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County of Berks / COVID-19 Leadership Team Press Release

Berks County receives additional funding for Homeless and Rental Assistance programs

Reading, PA— 7/20/2020 — Berks County officials have been approved for \$545,000 through two separate grants to support homeless and rental assistance programs for COVID-19 related issues. The county will be receiving \$245,000 in Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) funds through the CARES Act and has been approved by the state’s Department of Community and Economic Development for a \$300,000 Emergency Solutions Grant provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development CARES Act supplemental appropriation.

“This pandemic has put a financial strain on nearly every part of our community,” Commissioner Michael S. Rivera said. “The county is grateful to have these additional funds to help and protect residents who are now faced with the additional stress of keeping a roof over their heads.”

The HAP funding will be used to assist with rent and utility payments for those who are either currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to a loss of income. Dr. Edward B. Michalik, administrator of Berks County’s department of mental health and developmental disabilities, helped secure the funding and said it should help offset the amount of evictions the county is expecting will occur due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. The funds will be distributed by the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness. Dr. Michalik said the coalition had to stop processing applications for assistance due to a lack of funds and now has more than 125 applications waiting to be reviewed.

“It’s going to be a huge help,” Dr. Michalik said of the new funds. “I’m hoping that it will get us through the fall.”

The funds can be used for city and county residents who have an income eligibility between 100 and 200 percent of the United State Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines. Those interested in applying should contact the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness at 610-372-7222 or fill out the application found here:

<https://bceh.org/emergency-funding-application/>. A Spanish version of the application is available here: <https://bceh.org/programa-de-asistencia-de-alquiler-de-emergencia/>.

Gov. Tom Wolf announced on July 10 that Berks County Commissioners will be receiving a \$300,000 grant as part of the first of two allocations of Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funding. The grant will be used for homeless prevention and rapid rehousing efforts in Berks. The funding was part of a nearly \$19 million allocation to recipients in 52 counties throughout the state to assist in mitigating the impacts of the coronavirus on homeless families and individuals and to prevent future homelessness across the state.

To further assist homeowners and renters facing financial hardships, Gov. Wolf signed a new executive order on July 9 barring home foreclosures and evictions through Aug. 31. The order extended a prior order that was to expire last week.

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