

ANTRIM COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE POLICIES

PART I

VETERANS EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND POLICY

AUTHORITY

Public Act 192 of 1953

PURPOSE

The Antrim County Veterans Emergency Relief Fund (hereafter referred to as "Relief Fund") is intended to provide emergency financial assistance to honorably discharged veterans and/or their legal dependents who meet the prescribed eligibility requirements.

The Veterans' Relief Fund was created under Public Act 214 of 1899 and reads in part "AN ACT to provide relief outside of the soldiers' home for honorably discharged indigent soldiers, sailors, marines, nurses and members of women's auxiliaries and the indigent wives, widows and minor children of such indigent or deceased soldiers, sailors, marines, nurses and members of women's auxiliaries..." Part 35.22, Sec.2. (1) reads, "The judge of probate in each county shall appoint 3 veterans...who are residents of the county...to a commission to be known as the 'soldiers' relief commission' of the county, with the powers and duties as provided in this act." County Department of Veterans Affairs' Public Act 192 of 1953 was later enacted and reads in part "AN ACT to create a county department of veterans' affairs in certain counties, and to prescribe its powers and duties; and to transfer the powers and duties of the soldiers' relief commission in such counties." Antrim County adopted Public Act 192 of 1953 on November 14, 1985 and thereby transferred the powers of the Soldiers' Relief Commission to the Antrim County Veterans Affairs Committee (ACVAC). One of the powers and duties transferred to the ACVAC as written in Public 214 is "...to determine the amount necessary for aid and relief to be granted..." and "...determine not only the sum to be paid, but the manner of paying the same, and may discontinue the payment of such relief in their discretion."

General Definition of Need

When an eligible applicant is unable to temporarily provide the basic necessities of life in our society without causing a hardship, a situation for a possible Relief Fund grant exists. The assistance must be essential and not for the relief of an inconvenience, or the purchase of want/desire. The key factor in determining whether or not a grant is justified is the ability of the applicant to manage the obligation for which aid is requested after a grant is made. An emergent need is defined as a circumstance which causes a temporary financial emergency or hardship that a grant will resolve. If there is no reasonable expectation that the Relief Fund grant will enable

the applicant to resume his/her responsibility then aid is not appropriate. Care must be taken to insure that Relief Fund resources are expended wisely and judiciously. If an applicant's financial situation creates repetitive emergencies/hardships or appears chronic in nature, the ACVAC must refer the applicant to other resources designed to address those needs. In addition, the applicant should attempt to resolve the emergency or hardship through every reasonable means available prior to applying to the Relief Fund for assistance.

Veteran Eligibility

For the purpose of the Antrim County Veterans Relief Fund, a veteran is a person who served a minimum of 90 days in the active military forces (other than active duty for training) and who was discharged or released from active duty under honorable conditions. Veterans who served in more than one period of active service may combine their active duty dates to satisfy the 90 day requirement. Only the last separation certificate (DD214) will be considered to determine character of service.

OR

A person separated from military service prior to completion of 90 consecutive days of honorable service as a result of a physical or mental disability incurred in the line of duty, or aggravation of a pre-existing disability while on active duty.

Note: ACVAC members are not eligible to make application for grants while a member of the committee and for a period of six months after membership on the committee ceases.

Resident

A veteran is considered a resident of Antrim County if he/she has maintained an actual residence in the county for a minimum of six months as verified by appropriate documentation. Appropriate documentation may include proof of property ownership, driver's license, car registration, utility bills in the applicant's name, etc. In the case of a veteran living in a half-way house, participating in a re-entry program or other such programs as mandated by a court order, assistance is at the discretion of the ACVAC and considered on a case by case basis.

Legal Dependents

Legal dependents are defined as a person who depends on the veteran for support and relies on the veteran for normal daily sustenance, such as spouse, child or legally adopted child. The unremarried widow(er) of a veteran and minor children are considered legal dependents and therefore eligibility exists. Parents of a veteran are not considered legal dependents for Relief Fund purposes. Legal dependency of a child shall cease upon emancipation, marriage of the child or when the child reaches the age of 18. Minor children of a divorced veteran shall be considered legal dependents as long as they fulfill the residency requirements.

General Guidelines

A copy of the veterans' DD214 must be provided. In the case of a current spouse making application in the absence of the veteran, proof of marriage must be provided. In the case of a un-remarried surviving spouse making application, death certificate of the veteran and proof of marriage must be provided. Applicant must provide proof of household income and bank statements for the previous three months; itemized list of all household expenses and assets; documentation of the assistance requested, i.e. past due utility bill, shut-off notice, etc. Any other documentation deemed necessary by the ACVAC Liaison, office staff or ACVAC members to support the applicants request must be provided and if not provided, may result in a denial of said request.

Assistance may be granted once in a 12 month period. Exceptions to this rule can be made by the ACVAC on a case by case basis.

Emergency Grocery

Grocery vouchers are given to purchase food, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies and paper household items.

Assistance is generally given in the following amounts: \$100 for the applicant, \$50 for a second family member and \$30 for each additional family member.

Assistance can only be granted once in a 12 month period unless there are subsequent circumstances and solely at the discretion of the ACVAC.

Applicants will be provided information on food pantry and other pertinent agencies.

Utility Shut-off Prevention – Primary Residence

The applicant must provide a past due bill or shut-off notice from the applicable utility company. Necessary utilities include heating fuel, electric or water services. Past due telephone charges may be considered in the event a severe medical condition exists. Utilities must be in the applicants name or in the case of a married couple, the spouse's name.

Rental Assistance – Primary Residence

The applicant must be in imminent danger of eviction and must provide proof in the form of an eviction notice or written proof of past due amount. The applicant must provide a written rental agreement with the property owner, property management firm or lease holder. The rental agreement must be in the applicants name or in the case of a married couple, the spouse's name.

If a security deposit/first month's rent is requested, the applicant must provide written documentation from the landlord stating that the applicant has been approved for occupancy,

the anticipated date of move in, the unit's monthly rental amount and the required deposit amount.

Mortgage or Land Contract Assistance – Primary Residence

The applicant must provide proof of past due mortgage or pending foreclosure documentation. In the case of pending foreclosure, the ACVAC must have verification of the exact amount needed and the date the payment will be accepted by in order to stop foreclosure before making a decision. The applicant must also furnish the current value, purchase price, monthly payment amount, interest rate, balance owed and proof of homeowners insurance. Mortgage must be in the applicants name or in the case of a married couple, the spouse's name.

Home Repairs – Primary Residence

The nature of the emergent need must be clearly stated. The applicant must furnish current value, purchase price, monthly payment amount, interest rate, balance owed and proof of homeowners insurance. The applicant must submit two bids from licensed contractors (with evidence of state license). The ACVAC must decide whether or not the condition of the home warrants a grant.

Property Tax Assistance – Primary Residence

In the case of past due property taxes, the applicant must provide proof of past due amount. Property taxes must be in the applicants name or in the case of a married couple, the spouse's name. In applicable situations, the applicant will be advised to contact their township board of review for current year tax issues.

Vehicle Assistance

In the case of a past due automobile payment, the applicant must provide proof of past due amount or notice of pending repossession. The applicant must also provide a valid Michigan driver's license and proof that vehicle registration and insurance is current.

In the case of vehicle repairs, the applicant must submit two written estimates, proof of current registration, insurance and a valid Michigan driver's license. Only estimates from licensed mechanics will be considered. The ACVAC must decide whether or not the condition of the vehicle warrants a grant.

All documentation provided must be in the applicants name or in the case of a married couple, the spouse's name.

Medical Emergency Assistance

A medical emergency is defined as health problems, both physical and mental, that actually threaten the health or income, or both, of the applicant. Past due notices or contacts from collection agencies do not generally constitute an emergency for Relief Fund purposes. The mere existence of a large bill versus inadequate income does not automatically present a medical emergency. A garnishment of wages or a court order that jeopardizes basic living needs may be sufficient for the presumption of an emergency.

ACVAC members must determine if a reasonable effort has been made to establish a payment schedule, or if there has been a written rejection of coverage/relief from applicable third party payers. ACVAC is the payer of last resort for medical expenses after all other resources have been pursued.

Fines, Fees, etc.

The ACVAC will not authorize any payments for court related fines, fees, lawyers, etc.

Approvals by Antrim County Department of Veterans Affairs (ACDVA) Office Staff

The ACVAC authorizes the office staff to make immediate decisions without a formal application or committee approval for gas cards not to exceed \$50 per given instance. No more than \$100 in gas cards per veteran may be approved by the office staff in one calendar year. In the event that an applicant makes a request exceeding the \$100 per calendar limit, he/she must make formal written application to the ACVAC for a decision.

The ACVAC authorizes the office staff to make immediate decisions with a formal application and without committee approval on grocery voucher requests not to exceed one grant in a calendar year. In the event an applicant makes additional grocery voucher requests, he/she must make formal written application to the ACVAC for a decision.

Office staff will use their best judgement in making immediate decisions for gas cards and grocery vouchers and are NOT authorized to make immediate decisions on any other assistance requests. Notation of office staff approvals must be made in the applicant's file for future reference and the ACVAC will be made aware of said approvals in the next monthly meeting and the same will be recorded in the minutes.

Verbal Authorization by ACVAC Members

If an emergency assistance request needs to be addressed before the next regularly scheduled meeting, verbal authorization may be obtained from the ACVAC members and must be noted on the veterans' application. The application is then reviewed at the next monthly meeting by all committee members and signatures obtained.

One ACVAC member may verbally approve a request for \$200 or less. Requests ranging from \$200 to \$500 require the verbal approval of two ACVAC members. Requests ranging from \$500 to \$1000 require the verbal approval of three ACVAC members. Emergency assistance applications in excess of \$1000 must be reviewed at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting or a special meeting can be called if necessary.

Miscellaneous

In order to better serve veterans and their dependents, it is the responsibility of the ACVAC and the ACDVA to be aware of services offered by other agencies to which applicants may be referred. Referrals to other agencies are encouraged but not required.

The applicant can request a personal appearance in front of the ACVAC to explain the merit of the request, either during the initial decision process or the appeal process.

All payments are made directly to vendors. Payments will never be made directly to the applicant or a member of the applicants' family.

Any applicant who is found to have intentionally falsified information may be ineligible for any future assistance and can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

An applicant whose application for assistance has been either partially or completely denied will receive written notice of the request denied, the amount and the reason for denial. The applicant may file an appeal in writing with the ACVAC within 21 days of the date on the denial notice. The written appeal will be considered at the next ACVAC meeting and that decision shall be final.

PART II COUNTY BURIAL BENEFIT POLICY

Authority

Public Act 235 of 1911

Purpose

To provide a reimbursement of \$300 toward expenses incurred in the burial of eligible honorably discharged members of the armed forces OR their spouses by the county upon receipt of application.

Guidelines

Veteran or spouse must have been a resident of Antrim County at the time of death. Residency is determined by the residence address listed on the death certificate.

Veteran must have served for a period not less than 90 days of active service during a period of war OR was discharged under honorable conditions after serving less than 90 days of active service because of a service-connected disability during a period of war.

Eligibility may exist when the veteran/spouse passes away possessed of an estate, both real and personal, not exceeding the sum of \$40,000.00, over and above all encumbrances. Estate means the ownership of real or personal property at the time of death excluding the decedent's homestead. Homestead means a dwelling or a unit in a multiple unit dwelling and includes a mobile home or trailer coach.

If the deceased did not leave a dependent surviving, but did leave an estate sufficient to meet lawful claims, including burial expenses, then eligibility does not exist.

The application shall be submitted within two years after the date of death of the deceased person.

Payment will be made to the estate of the deceased person, or to the person who incurred the burial expense or to the funeral home if there is an outstanding bill.

These newly created policies are hereby approved and adopted on this thirteenth day of December, 2017 by the Antrim County Veterans Affairs Committee.



Thomas Brown



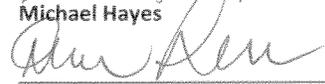
Thomas Sandeen



Roger Simon



Michael Hayes



Donald Seman

Acronym Key
ACDVA - Antrim County Department of Veterans Affairs
ACVAC – Antrim County Veterans Affairs Committee
ACVERF – Antrim County Veterans Emergency Relief Fund
BOC – Antrim County Board of Commissioners