

NEWS RELEASE

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**WESTMORELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**2 North Main Street, Suite 101**

**Greensburg, PA 15601**

**[www.co.westmoreland.pa.us](http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Westmoreland County Begins \$1.8 Million Homelessness Prevention and Housing Initiative**  
***County teams with three local agencies to implement new federal stimulus-funded program***

**Greensburg (November 5)** – The Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners, Tom Balya, Tom Ceraso and Chuck Anderson, today announced a new program to help county residents who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless because of current economic conditions. Westmoreland County's new \$1.8 million Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program is being funded through the federal money made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"This program is designed to help individuals and families who are on the verge of homelessness because of a loss of employment or illness, or because they have no other support system in place," said Commissioner Chairman Tom Balya. "Our goal is to help people with immediate needs transition into safe and stable housing and return to self-sufficiency as soon as possible."

"In today's tough economic times many county residents find themselves in precarious positions through no fault of their own," said Commissioner Tom Ceraso. "This program will offer assistance for folks behind on rent or utility payments, short-term rental help and other needed services to keep them from falling further behind."

Commissioner Chuck Anderson, who also serves as treasurer of Catholic Charities, an agency that provides similar services, added, "This one-time augmentation of existing services may prove welcome in these tough times for some families."

Under the program guidelines, residents with incomes below 50 percent of the Area Median Income (\$31,250 for a family of four) and who are at immediate risk of becoming homeless are eligible. In addition, overall assistance for an individual or family is capped at 18 months, but may include a combination of eligible services.

To receive financial assistance through the program, applicants must first undergo an initial consultation with a case manager who will determine the appropriate type of assistance to meet their needs and which local agency can best help. Based on their need, eligible participants may receive short-term:

- Hotel/motel vouchers
- Rental payment assistance
- Overdue utility bill assistance
- Rent 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

County Commissioners selected three agencies with expertise in housing needs and promoting self-sufficiency to offer these services: Westmoreland Community Action, the Westmoreland County Housing Authority and the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc. The county's Redevelopment Authority will administer the program.

The involved agencies have satellite offices throughout Westmoreland County and are poised to implement the program rapidly since the agencies already provide many of the services covered by the grant. Westmoreland County is required to expend 60 percent of the funds in two years and the full amount in three years.

While there are eligibility limitations to this program, any Westmoreland County resident who is experiencing a housing hardship should inquire about assistance since there are many other resources and agencies in the county that may be able to help.

### **Call County 24-Hour Toll-free Helpline**

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 experiencing difficulty with housing are also encouraged to contact the agencies for more information: **Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc** (724)836-2600 Ext. 215), **Westmoreland Community Action** (Rhonda Campbell, (724)837-6339 Ext. 26), **Westmoreland Housing Authority** (Tim McBride (1-(800)924-2669 Ext, 3037).

Westmoreland County also recently developed an Affordable Homes website ([www.AffordableHomesWestmoreland.com](http://www.AffordableHomesWestmoreland.com)) that details the services provided, the program eligibility criteria and contact information for getting help. The website also contains information about the availability of affordable homes for first-time homebuyers, as well as rental homes and apartments available for those with lower incomes.