



CPAC Recommended Project--Housing First Initiative: A Housing Stabilization Project

Dear Town Meeting Members,

Greetings to you! Amherst Community Connections is grateful and excited to have been recommended by the Community Preservation Act Committee of Amherst for our proposal to implement a *Housing First* initiative. If approved by Town Meeting, the project will receive \$150,000 for a three year funding period. Here is some information for you:

Why Housing First?

- ACC believes that housing is *the* solution to homelessness.
- Projects in Denver, D.C., and Utah have demonstrated the effectiveness of the *Housing First* approach.
- The problem with the standard “housing ready” requirement is that it is much more difficult to overcome disabling conditions such as addiction without stable housing. *Housing First* programs have low barriers to entry.
- Once an individual has housing, they are provided with case-management and support services.
- *Housing First* programs have been enormously successful at increasing housing retention, improving homeless individuals’ health and wellbeing, and saving taxpayer money.
- ACC’s experience operating a transitional housing program in Amherst in previous years has provided excellent preparation for implementing a program of this kind.

How will ACC’s Housing First program work?

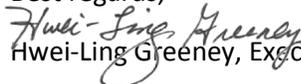
- Housing will be provided through subsidized rental units, paid for by vouchers held by ACC.
- Once participants are placed in housing, ACC staff will work closely with them to address barriers to maintaining housing. Services and referrals will be offered to help people to address addiction as well as other mental and physical disabilities, to develop supportive networks and independent living skills, and to find employment.

Who will benefit from the program?

- ACC will create 3 vouchers that will each enable 1 chronically homeless individual to move into a rental unit. To qualify an individual must be an Amherst resident, have a disabling condition, and have been homeless for 1 year or more.
- At last count, there were 20 chronically homeless individuals living in Amherst. ACC will seek applications from our qualified clients and referrals from other agencies who work with the homeless.
- The goal is for participants to “graduate” out of the voucher program as soon as they are ready and move into their own public or subsidized housing units. This way, more than three people per year will receive the benefit of participation in the *Housing First* project.
- ACC anticipates that Amherst will see a reduction in emergency response costs if more individuals are housed through *Housing First* programs. Amherst Police Department responded to 775 calls in 2013 regarding homeless individuals, at a cost of around \$58,000. *Housing First* programs in Denver and D.C reduced these costs by as much as 72% in 2 years. The program will cost ~50% less per participant per night than shelter services.

To learn more about this proposal please **RSVP to attend one of our *Housing First* Initiative info sessions at the ACC office on Wednesday, April 27rd at 4:00pm or 5:00pm. ACC is located at 121 N Pleasant St. Amherst. Thank you!**

Best regards,



Hwei-Ling Greeney, Executive Director of Amherst Community Connections