



COUNTY OF ERIE

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News Advisory

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County Executive Announces a New Source of Help for Those without Overnight Shelter

(Erie, Pa)—The cold winter months are upon us and there are not enough emergency shelter beds in Erie to provide homeless men, women, and families a safe and warm place to survive the night. Some may try to get into a shelter but it will be full or they will arrive too late. Others have fears, warranted or not, for themselves or their property that prevent them from taking advantage of shelter services. Women who are homeless or live in a potentially dangerous situation will have few choices to be safe.

Over the past year the Mental Health Association of Northwestern PA (MHA), located at 11th and Peach, has recognized these realities and has experimented with what is called a “Drop-in/Sit up” program.

“We are not a shelter, but several times throughout the year we opened our facility to persons who are either homeless, unable to sleep, or in an unsafe living situation,” said Executive Director of MHA, Bill Grove. County Executive Mark DiVecchio announced today that he has secured funding through the Department of Human Services to expand the “Drop-in/Sit up” program to help those in need of shelter from the harsh elements for the remaining winter months calling the location a “warming center”.

If the combination of temperature and the wind chill is 20 degrees or below, MHA will open their facility to accommodate people who otherwise would have no shelter, between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

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“The partners involved agree that a long-term plan is needed, but this will fill a short-term goal,” said County Executive, Mark DiVecchio. “On any given night there are many people sleeping outside because they have no place else to go and that is unacceptable. We are hoping that additional warming centers can be secured, but this is a positive first step.”

The MHA warming center will be in affect on Friday, January 16th and Saturday, January 17th, due to the forecasted cold weather.

MHA estimates the cost to maintain a warming center for one night at approximately \$500 for staffing, food and utilities. For more information, contact the Mental Health Association at (814) 452-4462.

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