Camp Braveheart Inc.

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BRAVE Program Guidelines & Emergency Financial Assistance Policy

Camp Braveheart Foundation – Columbiana County, Ohio

Program Website: Braveheartcamp.org/brave

1. Program Purpose & Mission

The **BRAVE Program (Braveheart Rapid Assistance for Veterans & Emergency Responders)** provides short-term, emergency financial assistance to eligible veterans, first responders, and their families experiencing acute financial hardship. The purpose of the program is to relieve immediate distress, prevent crisis escalation, and support the stability and well-being of those who serve the community.

The program is operated exclusively for charitable purposes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

2. Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Who the Program Serves

The BRAVE Program provides rapid emergency financial assistance to **veterans, first responders, dispatchers, correctional officers, tow and recovery workers, emergency medical workers, and their immediate family members** who are **living or working in Columbiana County, Ohio** and who are experiencing an urgent, crisis-level need.

2.2 Qualifying Crisis Situations

Eligible applicants must be facing a situation that threatens their **safety, stability, or ability to meet essential daily needs**, including but not limited to:

- **Housing insecurity**
- **Utility shut-offs**

- **Food shortages**
- **Transportation barriers to treatment**
- **Emergency clothing or essential needs**
- **Other documented critical hardships**

2.3 Expenses Generally Not Eligible for B.R.A.V.E. Assistance

- **Criminal or court-related financial obligations, including probation fines, restitution, court costs, or legal penalties.**
- **Attorney fees or legal defense expenses related to criminal or civil proceedings.**
- **Fines, penalties, or fees imposed by a government agency, court, or other authority.**
- **Personal debts or delinquent obligations that are unrelated to an immediate critical need.**
- **Gambling, alcohol, tobacco, recreational drugs, or other non-essential expenses.**
- **Expenses resulting from fraud, intentional misconduct, or illegal activity.**
- **Business debts or business operating expenses, unless specifically authorized under the program guidelines.**
- **Expenses that another agency, insurance provider, employer, government program, or other responsible party is obligated to cover.**
- **Reimbursement for expenses already paid, unless specifically approved under the program's guidelines.**
- **Expenses that primarily benefit someone other than the applicant or their immediate household.**
- **Requests that would create an ongoing financial obligation for Camp Braveheart, such as recurring bills that the applicant has no reasonable means of maintaining.**
- **Any expense that falls outside the charitable purpose or stated mission of the B.R.A.V.E. Program.**

2.4 Income & Poverty Considerations

Household income should generally fall below **250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines**, unless the Board determines that the crisis warrants an exception due to extraordinary circumstances. For the most recent federal poverty guideline sheet, visit:

https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/dd73d4f00d8a819d10b2fdb70d254f7b/detailed-guidelines-2025.pdf

2.5 Annual Assistance Limit

- Applicants may receive assistance **once per calendar year**.
- Maximum assistance amount: **$2,500 per household per year**.

2.6 Approval Is Not Guaranteed

Support is designed for **short-term, emergency situations**, and even if an applicant meets eligibility requirements, **approval is not guaranteed**.

All requests are reviewed by the Board to ensure:

- Responsible stewardship
- Alignment with program guidelines
- Availability of funds
- Documented urgency and need

Assistance is provided based on **urgency**, **documentation**, and **program capacity** at the time of review.

3. Disbursement of Funds

3.1 Payment Method

To ensure accountability and prevent misuse:

- Whenever possible, payments will be made **directly to third-party vendors** (landlords, utility companies, funeral homes, service providers).
- If a crisis situation requires issuing funds **directly to the applicant**—such as for emergency food, clothing, temporary shelter, or other immediate crisis-stabilization needs—the Board may authorize a **check to be issued in the applicant's name**. The applicant will be responsible for cashing the check at their own financial institution.
- The Board reserves the right to **request receipts or proof of payment** for any items or services purchased with the funds to ensure proper use and compliance with program guidelines.
- No cash payments will be made to applicants.
- Gift cards may be issued only for emergency food or clothing and must be logged.

3.2 Maximum Award

- Up to **$2,500 per household per calendar year**.
- Additional requests within the same year are not permitted. However, under special circumstances, the board of directors may approve additional funding with a unanimous vote.

4. Application Process

4.1 How to Apply

To apply for assistance through the BRAVE Program, applicants must click the **Apply Now** button at **Braveheartcamp.org/brave**.

This directs them to the secure online application portal where they can submit their request and upload required documentation.

4.2 Required Documentation

Applicants should be prepared to provide:

- **Proof of identity**
- **Proof of veteran or first responder status**
- **Proof of Columbiana County residency or occupation**
- **Proof of Need** such as:
    - Eviction notice
    - Utility shut-off notice
    - Treatment appointment verification
    - Funeral invoice
    - Other crisis documentation

4.3 Urgent Requests

Applications marked **URGENT** will receive a response **within 24 hours** of submission.

4.4 Incomplete Applications

Incomplete applications or applications without sufficient supporting documentation **will be denied**.

Meeting eligibility requirements **does not guarantee approval**.

5. Review & Decision-Making

5.1 Review Committee

Applications are reviewed by the **BRAVE Program Review Committee** and must be approved by the **Camp Braveheart Foundation Board of Directors**.

5.2 Decision Factors

Decisions are based on:

- Severity and urgency of the crisis
- Completeness of documentation
- Alignment with program guidelines
- Availability of funds
- Prior assistance history

5.3 Appeals

Applicants may request reconsideration within **10 days** if new documentation becomes available. Appeal requests can be sent to info@braveheartcamp.org.

6. Conflict of Interest Policy

To protect the integrity of the program:

- If a staff member, board member, volunteer, or their immediate family applies for assistance, they must be **fully recused** from all discussions, reviews, and votes.
- Recusals must be documented in meeting minutes.
- No individual may receive preferential treatment.

This ensures compliance with IRS rules prohibiting **private benefit** and **inurement**.

7. Record-Keeping & Financial Controls

7.1 Required Records

The organization must maintain:

- Completed applications
- Supporting documentation
- Payment receipts
- Board determination records (including determination letters)
- Vendor confirmations
- Annual assistance logs

7.2 Retention Period

Records must be retained for **seven (7) years** for IRS and Ohio Attorney General compliance.

8. Confidentiality & Privacy

8.1 Applicant Privacy

All applications and supporting documents are **strictly confidential**.

8.2 Data Protection

Information may only be shared:

- With board members reviewing the application
- As required by law
- With the applicant's written consent

9. Program Modification & Termination

The Board reserves the right to:

- Modify eligibility criteria
- Adjust funding limits
- Suspend or terminate the program
- Amend this policy at any time

10. Applicant Acknowledgment

Applicants must confirm:

- All information provided is accurate
- Funds will be used only for the approved purpose
- They understand the once-per-year limit
- They consent to verification of documentation

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