



News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Rental Assistance Available to Somerset County Residents

Somerset County Freeholder Patricia Walsh has announced that the Somerset County Rental Assistance Program is available to provide up to 15 months of rental assistance and monthly case management to eligible Somerset County residents. “The goal of this program is to help working families achieve financial stability,” she said.

Funding comes from the dedicated Homelessness Trust Fund, rather than from tax dollars. In 2010, the Board of Chosen Freeholders passed a resolution creating the trust fund and giving the County Clerk the authority to attach a \$3 surcharge to the county’s document-recording fee. The board also appoints a committee – including two freeholders, county staff and community members – that sets priorities for the use of the funding and has the authority to continue, change or add programs.

To date, the fund has collected \$842,630. Of that amount, \$328,060 has been allocated for rental assistance, \$135,000 for case management, \$23,716 for financial literacy training, \$55,000 for legal assistance, \$42,329 for planning and administration, and \$257,059 for housing construction.

Since 2010, the Homelessness Trust Fund has provided rental assistance to 105 households. Ninety-two percent of clients have only one income in the household – either a single parent with children or a single person with no children. The average participant’s income is about \$35,000 a year. There currently are 13 clients in the rental assistance program; the average tenant contribution of 30 percent of his or her income is about \$875, while the average rent is about \$1,145 per month.

“These are clients who are receiving no other subsidy and are living paycheck-to-paycheck,” said Freeholder Walsh. “One unanticipated major expense – for example a car repair, or a medical expense that is not covered by insurance – and the household is suddenly struggling to pay rent, which could lead to homelessness if there are no resources available. This program helps to prevent that from happening.”

Case management is provided by a trained volunteer and is intended to help clients set and achieve goals that promote long-term financial stability. The program provides a monthly subsidy to pay the difference between household rent and 30 percent of one’s monthly income, up to a maximum of \$300 per month.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they will be able to afford their housing without rental assistance within 15 months. In order to qualify, at least one adult in the household must be employed, working at least 30 hours per week. Any non-working adult must have a verifiable disability or be a caregiver for a member of the household.

In addition, applicants must have a formal lease at a rental rate that is less than the fair-market rent for the unit size, and must be within the following maximum income limits:

- 1 Person - \$52,900
- 2 People - \$60,400
- 3 People - \$68,000
- 4 People - \$75,500
- 5 People - \$81,500
- 6 People - \$87,600

In addition, program participants must complete a monthly household budget; attend a monthly meeting with the program case manager; and be willing to accept case management services that include financial management, employment and/or any other services that are deemed necessary to maintain permanent housing in Somerset County.

Applicants who meet the criteria will be served on a first-come, first-served basis after being screened by the Somerset County Community Development Office. For more information call the office at (908) 541-5756.

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