



April 15, 2020

Organization: Mission First Housing Group's The Whitehall Apartments  
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**1. What geographic area is served? (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served)**

A grant from the Chester County Community Foundation's Rapid Response Fund would support residents living at Mission First's supportive housing development for formerly homeless and at-risk veterans in Spring City, Chester County. This grant would provide 1) emergency assistance, specifically supporting cleaning and security costs, directly related to the COVID-19 disease pandemic and 2) one-time support for equipment to help launch The Whitehall's telehealth program.

**2. What population is served, what has been the impact of COVID-19, and how has your nonprofit responded?**

The Whitehall Apartments opened in June, 2017 to fill a need for affordable veterans housing near the VA Hospital in Coatesville. The Whitehall provides 48 apartments for veterans and family members, six of which are equipped for veterans with physical disabilities and includes 35 VASH housing vouchers for formerly homeless veterans. Today there are 56 residents living at The Whitehall. This includes 46 men and 10 women, 45 veterans, and 3 children aged 11, 12 and 14. 75% of veterans (34) are over 55 years old, 8 are between 36 and 54, and only 3 are 30-35.

Many residents of The Whitehall moved into the facility from transitional housing at the VA hospital. Many are formerly homeless and have chronic health issues and/or are living with substance use disorders or mental health issues. This means that many of our residents are among the most vulnerable populations for COVID-19.

Services in Need of Support

Mission First is committed to maintaining operations and ensuring safe, affordable housing to those populations. A grant from the Rapid Response Fund will support critical operations at The Whitehall, including:

Maintaining building health and safety by:

- a. Increasing cleaning and sanitizing services. Throughout Mission First's portfolio of more than 3,800 affordable apartments, there is an increased demand for more extensive cleaning and sanitizing measures to disinfect properties and reduce the risk for disease transmission. This is one of the

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most important ways to maintain healthy resident communities during this pandemic. We are investing in a higher level of cleaning and sanitizing services, to match CDC guidelines. This added level of cleaning is critical when considering that many of our Whitehall residents are managing chronic health issues that compromise their overall health and immune systems. Mission First expects to utilize this service at least through June 2020. A grant from the Rapid Response Fund would help to cover a portion of this critical service.

- b. Enhancing building security. Government-issued stay-at-home orders have resulted in a reduced on-site staff presence at The Whitehall. Approximately one-third of the residents living at Whitehall are managing a mental health diagnosis, including PTSD. A similar number are dealing with active substance use disorders. With so many residents living with the effects of trauma, these issues are particularly sensitive and need to be handled carefully. Daily living during a global disease pandemic heightens the effects of these traumas and puts many veterans at risk for relapse and exacerbated mental health challenges.

This is heightened further by a limited staff presence and the inability to offer any in-person programming, which during pre-COVID times, proved to be a great source of mental and emotional support for many of our residents. While our Resident Services Department has quickly transitioned to remote programming and virtual one-on-one check ins, residents are still missing out on the interpersonal connection and support provided by in-person access to mental health professionals, and the peer support provided during support groups.

As we do our best to ramp up virtual supports, we are also mindful of the need for a greater security presence, and residents have expressed great comfort about these added measures. To ensure resident safety, Mission First has retained 24/7 onsite security at The Whitehall and expects to utilize this extra level of support at least through June 2020.

#### Supporting start-up of a critical telehealth/Virtual Healthcare program.

Many veterans at The Whitehall have mobility and transportation issues and find it difficult to travel in person to routine appointments and medical care. Whitehall staff have been working closely with the VA to expand virtual healthcare onsite, however, not all residents have access to, or understanding of, the required technology. The VA's virtual healthcare program VA Video Connect (VVC) allows veterans to meet with their VA healthcare providers in a virtual medical room, using encrypted video to ensure the session is secure and private. Mission First is requesting support from Chester County Community Foundation for the one-time expense of purchasing two iPads, which residents will be able to check out and use for VVC appointments. This one-time investment in start-up program costs will help ensure the program is ready to launch when we are directed by the VA to launch this important service.

After this disease pandemic is under control, it will be more important than ever to keep veterans connected to physical and mental healthcare through the VA, ensuring they receive care while minimizing their interactions with other potentially ill patients at a medical center. Further, since many volunteer-run transportation programs, like the DAV Transportation Network, have been suspended indefinitely giving veterans the option of meeting remotely with healthcare providers will be critical.

### **3. How much funding is sought? How does this compare to your annual operating budget? What will the funding be used for? What is the expected timeframe for use of funds?**

The Whitehall Apartments is requesting \$20,000 to pay for the following emergency COVID-related expenses:

- \$3,000 for cleaning
- \$15,000 for security
- \$2,000 for iPads and protective cases



This represents approximately 3.7% of The Whitehall's annual operating budget. Funds for cleaning and security costs would be deployed immediately. Funds to support equipment purchase for the telehealth program would be spent immediately to purchase the equipment, though we will await go-ahead from the VA to launch the actual program.

**Attachments**

1. Audited Financial Statements
2. IRS 501 C3 determination letter