



**Amherst
Community
Connections**

Housing is THE Solution to Homelessness

Amherst Community Connections Housing-First Program

Amherst Community Connections (ACC) has received a three-year grant in the amount of \$150,000 from the Town of Amherst's Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC). This grant will be utilized to begin a Housing-First program. The grant will provide three (3) chronically homeless Amherst residents with a housing voucher that will also include wrap-around supportive services. The purpose of ACC's Housing-First program is to empower, advocate and assist the program participants to become self-sufficient, and become integrated into the larger community, eventually residing in long term permanent housing. The deadline for submission of the application is October 14. For more info, please call ACC at 413-345-0737 or go to ACC's website AmherstCommunityConnections.net.

A.) Program Eligibility

1. Amherst residency: The residency of applicants must be verified in writing by the service providers of the applicant.
2. Income eligibility: ACC uses the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program 2013 income eligibility guidelines. The income for a one-person household cannot exceed \$22,980.
3. Chronically homeless: The applicants must meet HUD's definition of chronic homelessness: applicant must have a disabling condition(s), must have been homeless for at least one year or homeless four times within three years and the length of time has to add up to at least one year. This must be verified by service provider who has done case work for the applicant. The disabling conditions must be verified by a medical doctor.
4. VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index—Service Priority Decision Assistance Tool) Prescreening for Single Adults: ACC will utilize this pre-screening tool to assess the vulnerability of applicants. If the Pre-screening Total is equal to or greater than 10, the individual is eligible to apply for voucher.
5. Voucher holders are required to pay 30% of their gross income to landlord for rent. ACC pays the remaining balance. The rent cap is \$900/month (inclusive). ACC will follow Amherst Housing Authority's calculation of rent if utilities are not included in the rent. Applicants who do not have income initially must have filed for, or are receiving Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC, i.e. state's emergency cash program).
6. ACC will interview applicants who have met all the eligibility requirements.
7. Upon a satisfactory interview, the applicants will have their names entered into ACC's housing lottery pool.

B.) Application Process

1. The application form will be available in ACC's office on September 19, 2016. The deadline for return of the completed application is October 14, 2016. Only applications with all the documents included will be considered, and be time-stamped.
2. Only those who have had satisfactory interview will be entered into ACC's housing lottery pool.
3. A drawing of eligible applicants will take place at Bangs Center on Monday, October 31, 2016.
4. Notifications will be sent out via US postal service to the three who have been awarded the voucher on November 1, 2016. Voucher-holders have up to 60 days to find housing.

5. Those who have fulfilled all the requirements will be placed on the waiting list. When a vacancy occurs, ACC will select the next applicants from the waiting list. The place on the time-stamped master list will determine the order on the waiting list.
6. Once a year, a post card will be mailed out to applicants on the waiting list. Applicants must return the post card to indicate they wish to remain on the waiting list. Applicants who do not return the post card, will be withdrawn from the waiting list.

C.) Public Notification

1. A news article will appear in ACC's October Newsletter. The newsletter is available to soup kitchen guests, human service agencies, correction facilities, library patrons, Amherst Town officials, the Amherst Housing Authority, and the general public. The newsletter circulation list is about 1,400 individuals.
2. ACC will post the info of the housing-first program on its website and on social media.
3. ACC will send a press release to Daily Hampshire Gazette, Amherst Bulletin and Springfield Republican.
4. ACC will announce the application information via email to Amherst service providers such as Amherst Survival Center, Not Bread Alone, Craig's Place Homeless Shelter/Craig's Doors, Elliot Homeless Services, Health Care for the Homeless, the Amherst Police Department, the Amherst Fire Department, and others.
5. Flyers will be emailed to the above service agencies to be posted in their respective, publicly visible places.
6. ACC will post flyers in visible public places such as ACC's office, Amherst Town Hall, libraries, bus stops, among others.
7. ACC will have case workers to do street outreach in downtown Amherst to solicit application.

