



# LINN COUNTY COMMISSION OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

## GENERAL POLICY AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

Revised: September 08, 2021

Iowa Code Chapter 35B provides the legal basis for county commissions of veteran affairs. In Linn County, the Veteran Affairs Director administers the veteran affairs program under the general supervision of the Veteran Affairs Commission and the direct supervision of the Board of Supervisors.

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### I..... **BENEFITS**

Standard veteran's benefits, such as grave markers, maintenance of graves, and federal benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are available to eligible veterans. In addition, eligible veterans, their spouses/surviving spouses, and legal dependents may qualify for emergency assistance from the Linn County Veteran Affairs Department (Department) for up to three (3) months in a twelve (12) month period.

The Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission (Commission) reserves the right to refuse benefits to an applicant who does not meet the eligibility criteria listed in Section II of this document.

The Linn County Veteran Affairs Executive Director (Director) may make exceptions to policy on a case-by-case basis as long as the expenses for the Services to Veterans activity do not exceed the original annual budget in any given fiscal year.

Applicants may appeal the Department's decision regarding eligibility, or the amount of assistance granted in accordance with Section XIV of this document.

## **II... ELIGIBILITY**

### **A. . Veteran/applicant must meet all of the following eligibility criteria to qualify for emergency assistance.**

1. . The veteran/applicant must have been a legal resident of Linn County, Iowa for at least 30 days. The Department may verify residency with a current driver's license, lease, utility bill, voter registration card, or another official document that proves residency.
2. . The veteran must have received an Honorable Discharge or General Discharge Under Honorable Conditions. If the veteran has more than one military discharge, all discharges must meet this requirement.
3. . The veteran must meet the definition of "Veteran" as provided in Iowa Code Section 35.1, and must have served at least 90 consecutive days of active duty beyond training, or have a VA recognized service-connected disability.
4. . The applicant must be a veteran, or a veteran's spouse/surviving spouse, dependent child, including a step child or adopted child, under age 18, or another legal dependent.
5. . The applicant must have an emergent need that cannot be met by other means and is not due to their own financial misconduct.
6. . The applicant must provide proof of an unexpected expense that caused a financial hardship.
7. . The applicant must meet the income guidelines established by the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.

### **B. Financial Eligibility Amount Calculation**

1. Emergency Assistance is not intended to supplement the veteran's/applicant's income.
2. Department staff may determine eligibility from one of the following:
  - Income versus expenses
  - Lost or projected income
  - Total amount of an unexpected expense(s)
3. Combined Asset Limitations and Exemptions

Single	Savings/Checking \$3,000.00 Asset Accounts \$7,500.00
Family	Savings/Checking \$5,000.00 Asset Accounts \$12,000.00
Exemptions	Home of residence, life insurance, qualified retirement accounts, up to two (2) vehicles per family.

### C. Normal Monthly Expenses

The Department considers the following list of expenses to be normal expenses for the purpose of eligibility determinations.

Food	See Appendix A
Shelter	mortgage, rent, lot rent
Utilities	natural gas, wood, fuel oil, electricity, water, garbage, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer
Telephone	Single person - up to \$70 per month Family - up to \$170 per month
Internet, cable, or streaming service	Up to \$75 per month
Auto loan	up to \$550 per month
Transportation allowance	Vehicle owner - \$270 per month Non-vehicle owner - \$70 per month
Insurance	Divided down to the month
Paid child support/spousal support	Over the past 30 days
Paid credit cards	Over the past 30 days
Paid prescriptions	Over the past 30 days
Paid medical bills	Over the past 30 days

### D. Immediate Assistance

The Department will only issue immediate assistance, i.e., with little verification of the applicant's circumstances, for food, to prevent a utility disconnection, to prevent homelessness, or for another reason approved by the Director.

#### **E. Utility Disconnection**

If there is a utility disconnection to a household that includes a minor under age 18 or a senior over age 65, the Department will not count the amount paid to avoid disconnection or to restore service against the applicant's eligibility for assistance.

#### **F. Updated Documentation**

An applicant must provide all applicable current documentation as defined in this policy with each application submitted for emergency assistance.

#### **G. Continuing Assistance Review**

Upon receiving a cumulative total of \$7,500.00 in assistance from the Department, and each time an applicant receives another cumulative \$7,500.00, the applicant must meet with the Commission prior to receiving additional assistance.

#### **H. . Former Spouses**

Former spouses who do not have legal custody of the veteran's dependent child(ren) are not eligible for emergency assistance. A former spouse who has legal custody of the veteran's dependent child(ren) may be eligible for emergency assistance if the veteran has not fulfilled child support obligations, but must provide proof of a financial hardship. The Department may provide emergency assistance based on the child(ren)'s welfare and emergent need(s).

### **III. HOUSEHOLD**

A household consists of a veteran, the veteran's spouse/surviving spouse, dependent children, including step children and adopted children, under age 18, or other legal dependents.

### **IV... INCOME**

Income includes: wages and salaries; exchanged services derived from labor (bartering); self-employment income; unemployment benefits; disability insurance; workers' compensation insurance; federal and state tax refunds; annuity, investment, and savings income; child support; spousal support; inheritances; monetary gifts; public assistance; pension or retirement benefits; VA compensation or pension; Social Security benefits; college grants, scholarships, loans, and GI bill benefits; and all other income as determined by the Commission.

## **V. INCOME DETERMINATION**

The Department will use all of the veterans/applicants household income for the last 30 days to determine eligibility for benefits.

## **VI. APPLICABLE DOCUMENTATION**

- Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty/DD Form 214
- Marriage Certificate
- Proof of a common law marriage verified with a statement signed by both parties
- Copy of birth certificate(s) for all dependent children
- Social Security numbers of all eligible dependents
- Death certificate, if applicant is a surviving spouse or eligible dependent
- Total monthly expenses for all eligible dependents
- Verification of all income sources for all eligible dependents
- Verification of all assets for all eligible dependents
- Verification of a food assistance appointment or food assistance benefits
- Doctor's statement verifying a disability or listing a diagnosis/prognosis
- Verification of Social Security benefits, if eligible
- Verification of VA benefits, if eligible
- Verification of benefits from disability or pension programs
- Verification of registration with Iowa Workforce Development or any other job training program, or documentation of unemployment benefits
- Verification of past employment including date last worked and the gross and net amount of the last check received
- Verification of new employment including start date, rate of pay, and scheduled weekly work hours
- Verification of legal guardianship and/or conservatorship
- Copy of a divorce decree(s)
- Other legal documentation as applicable

## **VII. PROGRAM BENEFITS**

### **A. Food/Non-food**

The Department may provide vouchers and/or gift cards for food/non-food benefits. The applicant must apply for all other food assistance programs for which the applicant's household may be eligible in order to qualify for food/non-food assistance from the Department.

### **B. Shelter and Security Deposit**

Shelter assistance may not exceed three (3) months in a twelve (12) month period. The Director may make exceptions for shelter assistance only if an applicant has applied for Social Security benefits, VA benefits, or is under a doctor's care.

1. Security Deposit

The Department provides security deposit assistance to help homeless households access stable housing. The Department will provide security deposit payments only if the applicant receives a referral to the Department from a partnering agency that provides services to the homeless population and verifies an applicant's need for housing stability. An applicant may receive security deposit assistance only once during a five (5) year period. An applicant must return the amount of the security deposit assistance to the Department upon termination of a lease if a landlord returns the security deposit to them.

2. Rent

The Department will make rent payments to the owner of the rental property as verified by the Linn County Assessor's Office or Cedar Rapids City Assessor's Office. The Department will not make rental payments to a relative of the applicant. The veterans/applicants name must appear on the rental property lease. The Department may provide rental assistance as follows:

Single - shared bath facilities	\$600.00
Single - own bath facilities	\$900.00
Family - two or more people	\$1,300.00

3. Primary Home Mortgage

A mortgage assistance payment may not exceed the amount of the applicable rental allowance. The mortgage statement must be in the name of the veteran/applicant and must be for a primary residence. The Department will make mortgage payments to the mortgage holder as verified in writing by the mortgage holder or by another legal document that verifies the name of the mortgage holder.

4. Applicants Residing in a Mobile Home Park

Applicants may receive both rental payment and lot rent, if the total does not exceed the applicable rental allowance. If the total exceeds the applicable rental allowance, the applicant may choose either the total applicable rental allowance on the rental payment/mortgage, or on the lot rent. The veterans/applicants name must appear on the rental property lease/mortgage statement and must be for a primary residence. The Department will make payments to the mobile home park owner.

**C. Utilities**

Utility assistance may not exceed three (3) months in a twelve (12) month period. Utilities are defined as natural gas, wood, fuel oil, electricity, water, garbage, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, telephone, and internet service. The applicant must apply for all other

utility assistance programs for which the applicant's household may be eligible. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the Department denying assistance. A utility bill must be in the name of the veteran and/or spouse and must be for a primary residence. The Department will make payments to the utility company or vendor.

**D. Funeral, Burial, Grave Opening, Cremation**

The Department may provide funeral, burial, grave opening, and/or cremation assistance for a veteran, spouse/surviving spouse, or dependent child(ren) as follows:

Funeral expense reimbursement	Not to exceed \$2,000.00
Cremation, including urn	Not to exceed \$1,500.00
Additional amount for an oversized casket	\$300.00

Family members of a deceased veteran/eligible dependent reserve the right to pay amounts in excess of the allowable reimbursement. However, if total expenses exceed \$5,000.00, the Commission will not provide assistance.

The Department will determine eligibility based on the application for funeral, burial, grave opening, and/or cremation assistance. Allowable exclusions when verifying eligibility include the spouse's income.

**E. Flag Holder Grave Markers**

Flag holder grave markers for deceased veterans buried in Linn County are available through the Linn County Veteran Affairs Department at no cost to the family and/or representative of the veteran. The Department will provide one marker per grave at no cost, unless the Director approves an exception. Additional grave markers are available at a price periodically established by the Commission. The Department will keep a record of all requests for grave markers.

**F. Maintenance of Graves**

The Department will provide for the maintenance of graves in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 35B.

**VIII. EMPLOYMENT**

All applicants must register with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), which makes referrals to job training agencies. Applicants must register for any and all benefits available to them, including unemployment benefits. Applicants must provide proof of completion of an appointment with IWD. Failure to comply with the requirements of this Section may result in the denial of assistance. The Department may grant an exception if the applicant can provide proof on an application in progress for VA Pension/Compensation benefits, Individual Unemployability, or Workers' Compensation.

An applicant must file an Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR) form with the Department if the applicant has applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The Department will provide assistance for up to and not to exceed one year during the process of determining eligibility for SSI benefits. If an applicant receives a denial for SSI benefits less than one year from the application date, and files a request for reconsideration in a timely manner, the Department may continue to provide assistance for up to and not exceed the balance of that

one-year period. An applicant may appeal the decision to terminate assistance at the end of the one-year period to the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission.

#### **IX. APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applicants must provide a list of income, assets, and expenses, and review a personal budget with Department staff to determine emergency assistance eligibility. The Department may request that applicants receive budgeting assistance from an outside source and provide documentation to verify completion of a budgeting program. Department staff may refer an applicant to another program if they determine that an applicant's debt warrants outside advice and counseling, and may deny assistance if an applicant demonstrates the inability to work with an outside source for such advice and counseling.

#### **X. CONSENT TO RELEASE OR EXCHANGE INFORMATION**

The applicant or authorized representative must sign a Consent to Release or Exchange Information (See Appendix B). The Department may revoke the Release upon written request of the applicant or authorized representative.

#### **XI. VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION**

Applications must be truthful and complete, and applicants must provide verification of all information contained in an application before the Department will make a determination of eligibility. The Department may deny assistance to an applicant who provides incomplete or false information during the application process. Any benefit paid to an applicant as a result of false information is subject to repayment provisions.

#### **XII. REPAYMENT PROVISIONS**

Any applicant who also applies for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and is entitled to a retroactive lump sum SSI payment must agree to comply with the reimbursement provisions of State Supplemental Income Program to remain eligible for assistance.

#### **XIII. DENIAL OF ASSISTANCE**

The Director and Department staff have the right to deny anyone assistance for misconduct, misrepresentation, or if they determine that any part of the application is fraudulent. The applicant has the right to appeal a denial of assistance to the Commission in accordance with Section XIV of this document. Any fraudulent claims will result in the loss of assistance for a length of time as determined by the Director and Commission.

#### **XIV. APPEAL PROCESS**

An applicant or an applicant's authorized representative may appeal the Department's decision regarding eligibility, or the amount of assistance granted, by filing a written Notice of Appeal with the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission. The applicant must meet with the Director prior to the Commission's review of an appeal. The Director and applicant must review the application/appeal with the Commission at the next regularly scheduled commission meeting. After the meeting, the Director or Department staff will mail a letter to the applicants' home of record informing the applicant of the decision made by the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission. The Commission has the final determination on assistance in accordance with the Iowa Code.



**CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this is a true and correct copy of the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission General Policy and Emergency Assistance Guidelines passed and approved by the Linn County Commission of Veteran Affairs on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of September, 2021.

**LINN COUNTY COMMISSION OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Claire LeMay, Chair

I certify that this is a true and correct copy of the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission General Policy and Emergency Assistance Guidelines passed and approved by the Linn County Board of Supervisors on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of September, 2021.

**LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stacey Walker, Chair

**APPENDIX A**

Approved September 08, 2021

The Linn County Commission of Veteran Affairs may revise Appendix A separately from the Linn County Veteran Affairs Commission General Policy and Emergency Assistance Guidelines.

**Linn County Commission of Veteran Affairs  
Normal Monthly Food Expenses**

Number in Household	Normal Monthly Food Expenses
1	\$250.00
2	\$500.00
3	\$650.00

4	\$750.00
5	\$850.00
6	\$950.00
*	Add \$100 for each additional minor child of the veteran living in the home.

**LINN COUNTY COMMISSION OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**

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Claire LeMay, Chair

**APPENDIX B**

**CONSENT TO RELEASE OR EXCHANGE INFORMATION  
Emergency Assistance**

I (we) \_\_\_\_\_ authorize communication or  
release of

PRINT NAME

confidential information by Linn County, or its duly appointed representatives, to any of the named individuals, institutions, businesses and/or agencies necessary for determining eligibility for assistance, for billing or reimbursement purposes.

I (we) understand that I (we) have the right to inspect the disclosed information at any time. I (we) understand that this consent will remain in force until termination of assistance from Linn County Commission of Veteran Affairs.

I (we) consent to and authorize:

Any local, state federal government agency, private businesses, firm or agency, bank, trust company, postal savings department, insurance company, other financial institution, or other applicable agencies to share information.

Investments, holdings, life insurance policies, checking/savings accounts, bonds, retirement benefits, annuities, and any other assets/resources that can be converted into cash. This includes applicant and all eligible household members.

Upon written request, I (we) understand that I (we) may revoke the CONSENT TO RELEASE AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION at any time. I (we) do hereby and forever release and discharge all of the individuals, institutions, businesses, agencies, and LINN COUNTY IOWA, its agents and employees, from any liability for releasing information whether such information is deemed confidential or not. A photocopy of this form shall be considered as the original.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Understanding (Applies to all parties in household)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Revised 9.3.21