



Kent County Veterans' Services

836 Fuller Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: 616-632-5722 Fax: 616-632-5723
KCVS@kentcountymi.gov

Emergency Relief Policy

Veterans' Services Advisory Committee

Mel Bauman, Mary Johnson, John Baxter, Shane Scherer, Trish Torres, Michael Blundell, Jill Wolfe

Purpose

Per ***Public Act 214 of 1899***, which is an act to provide relief for honorably discharged veterans and the indigent wives, widows and minor children of such indigent or deceased veterans. The Kent County Emergency Relief Fund is intended for emergency financial or living hardship situations. The Kent County Veterans' Services Advisory Committee will ensure that the resources of the Emergency Relief Fund are used in a manner that is most effective in alleviating and preventing living hardship situations that promote self-reliance and sustainability.

Changes to this Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Kent County Veterans' Services Advisory Committee and Kent County Veterans' Services staff. Any changes to this policy must be approved by a majority vote of the Committee.

Key Definitions

Veteran: For purposes of The Kent County Emergency Relief Fund, a veteran is a person who served either Active Duty, National Guard, or Reserves, and who was discharged or released from duty under honorable conditions. Open to all veterans no restrictions on periods of service as of 01/04/2018.

Proof of Veteran or Active duty status: DD214, NGB22, or Hink from VA Clinic.

Indigent: A applicant is indigent if he/she has no money/property or insufficient money/property available to pay for his/her immediate need such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other emergency financial needs.

Unforeseen Emergent Need: Any emergency as a result of actions not caused by negligent or willful misconduct.

Eligible Dependent: The spouse or the un-married surviving spouse or child less than 18 years of age or permanently disabled before age 18 or parent as allowed by IRS of a veteran who meets the above criteria. The spouse or children of a service member during the continuance of present hostilities and prior to their discharge.

Resident: A veteran is a resident of Kent County if he/she maintains an actual residence in the County and intends to make the County his/her permanent home as verified by appropriate documentation and photo identification.

Proof of Need: Proofs required at time of application may include but are not limited to, Employment layoff notice, Bank foreclosure notice, Rent or Mortgage late notice, Utility shutoff notice, Eviction notice, Repossession notice, Collection notice, Doctor/Dentist statement of need, or other documentation to prove financial need. Documentation must be in writing and verifiable.

Proof of Dependency: Birth certificates, Marriage license, Divorce Decree, Adoption Certificate, Court Order, and Income tax return/IRS guidelines.

Proof of Income: Social Security award. Veterans Administration award of pension, compensation, education or insurance, Employer letter, pay stub, or IRS statement, Unemployment compensation letter, Department of Social Services income, Workers compensation, Child Support.

Proof of Assets: Bank statement or Pay Card payment statement is required to verify assets and spending. Cash on Hand, Checking and Savings Accounts, Investments, Trusts. Assets such as vehicle, personal residence and personal belongings are not counted.

Frequency of Application: The Kent County Veterans' Services Advisory Committee understands that situations may require more than a onetime assist to alleviate or prevent a hardship situation for veterans and their families, therefore, each applicant's situation will be reviewed on a case by case basis. It is not the intent of this fund to provide long term financial assistance, but rather *to alleviate or prevent a long term financial hardship*.

Though discretionary there is no limitation as to the frequency of applications. A qualified applicant may apply as often as a non-reoccurring need occurs. It is the burden of the applicant to seek financial assistance from other resources outside of Kent County Veterans' Services.

Frequency of Assistance: Applicants who have a demonstrated history of frequent assistance requests may be denied or application for assistance may be presented to the Kent County Veterans' Services Advisory Committee in order to receive approval, should the Emergency Relief Coordinator deem it to be warranted.

Application Process

Applicants must complete the following process:

- An entire application must be completed in full every time an applicant applies (*).
** When applying for food the Questions pages do not require being completed, however must capture address, and current income to review for changes.*
- Verify any outstanding bills or emergent situations for which he/she is seeking relief. Once the application is submitted, a Kent County Emergency Relief Coordinator will investigate the request. Failure by the applicant to fully complete the application, and/or provide the required documentation or verification will result in a denial of the applicant's claim. Upon receiving all of the necessary information, the Coordinator shall:
- Complete the investigation and shall approve or deny (fully or partially) the application within 30 days.
- In addition, if the Coordinator investigating a claim shall suspect that a request for Emergency Funding is fraudulent or if the staff member encounters unusual circumstances surrounding a claim, he/she shall not make a ruling on such claims but shall refer the claim to the Kent County Veterans' Services Advisory Committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting for review and decision.
- Beyond the applicant's first application, the Coordinator will review bank statement for spending patterns, refer for budget course, counsel on spending habits and determine decision based partially on income and debt activity.
- Kent County Veterans' Services staff screen every applicant for other issues and, for returning applicants, may require participation in other services including but not limited to behavioral health services, supportive education, and access to additional benefits.
- The Veterans' Services Advisory Committee has the ability to overturn any decisions made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Authorization Levels:

1. Coordinator \$1,500
2. Manager \$3,000
3. Committee Approval > \$3,000

Applications over \$3,000 require full committee review at next meeting or, if the Emergency Relief Coordinator deems necessary, via email. If via email, the application is scanned and emailed to the full Committee.

Food Assistance

G:Emergency Relief Docs/Grocery Voucher/Application (ETC)

Food Voucher

Veteran \$150.00

1st Dependent \$50.00

Each add dependent \$15.00

Maximum: \$250.00

- Maximum use: once every three months.
- 1st time applicants must complete entire application to gather all necessary information.
- Returning applicants should complete the 1st page of the application.
- Included in the GROCERY VOUCHER APPLICATION FILE PACKET.

Vouchers are not provided on the Friday preceding a holiday weekend.

Housing

Mortgage Payments

- A copy of the mortgage and a separate mortgage letter from the lender must be provided.
- The mortgage must be in the applicant's name.
- Applicants may only submit late mortgage payment requests. Future mortgage payments will not be considered.
- No property taxes will be paid.

Security Deposit/ 1ST Month's Rent

Only one security deposit in a *lifetime* not to exceed the current fair market rent value equal to one month's rent will be eligible for consideration.

- HUDVASH applicants must have copy of their voucher and determine if applicant is responsible for rent and security deposit, or just security deposit.
- Applicant must have LEASE agreement, not pre-lease agreement however actual lease. If landlord will not issue a lease without Sec Deposit, a signed letter from the landlord stating potential occupants will suffice.
- Kent County Veterans' Services is not responsible for any situations that arise between Landlord and Tenant. Those parties must resolve. Once payment is made, the payment is final.
- Applicants may apply for assistance for a month-to-month rental agreement if a signed letter of agreement is in place and a copy of the agreement is provided.

Rent to avoid eviction

- Must be facing eviction.
- Unit must be in applicant's name.
- Must be equal to or less than current fair market rent.
- Applicant's rent is (fractioned) only covered, not roommates, friends, etc. This portion of rent will not be paid if payment will not stop the eviction.

FY 2021 Fair Market Rent (to be updated annually):

Efficiency: \$739

One Bedroom: \$817

Two Bedroom: \$994

Three Bedroom: \$1,309

Four Bedroom: \$1,501

Home Repairs

- No repairs due to neglect.
- No general maintenance: painting, carpet, etc.
- Must have two written estimates.
- Applicant must own or have mortgage on home. No rentals.
- Repairs require photo evidence.
- Furnace, water heater etc, must seek assistance through Home Repair Services first.

Bed Bugs & Other Infestations

- Must have two written estimates from licensed exterminators.
- Estimate must have warranty.
- If a multiple unit, all units must be treated, otherwise bugs will return to the source.
- Only one-time treatment per applicant unit.
- Requires written statement identifying that adjoining units are also treated or are not affected and only the applicant's unit will be treated.

Cell Phone and Internet Service

- The applicant must show proof the services are in danger of being shut off.
- The applicant must prove the need for services (such as for employment or school).

Education debt

- The applicant must have had an emergency that created the need to drop out of school creating the debt.
- The applicant must have an acceptance letter stating that if debt is paid then the applicant is free to reenroll for classes.
- NO EDUCATION LOAN DEBT WILL BE PAID.

Dental

- Applicant must provide two written estimates.
- The dental work must be of the nature to provide or prevent health risk issues or be preventing gainful employment.
- Applicant must seek services at Kent County South Clinic 1st. 4700 Kalamazoo Ave SE Kentwood.

Auto Repairs

- No general maintenance (tires, oil, fluid flushes, breaks, shocks struts etc).
- Auto repairs must have two written estimates from licensed mechanics.
- Cost of repairs not to exceed 40% of Kelly Blue Book Value.
- Applicant must have current Michigan DL, Insurance and Registration.
- Applicant must own the vehicle.

Utilities

- Utilities must be in the veteran's name.
- After the first assistance, proof that assistance was sought elsewhere prior to KCVS. A denial letter is required.
- For all rentals, copy of lease required. Only grant veteran's portion.
- A payment history must be obtained from utility company.
- If the applicant is HUDVASH then there must be evidence that the monthly utility assistance payment has been or had been used to pay utilities.
- Emergency assistance may be granted to the amount minus the cost of monthly HUDVASH utility assistance. HUDVASH documentation is required.
- Applicants can be awarded up to three times per twelve months (not calendar) per utility.
- Repetitive utility assistance will be denied.

Bus Passes

- Proof of at least 2 upcoming medical appointments.
And/Or
- Proof of new employment.

Work Clothes/Tools

- Requires letter from employer stating need for tools or clothing and employment verification.
- Need invoice for tools and/or clothing.

****WITH EXCEPTION TO HOME LOANS, NO LOAN DEBT WILL BE PAID****

No Bank Statement

- 1st time applicant’s decision based on evidence in application.
- If applicant returns in the future, they must have a statement.

Appellant Rights

An applicant whose application for assistance has been partially or completely denied by the Kent County Veterans’ Services office or Advisory Committee may take the following action:

1. File an appeal in writing to the Committee within ten days after receiving notice of denial.
2. The appeal will be considered at the next Veterans’ Services Advisory Committee meeting. Meetings are held monthly. The applicant may appear in person for the Committee’s review if is requested in their appeal. No walk-in appeals will be accepted.

The decision of the Veterans’ Services Advisory Committee is final.

Adopted and approved for policy:

Date: _____

Kent County Veterans’ Services Committee Chair: _____

Chair Signature: _____