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Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency is currently providing services to Veteran households using funds awarded through the **Supportive Services for Veteran Families** grant from the Department of Veteran Affairs, through the **EHA VET DRF** funds provided through the State of Oregon, and through an **Oregon Health Authority Rent Assistance Program** grant for Veterans with severe mental illness (in partnership with Salem Housing Authority). (Please see attached document for more details on these programs).

In providing services to Veteran households experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of becoming homeless we have become more aware of the following gaps in services in our community:

- » Need for longer term rent/utility assistance than SSVF and EHA VET DRF can provide
- » Lack of *affordable* housing
- » Need for supportive housing projects/programs that include subsidized rental units with supportive services such as; mental health providers, employment readiness/placement, supportive case management.
- » Lack of sufficient emergency shelter beds that meet the specific needs of Veterans (i.e. quiet, calm environment, ability to have assistance animals with them)

Additional challenges to Veteran households acquiring long-term housing stability:

- » HUD VASH has limited vouchers available (60 vouchers for Marion & Polk Counties, as of 2-17-16 all vouchers are currently in use)
- » HUD VASH eligibility requirements allow the program to serve a specific segment of the homeless Veteran population
- » Many of the Veterans we see have some type of disability, approximately 40% of the time the individual has not identified that they have a disability so have no diagnosis
- » High incidence of substance use among the Veterans we serve
- » Veterans with apparent mental health issues do not seek support/treatment due to stigma and fear of negative impact on their career and general day to day lives.
- » Need for transportation assistance to consistently get to appointments (medical, housing, mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, housing appointments)
- » Lack of access to VA drug and alcohol assessments and treatment in the Veterans' home community
- » Oregon National Guard service members who have been deployed for catastrophe clean-up/support, firefighting, etc. do not qualify for Veteran benefits because they have not been deployed under title 10 orders, (have not served in a hazard pay zone i.e. Iraq or Afghanistan)



Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA) Veteran Services

1. **EHA VET DRF** – these funds are used to assist Veteran households in Marion and Polk Counties that are experiencing homelessness or that are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. State directed eligibility requirements include; Veteran in the household must have an Honorable discharge, household income must fall below 80% of area median income.

Funds are used to assist eligible households with the following:

- One time/short term rent/utility assistance when the assistance will stabilize the household's housing.
- Rent/utility deposit assistance to help a household obtain permanent housing or move to more affordable housing.

In some instances these funds are leveraged with MWVCAA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and in partnership with HUD VASH to better serve a Veteran household.

2. **SSVF** (Supportive Services for Veteran Families) – These funds are received through a grant from the Veteran's Administration. The funds are used to assist Veteran households in Marion and Polk Counties that are experiencing homelessness or that are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. VA directed eligibility includes; Veteran in the household must have a discharge status that is Other Than Dishonorable, household income must fall below 50% of area median income.

Funds are used to assist eligible households with the following:

- Rent/utility assistance for up to 6 months
- Rent/utility deposit assistance
- Employment readiness/placement services
- Housing placement services
- Intensive case management

3. **OHA (Oregon Health Authority) Rent Assistance Program** – These funds are received through a grant from the Oregon Health Authority and in partnership with the Salem Housing Authority. The funds are used to assist Veteran households in the City of Salem that are experiencing homelessness or that are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Definition of Veteran meets VA definition, must have a discharge status that is Other Than Dishonorable, household income must fall below 80% of area median income, Veteran in the household must have a diagnosed mental health condition that meets the criteria for severe mental illness.

Funds are used to assist eligible households with the following:

- Long term rent/utility assistance
- Rent/utility deposit assistance
- Barrier removal assistance (i.e. application Fees, transportation costs, medication cost)



- Housing placement services
- Intensive case management services
- Peer support services

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency Veteran Services staff also facilitates, and participates in the **Marion-Polk Community Network for Veterans** meeting monthly. The group is made up of representatives from organizations focused on Veteran issues and Veteran services. They are working to identify gaps in services and other issues concerning veterans, to identify solutions to gaps and issues, and to facilitate, and advocate for solutions.

