. However, the core elements here are useful for framing and are integral to a trauma-informed screening process

- 1) **Providing Information and education** about SSVF, prevention and homeless assistance resources, VA services and benefits, and other resources that may be helpful to Veterans. This includes helping Veterans understand the screening process and its purpose, limitations of SSVF services, documentation requirements and important emergency or outreach contact information.
- 2) **Offering Emotional support and reassurance** to help Veterans feel at-ease, safe, and understood. This includes helping Veterans understand and prepare for any next steps to increase clarity and understanding.
- 3) **Creating a Linkage to resources** and actively supporting Veterans who may be unsure, reluctant, or unable to quickly connect to resources on their own.

The following are some tips on best practices for pausing, engaging in self-reflection, and thinking through next steps in the screening process:

- **Be aware:** Unconscious bias and implicit racism have resulted in disparities within our systems and institutions. When working with Veterans, consistently ask oneself: Would I be reacting (thinking, feeling) the same way no matter who the Veteran is or what the situation is? How have current and historic inequities contributed to this individual Veteran's situation, needs, and preferences?
- **Listen with empathy:** Before asking a person to disclose more or a specific detail, ask oneself: Am I curious or concerned? Is knowing this information critical to the assessment process? Acknowledge that sharing personal information and details sometimes results in an emotional toll. Clarify details only to support the process or help determine where to refer a Veteran for additional support.
- **Check Assumptions:** Do not assume the gender, sexuality, race, or other identities of the Veteran.
- **Seek to Empower:** SSVF Grantees are responsible for ensuring Veteran choice and self-determination help drive the housing intervention. Staff must support Veterans in their goals, rather than goals imposed by the program.

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

## Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

- Look for Creative Options:** Some Veterans may have natural support systems or other options available that SSVF grantees can assist with. Some of these options may be temporary in nature but allow the Veteran and the SSVF grantee the time and space to establish a longer-term housing plan and options.

The chart below has two columns. The first provides the context and details on the information which is obtained via the **HP Screening Tool**. This information **should not be shared with the Veteran** but can provide clarity for the staff administering the tool. The second column provides trauma-informed framing and language for the discussion with the Veteran.

### **Stage 1: Initial Eligibility Screening**

“Yes” responses to *all three* eligibility domains are required for initial SSVF HP eligibility and enrollment in SSVF with Rapid Resolution services (limited TFA based on RR allowable activities)

Information for SSVF Grantee/Screeener	Example Prompts to Veteran
<p><b><u>For Stage 1 Initial Eligibility Screening</u></b></p>	<p><i>I need to ask you some questions to determine whether you are eligible to receive SSVF program services.</i></p> <p><i>Regardless of your eligibility for this program, I can help you connect to other resources and think through your next steps.</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any questions?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 1: Veteran Status</b></p> <p><b>Factor one must be verified via DD-214 or Squares 2.0</b></p> <p>Applicant household must either be a Veteran or a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. A Veteran is defined as “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released there from. Veteran excludes a person who received a dishonorable discharge from the Armed Forces or was discharged or dismissed from the Armed Forces by reason of the sentence of a general court-martial. The length of service restrictions under 38 U.S.C. 5303A do not apply.”</p>	<p><i>First, I will need to verify that your discharge status, Income level, and housing status match the eligibility requirements for enrollment in the SSVF program.</i></p> <p><i>Can I have some information so I can check your eligibility for SSVF? This should only take a moment.</i></p> <p>If Veteran has already been verified, let them know what their records show.</p>
<p><b>Factor 2: Very Low-Income Status (50% Area Medium Income)</b></p> <p><b>Proof of Income must be provided for all household members</b></p>	<p><i>What is your current household income? This could include employment, or any cash benefits for household members.</i></p> <p><i>Because this program focuses on Veterans and their families who are very low income, we will need to include</i></p>

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

<p>Applicant household gross annual income must be less than 50% of area median income based on the income limits most recently published at: <a href="http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html">http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html</a></p>	<p><i>the income level of everyone who is living with you now, or will be living with you once you find housing.</i></p> <p><i>How many total people (adults and children) are part of your household and will continue living with you?</i></p> <p><i>*Please see the SSVF Program Guide for detailed instructions on counting income for the purposes of program eligibility.</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 3: Imminently At-Risk of Literal Homelessness</b></p> <p>Does the Veteran household indicate they will experience literal homeless with no alternative safe housing options within the next 31 days but for SSVF assistance (i.e., will enter emergency shelter, including EHA and Safe Haven, transitional housing, or a place not meant for human habitation)?</p>	<p><i>Can you share information about where you currently live? Is this where you usually stay? Do you have a lease or other written agreement for the place where you're staying or where you usually stay?</i></p> <p><i>Is your current housing safe for you? If it's not safe, is there another safe place you can stay?</i></p> <p><i>How many days do you have until you lose your housing or have nowhere else safe to stay, even if temporarily? Do you feel you might be without a place to stay in the next month and will need emergency shelter if you don't get help?</i></p> <p>Note: if the Veteran is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and they have nowhere else safe to stay tonight, they are considered literally homeless and should be immediately supported in accessing appropriate shelter and SSVF Rapid Rehousing or other housing assistance.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 1 INITIAL ELIGIBILITY DISPOSITION</b></p> <p><b>If Veteran is eligible:</b></p>	<p><i>You are eligible for the SSVF homelessness prevention assistance, which means we can enroll you in the program. We do not yet know how much assistance we can offer but if we enroll you, we can at minimum support you with next steps, either with our program or other community resources.</i></p>
<p><b>If Veteran is NOT eligible:</b></p>	<p><i>Although your current situation means you are not eligible for the SSVF program at this time because....., let's take a few minutes and talk about your goals and needs, and some other options outside of the SSVF program.</i></p>

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

## Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

### Housing Problem Solving and Rapid Resolution

#### Information for SSVF Grantee/Screeners

This conversation should be organic, and Veteran led, but should capture the following:

Notes on current housing situation and why Veteran is requesting assistance

Barriers identified to maintaining current housing situation

Housing and financial resources/opportunities identified

Would this Veteran benefit from eligible SSVF Rapid Resolution services, such as mediation with a friend or family member, landlord mediation, coordination of other housing resources or targeted TFA based on allowable RR costs?

If yes, following the prompts to continue the conversation

#### Example Prompts to Veteran

##### **Questions to weave into a conversation:**

*Let's talk more about your housing situation and members of your household who are currently with you. First, I want you to know that everything you share is confidential and you can choose to not answer any question if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. These questions will help me better understand your current housing situation, your needs and other housing options that might be available. Part of what I'm going to ask about are other, safe housing options you may have, including temporary ones you might have while we help you obtain more stable housing.*

*If you need to leave your current housing situation (including if you're staying somewhere that's not safe for you/your family), what kind of housing are you looking for, and how much space do you need? Then we can see what is available. That way, you can decide what will or won't work for you.*

*Lets' talk about your specific housing needs, and what you might work or not work for you:*

*Are you living now as a single parent? Do you have any minor children who will be living with you and if so, are any of them under age 6 or need special care? What does that look like?*

*Since it may mean you need additional housing options, is anyone in your household pregnant?*

*As you consider how many children will be living with you & their age/gender mix, how many bedrooms will you need?*

*Let's talk about other housing options you may have – like staying with a friend or family member where you would feel safe, stable – at least for the time being, and welcome. Take a moment to think about friends and relatives who might be able to help out, even for a little bit. Would those options change if you could contribute to cover household expenses?*



**Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)  
Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide**

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

	<p><i>Given your current housing situation, what you would consider a reasonable vs unreasonable housing option for you at this time?</i></p> <p><i>If it would mean you could stay in your current housing, are you open to someone negotiating with your landlord on your behalf?</i></p> <p><i>Have you ever had a roommate before? Would you be willing to live with someone else if it helped you afford your current/new housing situation?</i></p>
<p>If yes, collect names and phone numbers here:</p>	
<p>What was the outcome of your conversation? Please indicate initial reactions and expectations for the Veteran’s service needs. Use active listening to share observations with the Veteran. Note any additional service needs or potential options that come up in the conversation. Use responses gathered to populate factors in Stage 2.</p>	<p><i>From our conversation, it sounds like you...</i></p>

**Stage 2: Prioritization and Threshold Screening**

The factors below are used to further target and prioritize homelessness prevention resources when there is insufficient program funding or capacity to fully assist all eligible or enrolled households imminently at-risk of literal homelessness within 31 days "but for" assistance. This section should be completed with all Veterans who qualify via the Stage 1 eligibility disposition and completed again should conditions change during the housing crisis. Some information gathered may already be known based on the initial Stage 1 Screening, HMIS or community data, and other information you have gathered.

NOTE: The YES/NO factors below are framed in such a way that a YES answer means that the Veteran the points identified in the screening tool for the given factor and a NO means they do not.

<p align="center"><b>Information for SSVF Grantee/Screener</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Prompts To Veteran</b></p>
<p><b><u>For Stage 2: Prioritization and Threshold Screening</u></b></p> <p>Confirm any information already collected so the Veteran does not have to repeat anything already known or available.</p>	<p><i>These questions are not meant to exclude you from services, but rather to help us understand the extent to which we can assist, particularly with financial assistance. Due to some limitations on funding, we cannot offer things like arrears or rental assistance to all Veterans, but the following questions will give us a little more information so we can best support you directly or help you access another local resource to prevent you from losing your current housing or otherwise becoming homelessness. I understand some of this information is sensitive, but</i></p>

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

	<p><i>please know that all of it essential for us to know how best to help you. Some of the information I'm going to ask about will also help me understand what a potential landlord might find out that can work against you. This will help me figure out what resources and landlords I might be able to connect you with that are a good match. No matter what your experience is and what you share with me, I'll do everything I can to help you access housing assistance and ensure you are safe tonight and moving forward.</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 1:</b> Housing loss expected within  Information obtained in Stage 1 screening, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Factor 2:</b> Current household income  Information obtained in Stage 1 screening, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Factor 3:</b> Past Experience of Homelessness (street/shelter/transitional housing) (any adult)"  This factor determines whether the household has any past history of homelessness, including as a child. Due to the predictive nature, those with a past history of homelessness are prioritized for assistance.</p>	<p><i>Have you or any adult in your household ever been homeless? This would include sleeping on the streets, in shelter, or in a place not meant for sleeping, such as an abandoned building? This could include being homelessness as a child or young adult.</i></p> <p><i>When was the last time you were homeless?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 4a:</b> Is not the current leaseholder/renter of the unit  Information obtained in Stage 1 screening, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Factor 4b:</b> Has never been a leaseholder/renter of a unit.  This question is only asked if the Veteran reports they are not a current leaseholder/renter.</p>	<p><i>Since age 18, have you had a lease in your name?</i></p>

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

<p><b>Factor 5:</b> Currently at risk of losing a tenant-based housing subsidy or housing in a subsidized building or unit (household)</p> <p>If information usually obtained in Stage 1 screening or housing problem-solving conversation, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran unless needed.</p> <p>If not obtained, follow prompt.</p>	<p><i>Are you currently leasing a rental unit that is subsidized? That is, do you pay less rent due to your income?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 6:</b> Rental evictions within past 7 years (adults)</p>	<p><i>Have you been evicted or has a landlord tried to evict you from a place you stayed anytime in the last 7 years? This could include getting a formal eviction notice from a landlord, going to court for an eviction, being told by a judge to move, and/or where your landlord or someone removed your belongings from your home due to a court order. How many times has this happened to you?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 7a:</b> Criminal record for arson, drug dealing or manufacture, or offense against persons or property (adults)</p>	<p><i>Have you had or any of the adults in your household ever been arrested for arson, drug dealing or manufacturing, or offenses against people or property? This could include times where you or a household member was arrested, but weren't convicted. If you're not sure we can also work with you to check public records, which would help us navigate housing options as we go along.</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 7b:</b> Incarcerated as adult (any adults)</p>	<p><i>Have you and/or any other adult in your household spent any time in jail or prison as an adult?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 7c:</b> Discharged from jail or prison within last six months after incarceration of 90 days or more (adults)</p> <p>This question is only asked if the answer to question 7b is yes.</p>	<p><i>Did you spend any time in jail or prison in the last six months?</i></p> <p><i>If yes, how long were you in jail or prison?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 7d:</b> Registered sex offender (any HH members)</p>	<p><i>Is anyone in your household required to register with local law enforcement as a sex offender?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 8:</b> Disabling condition (physical health, mental health, substance use) (HoH)</p> <p>This question seeks to determine disability status only for the head of household. In this instance, a disabling condition is defined as: A diagnosable substance use disorder; a serious mental illness; a developmental disability or a chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions.</p>	<p><i>Do you have a severe and ongoing disability or health condition that affects your ability to work and/or keep your housing? This could include a substance use disorder, a serious mental illness, a developmental disability and/or a chronic physical illness.</i></p>

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

<p>Note: households are not expected to provide a specific diagnosis, details about their disabling condition, or verification or proof for this factor. Self-report of a disabling condition that meets the definition above is adequate for scoring.</p>	
<p><b>Factor 9a:</b> Currently pregnant (any household member)</p> <p>If information was obtained in Stage 1 screening conversation, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p> <p>If not obtained, follow prompt.</p>	<p><i>Is anyone in your household currently pregnant?</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 9b:</b> Single parent/guardian household with minor children.</p> <p>Information obtained in Stage 1 screening conversation, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Factor 9c:</b> Household includes young children (age six or under), or a child who requires significant care</p> <p>Information obtained in Stage 1 screening conversation, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p> <p>If not obtained, follow prompt.</p>	<p><i>Do you have any minor children who will be living with you and, if so, are any of them age 6 or younger? Do any children need significant care on a daily basis from you, another household member, or someone else? This could be because the child is disabled or has needs that require a significant amount of time and attention, beyond other children of a similar age.</i></p>
<p><b>Factor 9d:</b> Household size of 5 or more requiring at least 3 bedrooms (due to age/gender mix)</p> <p>Information obtained in Stage 1 screening, populate without requesting additional information from the Veteran.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Factor 10:</b> Household includes one or more members of an overrepresented group in the homelessness system when compared to the general population. This assessment can be based on nationwide data that demonstrates the overrepresentation of certain groups in the homelessness systems as outlined below: Nationwide data demonstrates that the following racial and ethnic groups are overrepresented in the homelessness system:<sup>45</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> American Indian, Alaska Native, Indigenous</li> </ul>	<p><i>Do you identify as a Black, Indigenous/Native, and/or a Person of Color who has been discriminated against because of your race or ethnicity?</i></p>

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native/Pacific Islander

In addition, national data shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals are twice as likely as the general population to have experienced homelessness in their lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, if the Veteran identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning, they should receive points on this question.

CoCs are encouraged to use local data to better understand disparities that exist in their community, but can base their determination on the information provided above. If the community does not currently have data available, the following resource may be useful to better understand local racial demographics in the homelessness system.

### CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool (the current version uses 2019 PIT data)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5787/coc-analysis-tool-race-and-ethnicity/>

The tool compares race and ethnicity for the general population, people in poverty and people counted in the 2019 PIT. It includes Veteran PIT data but Veteran breakdown not available for the general population or people in poverty

Due to a lack of robust data on LGBT status in the homelessness system, there is not currently a tool to support local analysis of sexual orientation and gender identity of those experiencing homelessness. Communities should use local data exists if it exists or defer to national overrepresentation to score this factor.

Notes: Gathering information about a past history of discrimination is helpful to understanding a Veteran's experience and their needs, but points should be awarded **only** includes household members from groups that have been historically marginalized by race or ethnicity:

Black, American Indian, Alaska Native, Indigenous, Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and other persons of color

*Have you ever been discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?*

**Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)**  
**Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide**

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

<p>and/or</p> <p>by sexual orientation or gender identity (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer).</p> <p>If a Veterans identifies both as a member of the identified racial or ethnic groups AND as LGBTQ, the maximum points available for this factor is 7.</p> <p><b>If the Veteran has shared their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or gender identity during another point in the interview, you do not need to ask this question again.</b></p>	
<p><b>Total Score</b></p> <p>This tool is scored on a scale of 0-100. Calculate total score to determine if Veteran meets local threshold score. The score is not shared with the Veteran but helps to determine currently eligibility for TFA for qualifying Veterans.</p> <p>Do not share the Veterans score, but relay how you can assist them based on the score.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>If Veteran qualifies for TFA:</p>	<p><i>Based on your responses, you may qualify for financial assistance if needed.</i></p>
<p>If Veteran does not qualify for TFA:</p>	<p><i>Based on your responses, you're not eligible for financial assistance at this time. However, I am still here to help you with other services we offer and getting connected to other resources. Here's how I can continue to support you...</i></p>
<p><b>Disposition</b></p> <p>Information recorded in the screening form must be supported by additional documentation, as indicated. Forms must be signed and dated by the authorized SSVF staff person completing the form, and by an SSVF program supervisor.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) *Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide*

*Published September 2021, Updated October 2023*

## Appendix A Key Terms and Glossary

- **Eligibility:** Meeting the basic conditions and requirements for enrollment into the SSVF Program. For SSVF Homelessness Prevention this includes Veteran Status, Income Eligibility, and indication of housing loss leading to literal homelessness in the next 30 days.
- **Screening:** The process for evaluating the possible presence of a particular problem (e.g., imminent risk of housing loss and homelessness). The outcome is normally a simple yes or no.<sup>4</sup> For SSVF, screening occurs as part of the process for determining if a household meets the basic eligibility requirements for the SSVF Program, as well as any prioritization factors. For SSVF Homelessness Prevention, this is established using the HP screening tool.
- **Assessment:** The process for defining the nature of the presenting problem, determining specific needs, and the appropriate response and assistance to be offered. For SSVF, assessment occurs during the process of using Housing Problem Solving approaches to further understand a Veteran’s housing situation and other critical needs to determine the level of assistance a household can or should receive from the SSVF Program.
- **Prioritization:** The use of data and other factors to prioritize Veterans for greater levels of services and financial assistance based on urgency, vulnerability (current or potential if homelessness is not prevented), equity, resource availability, and grantee capacity. The Stage 2 Prioritization Screening and Threshold Score is a key means to determine the type and intensity of SSVF Homelessness Prevention services allowable for a given Veteran household.
- **Housing Problem Solving:** Strategies and services that assist households to use their strengths, support networks, and community resources to find safe, decent and appropriate housing as soon as possible outside of the homeless crisis response system, even if temporarily. These strategies should be used with everyone interacting with the homelessness services system, often more than once and as conditions change. Housing Problem Solving is a core set of strategies and features that should be employed throughout the homeless crisis response system.
- **Diversion:** Diversion strategies and practices seek to assist people to resolve their immediate housing crisis by accessing a safe and appropriate housing alternative versus entering emergency shelter or otherwise staying in a place not meant for human habitation that night. This typically occurs at the point people request emergency services, such as entry into emergency shelter, or could take place in a day center or through outreach before a person spends a night unsheltered. A household is “diverted” if they present for emergency housing assistance and are instead supported and able to identify a safe and appropriate alternative to literal homelessness.
- **Rapid Exit:** Rapid exit strategies are appropriate after a household has entered emergency shelter or stayed in an unsheltered setting and serves to help them move as quickly as possible back into safe, appropriate temporary or permanent housing with the support of services and a minimal level of financial assistance. A household is “rapidly exited” if they have entered literal homelessness are supported in quickly accessing other safe alternatives, even if temporary, to remaining in emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation.
- **Homelessness Prevention:** Homelessness prevention strategies represent a wide array of efforts to prevent housing crises from occurring and to prevent people who face such crises from experiencing homelessness. Targeted homelessness prevention (i.e., SSVF) is a type of secondary prevention that offers more focused assistance for households who face imminent housing loss and literal homelessness.

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide

Published September 2021, Updated October 2023

- **Rapid Resolution:** Rapid Resolution services are specific SSVF allowable activities and costs associated with employing Housing Problem Solving strategies and limited financial assistance to help Veterans resolve their immediate housing crisis, even if temporarily, and where no current lease is in place. Rapid Resolution activities can be applied in homelessness prevention, diversion, and rapid exit situations.
- **Equity:** Equity is achieved when a person’s race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or gender preference, religion or geography is no longer a predictor of outcomes. SSVF Grantees are required to review program and community data to ensure equitable access to and delivery of services and to employ strategies that promote equitable practices, protocol, and decision-making authority.
- **Trauma:** Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Trauma can affect people of every race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender, psychosocial background, and geographic region. A traumatic experience can be a single event, a series of events, and/or a chronic condition (e.g., childhood neglect, domestic violence). Traumas can affect individuals, families, groups, communities, specific cultures, and generations. It generally overwhelms an individual’s or community’s resources to cope, and it often ignites the “fight, flight, or freeze” reaction at the time of the event(s). It frequently produces a sense of fear, vulnerability, and helplessness. Housing insecurity and homelessness, as well as racial trauma, are forms of trauma affecting Veterans and non-Veterans alike. Other forms of trauma experienced by Veterans during their military service can result from exposure to conflict and physical injury and/or due to inter-personal violence, including military sexual trauma (MST).<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 57. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4801. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted in part from SAMHSA’s CCP Trainer’s Guide: Core Content Training. Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program, 2013.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/core-content-trainers-guide.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> IBID

<sup>4</sup> The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> United States Census 2020 Population Estimates, retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/POP010220>

<sup>6</sup> Homelessness Among LGBT Adults in the US, UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, 2020, retrieved from:

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-homelessness-us>

<sup>7</sup> Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Substance Abuse Treatment: Addressing the Specific Needs of Women. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2009. (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 51.) Chapter 4: Screening and Assessment. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK83253/>

<sup>8</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.