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Handbook
Guide of Services Provided
Rules and Eligibility Standard

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
of
BOONE COUNTY



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Section 100 VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County (VAC) is a local Government Unit created under the provisions of the Military Assistance Act 330 ILCS 45. Financial Operational oversight is the duty of the VAC Superintendent. Development of rules and guidelines for the distribution of financial assistance, program grants, etc… in accordance with applicable laws and agreements are the responsibility of the VAC Superintendent. The Superintendent has full authority over the financial assistance program per the Military Assistance Act.

General program oversight is provided by the VAC. The Commission is made up of one delegate and one alternate from each member military service organization. The Commission is guided by its own set of By-Laws which were approved by the Boone County Board. The members of the Commission also are incorporated as a Not for Profit (VACBC, Inc.) recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (19). The duties of the Commission includes but is not limited to; working with the Superintendent on presenting periodic reports to the Boone County Board, approval and general oversight of discretionary functions such as transportation service and VA Claims, and approval of new programs requiring a grant. The VACBC, Inc. has the authority to perform fundraising and apply for grants to help fund discretionary programs consistent with the mission and by-laws of the VACBC, Inc.

General financial oversight is provided by the Boone County Board per the Military Assistance Act. Unresolved disputes between the Boone County Board and The Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County are to be handled in accordance with the Military Assistance Act. The Chairman of the Boone County Board may designate a County Officer as representative to the Veterans Assistance Commission Executive Committee.

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County is also a member organization of the Illinois Association of Veterans Assistance Commissions (IAVAC) and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO). The NACVSO is also a United States Congress chartered veterans' service organization, recognized by the USDVA to represent veterans.

Section 200 VETERANS ASSISTANCE

Veterans Assistance is designed to provide needed services to eligible veterans and families who, according to written standards adopted and applied consistently by the Boone County Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County (VACBC), are in need of meeting basic living expenses and/or advocacy services.

Sub-Section 201 330 ILCS 45 – Military Assistance Act

Sec. 1. The term "Overseer of military veterans assistance", as used in this Act, shall be construed to mean all persons whose duty it is, under the existing statutes, to care for, relieve or maintain, wholly or in part, any person who may be entitled to such assistance under the statutes of the State of Illinois. This Act shall not infringe upon the mandated powers and authorities vested in the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. (Source: P.A. 87‑796.)

(330 ILCS 45/2) (from Ch. 23, par. 3082)

Sec. 2. For the assistance of military veterans, who served in the Armed Forces of the United States, whose last discharge from the service was honorable to be eligible for assistance, their families, and the families of deceased veterans with service as described in this Section who need assistance. The supervisor of general assistance or the county board shall provide such sums of money as may be just and necessary to be drawn by the commander, quartermaster or commandant of any post, ship, camp, chapter or detachment of any congressionally chartered or state chartered veterans organization, in the city or town, or the superintendent of any Veterans' Assistance Commission of the county, upon the recommendation of the assistance committee of the post, ship, camp, chapter or Veterans' Assistance Commission. If any supervisor of general assistance or county board fails or refuses after such recommendation to provide any just and necessary sums of money for such assistance, then the commander, post, chapter, or detachment or the superintendent of any Veterans' Assistance Commission located in the district of such supervisor of general assistance or such county board shall apply to the circuit court of the district or county for relief by mandamus upon the supervisor of general assistance or county board requiring him, her or it to pay, or to appropriate and pay such sums of money, and upon proof made of the justice and necessity of the claim, the circuit court shall grant such assistance. Such sums of money shall be drawn in the manner now provided by law for the assistance of the poor. Orders of commanders, quartermasters, commandants or superintendents of Veterans' Assistance Commissions shall be proper vouchers for the expenditure of such sums of money. (Source: P.A. 87‑796.)

(330 ILCS 45/3) (from Ch. 23, par. 3083)

Sec. 3. In case there is no post or camp of a military veterans organization, in any town in which it is necessary that such assistance as provided in Section 2 should be granted, the overseer of military veterans assistance shall accept and pay the orders drawn, as hereinbefore provided by the commander, quartermaster or commandant of any post or camp of a military veterans organization, upon the recommendation of an assistance committee, who shall be residents of the said town in which the assistance may be furnished. (Source: P.A. 87‑796.)

(330 ILCS 45/4) (from Ch. 23, par. 3084)

Sec. 4. Upon the taking effect of this Act, the commander of any post or camp of a military veterans organization, which shall undertake the assistance of military veterans and their families, as hereinbefore provided, before the acts of the commander, quartermaster or commandant shall be operative in any city or town, shall file with the city clerk of such city or town clerk of such town, or overseer of military veterans assistance of such town or county, a notice that said post, camp, chapter or detachment intends to undertake such assistance as is provided by this Act, and such notice shall contain the names of the assistance committee of the post, camp, chapter or detachment in such city or town, and the commander

and other officers of said post, camp, chapter or detachment. And the commander of the post, camp, chapter or detachment shall annually thereafter, during the month of October, file a similar notice with the city or town clerk, or the overseer of military veterans assistance, also a detailed statement of the amount of assistance furnished during the preceding year, with the names of all persons to whom such assistance shall have been furnished, together with a brief statement in such case from the assistance committee upon whose recommendation the orders were drawn. Any person who fails or neglects so to do at the time required by this Act shall be guilty of a petty offense and fined $250 to be recovered in the name of the county in the circuit court. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

(330 ILCS 45/5) (from Ch. 23, par. 3085)

Sec. 5. The auditing board of any city or town, or the overseer of military veterans assistance of any city, town or county, may require of the commander, quartermaster or detachment of any post or camp of a military veterans organization, undertaking such assistance in any city or town, a bond with sufficient and satisfactory sureties for the faithful and honest discharge of their duties under this Act. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

(330 ILCS 45/6) (from Ch. 23, par. 3086)

Sec. 6. Overseers of military veterans assistance are hereby prohibited from sending military veterans (or their families or the families of those deceased) to any almshouse (or orphan asylum) without the full concurrence and consent of the commander and assistance committee of the post or camp of a military veterans organization having jurisdiction as provided in Sections 2 and 3 of this Act. Military veterans with families and the families of deceased veterans, shall, whenever practicable, be provided for and assisted at their homes in such city or town in which they shall have a residence, in the manner provided in Sections 2 and 3 of this Act. Needy or disabled veterans of the classes specified in Section 2 of this Act, who are not mentally ill, and who have no families or friends with which they may be domiciled, may be sent to any veterans home. Any less fortunate veteran of either of the classes specified in Section 2 of this Act or any member of the family of any living or deceased veteran of said classes, who may be mentally ill, shall, upon the recommendation of the commander and assistance committee of such post or camp of a military veterans organization, within the jurisdiction of which the case may occur, be sent to any mental health facility and cared for as provided for indigent persons who are mentally ill. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

(330 ILCS 45/7) (from Ch. 23, par. 3087)

Sec. 7. In case there shall be within the limits of any city or town more than one post or camp of military veterans organizations, it shall be the duty of the commander of each post, camp, chapter or detachment within such limits, to send to the commander of every other post, camp, chapter or detachment, as the case may be, within said limits, on the first day of each month, a written list of the names of all persons to whom assistance has been granted during the preceding month, under the provisions of this Act. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

(330 ILCS 45/8) (from Ch. 23, par. 3088)

Sec. 8. The commander of any post or camp of a military veterans organization, congressionally chartered or state chartered commander, or the superintendent of any county Veterans' Assistance Commission of Illinois shall annually report to the Governor, on or before the first day of January of each year, such portions of the transactions of the aforementioned veterans' organizations relating thereto as he may deem to be of interest to that organization and the people of the State. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

(330 ILCS 45/9) (from Ch. 23, par. 3089)

Sec. 9. In counties having 2 or more posts, camps, chapters or detachments of military veterans organizations as may be recognized by law, a central assistance committee may be organized to be known as the Veterans

Assistance Commission of such county, composed of one delegate and one alternate from each of such posts, camps, units, and chapters or ship selected annually as determined by each post, ship, camp, or chapter. When so organized a commission shall be clothed with all the powers and charged with all the duties theretofore devolving upon the different posts and chapters as provided in Section 2.

The Commission superintendent and the president or chairman of the county board, or some other county officer appointed by him, shall have general oversight of the distribution of all moneys and supplies appropriated by the county for the benefit of military veterans and their families, subject to such rules, regulations, administrative procedures or audit reviews as are necessary as approved by the county board to carry out the spirit and intent of this Act. No warrant authorized under this Act may be issued for the payment of money without the presentation of an itemized statement or claim, approved by the superintendent of the Commission.

If general assistance funds are allocated to a county for assistance to military veterans and their families as provided in the Illinois Public Aid Code, the administration of such funds and of county tax funds levied for such purpose as provided in Section 5-2006 of the Counties Code shall be subject to the supervision of the Department of Human Services in accordance with the provisions of the Illinois Public Aid Code. The superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission must comply with the procedures and regulations adopted by the Veterans Assistance Commission and the regulations of the Department of Human Services. To further the intent of this Act of assisting military veterans, this Act is to be construed so that the Veterans Assistance Commission shall provide needed services to eligible veterans. (Source: P.A. 89-507, eff. 7-1-97.)

(330 ILCS 45/10) (from Ch. 23, par. 3090)

Sec. 10. The executive powers of the commission shall be vested in a superintendent elected by the commission from among those who served in the armed forces of the United States. The superintendent, designated Superintendent of Veterans Assistance of the county, shall, under the direction of the commission, have charge of and maintain an office in the county building or other central location, to be used solely by the commission for carrying on its assistance work. The county shall provide the office and furnish all necessary supplies, including telephone, printing, stationery and postage thereof.

The county board shall, in any county where a Veterans Assistance Commission is organized, in addition to sums appropriated for assistance and emergency assistance purposes under this Act, appropriate such additional sums, upon recommendation of the Veterans Assistance Commission and as approved by the county board, to properly compensate the officers and employees required to administer such assistance. Such county board approval shall be based upon recognized and established salary guidelines developed by the county and used by the county to compensate county employees. If the county does not have established employee salary guidelines, the county board shall provide funds to the commission to compensate the superintendent and his employees in a just manner. The county board shall also provide funds to the commission to reimburse the superintendent, officers, delegates and employees for certain expenses which are approved by the commission. The superintendent and other employees shall be employees of the Veterans Assistance Commission, and no provision in this Section or elsewhere in this Act shall be construed to mean that they are employees of the county.

Superintendents, subject to rules formulated by the commission, shall select, as far as possible, secretaries and other employees from among honorably discharged military veterans as defined in Section 2, or their surviving spouses.

Superintendents of all counties subject to this Act, when required by the commission, shall give bond in the sum of $2,000 for the faithful performance of their duties.

All persons elected or selected to fill positions provided for in this Section shall be exempt from the operation and provisions of any civil service act or laws of this State and the secretary of the commission shall be appointed by the superintendent. However, if "The Illinois Public Aid Code", as amended,

becomes applicable in any county, the Department of Human Services may exercise the powers therein designated in relation to employees engaged in the administration of assistance under this Act. (Source: P.A. 89-507, eff. 7-1-97.)

(330 ILCS 45/11) (from Ch. 23, par. 3091)

Sec. 11. The term "military veterans organizations" as used in this Act, shall mean those organizations formed by and for military veterans which are chartered by Congress or which are chartered by the State of Illinois with a paid membership of at least 15 and which provide responsible aid, assistance, or services to the veterans community. (Source: P.A. 87-796.)

Sub-Section 202 Mandatory Functions

The mandatory function of the VAC is to provide financial assistance to needy veterans, the needy surviving spouse of a veteran, and the minor children of a veteran not in the veteran's custody. Eligibility for financial assistance is done in accordance with written standards approved by the Veterans Assistance Commission. Financial assistance may only be approved for basic living expenses such as food, shelter, utilities, personal needs, transportation, and independent living expenses.

Veterans' assistance is never given in cash. All housing and utility costs are paid directly to the person or agency(s) to which payment is due. Vouchers for food or fuel are given. Vouchers are only provided to local merchants for whom a payment agreement has been prearranged between the vendor and the VAC. Assistance is only granted for services provided within the boundary of Boone County.

The Veterans Assistance Program consists of interim financial assistance and should not be considered an on-going financial supportive program over any considerable period of time. The Military Veterans Assistance Act states that **"the VAC shall provide needed services to eligible veterans".** (Chapter 330, Illinois Compiled Statutes, Act 45, Paragraph 9 {330 ILCS 45/9}).

Veterans Assistance is assistance paid exclusively to Honorably Discharged Veterans of the United States Armed Forces, their surviving spouses and/or their dependents. Financial assistance is made available simply because of their eligible military service and their financial need for this assistance.

Sub-Section 203 Discretionary Functions

Discretionary functions are approved by the Commission and administered by the VAC Office. Funding for discretionary functions may or may not be funded through the Boone County Board. Even though some discretionary functions are funded by grants, the Boone County Board still must approve receipt of the grants. Therefore, new proposals for discretionary functions should be reported to the Boone County Board via the VAC's Executive Committee prior to applying for grant funding. Some of the approved discretionary functions approved by the Commission:

Emergency Veterans Assistance (EVA): One time financial assistance that may be available to an applicant that meets the written eligibility requirements for EVA.

VA Claims Representation: Assist veterans and their family members in the filing of claims for various programs authorized by the United States Government and maintained by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. VAC Veterans Service Officers are recognized by the VA General Counsel to present and prosecute claims submitted on behalf of veterans and eligible family members. These programs include Disability Compensation, Pension, Dependents Indemnity Compensation, Headstones, and College programs. Success of this function results in reducing the clients need for financial assistance under the VAC's mandatory function, and reduces the need for other County funded and non-funded social services.

Transportation: Operation of motor vehicles for transporting eligible veterans to the Rockford VA Medical Center. Cab service is used to transport vets to the outpatient clinic, and to designated pick-up points for service

to Madison VA Medical Center. New vehicles are purchased either by fundraising by the VACBC, Inc or by financial grants.

Indigent Veterans Burial: The Superintendent administers the Indigent Veterans Burial program for the County Government. This program does not utilize any VAC funds.

Draft Registration: Assist young men in registering with the Selective Service Administration.

Medical Assistance: Medical assistance for programs such as Veterans Restorative Dental, and Veterans Eye Care are funded by grants. Eligibility requirements are subject to guidelines established by the granting authority.

Advocacy Services: Advocacy services include representing, and/or working closely with, and/or applying to the proper local, state or federal agencies or local intervention with vendors such as landlords or utility companies, to procure benefits and insure the rights and benefits that each veteran is entitled to have been granted to the veteran, surviving spouse, and/or dependent.

Referral Services: The VAC Office works with many local government and social service agencies in order to provide VAC clients with valuable services helpful to their specific need.

Section 300 VETERANS ASSISTANCE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Veterans Assistance Commission shall provide application information to any person who requests Veterans Assistance or financial Assistance. Application Information is defined as what documents and information is needed to apply for Veterans Assistance and, offering to schedule an appointment to determine eligibility for Veterans Assistance. An application is different from an inquiry in that an inquiry is only a request for information about eligibility requirements for assistance or other program information.

The minimum information required to start an application is the applicants full legal name, the applicants mailing address and physical address (in the case of a Boone County resident who is homeless, the address can be the VAC Office), and other contact information such as telephone number and e-mail address if available.

The date the applicant requests Veterans Assistance the VACBC has 30 days to approve or deny the request. This also means that the applicant/recipient has 30 days to prepare information needed for the application and report for a scheduled application interview. If the request is made by phone the VACBC will take contact information needed to create a file.

The completed application contains a minimum of an eligible and certifiable discharge (DD-214 or Statement of Service), name, address, date, a signed copy of Rights and Responsibilities, proof of registration with Employment Security (or verifiable note from a doctor stating applicant can't work), and proof of residence; the remainder of the application is to be filled out to the best of the applicant's knowledge and ability. Additional information such as a current bank statement (if an account exists), current mortgage statement or lease, utility bills, etc…, is required to determine eligibility and assistance level. Veterans Assistance cannot be denied because the applicant is homeless.

Veterans Assistance can only be granted or denied an applicant/recipient one time in a 30 day period. The 30 day period begins with the request to be considered for Veterans Assistance and ends 30 calendar days later. Presentation of required information by the applicant/recipient greater than 30 days after the initial request for Veterans Assistance will be considered a new request.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Veterans Assistance is a Needs Based Financial Assistance program, that is, accurate information on both household income and basic household expenses are required to determine eligibility. All applicants for financial assistance from the VACBC must meet the eligibility requirements set forth in the following sub-sections. Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County Delegates, Alternates, employees, and their spouses are not eligible for financial assistance from the VACBC.

Needs Based Financial Assistance – compares income to a set "Standard of Need" and then to basic household expenses. Veterans Assistance plus the applicant's/recipients countable income will not exceed the established Standard of Need. The Standard of Need is determined annually by the Veterans Assistance Commission and is based on the US Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Level Guidelines. Additionally, Veterans Assistance plus the applicant's/recipients countable income will not exceed the total of basic household expenses.

The maximum level of financial assistance available based on the applicants eligible family size is reviewed annually by the Veterans Assistance Commission and may be revised based on economic conditions such as inflation.

Basic Household Expenses include – monthly rent or mortgage (principle and interest only) for the applicant's/recipients primary residence, and monthly utilities…heat, electric, water, sewer, telephone (basic charges only, call packages and individual calls not included), and garbage. Child support can also be considered an expense as long as the applicant provides a copy of the court order and proof that the support is being paid. Veterans Assistance is not available to make direct payments for Child Support.

Sub-Section 301 ELIGIBLE MILITARY SERVICE

Eligible Veteran for VAC Assistance – *A veteran whose last period of active military service was Honorable and met the time in service requirement for the era in which the veteran serviced unless the veteran was discharged for a disability incurred in the line of duty (not as a result of the members own misconduct) that was found to be service connected by the US Department of Veterans Affairs*

The Last Period of Service refers to veterans who had more than one period of active military service and more than one discharge.

Honorable Discharge is a discharge in which the character of discharge is described as honorable. A General under Honorable Conditions does not meet this criteria unless the service members discharge was the result of a service connected disability as recognized by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, and not the members own misconduct.

Active Military Service is full time service in a branch of the United States Military as opposed to Reserve duty where a member is still in the military but not actively engaged. Active duty for training, service as a Cadet or Midshipman at the United States Military Academy, the United States Naval Academy, United States Coast Guard Academy, United States Air Force Academy, or in any component of the Reserve Officers Training Corps is not considered as qualifying service.

Veterans Who Began Active Service After September 7, 1980 must complete a minimum of 24 consecutive months of active duty.

Veterans Who Began Active Service Before September 8, 1980 must complete a minimum of 181 consecutive active duty days or one day of combat during a period of hostilities as recognized by the President and Congress of the United States of America.

Reservists or National Guard Members who were voluntarily or involuntarily activated or federalized by the President of the United States or the Secretary of Defense during a period of hostility, and completed the term for which the member was activated.

Any Honorably Discharged Reservist or National Guard Member who was federally activated and served honorably for a minimum of 24 consecutive active duty months for service other than active duty for training.

Misconduct – involves deliberate or intentional wrongdoing with knowledge of or wanton and reckless disregard of its probable consequences. Such a discharge would bar a veteran from Veterans Assistance.

Service Connected Disability – A chronic illness or injury found to be related to the veterans military service to a degree of 0% or greater by the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sub-Section 302 RESIDENCY

The funds provided this office for its assistance program is obtained solely from appropriated tax moneys levied on property owners in Boone County. Therefore, all veterans, and their families, seeking assistance from the VACBC shall be residents of the State of Illinois and residents of the County of Boone. Individuals participating in a Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program, Veterans Transition Program, or the like, where the agency provides their veteran clients with housing and the program is funded by any Federal or State government agency specifically providing funds for the Veterans Program are waived from the six month residency requirement.

Prior to being considered for financial assistance applicants/recipients who have resided in Boone County for less than six months must provide a current Illinois State ID and; proof of application for public aid from the Illinois Department of Human Services in Boone County, proof of having applied for Section 8 housing or Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), and proof of actively seeking employment (unless exempt) via the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Acceptable proof of residency includes; a statement from an Administrator of General Assistance or other State or Federal Agency that identifies the date the applicant/recipient became a resident of Boone County, motel receipts covering the required time for residency, or a current state ID that shows a current Boone County address.

Applicants who are homeless must declare residency in Boone County and provide a contact address. The address may be the office of any Administrator of General Assistance within Boone County, PADS, or the VAC Office.

Applicants/recipients who have lived in Boone County for less than six months and meet the eligibility requirements for Veterans Assistance from the VACBC will only receive financial assistance at the levels published by the Illinois Department of Human Services. This does not apply to Veterans in a VA or DOL funded program.

Sub-Section 303 EMPLOYMENT & AVAILABILITY TO WORK

All applicants/recipients must be available to work, be registered with the Illinois Department of Employment Security, and be seeking full time employment unless otherwise exempt from doing so due to medical, age, or care giving.

Available to work – means that the applicant/recipient is available, and willing to accept employment and work between the hours of 0700 and 1730.

Applicants/recipients – refers to all adult members of the household. That is, both the veteran and the non-veteran spouse shall be registered unless otherwise exempt from seeking employment.

Registered with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) – is the applicants/recipients working with IDES staff to establish themselves on whatever system the IDES is utilizing at the time, **and** physically meeting with an IDES employment counselor at least monthly to discuss employment issues, and present a weekly diary containing at least the IDES minimum number of unique and verifiable employment contacts per month.

Verifiable Employment Contact – is one in which the applicant/recipient made contact with a potential employer by means of a application for employment, presenting a resume, or other means in which the potential employer can confirm that the applicant/recipient desires employment.

Homeless Veterans Programs - Veterans participating in a Federal or State funded Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program, Veterans Transition Program, or the like, are not required to seek full time employment, however, the agency housing the veteran is to verify monthly in writing that the resident veteran is actively participating in the program. Such veterans are not exempt from meeting with IDES at least monthly, following IDES recommendations for employment readiness, and perform a monthly employment search. Veteran residents must demonstrate that they are progressing with regard to employability.

Job Search Training & Work Program (JSTW) – Applicants eligible to work will be required to participate in job search and related training programs as referred by IDES or the Illinois Workforce Network. A Community Work Program may be required pending the available work program opportunities.

Full Time Employment – is a minimum of 100 hours per month.

Exempt due to Medical – means that the applicant/recipient can produce a current and verifiable document signed by a doctor licensed to practice medicine stating that (s)he is not capable of working full or part time, or the applicant/recipient is receiving Social Security Disability (or SSI), or the applicant/recipient is receiving a VA

Non-Service Connected Disability Pension, or the applicant/recipient is in receipt of VA Service Connected Disability Compensation of 70% or greater. Doctor's statements identifying a temporary disability that do not include a specific return to work date will be valid to the VAC only during applicant's current eligibility period.

Exempt due to Age – means the applicant/recipient is over the age of 62. Such applicants will be required to file for Social Security benefits.

Exempt due to Care Giving – refers to one parent or legal guardian caring for a child under the age of 1, or an individual caring for a severely ill or helpless member of the immediate family. The need for a care giver must be confirmed by a doctor licensed to practice medicine.

> **Immediate Family in Regard to Care Giving –** is the veteran, spouse (the person to whom the veteran is legally married as recognized by the State of Illinois), minor children whom the veteran and or spouse have legal custody over, and the veterans and spouses parents.

Sub-Section 304 APPLICATION INTERVIEW

The primary function of the Superintendent of Veterans Assistance and his/her duly authorized representative(s) in the intake process is to make a prompt and accurate determination of each applicant's eligibility for assistance. It is the responsibility of the applicant to arrive to his/her interview on time and with all required documentation necessary to make a determination of eligibility.

In the process of securing information to determine eligibility, the interviewer shall provide the applicant with pertinent information regarding the Veterans Assistance Program for which he/she may be eligible and the eligibility requirements as follows:

1. An explanation of VACBC standards used to determine his/her needs and the assistance available from the VACBC, including the allowances for specific assistance items; (A copy of the "VACBC Notice of Rights and Responsibilities of Veterans Assistance Applicants or Recipients Form" may be given to anyone who inquires about or applies for assistance.)

2. Prompt reporting by the recipient of changes in circumstances which may affect the eligibility or extent of needs within five (5) days of the occurrence;

3. Statutory provision covering the right of appeal and fair hearing;

4. Confidentiality of all information;

5. Discussion of other possible resources for meeting needs;

6. Referral to the Illinois Department of Human Services if the applicant appears to be eligible for; Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD), Food Stamps, and/or Medicaid in order to comply with the provisions of the Public Aid Code;

7. The responsibility of the applicant to apply for pensions, Social Security, or all other benefits for which any member of the assistance unit may be eligible;

8. The requirement that all employable members of the assistance unit not currently employed full time, must register for full time employment with the Illinois Department of Employment Security, unless exempt. Applicants/recipients required to work with IDES to secure full time employment shall be required to follow reasonable recommendations made by IDES to such as; resume class, interview class,

and skills development per the Job Search Training & Work Program requirement in section 300 Sub-Section 303.

9. Applicants/recipients required to register with IDES shall provide a minimum of five verifiable job leads, applications, submitted resumes, per week to IDES (the Vet Rep may adjust this number based on the veteran's skills and work history). Applicants shall continue to report to IDES in person for up-dates and information at least once a month until full time employment is secured or if applicant becomes exempt.

During the application interview, information should be secured concerning additional resources for support or services, such as legally responsible relatives, employers, public and private agencies and the possible use of these resources.

Refusal to provide information necessary to the determination of eligibility, failure to keep scheduled appointments, refusal to sign a necessary Consent to Release of Information, or refusal to accept a referral for services will result in the denial of the application on the basis of lack of cooperation or information not sufficient to grant.

Section 400 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF APPLICANTS AND RECIPIENTS

While VACBC employees are not Boone County Employees, each VACBC employee is to treat each guest in accordance with the Boone County Personnel Policy Manual as approved by the Commission, and administer services in accordance with the VACBC Assistance Criteria and Support Available. Applicants and Recipients have the right to review any section of the VACBC Assistance Criteria and Support Available in the presence of a VACBC Employee.

Sub-Section 401 APPLICANTS' RIGHTS

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County (VACBC) must administer the Veterans Assistance Program in such a way as to afford certain rights to applicants and recipients. In addition, applicants will be provided a copy of rights and responsibilities which must be read and signed by the applicant/recipient.

Sub-Section 402 NON-DISCRIMINATION

No applicant or recipient of Boone County Veterans Assistance is to be discriminated against or denied assistance under any program administered by the VACBC because of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or political affiliation.

Sub-Section 403 CONFIDENTIALITY

Applicants and recipients are entitled to confidentiality in the investigation of eligibility and in the maintenance of case records. For the protection of applicants/recipients, the VACBC and its respective officers and employees are prohibited, except as provided below, from disclosing the contents of any records, files, papers and communications except for purposes directly connected with the administration of Veterans Assistance including the procedural oversight given to the Chairman of the Boone County Board or the Chairman's designated County Board Officer pursuant to 330 ILCS 45/9 and the right and duty of the out-side auditor hired to provide the yearly audit by Boone County and/or VACBC.

In a judicial proceeding, except those directly concerned with the administration of public aid, or those in which an applicant/recipient is a party thereto, the above information is considered to be privileged communications, defined as "a communication between parties to a confidential relationship such that the person receiving the communication cannot be legally compelled to disclose it as a witness."

The contents of case files concerning VACBC recipients are to be made available without subpoena of formal notice to officers of any court, law enforcement agency or other persons or agencies as from time to time may be authorized by any court. Within the VACBC only the following personnel may have access to client files: Superintendent and office staff; Chairman, Senior or Junior Vice Chairman only when serving as Acting Chairman (Must provide signed disclosure stating reason for access); Boone County Board Officer only if serving as Acting Superintendent; and the Interim Chairman appointed by the VACBC Executive Board (Must provide signed disclosure stating reason for access).

When names and addresses of recipients of Veterans Assistance are furnished to other governmental agencies or departments, they must adopt regulations necessary to prevent their publication or use for purposes not directly connected with the administration of assistance under the Illinois Public Aid Code. Some applicant information such as the applicant's household found eligible for Veterans Assistance may be shared with the Administer of General Assistance at the Township Office, or other Administrator of General Assistance in the jurisdiction of the applicants/recipient's address and previous address.

All records shall be made available for review to the applicant/recipient upon the receipt of a written request from him/her. Records may be examined ONLY in the presence of a duly authorized VACBC representative. Copies of the records will be made available at a reasonable charge.

Sub-Section 404 FREEDOM OF CHOICE

An individual is entitled to freedom of choice to accept or reject services and to select living arrangements. The VACBC has neither the right nor the responsibility to impose upon a recipient a change in living arrangements; however, the VACBC may refuse to pay rent for substandard housing as defined by appropriate Illinois Revised Statute.

Sub-Section 405 REPORTING CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

It is the responsibility of the recipients of Veterans Assistance to accurately report any change in circumstances or receipt of income or assets which might affect the assistance payment within five (5) days of occurrence or the expenditure of funds, whichever occurs first.

Sub-Section 406 REFERRAL REQUIREMENTS

An applicant/recipient is to be provided with information about other programs and services available to assist him/her with his/her basic maintenance needs and is to be referred to other agencies which the VACBC believes in good faith to be potential sources of assistance.

Referrals to specific programs are to be done in writing on a VACBC Other Assistance Referral Form and are to be documented in the case file. The applicant recipient has a responsibility to accept a referral made in good faith to a source of potential assistance. Follow-ups from referrals must be returned to the VAC in person prior to the VAC releasing additional assistance.

Applicants for and recipients of Veterans Assistance who appear eligible for other Government Aid will be referred to those agencies such as; Job Training, Employment Security, Boone County Housing Authority, Department of Human Services, and Social Security. If the applicant/recipient fails to apply for or accept those benefits, he/she and his/her dependents are not eligible for Veterans Assistance.

Applicants/recipients who have applied for public aid and request Veterans Assistance while the application is pending may be eligible to receive Veterans Assistance until a determination is made on his/her application. The applicant/recipient is entitled to all rights to written notice of decision on eligibility for VACBC assistance and/or termination or reduction of VACBC assistance, regardless of any referrals made.

The VACBC requires a specific reason for denial of assistance from any agency that the applicant / recipient were referred.

Sub-Section 407 NOTICE OF DECISION

In accordance with the due process, every applicant/recipient is entitled to a timely and written notice as to action taken concerning his/her case and of the disposition of his her application. The written notice will be found on the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet and shall contain:

1. A clear statement of the action taken;

2. A clear statement of the reason for the action, sufficient in detail to allow the applicant/recipient to determine whether the VACBC action is correct;

3. A specific Handbook policy reference which supports such action, and;

4. A statement of the applicant/recipient's right to appeal should the request for Veterans Assistance be granted at an amount less than the maximum pay out level for the applicants/recipients family size, or denied

Whenever an application for Veterans Assistance is denied or approved the applicant/recipient must also be given a copy of the decision.

The VACBC is required to inform its applicants/recipients of their right to appeal at the time of application and at any time dissatisfaction is expressed. The VACBC is also required to help those individuals desiring to make an appeal and to explain the appeal procedure. Such assistance shall include providing a VACBC Appeal Form to the applicant/recipient and assisting him/her in the completion of the VACBC Appeal Form.

Sub-Section 408 APPEALS AND HEARING

Sub-Section 408(A) RIGHT OF APPEAL

An individual who applies for or receives Veterans Assistance has the right to appeal any of the following:

1. Refusal of the VACBC to accept any application;
2. Failure by the VACBC to act upon an application, make a decision or take appropriate action on any request which an applicant makes within thirty (30) days of the date of the application or request;
3. A decision by the VACBC to deny an application;
4. A decision by the VACBC to reduce, suspends, terminate or in any way change the amount of assistance;
5. A decision granting assistance in an amount which the applicant/recipient deems inadequate;
6. An issue of policy, if the applicant/recipient is aggrieved by its application.

An individual who applies for or receives Veterans Assistance and wishes to appeal any VACBC action enumerated in the foregoing paragraph can file a formal appeal for a fair hearing. The request to appeal is to be made in writing on the form prescribed by the VACBC. The appeal is to be heard at a location, within Boone County, to be determined by the VACBC. The appellate will be notified of the date, time, and location of the hearing, in writing, by the VACBC no later than two weeks prior to the hearing date.

The applicant/recipient or his/her duly appointed representative must exercise the right of appeal within sixty (60) calendar days after the decision of the VACBC. If the appeal is not made within the sixty (60) day period, the VACBC action will be final.

The sixty (60) day period begins with the date of personal receipt of the decision by the applicant/recipient or, in the case of mailing, receipt will be deemed to be within three days of the date of the postmark.
The sixty (60) day time limitation does not apply when the VACBC fails to take action on a specific request or denies a request without informing the applicant/recipient.

Sub-Section 408(B) VACBC RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE APPEALS PROCESS

If the VACBC action involves a decision to reduce, suspend, terminate or in any way change the amount of assistance, and the applicant/recipient or his/her duly appointed representative files a formal appeal in writing which is received in the VACBC office within ten (10) calendar days after the date of the personal receipt of the

decision by the applicant/recipient or, in the case of mailing, the ten (10) calendar days shall begin three (3) days after the date of the postmark, the VACBC is to continue the assistance at the level in effect prior to the proposed action unless the reason for suspension is for illegal conduct. The applicant/recipient may be required to refund all or part of assistance granted during this period pending Board of Appeals decision. The applicant/recipient has the right to request that benefits not be continued at the prior level pending the results of the appeal hearing to avoid overpayment. Such requests are to be documented in writing.

The VACBC, upon notification that an appeal has been made, prepares the prescribed Statement of Facts document. This form sets forth the decision questioned by the appellant and the facts known and considered by the VACBC in arriving at its decision.

The Statement of Facts document must also contain the legal basis for the decision and, specifically, the Handbook section(s) justifying the decision. The completed Statement of Facts document is to be sent to the Board of Appeals of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County for its information in hearing the appeal and to the appellant or his/her duly authorized representative and his/her legal representative, if any.

Before and during the hearing, the VACBC is to permit the appellant and/or his/her representative(s) to examine the case record and any other documents to be used at the hearing and obtain copies of the same. Records may be examined only in the presence of a duly authorized VACBC representative.

During the appeal process, changes in the appellant's situation may occur which affect the eligibility or the amount of assistance to which the appellant is entitled. Provided that the changes are not related to the proposed action being appealed, the VACBC is to initiate the necessary section in the usual manner by means of written notice.

Sub-Section 408(C) BOARD OF APPEALS AND COUNTY BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE APPEAL PROCESS

The Board of Appeals of the VACBC is to consider appeals for the Veterans Assistance Program. The Board of Appeals is to be composed of the President of the VACBC, one County Board Officer appointed by the Boone County Board, three members of the VACBC elected from the body of the commission. Members of the VACBC Executive Board may be asked to participate in the appeal process at the discretion of the VACBC President. The Superintendent of the VACBC is also a member of the Board of Appeals; however, in the appeals process the Superintendent will only participate as a respondent to the Appeal.

The VACBC will:

1. Provide a location and facilities for conducting hearings on Veterans Assistance appeals.

The Appellant or his/her duly authorized representative will:

1. Meet their expenses incidental to such hearings;
2. Provide for the attendance of witnesses and the production of books and records needed to substantiate the appellant's claim.

The Board of Appeals of the Veterans Assistance Commission Boone of County has the following responsibilities with reference to hearings of Veterans Assistance appeals:

1. Review the completed Statement of Facts provided by the Superintendent of the VACBC;
2. Schedule the hearing and notify the appellant of the date and time set for the hearing no less than ten (10) days prior to the hearing date, unless an earlier date is agreed upon by the appellant and the Superintendent of the VACBC. The notice will be issued by the use of the prescribed Notice of Hearing form; see Appendix B;
3. Postpone the hearing only at the request of the appellant or the Superintendent of the VACBC;

4. Continue the hearing when it appears necessary to obtain and present additional pertinent information or for good cause shown. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, illness or non-availability of the appellant, a necessary witness, or the appellant's legal counsel

5. The Board of Appeals may deny a request for appeal if the Board believes the evidence clearly shows that the request for appeal is frivolous, that is granting the claim would contradict established guidelines. An example would be granting assistance to an applicant who cannot produce proof of service in the U.S. Military.

Sub-Section 408(D) PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING THE HEARING

The Board of Appeals of the VACBC shall conduct hearings at an accessible location within Boone County. If requested by the appellant, a qualified arbiter may be appointed to conduct the hearing; however, the cost of an arbitrator will be borne by the appellant.

A hearing shall be conducted informally to:

1. Control presentations to points at issue;
2. Explain the purpose and procedure to be followed;
3. Determine the manner in which the decision will be rendered;
4. Advise the appellant that he/she is entitled to examine any record or report presented at the hearing;
5. State the problem at issue as indicated from the Notice of Appeal and the Statement of Facts;
6. Safeguard the confidential nature of the proceedings by limiting participants to those directly concerned, such as the appellant or his/her duly authorized representative, his/her legal counsel, witnesses, and the Superintendent of the VACBC;
7. Develop the facts relevant to the issue;
8. Secure pertinent information relating to the problem at issue;
9. Allow the appellant to present evidence in support of his/her claim, including the testimony of witnesses;
10. Allow the appellant to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses;
11. Summarize the points developed.

A record will be made of the hearing consisting of either an audio or an audio/video tape recording of the hearing, to be transcribed at the request of either party at the cost of the VACBC.

Sub-Section 408(E) DECISION

After the conclusion of the hearing, the Board of Appeals of the VACBC will:

1. Prepare a written statement comprised of its findings of fact and its decision which affirms, reverses, or modifies the Superintendent of the VACBC's decision and includes the legal basis;

2. Notify the Superintendent of the VACBC office and the appellant of the decision, in writing, within ten (10) days of the date of the hearing unless additional time is required and has been allowed for proper disposition;

3. Require a written report from the Superintendent of the VACBC to the Executive Committee within ten (10) business days as to carrying out the Committee's instructions when its decision reverses or modifies the Superintendent's original decision;

4. Maintain records of findings of fact and decision.

Sub-Section 408(F) DISMISSAL DUE TO NON-APPEARANCE

If neither the appellant nor the appellant's duly authorized representative appears at the time and place designated for the hearing, and a postponement by either of them has not been requested in writing, the appeal is considered abandoned and is dismissed.

The appellant has the right to request reinstatement of the appeal within ten (10) days of the date of the Notice of Decision on the appeal for verifiable good cause.

SECTION 500 DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

A determination of eligibility is made by the Superintendent of the VACBC and/or his/her staff, based upon the evaluation of evidence relating to eligibility factors which must be provided by the applicant to the best of his/her ability. The VACBC has no more than 30 days to make a determination from the date the applicant/recipient requested Veterans Assistance or Emergency Veterans Assistance. The determination of eligibility is to include a personal interview and a VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet prior to authorization of assistance.

Sub-Section 501 HOUSEHOLD BILLS AND INCOME

In addition to basic family information income, asset, and expense information are required in order to determine if the applicant/recipient is financially eligible for Veterans Assistance. Information required at the time of the interview includes, all utility bills in the veterans, or the veterans spouse's name, all income received to support the household, and a current bank statement. Greater detail of financial information can be found in Section 800.

Sub-Section 502 VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY FACTORS

Income – Verification must be made of all income, including earnings from employment, cash assistance from family members, or other types of assistance from public and private agencies. The applicant is required to cooperate in the verification process.

Utility Bills and Mortgage – Statements must be current. Outdated and missing information can't be used to determine financial need in the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet.

Address – The applicant's address is to be verified with a landlord's or mortgage holder's statement, to be provided to the VACBC. If an applicant is homeless when an application is first made, is found to be eligible for VACBC benefits and subsequently finds housing, a form will be provided to the recipient for the landlord to complete. When this completed form is returned to the VACBC office, the recipient's address will then be added to the application.

Responsibility of obtaining documents needed to determine the applicant's / recipient's eligibility is that of the applicant/recipient.

Verification of information supplied by the applicant/recipient is accomplished by examination of documents and other written evidence such as:

- Public records including but not limited to records of birth, marriage, divorce, naturalization, alien registration, school records, court documents, social media, tax receipts;
- Personal records such as receipts for payment of rent and /or utilities, union dues, insurance premiums;
- Other welfare or service agency records;
- Employment records.

Verification may also be obtained by other contacts such as visits, telephone calls, letters to business establishments and agencies. The applicant's / recipient's consent is required to secure information other than public records and this consent is obtained by having the applicant sign an Agency Referral and sharing agreement.

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide verification of information and follow-ups to agency referrals at the time of the application interview.

Information that can't be verified is not to be included as part of the applicants file, and cannot be used to determine the applicant's / recipient's eligibility.

The VACBC shall notify the applicants/recipients Township Administer of General Assistance with basic information (names of all household members, address, and status of eligibility for Veterans Assistance). The VACBC will contact the applicants/ recipients previous Township Administer of General Assistance, and VAC (if applicable) who have lived in Boone County for less than 6 months.

Registration and Employment Counseling - will be verified by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) Employment Representatives for each eligible member of the household required to seek full time employment. Verification is provided by IDES after the applicant/recipient provides the Employment Rep with verifiable job search journal, and proof of having followed recommendations made by the IDES Employment Rep from the previous meeting.

Sub-Section 503 VACBC BUDGET COMPUTATION WORKSHEET

The budgeting process has a dual purpose: (a) to determine eligibility for Veterans Assistance or Emergency Veterans Assistance and (b) to determine the amount of assistance for which an individual or family is eligible. All financial information from the applicant/recipient needed in this budgeting process is contained in the Application for Veterans Assistance. Detailed information about the budgeting process is described in Section 800.

SECTION 600 NON-FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS OF ELIGIBILITY

Sub-Section 601 CITIZEN STATUS

To be eligible for Veterans Assistance from the VACBC, an applicant must be a US Citizen, or a legal resident of the United States, and reside in Boone County Illinois.

Sub-Section 602 HONORABLE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENT

Applicants for assistance from the VACBC must present a DD-214 or Certificate of Service showing eligible service and character of discharge. If the applicant does not have a DD-214 or Certificate of Service, he/she must authorize the VACBC to obtain a copy from the appropriate US Department of Defense records center. No assistance can be granted to an otherwise qualified applicant without a DD-214 or Certificate of Service. Applicants without a certifiable copy of their discharge shall be assisted in requesting a copy to be delivered to the VAC office. Persons who received assistance using falsified statements of service shall be turned over to legal authorities for prosecution.

Sub-Section 603 PROOF OF RESIDENCE

A person is a resident when he/she is physically present in and considers Boone County, Illinois to be his/her place of residence and has no present intent to move from Boone County. Residence, for the purposes of the VACBC, is defined as where the person is living voluntarily, not for a temporary purpose, but the place he/she considers his/her permanent home.

If a resident is temporarily absent from Boone County and an application for assistance has been made, he/she meets the residency requirements if he/she intends to return when the purpose of the absence has been accomplished.

Proof of residency must be furnished to the VACBC. In addition to an Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID, acceptable proof of residency may consist of, but is not limited to, the following:

- Voter's Registration Card;
- Copy of a current residential lease in the applicant's name;
- Copy of a recent utility bill (electric, water, gas, telephone) in the applicant's name;
- Current receipt of rent paid to a hotel or motel located within the county.

An applicant will not be denied assistance on the basis of being homeless.

Sub-Section 604 RELATIONSHIP (FAMILY CASES ONLY)

To be considered for VACBC assistance, any child for whom assistance is requested must meet the degree of relationship to the applicant as specific below, or if this relationship does not exist, the applicant must be the child's legal guardian. A child is defined as a person who is unmarried, under the age of eighteen (18) (nineteen if attending a secondary school on a full time basis) and legally resides with the applicant.

The child(ren) of the veteran need not reside with the veteran nor be denied assistance simply because the child(ren) was/were born out of wedlock. The applicant must provide documentation as required in Sub-Section 602 and the child's birth certificate/adoption papers/guardianship papers naming the veteran as a birth parent, adoptive parent, or guardian. Additionally, the child's Social Security card must be presented.

To be considered for VACBC assistance an adult, non-veteran applicant must be the spouse or surviving spouse of a veteran. The applicant must provide documentation as required in Sub-Section 602 and a marriage license identifying the veteran as the spouse of the applicant. In the case of a surviving spouse a copy of the veteran's death certificate must also be presented. Former spouses or significant others of veterans are not eligible for assistance from the VACBC. Additionally, the applicant's Social Security card must be presented.

Sub-Section 605 TEMPORARY ABSENCES FROM THE HOME

The absence of an adult member of the assistance unit for a temporary period does not affect eligibility for assistance provided that the absence does not exceed thirty (30) days and a permanent home is not established elsewhere.

The absence of a child for a temporary period does not affect eligibility for assistance provided that all of the following criteria are met:

1. An adult member of the assistance unit retains financial responsibility in whole and;
2. The adult continues to accept and exercise responsibility for the child's welfare and;
3. The child was not removed from the home by a court of law and;
4. The child has not been placed outside his home in the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD) Individual Care Program and;
5. The child identifies the home of the adult as his own permanent residence and;
6. The period of absence does not exceed thirty (30) days.

Sub-Section 606 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

Each eligible recipient of Veterans Assistance who is not exempt from employment shall maintain current registration for employment at the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), and make a good faith effort to secure employment which he/she can physically and mentally perform.

Any person not exempt from employment must register for employment and must seek employment using IDES job searches and must accept any offer of suitable and available employment. A non-exempt Veterans Assistance recipient, in both family and individual cases, who fails or refuses to comply with the above, will be determined to be ineligible for further assistance.

Individuals who became unemployed because he or she quit, unexcused or unverifiable absence from work, or misconduct shall not be eligible for Veterans Assistance for 90 days from the date the individual applied for Unemployment Benefits.

A Veterans Assistance applicant/recipient is exempt from employment if he/she is required in the home for; the full time care of a disabled, aged, or ill member of the immediate family (a note from a doctor must be on file), the care of a child under one (1) year of age, or is medically exempt as determined by a doctor licensed to practice medicine. Only one caregiver may be exempted per eligible household. VACBC determination will be made based upon a written report from a licensed, practicing, medical professional or on relevant social service organization information. Medical exemptions are more fully explained in Sub-Section 607.

In order to be determined to be exempt from employment, the applicant/recipient is to complete a VACBC Request for Work Exemption form setting forth the reason(s) for the exemption. The VACBC may exercise the right to contact the confirming physician to verify the authenticity of the confirmation and or the physician's license to practice medicine. A written notice of the decision on the request is to be made within thirty (30) days of the date the request is filed.

The written notice will be made on the VACBC Decision on Request for Exemption. The applicant/recipient is to be informed of his/her rights to appeal the decision and that, if an appeal is filed, he/she will not have to register with IDES until a decision has been rendered on the appeal.

To enable applicants/recipients to become employable, written referrals may be made to the Illinois Department of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), local vocational rehabilitative services, or to medical/psychological services. Referrals will be made on a VACBC Referral for Other Assistance form. Willful failure or willful refusal to follow through on any such referral or to participate in good faith in such services constitutes grounds for denial or termination of assistance from the VACBC. The VAC shall pay for referred medical services rendered in cases where the applicant/recipient is not receiving treatment, and is not eligible for VA Healthcare.

If a Veterans Assistance applicant/recipient is not working due to a strike, the applicant/recipient shall be provided referrals to other financial assistance agencies, and be required to provide follow-ups from same prior to being considered for assistance. An applicant's/recipients unemployment due to an unlawful strike, or strikes not sanctioned by the Union will be viewed as voluntary removal from the workforce, and thus will not be eligible for financial assistance.

Sub-Section 607 MEDICAL EXEMPTION FROM REGISTRATION AT IDES

All applicants/recipients are to be told of the requirement of registration with IDES and of the availability of medical exemption from such registration.

A person will be entitled to a medical exemption if he/she is suffering from an illness or condition, either physical or mental, which renders him/her unable to work. The recipient requesting a medical exemption will not be eligible for financial assistance until an exemption form is completed and confirmed with a note from the applicant's doctor. Applicants/recipients who are at least 70% disabled as determined by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, in receipt of a VA Pension, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or in receipt of Social Security Disability will be considered medically exempt.

An acceptable doctor's verification of inability to work must include a timeframe specifying how long the applicant/recipient will not be able to work. All ambiguous time frames such as "until further notice" or "until next appointment" will be defined as 30 days from the date of the doctor's note or for the current eligibility period whichever is earlier. Individuals whose doctor claims that the patients will never be able to return to work will be given a referral to Social Security to apply for disability or SSI. Those who appear eligible for a non-service connected pension will make an appointment to file for same.

Sub-Section 608 MEDICAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Applicants for Veterans Assistance are required to apply for, and to avail themselves of, all medical benefits and services for which they may qualify as a condition of eligibility for financial assistance for payment of medical bills from the VACBC. Referrals to appropriate potential sources of medical assistance, namely Medicaid, Aid to the Medically Indigent (AMI), and the Veterans Health Administration of the USDVA will be made on a Referral form.

Pregnant women who apply for Veterans Assistance and who may be eligible for AFDC related MANG must apply for it and will be given a referral in writing to the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Applicants are required to supply information to the VACBC regarding potential medical benefits for which they may qualify during the application and interview process.

Willful failure or willful refusal of applicants to apply for and to avail themselves of all possible medical benefits and services for which they may qualify and to which they have been referred on written referral will render them ineligible for assistance from the VACBC.

Applications as referred to in this section are to include all members of the household under the same eligibility requirements as defined for other assistance.

Applicants for medical assistance must provide verification as stated previously that they have applied for, and been denied, medical assistance or prescription drugs from all other available sources.

Sub-Section 609 ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERANS ASSISTANCE AS RELATED TO SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Individuals who are temporarily disabled, but will not be able to work within one year and are, therefore, not eligible for Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits may be eligible for Veterans Assistance until they are able to return to work.

If the VACBC believes, in good faith, that an applicant for Veterans Assistance may be potentially eligible for these benefits, a referral will be made to the Social Security Administration using the Referral form. While an application for such benefits is pending, the applicant may be eligible for Veterans Assistance until a decision is reached on the application for Social Security benefits as long as a doctor can confirm an applicant's claim that he/she cannot work, and verifiable follow-ups are provided showing the application/appeal is progressing.

Applicants applying for SSD or SSI will be required to file a 1099 form to be sent to the Illinois Department of Human Services. If the Social Security Administration grants SSI a portion of the applicants/recipients back payments may be withheld by the State of Illinois for the reimbursement of assistance from the VACBC. SSD or SSI applicants will be required to provide an application status to the VAC at least quarterly.

Applicants who are receiving SSI will not be eligible for Veterans Assistance. Members of the household who are receiving SSI can't be considered as eligible members of the household.

Applicants otherwise ineligible to work must have on file a completed Medical Exemption form, (IAW Sub-Section 607), with a doctors opinion stating that he/she is unable to work.

Sub-Section 610 APPLICANT/RECIPIENT COOPERATION

Applicant/recipient cooperation in determining eligibility is required. Failure or refusal of the applicant/recipient to cooperate with the VACBC will result in the denial or termination of assistance, based on the VACBC's inability to determine eligibility.

Applicants/recipients must cooperate with special programs conducted for purposes of obtaining or verifying information, financial or non-financial, upon which eligibility may depend.

Applicants/recipients are also required to apply for all other financial benefits and to avail themselves of all potential resources for which they may qualify and to avail themselves of such benefits at the earliest possible date. They are to receive a written referral from the VACBC to the program(s) which the VACBC believes, in good faith; the applicant/recipient may be eligible.

The eligibility of each adult in the assistance unit is dependent upon the individual maintaining regular registration and corporation with IDES recommendations for employment and/or training, unless exempt as previously described.

An applicant/recipient must be able to participate in the Community Work Program between the hours of 7:00am and 5:00pm

Sub-Section 611 SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Applicants/recipients arrested and/or convicted of an alcohol or drug related offence shall not be eligible for assistance until evidence that court approved or VA approved inpatient rehab has been successfully completed since conviction. This also applies to offences where drugs or alcohol were a contributing factor, and to recipients who are removed from; rehab facilities, transitional centers, or halfway homes for substance abuse. Applicants/recipients will receive assistance while waiting for any opening at any VA rehab center serviced by the VAC, however, will be denied assistance for; failure to report to the first available rehab opening. Denial of assistance will continue until successful completion of the VA inpatient rehab program or 24 months, whichever comes first.

Sub-Section 612 ILLEGAL CONDUCT

Applicants/recipients convicted of an offense under the Illinois Controlled Substances Act or the Illinois Cannabis Control Act which is either a Class X or Class 1 felony, or any comparable federal criminal law which has as an element the position use or distribution of a controlled substance as defined in section 102(6) of the Federal Controlled Substances Act (21 USC § 802(6)), will be ineligible for Veterans Assistance.

If it becomes known to the Veterans Assistance Commission that an applicant/recipient is engaged in unlawful activities the applicant/recipient shall be ineligible for financial assistance from the VAC. Additionally, the VAC shall be obligated to assist law enforcement officials as requested by same. Such activities include but are not limited to:

Probation and Parole Violators

An applicant/recipient who is violating a condition of probation or parole

Flight to avoid prosecution and / or testimony

An applicant/recipient who has fled from the jurisdiction of any court of record in Illinois or any other state in the United States to avoid prosecution or to avoid giving testimony.

Flight to avoid imprisonment

An applicant/recipient who has fled to avoid imprisonment in a correctional facility in Illinois or any other state in the United States

Escapees from a correctional facility

An applicant/recipient who has escaped from a correctional facility of Illinois or any other state in the United States

Failure to comply with a Court order

An applicant/recipient whose financial emergency is the result of legal fees or fines resulting from unlawful actives will not be eligible for Veterans Assistance or Emergency Veterans Assistance. If an applicant/recipient is found to be in noncompliance with a Court order such as paying fines, child support, etc… and the applicant/recipient will not report his/her change in status, the applicant/recipient will not be eligible for Veterans Assistance or Emergency Veterans Assistance.

Misrepresentation to obtain assistance

An applicant or recipient who provides fraudulent information such as; misrepresents themselves by presenting false identification, or false representation of an eligible or ineligible applicant / recipient in order to obtain assistance from the VAC shall be prosecuted.

An applicant/recipient who provides fraudulent information in order to receive assistance from any Veterans Assistance Commission and any one of the following shall not be eligible for Veterans Assistance for a period of two years from the date of discovery: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Food Stamp

Act, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), another Veterans Assistance Commission, or Administrator of General Assistance.

An applicant/recipient who was convicted of having provided fraudulent information or statements with respect to residence in order to receive assistance simultaneously from two or more states under one or more of the following assistance programs is ineligible for Veterans Assistance for a period of ten years from the date of conviction: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Food Stamp Act, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

An applicant/recipient convicted of benefits fraud involving a Township, Administrator of General Assistance, or Veterans Assistance Commission shall not be eligible for Veterans Assistance.

An applicant/recipient who has an overpayment with the VA for Non-Service Connected Pension or Death Pension, Unemployment Benefits, a Township or Administrator of General Assistance, or another VAC shall not be eligible for Veterans Assistance until the affected agency reports that the overpayment has been satisfied.

SECTION 700 FINANCIAL FACTORS OF ELIGIBILITY

Assets, defined for VACBC assistance purposes, refer primarily to real property and/or personal property, cash, Securities, Funds, and other liquid accounts available to be used by the applicant/recipient for the payment of living expenses.

Section 701 EXEMPT ASSETS

The applicant's homestead is exempt from consideration in determining eligibility for Veterans Assistance and the amount of the assistance payment. Homestead is defined as the dwelling house and contiguous real estate owned and occupied by the applicant as the principal dwelling place and for which such applicant is liable for payment of real estate taxes.

For purposes of this provision, contiguous real estate is defined as the one specific parcel of real estate upon which the principal dwelling house of the applicant sits, whether delineated by reference to government surveys, metes and bounds, duly recorded plats, or by real estate index number. The only exceptions are; a 'double lot' or 'triple lot' in which one single family home exists and is owned and occupied by the applicant, and one vacant lot adjacent to the applicants home which is less than one acre and owned by the applicant.

Other exempt assets include:

- Clothing, personal effects and household furnishings;
- One automobile for each eligible member of the household who is employed full time or is required to actively seek full time employment;
- One additional motor vehicle if the equity value does not exceed $5,000.00;
- The value of the coupon allotment under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 as amended, (however, amount is deducted from family food expense on VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet):
- Tools, electronic equipment, or other materials and equipment required in the applicant's principal occupation;
- The value of US Department of Agriculture donated foods (surplus commodities);
- The value of supplemental food assistance received under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended, and the Special Food Service for Children under the National School Lunch Act, as amended;
- Cemetery lot or burial crypt owned prior to application for Veterans Assistance;
- In kind services;
- $2000 asset disregard for a family of 1, $3000 for a family of 2, $50 for each additional eligible family member up to a total of 8 or $3,300 in income disregard.

Sub-Section 702 INCOME

Income is considered as a return in terms of money derived over a period of time from labor, some form of investment, contributions, benefits, pensions, grants or loans from friends or family members, in kind income, or monetary gain from other source. Income of an applicant/recipient is deemed to be, or will be available at any time during the Veterans Assistance payment period.

Income from performing labor – represents income and expected income from one's employment.

Income from Investments – represents monetary dividends, interest, IRA, etc… that is earned or expected by the applicant/recipient.

Contributions – are monetary donations made directly available to the applicant/recipient or eligible members of the household.

Benefits – refer to income in the form of Unemployment Insurance, disability, Workman's Compensation, etc…

Pensions – refer to income in form of longevity pension from employment, Social Security Retirement, VA Pension, etc…

Grants or Loans from Friends or Family- refers to cash provided directly to the applicant/recipient or members of the eligible household for the payment of basic household expenses.

In Kind Income – is a benefit paid directly to a vendor on behalf of an applicant/recipient or eligible member of the household for the payment of basic household expenses. Such income is exempt, but will be deducted from the expense for which the household benefited. In kind income for the payment of other than basic household expenses shall be considered a cash grant.

Payment period – is the 30 day period beginning with the applicants/recipients request for assistance.

Only other non-exempt income, currently available to meet the applicant's needs, is to be considered by the VACBC when determining eligibility. Income is considered available to the extent and in the amount that it is actually received by the applicant.

When available non-exempt income is sufficient to meet the applicant's needs, as determined by the VACBC standards, the applicant is not eligible for Veterans Assistance.

Sub-Section 703 EARNED INCOME

Earned income is defined as moneys earned in self-employment or in the form of wages, salaries, or commissions for personal services as an employee of another, including profit's from a person's business enterprises, including rental income earned as a landlord or income derived from renting rooms to a tenant in the applicant's primary residence, and similar sources.

A person is considered employed full-time when that person is employed for at least one hundred (100) hours in a month. Employed throughout the month means an individual is considered an employee, or is self-employed, for at least one half of the calendar days of the month.

Certain amounts of income from employment are exempt from consideration when determining eligibility for VACBC assistance.

Sub-Section 703(A) INCOME DISREGARD

An adult VACBC applicant/recipient employed either full-time or part-time, is entitled to an income disregard of ninety dollars ($92.00) for employment expenses. If the veteran applicant's spouse is employed part or full time he/she is also entitled to a ninety dollar ($92.00) income disregard.

Sub-Section 703(B) EMPLOYMENT DEDUCTION

A veteran VACBC applicant/recipient is also entitled to receive an employment deduction for each of three (3) months within a twenty-four (24) month period where the applicant/recipient was employed full time in a 30 day period. The amount of the employment deduction for VACBC purposes is three hundred fifty dollars ($350.00); this is only available to the eligible veteran applicant.
The employment deduction, (as applicable), and any income disregard(s) are to be deducted from the applicant's/recipient's earned gross income.

Sub-Section 704 UNEARNED INCOME

Unearned income is all income other than that received in the form of wages, salaries for services performed as an employee, or profits from self-employment. Unearned income consists of income in which the individual is not actually working, such as:

- Returns from investments;
- Pensions and benefits;
- Income from trust funds and annuities;
- Contributions or gifts received;
- Educational benefits;
- Funds generated from the sale of personal property.

The Standard Deduction for unearned income is one hundred nine dollars ($109.00). If both the veteran applicant and his/her spouse receive Social Security or Social Security Disability Insurance then the Standard Deduction will be two hundred fourteen dollars ($218.00).

Sub-Section 705 EARMARKED INCOME

Income received on behalf and restricted for the use of a child by court order or legal stipulation of the contributor. An example of earmarked income is child support.

Child Support – is deemed available to the entire household. However, the legal guardian who is receiving the support on behalf of the child can elect not to include the child in the household. If this option is taken the child is not to be counted as being part of the household, and the earmarked income is not to be considered as household income.

Supplemental Security Income – (SSI) is income made available to individuals who do not meet the eligibility requirements for Social Security Disability Income. Veterans receiving SSI are only eligible for Emergency Veterans Assistance for Housing. Family members receiving SSI will not be counted as members of the household for Veterans Assistance consideration.

Sub-Section 706 PROTECTED INCOME

Income which cannot be considered available to meet the needs of any person other than the designated recipient. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is protected income. Veterans Assistance is not available to individuals receiving SSI.

Sub-Section 707 EXEMPT UNEARNED INCOME - OTHER

The following unearned income is exempt:

1. The cash value of Federal Food Stamps
2. The value of US Department of Agriculture donated foods (surplus commodities);
3. Any benefits received under Title VII, Nutrition Program for the Elderly, of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended;

4. Any compensation provided to individual volunteers under the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and the Foster Grandparents Program and Older Americans Community Service Programs established under Title VI of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended;
5. Income in an amount not greater than fifteen hundred dollars ($1,500) received by a beneficiary of a life insurance policy;
6. Income received under the provisions of the Illinois Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Act, including benefits commonly known as the "circuit breaker" and "additional grants";
7. Educational loans and scholarships made or insured under any program administered by the Secretary of the US Department of Education, whether paid to the school or to the student. Examples would include, but not be limited to, Pell Grants, Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grants, Monetary Assistance Programs, and the Guaranteed Loan Program;
8. Educational loans, scholarships, and other educational benefits not made or insured by the US Department of Education paid directly to the school for items necessary for school attendance.

Sub-Section 708 NON-EXEMPT UNEARNED INCOME - OTHER

The following unearned income is non-exempt:

1. Government benefit programs such as Social Security, Railroad Retirement, Unemployment Compensation Insurance benefits, Supplementary Unemployment Assistance (private), Military Retirement (including Coast Guard, Public Health Service, National Guard, and Reserves), Income Tax Refunds (will be entered into assets… this may cause eligibility to be denied for the month received pending on the size of the return), and Veterans Administration benefits;
2. Non-governmental benefits such as employer or union pension plans;
3. Local government benefits such as pension plans for state, county, township, municipal employees;
4. Profit realized from the sale of real property;
5. Payments from responsible persons and/or relatives and non-relatives paid directly to the applicant/recipient;
6. TANF assistance (Families in receipt of TANF will not be eligible for Veterans Assistance)
7. Net profit/income from the rental of an apartment, home, or land;
8. Educational loans, grants, scholarships, and other educational benefits not made nor insured by the US Department of Education and paid directly to the student.

Sub-Section 709 LUMP SUM PAYMENTS

A non-recurring payment from a third party to a recipient of a settlement or award or retroactive income payment. Examples of lump sum pavements include; injury settlements, workman's compensation settlements, insurance settlements, back pay from SSI or SSD, back pay from VA Pension or Disability.

The period of ineligibility is determined as follows:

1. Add the net lump sum payment to all other non-exempt income received during the month in which the lump sum payment is received, but do not include the VACBC amount;
2. Using the size of the eligible family unit determine the maximum pay-out per the model used by the VACBC;

3. Divide the total income (from step 1) by the maximum pay out for the family size; the resulting figure will the number of whole months that the case will be ineligible;
4. Any income remaining which is less than one month's needs is budgeted as income in the month following the period of ineligibility, if re-application for Veterans Assistance is made.

Applicants for Veterans Assistance who are temporarily ineligible for AABD or AFDC because of the receipt of a lump sum payment are not eligible for Veterans Assistance; dependents of the applicant whose eligibility depends on that of the applicant are also ineligible.

The receipt of a life insurance lump sum benefit by a VACBC recipient is exempt up to fifteen hundred dollars ($1,500) if the life insurance benefit was used to pay for the funeral or burial of the insured deceased.

Sub-Section 710 UNDOCUMENTED INCOME

Applicants/recipients reporting little or no source of income who are eligible for veterans assistance for basic living expenses in an amount not sufficient to cover the full amount of monthly expenses shall provide documentation demonstrating how the balance of the expenses is to be paid prior to funds being released for housing. Partial payments will not be sent to any landlord/bank. Verifiable written commitments from other agencies willing to cover the monthly expenses are acceptable.

Sub-Section 711 RESPONSIBLE RELATIVE POLICY

The following classifications define the only relatives who are legally responsible for the financial support or maintenance of applicants for or recipients of Veterans Assistance:

- Spouse for Spouse - A husband is liable for the support of his wife and a wife for the support of her husband if either is in need of such support and is likely to become a public charge;
- Parents for Children to Age Eighteen (18) {Nineteen (19) if a full time student} - A parent is liable for the support of all children to age eighteen (18), unless the child is a full time student at a secondary school, in which case the parent is responsible for support until age nineteen (19).

SECTION 800 DETERMINATION OF LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE

Sub-Section 801 NEED

Non-exempt assets which is available to the applicant for or recipient of Veterans Assistance, must be sufficient to meet basic maintenance requirements as defined in the written standards adopted by the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County.

Sub-Section 802 VETERANS ASSISTANCE CASE CLASSIFICATION

There are two classifications of Veterans Assistance Cases:

1. FAMILY CASE - A family case is defined as at least one adult and one child.

2. INDIVIDUAL CASE - An Individual Case is defined as a case in which the applicant is the veteran, the surviving spouse of the veteran, or the minor child of a veteran who is either living alone or with others not included in the assistance unit.

Sub-Section 803 PAYMENT PROVISION

Assistance is to be issued in the form of a voucher, an assistance letter, or a direct payment to a vendor. A vendor payment made by the VACBC, although not necessarily a full payment shall constitute, for VACBC purposes, payment in full for the goods and services covered thereby.

The recipient of VACBC assistance may allocate the total amount of benefits for which he/she is approved by the VACBC among the assistance items listed in Sub-Section 804. No voucher or check shall be issued for payment exceeding the actual amount due on the bill presented.

Sub-Section 804 ASSISTANCE ITEMS

The level of total assistance available to an eligible applicant shall be determined using the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet. The applicant may allocate up to the maximum assistance he/she is eligible for among the assistance items listed with the exception of food and transportation.

The following assistance items are to be considered and may be included for Veterans Assistance:

1. FOOD - A food expense is automatically computed as part of the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet. A Social Security number must be provided to the VACBC for each member of the assistance unit receiving this assistance.

The maximum amount for a food voucher or certificate will not exceed $75.00 for the first person and $50.00 per additional unique individual in Veterans Assistance unit over the assistance period.

Food purchases may be made in a grocery store of the applicant's/recipient's choice as long as there is an existing agreement to accept a VAC voucher or certificate.

2. PERSONAL NEEDS - Personal needs include toiletries, paper products, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies, and minor first aid products.

The expense is automatically computed on the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet. Personal needs are provided for with food vouchers and are limited by the maximum amount of assistance available to an eligible applicant.

3. SHELTER - Shelter includes; house rent, mobile home rent, or mobile home lot rental. *The VACBC cannot provide assistance for rent in which the occupied building is in an unsafe condition and/or the*

number of occupants in a building or unit exceeds the number allowed under State and Local laws. The amount of shelter aid assistance cannot exceed $5,000 in any 24 month period.

Payment in Full – Veterans Assistance and the applicants'/recipients resources must be sufficient to pay the current monthly rent. Partial payments will not be sent to landlords. It is the applicants'/recipients responsibility to provide the difference between Veterans Assistance and the monthly rent within the 30 day assistance period. Verifiable written Statements of Support from other social service agencies are acceptable.

Subsidized Housing - Applicants receiving Section 8 housing vouchers or living in HUD subsidized units may only be eligible for limited assistance as determined by agreements with the local Housing Authority. Applicants/recipients must meet the eligibility requirements for Emergency Veterans Assistance and the amount of aid can't exceed $500 in any 24 month period. All such assistance shall be reported directly to the Boone County Housing Authority. Applicants living with a Section 8 client or subsidized unit recipient shall not be granted housing or utility assistance.

Shared Living Arrangement - When a recipient shares a dwelling, the amount budgeted as shelter or rent should be determined on an equal share basis among the adult members of the household.

Eligible applicants over the age of 65 whose only source of income is from Social Security will have an independent living expense up to $140 to defer the cost of transportation and assistance with daily living. Additionally, up to $300 will be considered as a housing expense for owner occupied residences in cases where the mortgage is paid off and there is need for a verifiable home repair.

Payment Restrictions – Veterans Assistance is not available for back (unpaid) rent. Rental payments are not to be made to relatives of the applicant unless it is a separate dwelling of rental property. Veterans Assistance is not available to pay for taxes, insurance, repairs, or mortgages in arrears.

4. UTILITIES AND HEATING FUEL - Allowable utilities include heating fuel, cooking fuel, electricity, telephone, water, waste water, and garbage disposal.

Assistance for heating oil is available only for the months of October through April. The utilities must be in the applicant's name or the applicant must provide verification that he/she is responsible for the utility payments under the terms of the rental/lease agreement. Veterans Assistance is not available for utility deposits or connection / reconnection charges. Only the actual use (or average monthly for multi month billing) for the billing period may be used to compute eligibility on the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet. Assistance can be granted up to the full amount due less any credits.

Telephone - The VACBC can pay the basic charge ($60.00) for one telephone in the household. Only the basic charge will be used on the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet to compute eligibility.

5. TRANSPORTATION - Transportation will be provided to eligible veterans in the following manner:

A. Transportation to the Rockford VA Medical Center and Madison VA Medical Center is available to the veteran and medically necessary companion via the VACBC voucher cab. Veterans Assistance will not be used to pay for transportation to the North Chicago VAMC.

B. A motor vehicle fuel voucher can be provided to an eligible applicant who is actively seeking employment and has recorded his trips to visit employers or IDES. A fuel voucher can also be provided an eligible applicant for transportation to medical appointments as long as the trips have been recorded. Proper recording will include; date of trip, destination address, and round trip miles.

C. Pre-approved vehicle repairs for the eligible household's primary vehicle are available provided that the vendor is willing to accept payment from the Veterans Assistance Commission, and that the applicant/recipient pre-pays the difference between Veterans Assistance and the repair estimate.

The VACBC does not provide funds to purchase a motor vehicle, vehicle insurance, or license. Prior to receiving a motor vehicle fuel voucher, the applicant must provide the VACBC with a copy of his/her current driver's license, a current motor vehicle registration and a current Illinois insurance card for the vehicle being fueled.

Transient travel expenses can be provided a transient veteran one time. An example of such an expense would be motor vehicle fuel, a one way bus ticket, or transportation to the nearest Veterans Affairs Medical Center. This would be a grant to assist an honorably discharged veteran who has become stranded in Boone County, en-route to another state or county, through no fault of his or her own. This grant may not exceed the maximum payout level for one eligible applicant.

8. MEDICAL CARE – Medical care such as Veterans Restorative Dental Services is only available if the VACBC is able to secure grant funds for such programs. Conditions under which an applicant/recipient may be eligible for medical are outlined in such grant agreements.

9. BURIAL - 55 ILCS 5/5-27 – Burial of Indigent Veterans and Their Families - The Counties Code authorizes the Boone County Board to bear the expense of interment of honorably discharged veterans of selected conflicts and certain family members. These individuals must not have sufficient means to defray the funeral expenses of the deceased and does not apply to family members who were receiving public assistance at the time of their demise. The maximum assistance available is $900 and shall not be available for any burial ground or cemetery used exclusively for the burial of paupers, nor in a portion of any cemetery or burial ground reserved for paupers. The request for such funds must originate with the funeral home.

The VACBC has been appointed to represent the Boone County Board in this matter.

Sub-Section 805 BUDGETING

The budgeting process has a dual purpose: (a) to determine eligibility and (b) to determine the amount of assistance for which an individual or family is eligible.

All financial information from the applicant/recipient needed in this budgeting process is contained in the Application for Veterans Assistance. All assistance items for which the applicant may be eligible are found in the previous sub-sections of Section 800 of this Handbook. The amount(s) allowed for assistance items are shown in Appendix A of this Handbook.

Using the VACBC Budget Computation worksheet, determine the applicant's non-exempt income, earned and unearned, currently available to meet his/her needs.

To provide help in arriving at a monthly earned income figure, particularly in new cases, the applicant is required to furnish to the VACBC a record of his/her earnings for the month prior to submission of the application.

All non-exempt income, earned and unearned income, of all eligible household members are to be converted to a monthly average. To arrive at this amount:

Multiply weekly income by 4.3;

Multiply bi-weekly income by 2.15;

Multiply semi-monthly income by 2.

Enter the computed figure for monthly earned income on the VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet as Gross Monthly Earnings. Using any income disregards and employment deductions, described in Section 700 of this Handbook, that may apply to the case as well as other applicable deductions and exemptions listed on the worksheet, deduct the total amount of earned income to be disregarded. The remainder is the Total Monthly Non-Exempt Earned Income.

To this figure, any non-exempt unearned income, computed if necessary to a monthly average, and non-exempt assets should be added.

Next, using the allowance for assistance based on the current VACBC standards, consider each assistance item to be included for veterans Assistance as it pertains to the particular case, Family or Individual.

If the total of these payment level allowances is more than the total of the non-exempt income plus the non-exempt assets, financial eligibility exists.

If, on the other hand, the total of non-exempt income and non-exempt assets is greater than the total of the payment level allowances, the applicant should be denied or the case should be closed.

The budgeting process described above is required for each new case and each time an ongoing case is predetermined for eligibility.

Sub-Section 806 OVERPAYMENTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS

Overpayments are payments issued in a given month to, or on behalf of, an applicant/recipient by voucher which result in an income maintenance payment level which is higher in any amount than that provided for in the VACBC standards.

Overpayments may result from caseworker/administrative error or from intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of facts by the applicant or recipient.

When it is known that a recipient of Veterans Assistance has received an overpayment, but all information necessary to determine the amount is not available from the case record, the information is to be requested from the recipient. If the necessary information is not provided, the entire assistance benefit issued at the time the overpayment occurred will be considered an overpayment, not just the assistance item(s) in question.

Notice of any alleged overpayment and the intention of the VACBC to recoup the overpayment is to be given in writing to the recipient.

The Notice must include the factual reason(s) for the overpayment and the legal reference for the overpayment. An attachment to the Notice of Change in Veterans Assistance will specify the amount of assistance that was issued during the time of overpayment, by month; the amount of assistance that should have been issued, by month; and the total amount of the overpayment. The Notice is also to include all appeal rights of the applicant/recipient. If the recipient elects to appeal the matter of the overpayment, no recoupment of the overpayment is to take place while the appeal is pending.

If an overpayment is found to have occurred, the recipient may, within thirty (30) days of the notice of overpayment, request that it be waived if the overpayment was received without the fault of the recipient. The VACBC is to issue a written decision on the requested waiver and the recipient must be notified of his/her right to appeal the decision.

If an applicant willfully misrepresented income to qualify for assistance and fails to reimburse the VACBC the ineligible amount, the VACBC shall; notify the applicants Township Administrator of General Assistance and surrounding VAC Superintendents of the overpayment, file a complaint with the States Attorney's Office, and; with the approval of the States Attorney, file a 1099 with the IRS declaring the amount as unreported income.

If a client has been denied assistance from TANF, SSI, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Unemployment, an administrator of General Assistance or another Veterans Assistance Commission due to an overpayment, the applicant/recipient shall not be eligible for Veterans Assistance until the overpayment is recovered.

Recovery is the repayment of the amount of the overpayment from the applicant's/recipient's assets, either as a result of a voluntary agreement between the applicant/recipient and the affected agency or as a result of legal action.

Section 900 DISPOSITION OF AN APPLICATION FOR VETERANS ASSISTANCE

Disposition of an application for Veterans Assistance must include the following:

1. The determination of eligibility (approval) or ineligibility (denial) for each assistance item (e.g. food, shelter, utilities, etc.);

2. The written notification of approval or denial including a statement of the right to appeal;

3. Upon approval, the issuance of assistance, the total amount of which is to be allocated by the recipient, by voucher to a vendor on behalf of the applicant/recipient;

4. Issuance of a VACBC Notice of Rights and Responsibilities of Veterans Assistance Applicants and Recipients Form showing a specific report day for the evaluation of continued assistance. The applicant/recipient or his/her duly authorized representative is to acknowledge receipt of the Notice by signing and returning one copy of the notice.

Every applicant for Veterans Assistance has a right to an accurate determination of eligibility within thirty (30) days from the date of the application. This thirty (30) day period begins the day the applicant makes an appointment.

The thirty (30) day time limitation may be exceeded only when a decision cannot be reached due to an applicant's delay in providing information or material essential to a determination of eligibility. In cases in which the applicant is willfully responsible for the delay, the thirty (30) day period for disposition of an application is not extended.

Sub-Section 901 APPROVAL

Authorization of Veterans Assistance for is effective from the date of the initial request for assistance. The assistance period begins the day the applicant/recipient made a request for assistance and ends 30 calendar days later.

Sub-Section 902 DENIAL

An application for Veterans Assistance shall be denied if it is established that the applicant does not meet one or more of the eligibility requirements, The VACBC is not able to verify or obtain needed information, or if the applicant chooses to withdraw his/her application. All withdrawals must be in writing and signed by the applicant.

Section 1000 CASE RECORDS

Sub-Section 1001 MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

Case records will be maintained in accordance with state and local laws.

Sub-Section 1002 DESTRUCTION OF OBSOLETE RECORDS

Obsolete records, documents, papers and memoranda pertaining to Veterans Assistance cases may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of by the VACBC anytime subsequent to the expiration of five (5) years after the matters to which they relate have been concluded, or in accordance with state law whichever comes first.

Section 1100 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF BOONE COUNTY

Sub-Section 1101 BONDS

The Executive Board of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County may require that the Superintendent (including Acting or Interim Superintendent) of the VACBC to post a bond with the Boone County Government, in the amount and with sureties fixed by the Commission assuring their discharge of duties and accounting of Commission funds and property during the Superintendent's tenure. If the VACBC requires that the Superintendent post bond, the cost of this bond will be borne by the Commission.

Sub-Section 1102 PENALTY FOR PUBLICATION OR USE FOR POLITICAL OR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES

It is unlawful to use, for political or commercial purposes, or to publish names of recipients of Veterans Assistance except in the conformity with statutory regulations or for anyone to knowingly allow the use of lists of names or information concerning applicants or recipients of Veterans Assistance. The VACBC will request the State's Attorney take action in the case of violators of this section.

Sub-Section 1103 TRANSFER OF RECORDS

When the Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County leaves office, all records, documents, accounts and equipment pertinent to the administration of Veterans Assistance are to be turned over to the succeeding Superintendent or to the Chairman of the VACBC.

Sub-Section 1104 INTERIM OR ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

If the Superintendent of the VACBC is in arrears with the Commission or the County or has misused, misappropriated, or converted to his/her own use or to the use of any other person any Veterans Assistance funds or is guilty of any other misconduct in office, the Executive Board of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County may remove him/her from office. In this event the Executive Board of the VACBC may appoint an interim or acting Superintendent until such time as a permanent Superintendent may be appointed by the entire Commission.

Sub-Section 1105 LEGAL USE OF VETERANS ASSISTANCE LEVY FUNDS

Funding of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County includes both donated and appropriated funds.

Donated funds will be turned over to the Treasurer of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County or to the Treasurer of Boone County for deposit to appropriate banking accounts. These funds may only be used by the VACBC for the purpose for which they were donated. Donated funds not designated for a specific project by the donor may be used as the Superintendent, with the consent of the Executive Board, may decide.

Appropriated funds may only be used in funding the VACBC operating budget. These funds may not be transferred to, nor used for, any use not specifically governed by The Military Veterans Assistance Act (330 ILCS 45).

Section 1200 EMERGENCY & DISASTER VETERANS ASSISTANCE

Emergency Veterans Assistance (EVA) may be available to applicants/recipients who are not eligible for Veterans Assistance due to their income. EVA is available to assist applicants/recipients who, by no fault of their own, fell behind on their mortgage, rent, or utilities (excluding telephone). Funding for EVA is not certain thus may not be available throughout the year. If approved for EVA the applicant will not be eligible for EVA again for 24 consecutive months.

Not eligible for Veterans Assistance due to income – means that the applicant/recipients income exceeded the maximum income allowable for Veterans Assistance, however, he/she met all other requirements for eligibility.

By no fault of their own – indicates that the applicant/recipient experienced a recent unforeseeable incident which resulted in the current financial situation.

Funding for EVA – is budgeted on a year to year basis. If the EVA funds are exhausted any time during the fiscal year, EVA will be unavailable until the next fiscal year.

Sub-Section 1201 ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for Emergency Veterans Assistance is about the same as for Veterans Assistance except that the applicant's income is higher than what can be approved for Veterans Assistance and less than an established EVA Standard of Need, a Statement of Cause is required to establish the cause of the financial emergency, and the applicant has to be verifiably in arrears with either rent, mortgage, or utilities. Eligibility for EVA (if available) will automatically be determined during the application process for Veterans Assistance.

Statement of Cause – is required from the applicant to explain the verifiable incident that resulted in the household falling behind on the mortgage, rent, or utility. To be eligible for EVA the incident had to have been beyond the applicant's control.

Verification of being in arrears – can be demonstrated with a 5 day notice, statement from a mortgage company, or arrears utility bills.

Sub-Section 1202 ASSISTANCE ITEMS

Payment of arrears utilities (except for telephone) – Payment is made for arrears utility bills for actual use. EVA for the connection or reconnection of utilities is not available.

Payment of rent or mortgage in arrears – is available as long as EVA plus available resources from the applicant can bring the household current on their rent or mortgage. Partial payments will not be sent to a landlord or mortgage company.

Sub-Section 1203 LEVEL OF EMERGENCY VETERANS ASSISTANCE

The level of EVA available to an applicant is based on Very similar requirements to Veterans Assistance except the established Pay Out Level for an eligible family size is higher.

Sub-Section 1204 DISASTER VETERANS ASSISTANCE (DVA)

A disaster is defined as a man caused or act of God (not caused by the applicant or members of the applicants household) which renders the home unlivable as determined by local officials or agencies. A recognized "First Response Agency" who provides emergency housing in response to a disaster will refer an applicant to the Veterans Assistance Commission.

The VACBC Budget Computation Worksheet is used to determine the level of assistance, however, income is not considered. The DVA will be used to reimburse or extend housing assistance being provided by the "First Response Agency" (pending VAC approval). Additionally, food vouchers, certificates will be provided based on

the eligible family size in addition to the DVA provided. Disaster Veterans Assistance may be granted only once in the applicants lifetime.

1300 VACBC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

The VAC Transportation service to the Madison VA Medical Center is available to veterans who are eligible to use the facility and reside in Boone County. Veteran Clients are picked up from a centralized location within the county and transported to Madison via Rockford. The vehicles leave the VACBC by a specified time and return our veteran clients to the centralized pick up points. The VACBC is the only service to the Medical Center currently available in Boone County. Although the service is not a mandatory function of the VACBC, the Commission feels it important enough to continue funding its operation.

Sub-Section 1301 ELIGIBILITY

Transportation will be provided to Honorably Discharged Veterans, Military Retirees, eligible dependents, and the assistants of those veterans requiring assistance. A completed application and a copy of the veterans Honorable Discharge, DD-214, and photo ID card must be on file at the VAC office prior to our being able to provide transportation. Veterans not having a copy of their Discharge will receive assistance with requesting a copy from the National Archives & Records Administration.

Sub-Section 1302 DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

All veterans and their assistants are picked up from a designated pick-up point at a time to ensure that our veterans are at the Rockford VA Clinic or the Madison VA Hospital no later than 8:00am. Return transportation is provided from the Rockford VA Clinic and from the returning Madison van. The VAC Transportation Service is not a replacement for an ambulance; clients experiencing medical distress are strongly encouraged to dial '911' for immediate attention rather than the VAC Transportation Line for next day transportation to the VA Hospital.

The VAC requires, asks for, and gives priority to veterans with actual appointments at a Medical Center. The veteran is responsible for providing the VAC with a future appointment sheet from the appropriate Medical Center.

The VAC understands that appointments may be changed or added at any time after they leave the hospital. Veterans may also call in their appointments using the dedicated transportation service line (815-544-6464). Clients are asked to leave their name, appointment date and time, which clinic, and which pick up point they prefer. Clients are asked to call in appointments as soon as they are aware so we can match service based on expected passenger load. Calls for next day appointments must be received by 11:00am the business day prior to the appointment. The VAC is not responsible for transportation not being available to a client who did not notify the VAC Office of an upcoming appointment.

Clients need to call the transportation line (815-544-6464) after 1:00pm the day before their appointment to schedule service.

Sub-Section 1303 SIGNIFICANT MOBILITY PROBLEMS AND DISABILITIES

The VAC does not at this time operate wheelchair accessible vehicles to assist limited mobility veterans and those using standard wheelchairs.

The VAC transports individuals with a variety of medical issues. Clients with cold or flu like symptoms will be asked to wear a mask so as not to expose other passengers. Clients whose condition presents a risk to the health and safety of other passengers may be denied the use of the VAC Transportation Service. In all such cases, the Superintendent will notify the VAC Board of Appeals of the decision. If the VAC transportation service is not appropriate for you we will work with you and the VA to secure more appropriate transportation.

Sub-Section 1304 SAFETY

All passengers are required to properly use seat and shoulder belts. *Failure to use the belts will result in loss of transportation privileges.* The driver needs to remain focused on the road, please do not talk to the driver while the vehicle is in motion. Passengers will be discouraged from using the front passenger seat.

If a veteran experiences a medical emergency on the trip to the VA Medical Center the Driver will stop the vehicle, call the paramedics, and render first aid. The distressed veteran will be taken to the nearest hospital by emergency vehicle. The VAC Transportation Service is not a replacement for an ambulance; clients experiencing medical distress are strongly encouraged to dial '911' for immediate attention rather than the VAC Transportation Line for next day transportation to the VA Hospital.

Sub-Section 1305 SMOKING, DRINKING, AND EATING

Smoking is not permitted on the vehicles, and will result in loss of vehicle privileges. Open food containers and eating is not permitted on the bus. Beverages are permitted as long as they are in a covered 'car cup'. Individuals who are intoxicated, or who attempt to bring alcohol on the vehicle will lose their privilege to use the VAC Transportation Service.

Sub-Section 1306 UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Clients and their assistant's are expected to be on their best behavior while waiting at the designated pick up point, in the bus, and at the VA Medical Center. Harassment of other passengers, VA Hospital employees, or VAC employees will not be tolerated.

The VAC Transportation Service is a free service offered to Boone County Veterans that is funded by local tax dollars. As such, clients are not eligible for a transportation allowance from the VA Medical Center. Clients caught taking a transportation allowance from the VA Medical Center will be reported to the VA.

Persons found engaging in unlawful activities at any point during the service will be reported to authorities.

Sub-Section 1307 DRIVERS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Employee Guidebook – The Commission has adopted all the guidelines set forth in the Boone County Employee Handbook. Each driver is responsible for following those guidelines. In addition to following the Employee Handbook, drivers are responsible for the following;

Clean, Safe, and Polite – Transportation Service Providers are expected to maintain a clean and groomed appearance. Each vehicle is to be operated in a safe manner in accordance with acceptable 'Rules of the Road'. As representatives of the VAC they are to be polite at all times and observe each client's privacy.

Incident Reporting – In the case of an incident involving passenger behavior or where someone in the vehicle was injured, a written report of the incident must be provided upon returning to the VAC Office

Sub-Section 1308 COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Transportation Reports – It is the responsibility of the Transportation Coordinator to assemble regular transportation reports and provide them to the Commission and other interested agencies. Incident reports are to be forwarded directly to the VAC Superintendent.

Determination of Transportation Applicants/Recipients Eligibility for the Service – The Transportation Coordinator will make a determination if the Service is appropriate for a client. If it is found that a client is not eligible for continued service due to disability or illness it is the responsibility of the Coordinator to assist with

identifying alternate transportation. In any case where it is determined that the VAC is not able to provide transportation to a client, the Coordinator is to provide a report to the VAC Board of Appeals.

Passenger Concerns – The Transportation Coordinator or the Deputy will address passenger concerns to the best of his or her ability in accordance with the established rules set forth as approved by the Commission.

1400 CLAIMS REPRESENTATION FOR VA BENEFITS

Sub-Section 1401 VA DISABILITY OR PENSION CLIAMS

The Veterans Assistance Commission may be available to provide assistance to veterans and/or their families with preparing and presenting claims to the US Department of Veterans Affairs. A Veterans Service Officer who is certified by a recognized Veterans Service Organization and by the General Counsel of the US Department of Veterans Affairs to prosecute veterans claims, must be present in order to prepare and submit a VA Claim. All such claims are to be consistent with the guidelines set forth by the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers and/or the certifying Veterans Service Organization.

Certified by a Recognized Veterans Service Organization – indicates that the Service Officer holding the certification was trained in VA Claims Prosecution. The Service Organization must be recognized by the US Department of Veterans Affairs as one that can, under the name of the organization, present and prosecute claims on behalf of veterans and their families.

Prosecution of Claims – in this case is the act of an Accredited Veterans Service Officer advocating on behalf of a veteran claimant or his/her family before the US Department of Veterans Affairs in order to help the claimant get a specific benefit.

Sub-Section 1402 OTHER VA BENEFITS ASSISTANCE

The Veterans Service Officer or counselor will assist the veteran or family member with the paperwork or filing requirements to obtain other VA Benefits. The Veterans Service Officer or counselor will assist to the best of his/her ability, or help the applicant identify a counselor better qualified to assist with a particular benefit.

Appendix A

Standards of Needs Tables

The Standard of Need Tables (Table A-1 thru A-3) were developed using information from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Township General Assistance program and the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The number of people in the assistance unit, having been predetermined in the application for assistance, is the left hand column in the table. Crossing this number to the center column provides the Standard of Need. The applicant's income, as determined in Section 700, is subtracted from the appropriate Standard of Need. If this results in a negative number the applicant is not qualified for financial assistance. If the result is a positive number the applicant is eligible for financial assistance up to that figure or to the figure listed in the right hand column, whichever is lower.

Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County
Standard of Need & Maximum Pay Out Levels

Veterans Assistance
Table A-1

Veterans Assistance – Every 30 days while eligible

Family Size	Standard of Need	Pay Out Level	Lifetime Assistance Cap
1	$1699	$680	5,000
2	$2289	$916	6,750
3	$2879	$1152	8,735
4	$3469	$1388	9,560
5	$4059	$1624	10,000
6	$4649	$1860	10,000
7	$5239	$2096	10,000
8	$5829	$2332	10,000

Resident Less Than 6 Months
Table A2

Veterans Assistance for Residence < 6 months – Every 30 days while eligible

Family Size	Standard of Need	Pay out Level
1	$1699	$340
2	$2289	$458
3	$2879	$576
4	$3469	$694
5	$4059	$812
6	$4649	$930
7	$5239	$1048
8	$5829	$1166

Emergency Veterans Assistance
Table A-3

Emergency Veterans Assistance – Granted only once in 24-month Period

Family Size	Standard of Need	Pay out Level	Resident for < 6 months
1	$2831	$849	$425
2	$3815	$1145	$572
3	$4798	$1439	$720
4	$5781	$1734	$867
5	$6765	$2030	$1015
6	$7748	$2324	$1162
7	$8731	$2619	$1310
8	$9715	$2915	$1457

Updated: Table A-1 & A-2 increased to 150% Poverty level as of 6/20/2016
Updated: Revised all Tables to reflect 150% yr 2022 Poverty level as of 8/1/2022 – Source: ASPE.hhs.gov

Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County

Standard of Needs Tables
Grocery Expense Table

Food vouchers or certificates will be issued to cover a 30 day period. Food vouchers will include both grocery and personal needs items. They may not be used to purchase alcoholic or tobacco products. The vendor shall not issue change to the recipient.

Grocery Expense

Assistance Unit	Dollar Amount per week
1	$100.00
2	$125.00
3	$150.00
4 or more	Additional $20.00 per person

Personal Needs are computed as $50 for the first person and $10 for each additional person. Personal Needs are computed as a separate family expense, however, are considered part of the total assistance awarded.