

Whatcom County Veterans Program

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Overview of the Program
 - Applicable Regulations
 - Programs and services
 - Expansion since 2018
 - Budget
- Actionable Items

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Program Background and Evolution

2000 - Veterans Assistance Fund collected by
County under state RCW and
administered under the Finance Office

2011 - Veterans Assistance Program Established
- Veterans Specialist hired

2018 - Federal Accreditation of Veterans Specialist

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Veterans Assistance Program

Whatcom County Code

2.152.010 Veterans' assistance program established.

Pursuant to RCW [73.08.010](#) a Whatcom County veterans' assistance program is hereby established for the purpose of ***developing, implementing and administering a comprehensive system of services to aid Whatcom County veterans.*** Programs and services shall include those that meet identified basic needs for individuals, as well as community programs that benefit veterans and their families. (Ord. 2011-033 Exh. A).

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Veterans Assistance Program Funding

2.152.020 Program funding.

The resources of the veterans' assistance fund, authorized by RCW [73.08.080](#), will provide support for the programs and services delivered to Whatcom County indigent veterans. Funding from other sources may also support the veterans' assistance program and may be used to provide services to nonindigent Whatcom County veterans as allowed by state law. (Ord. 2011-033 Exh. A)

Approx. \$300K annually in revenue

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RCW 73.08.005.3

- "Indigent" means a person who is defined as such by the county legislative authority using one or more of the following definitions:
 - (a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, pregnant women assistance benefits, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, medicaid, medical care services, or supplemental security income;
 - (b) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of up to one hundred fifty percent or less of the current federally established poverty level, or receiving an annual income not exceeding a higher qualifying income established by the county legislative authority; or
 - (c) Unable to pay reasonable costs for shelter, food, utilities, and transportation because his or her available funds are insufficient.

***In 2018 County Council voted to annually update the income threshold and set the threshold for 2018 at 60% Area Median Income (AMI)**

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Programs and Services

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Temporary Financial Assistance

- Rental Deposits
- Rental eviction/mortgage foreclosure prevention
- Utility assistance (power, water, gas, trash)
- Limited and unusual medical bills not covered by VA (dentures, large prescription co-pays)
- Car payments, car insurance or bus passes
- Other outstanding one time basic needs (hot water heater replacement, property taxes)

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Financial Counseling

- Conducted for all temporary financial assistance requests
- Provided by our office
 - Focus on promoting independence and self-sufficiency
- Referral to outside agencies for skill building and education
 - FLARE
 - Whatcom Dream
 - Love Inc

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Temporary Financial Assistance (Direct Assistance)

	2000-2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total # of Vets for current year(s):	1497	79	83	75	66	60	91	57
Average amount per veteran	\$929.20	\$754.23	\$985.68	\$975.61	\$881.79	\$1,003.24	\$989.29	\$1,111.97
% of new usage	25%	52%	49%	69%	56%	57%	47%	56%

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Contracted Services

- Housing
- Transportation
- Legal Assistance

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Housing

- 1025 Veteran Households Served by Opportunity Council (2012-2018)
 - 418 Veteran's Funded Eviction Preventions
 - 366 Veteran's Funded Homeless Re-housings
 - 241 Veterans were served by non-Veteran Funding Sources
 - Reached functional zero in Veterans Homelessness

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Transportation

- Whatcom Veterans Transportation Program coordinated by the Opportunity Council (established 2012)
 - 85 veterans served
 - 1196 trips
 - 300 volunteer drivers
- WTA bus passes for workers and students
- Disabled Americans Veterans van to Seattle VA

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Benefits/Legal Assistance

- Contract with LAW Advocates to assist with non-criminal legal concerns
 - SSDI
 - SSI
 - proof of identity
 - Barriers to employment
 - Housing issues

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Other Programs and Services

- DSHS Child Support Officer for veterans
- Reentry services for incarcerated veterans
- VA work-study program
- Community Outreach
- Childcare assistance
- Burial assistance in accordance with RCW 73.08.070
- Case Management, information and referral regardless of income or discharge status
- Connection to VA and local substance use disorder treatment
- State and Federal Representation
 - Co-Chair ACHS Veterans' Committee
 - Member of Representatives' DelBene and Larsen Veterans' Boards

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Community Partners

- **Opportunity Council**
- Whatcom Homeless Service Center
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Disabled American Veterans
- Combat Veterans International
- Northwest Regional Council
- DSHS
- **LAW Advocates**
- Worksource
- Mt. Vernon VA Community Based Outreach Clinic
- Bellingham Vet Center
- Whatcom Community Detox
- Veterans Benefits Administration Seattle Regional Office
- Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

*Bolded partners are contracted with County Veterans Assistance Fund dollars

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Highlights since 2018

- Defined childcare as a basic need
- Increased income eligibility levels in order to meet the need of local veterans
- Veterans Specialist became a nationally certified and accredited Veteran Service officer with the Veterans Administration and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Veterans Specialist serves as Co-Chair of ACHS Veterans Committee
- Created Veterans listserve/email distribution list to better connect the Veteran community
- Hired Ann Beck, the Human Services Supervisor
- Human Services intern investigating ways to improve local VHA healthcare for Veterans

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Veteran Service Officer

- Certified and Accredited through Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Federal Accreditation with the Veterans Benefits Administration
 - Direct communication with VA-no middleman
 - Access to VA database and cloud
- Coordinate Veterans with the VA
 - Medical Benefits
 - Disability pensions and compensation
 - Burial/death benefits
 - Education benefits
 - Discharge upgrades
- Partnered with the Veteran Navigators for monthly community outreach

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2019 Veteran Service Officer Stats

- 259 claims filed
- \$196,079 awarded in back pay
- 100% batting average on submitted claims
- Primary claims break down by type
 - 50% Agent Orange/Vietnam Claims
 - 25% Military Sexual Trauma
 - 25% miscellaneous
- Top claimed individual issues
 - tinnitus
 - PTSD
 - Agent Orange Presumptives

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2020 VA Compensation Pay Table

25.1% of Whatcom County Veterans are VA service connected

	Monthly Rate	with Spouse
10%	\$142.29	
20%	\$281.27	
30%	\$435.69	\$486.69
40%	\$627.61	\$696.61
50%	\$893.43	\$979.43
60%	\$1,131.68	\$1,234.68
70%	\$1,426.17	\$1,547.17
80%	\$1,657.80	\$1,795.80
90%	\$1,862.96	\$2,017.96
100%	\$3,106.04	\$3,279.22

Non Service Connected Pension for Combat Era Veterans is \$1146/month per single, \$1501/month per couple

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Current Budget

Veteran's Budget Report				
With Fund Balance				
	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Budget
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Revenue from taxes	310,204	343,477	307,000	307,000
Personnel	88,918	77,781	107,248	115,814
Contracts	77,447	82,305	76,500	76,500
Veteran's Assistance	60,220	91,364	75,000	75,000
Program Support	1,023	1,030	2,950	2,950
Total Direct Expenses	227,608	252,480	261,698	270,264
Administration	37,702	51,733	53,622	55,377
Total Expenses	265,310	304,214	315,320	325,641
Net	44,894	39,263	(8,320)	(18,641)
Beginning Fund Balance	588,212	633,106	672,369	664,049
Revenue	310,204	343,477	307,000	307,000
Expense	265,310	304,214	315,320	325,641
Ending Fund Balance	633,106	672,369	664,049	645,408
Contract Detail:				
Law Advocates	2,204	1,281	390	3,000
Opportunity Council Transport	2,363	1,982	3,662	3,000
Opportunity Council-Housing for Veterans	72,880	80,323	39,446	70,500
Total Veteran's Program Contracts	77,447	83,586	43,497	76,500

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Actionable Items

- Review and approve updates to County Codes 1.250 and 1.252 at a future County Council meeting
- Review and adopt eligibility income threshold via Resolution
(VAB recommends continuing at 60% AMI)

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Please come visit us:
Whatcom Veterans Program Office
509 Girard Street
Creekside Level

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