

NEWS RELEASE April 18, 2012

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**Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program
(HPRP) winding down**
Program funding will end July 31, 2012
**1,818 Westmoreland County residents have been helped
since November 2009**

Greensburg, Pennsylvania- The Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development announced today that funding is still available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2009 Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). The program is to help people who may be at risk for homelessness because they are behind on rent or utility payments. However, with a July 31, 2012 deadline, time is running out on available funding. People who are facing a housing crisis are urged to call one of the two agencies who are administering funds, Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc, (724) 836-2600 Ext. 215 or Westmoreland Housing Authority (1-(800)924-2669 Ext, 3037).

"As we near the program deadline, we want to make sure residents and community agencies know that this resource is still available for those in need, but will be ending soon," says Chuck Anderson Westmoreland County Commissioner. Anderson noted the original goal of the one-time program was to prevent homelessness at a time when the country and region was experiencing an economic down turn.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Westmoreland County was awarded 1.8 million dollars from HUD and later granted an additional \$552,000 from the State of Pennsylvania for homelessness prevention. Initially, the County partnered with the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc., Westmoreland Community Action and Westmoreland Housing Authority to implement HPRP which began full implementation in November 2009.

Since then, 1818 individuals in 779 households in Westmoreland County have received help. The average amount of assistance per person was about \$1500. Shujuane Martin, Private Industry Council Project Supervisor says the most frequent request for help is for a family or person who is facing eviction because of unemployment or an unexpected injury or disability that prevents them from working.

County Commissioner Tyler Courtney lauded the agencies who have been involved for their fast launch of the program and ability to quickly assist people. "In many cases," says Courtney, "the short term assistance (which averaged only \$1500/person) was the difference between a person remaining in their home or having to look for a shelter or some other housing alternative which would have been far more costly."

Who is eligible?

Westmoreland County residents who are at or below 50 percent of the Area Median Income (**\$32,450** for a family of four) and who are at immediate risk of becoming homeless may receive assistance to cover any of the following:

- Delinquent rental payments if faced with an eviction notice.
- Delinquent water bills if faced with a shut-off notice.
- Delinquent utility bills if faced with a shut-off notice.

Other forms of assistance have included:

- Hotel / motel vouchers for temporary housing
- Rent and / or security deposits
- Utility deposits
- Moving cost assistance
- Workshops, one-on-one counseling, and skill development on budgeting, saving and financial planning

The following is not covered:

- Mortgage assistance and costs
- Payment on overdue credit cards, car loans, etc.
- Non-housing services such as child care, employment training, education, transportation, food, household items and clothing

How to receive help

To receive financial assistance through the program, applicants must first meet with a case manager who will determine if they are eligible and the appropriate type of assistance to meet their needs. If they are facing imminent eviction, they must show a magistrate's eviction notice. To receive rental assistance they must also show proof that a lease is in place.

Call County 24-Hour Toll-free Helpline

Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas notes since the start of the program, "The County's toll free helpline has logged hundreds of calls inquiring about assistance." Not all of the callers were eligible for HPRP funds but Kopas believes most were still helped in some way. Kopas encourages any Westmoreland County resident who is experiencing a housing hardship to inquire about assistance since there are many other resources and agencies in the county that may be able to help, even after HPRP funding winds down. For information and referral, county residents should call Westmoreland County's 24-hour toll-free Helpline at 800.222.8848. Social service agencies that are helping families having trouble with housing are also encouraged to contact the agencies for more information:

The Westmoreland County Affordable Homes website also details the services provided, program eligibility and contact information for getting help. The website, www.AffordableHomesWestmoreland.com, also has information about the availability of affordable homes for first-time homebuyers, as well as rental homes and apartments available for those with lower incomes.