



**NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM
WILLIAMSBURG HEALTH FOUNDATION
CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG
JAMES CITY COUNTY
YORK COUNTY**

Together with the City of Williamsburg, James City County and York County, the Williamsburg Health Foundation has announced grant funding to the localities which totals \$1 million to prevent rental evictions of Greater Williamsburg residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There is a profound, multifaceted connection between one’s housing and one’s health,” said Carol L. Sale, President and CEO of WHF. “So profound that Trustees of the Williamsburg Health Foundation made the challenging decision to increase the foundation’s annual spending limit this year which required reaching into the foundation’s corpus to fund this program. This is a unique and important million-dollar investment for us and for the entire community.”

The million-dollar investment in a healthier Greater Williamsburg is divided among the three localities. Each received a sum relative to the size of its population and number of low-income households: \$270,000 to the City of Williamsburg; \$430,000 to James City County; and \$300,000 to York. The grant dollars will provide emergency rental payments for qualifying low- to moderate-income households. The City’s Human Services Department and the Housing divisions of James City and York counties worked together to create a common application for the COVID-19 Eviction Prevention Program; the application window opens Feb. 1.

When considering its options in funding around COVID-19, the foundation spoke with local experts about the long-term fallout from the pandemic. Experts told the foundation that temporary moratoria on evictions do not resolve the rental crisis, and once lifted, households would begin to fall off what is being called “the eviction cliff” and be unable to recover from financial hardship caused by COVID-19.

“This money is designed to help people who paid their rent pre-pandemic, who were stable pre-pandemic,” said Jack Tuttle, Board Chair at WHF, “to help keep a bad situation from becoming a desperate situation jeopardizing the long-term health and well-being of a family.”

“WJCC Public schools already have one of the highest rates of homeless students in the state. Imagine if those numbers sharply increase because of fallout from COVID” said Sale. “Our community will only be truly healthy when we have safe, affordable housing for all who live and work here. Too many families currently choose between rent and food —or rent and opportunities for their children.”

“We’re grateful the localities are contributing their staff time and talent to distributing these funds, which means that all of the foundation’s dollars go directly to rent relief,” said Sale. “The foundation has a long tradition of program partnership with localities in our service area.”

“When a city resident comes to our office to apply for emergency rental assistance, we can also connect them with other services they might not even know they can access,” said Wendy Evans, director of human services for the City of Williamsburg.

“Every month since the pandemic began, those of us in housing get ready for the moratorium to end and the flood of evictions that will come with it. Having these funds from the Williamsburg Health Foundation provides a safety net to catch those at risk of eviction when the moratoria are no longer in place. Now, we know we will have some additional resources to help renters,” said Keith Denny, Housing Manager of James City County.

“With these grants, everyone has to pitch in,” said Denny. “These funds will be paid directly to landlords. But, the landlords need to make some concessions as well. They need to agree to work with tenants to enter into a repayment plan for past due rent.”

“These grant funds from the Williamsburg Health Foundation are so important right now when many people are trying to keep a roof over their heads,” said Abbitt Woodall, York’s Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Manager. “These are not faceless, nameless people – these are our neighbors, friends, and coworkers. Helping them ultimately aids the entire community and region. Similarly, these funds will sustain landlords who rely on rent and mortgage payments to continue providing housing.”

“WHF cannot provide rent relief long term. We do not intend to do so. But, at this critical moment in the pandemic, we are certain that keeping individuals and families from falling into a cycle of homelessness and poverty is the best thing this foundation can do for both the immediate and long-term health of our community and the people who live here,” said Sale.

If you need rent relief, please contact a representative in your locality:

- Williamsburg: 757-220-6161
- James City County: 757-259-5340
- York County: 757-890-3885