

Gratiot County

Department of Veterans Affairs

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RE: Veterans' Relief Fund VRF (Soldiers and Sailors Relief Fund Program)

PURPOSE: This Memorandum establishes Procedures for the Implementation of the Gratiot County Veterans' Relief Fund (VRF)

AUTHORITY: The Gratiot County Veterans' Relief Fund finds its authority in two State Laws.

Provisions of Act 214 of 1899:

“To be eligible for a grant from the County VRF you must be a legal resident of Gratiot County Michigan at the time of application. You must have been **discharged under honorable conditions**, with at least 1 day of active wartime service. Service during the following periods (or an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service between periods in places such as Grenada, Lebanon, Berlin, Persian Gulf, or the Mayaguez operation) is required: WWI: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918 (if service in Russia then to April 1, 1920); WWII: December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946; Korea: June 27, 1950 to January 31, 1955; Vietnam: August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975; Gulf War: August 1, 1990 to TBA

Provisions of Act 192 of 1953, MCL 35.624: “Sec 4: The county department of veterans affairs shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as shall be necessary in carrying out the provisions of this act and any and all other benefits to which veterans may be entitled as prescribed by the county department of veterans affairs.” In keeping with this provision, and the fact that Gratiot County funds the VRF from the General Fund (not the millage authorized under Act 214 of 1899), the Gratiot County Veterans Committee and the Gratiot County Department of Veterans Affairs have authorized assistance to Peacetime Era Veterans in addition to Wartime Era Veterans.

PROCEDURES:

A. This policy is established pursuant to the referenced state laws, to clarify county policies for the implementation of state law regarding the VRF established to assist **indigent veterans** and the spouses, widows, minor children, and parents of said indigent or deceased veterans. The Veterans Service Officer will determine if the Veteran has been “**discharged under honorable conditions.**” This will include both an “Honorable” Discharge and a “General Under Honorable Conditions” Discharge. NOTE: This determination is made based on the military discharge and does not include those who have been determined to have service “Honorable for VA Purposes.”

B. The Veterans Service Officer taking the application will ensure that the Veteran is truly “indigent.” The Attorney General of Michigan has defined “Indigent” as being both “poor” and/or “needy.” For purposes of the Gratiot County VRF, “**poor**” will be defined as at or below the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Non-Service-Connected Pension Rate. This easily accessible table is adjusted annually by the USDVA, and is set just above the poverty rate. This chart also accounts for the number of legal dependents in a Veteran’s household. For purposes of the Gratiot County VRF, “**needy**” will be defined as having an **Emergent** need that exceeds available household resources. “Emergent” is defined

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as an unforeseen circumstance causing a temporary financial emergency that will be resolved with this monetary grant.

C. The Gratiot County VRF is limited by Budget. Assistance can only be provided up to the amount of funds in the County Budget Line for “Soldiers and Sailors.” When those funds are exhausted no further assistance can be provided without additional funding being authorized by the County Board of Commissioners.

D. Food Vouchers will be provided by other programs (Food4Vets and Gift Cards) and once those programs are exhausted then food vouchers may be granted under this program. Food Vouchers will be provided at a rate of \$100 per Veteran, plus an additional \$50 per dependent; up to a maximum of \$200 per applicant/family. A Veteran can only apply one time in a thirty-day period. Any further restrictions may be established from time to time by the Veterans Committee based on needs and budgetary constraints.

E. Other assistance may be given under VRF, (ie...utilities, car repairs, rent assistance, medical bills, etc...) but limited in monetary award per veteran/family. Due to the minimal budget and other assistance available, the award will be limited up to \$300 per veteran/family and can be used to supplement other assistance programs. The veteran/family will only be eligible for VRF assistance only once during a Fiscal Year.

F. The Veterans Service Officer will take the application either in person, via mail, or over the telephone. The VSO taking the application will determine if the Veteran is eligible by service. If not, the VSO will immediately notify the applicant that the application cannot be approved. If the applicant is eligible by service, the VSO will take the application and consult with the remaining VSOs if time and availability permits.

G. Once the Veteran is approved for assistance, the VSO will submit the appropriate paperwork to the accounting department to send to vendor or issue a Food Voucher. The Food Voucher may only be used at Ric’s grocery store. NOTE: The Voucher will be returned by the Store, with receipt, for payment.

APPEALS: Appeals will be addressed to the Veterans Committee at their next scheduled meeting.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROGRAMS.

The VRF, by law, assists Indigent Veterans. Those Veterans who do not qualify as Indigent, may apply for assistance through the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF) or other government and private programs, as eligible.

This policy is effective upon approval by the Gratiot County Veterans Committee.

Approved: October 20, 2022 at Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee meeting, Gratiot County Courthouse.