

Northampton County County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Northampton County's County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program?

This program could provide you with a loan to complete up to \$25,000 of repairs to your home, if you live in Northampton County outside of the city limits of Easton and Bethlehem. You would not be responsible to pay for the repairs until you moved out of your home, transferred ownership to another person, or turned it into a rental property. At that time, a portion of your loan would be due back to Northampton County to replenish the fund for future homeowners. It is a "zero-interest" loan, so you would not have any interest payments. There also are no application fees, closing costs, or other charges associated with the loan.

The cities of Easton and Bethlehem both have their own funds to run the same type of home repair program for their residents. If you live within Easton city limits and need home repairs, you can call the city at (610) 250-2071. If you live within Bethlehem city limits and need home repairs, you can call the city at (610) 997-7095. Both the Easton and Bethlehem programs are separate from the Northampton County County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program. They may be run a bit differently, but offer similar services.

If you have an Easton or Bethlehem mailing address, but live outside of the Easton or Bethlehem city limits you are eligible to apply to the Northampton County County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program. This includes the municipalities of Forks Township, Palmer Township, Wilson Borough, Glendon Borough, West Easton Borough, Williams Township, Bethlehem Township, Freemansburg Borough, and Hanover Township.

Applications will be prioritized from homeowners living in municipalities designated as "low-to-moderate-income" by the U.S. Department of Housing Development. These include Bath Borough, Wilson Borough, Walnutport Borough, Northampton Borough, North Catasauqua Borough, Wind Gap Borough, Bangor Borough, Roseto Borough, Freemansburg Borough, West Easton Borough,

What are the income limitations for this program?

We can only serve households whose income is below 80% of the area median income. This means that, when we add up the income from everyone who lives in your house, this number must be below the 80% area median income figure. The federal government calculates this figure, and it changes from year to year. Unfortunately, if your household is over these income limits, you are not eligible for the program. The federal government sets the income limitations, and neither CACLV nor Northampton County can make any exceptions.

What kinds of repairs can we make to your house?

Our program covers the cost of repairing any substandard items in owner-occupied homes. As a blanket policy, we can do work that meets one of the following purposes:

- Removal of health and safety hazards from your home.



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- Updates to bring your home up to the building codes enforced by your borough or township.

In general, we can normally do the following types of work in most cases. (Please note that the specific work to be done to a home is determined on a "case-by-case" basis.)

- Elimination of hazards caused by lead-based paint, asbestos-containing materials, and mold in the home.
- Installation of a radon mitigation system, if radon levels are elevated and your home does not have one.
- Repairs to any gaps, holes, cracks, or deterioration in foundations, roofs, exterior walls, doors, or windows that might allow weather, water, or pests into your home.
- Repairs to damage caused by current or past water leaks, weather conditions, or pests.
- Repairs to minor framing or structural issues.
- Repairs to leaky, broken, or "slow" plumbing.
- Repairs to poorly-working heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, heaters, thermostats, and ductwork.
- Repairs to unsafe, broken, or antiquated electrical wiring or equipment. Updates to "overloaded" circuits likely to cause an electrical hazard.
- Repairs to broken doors, windows, and associated hardware.
- Installation and/or replacement of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in all locations required by code.
- Removal of "trip and fall" hazards from floors, interior and exterior stairs, or decks attached directly to the home. Installation of handrails and guardrails at interior and exterior stairways.
- Any repairs not listed above necessary to bring your home in compliance with the Minimum Housing Quality Standards or building codes.

We can sometimes do the following types of work. However, we need a note from your doctor or an appropriate social service agency, saying that the work is necessary for your well-being due to a health condition.

- Repairs, replacement, or installation of air conditioning systems and components. (If your house already has central air and it is not working well, the program still cannot do any work to it without a doctor's note.)
- Installation of handicap ramps.
- Widening of doors.
- Installation of handicap toilets, specialty plumbing fixtures, or "roll-in" showers.
- Installation of smoke detectors for the hearing impaired.
- Lowering of light switches.

We are unable to do the following types of work. However, if you want any of these types of work done and have the money to pay for them, you are allowed to pay our contractor to complete the work while they are in your home.

- Work that is purely for visual or cosmetic appeal. We will not replace interior or exterior finishes that are in good shape and do their job properly, even if they are dated, out of style, or no longer to your taste.



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- Landscape work, unless it is necessary to remove lead-based paint hazards in the soil around your home or redirect water runoff away from your home's foundation.
- Repairs to detached garages, sheds, fences, swimming pools, or other structures located on your property but not connected to your home.
- Construction of additions to your home, or changes to your home's floorplan.
- Luxury upgrades or items. Where new materials are installed, we will select a good quality, "mid-grade" material from a reputable manufacturer.
- Repairs or replacements to household appliances. The only exception may occur if your home lacks a working stove or refrigerator and the budget allows.
- Repair or installation of cable or satellite television, phone, or Internet service.
- Repair or installation of home security systems.

Who funds the program?

The present funder for this program is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which has granted Northampton County money through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

What are the terms of the loan that pays for the repairs?

While the cost of the repairs will not cost you anything up front, you will remain responsible for repaying some portion of the loan whenever you either choose to sell your home or pass it on to your heirs. Here are the basic terms of the *partially-forgivable* loan:

- The loan is **zero interest**. This means you will only have to pay back the principal, with no interest payments. There are also **no closing costs or fees** associated with the loan.
- Your **credit score has no effect** on this loan. We will not pull your credit report at any time.
- There is no need to make regular payments on the loan. You can also **repay the loan early** at any time, either in part or in full, with no penalty.
- Repayment is **not due back** until you sell your home, transfer title to another owner or one of your heirs, turn your home into a rental, or no longer use your home as your primary residence.
- The loan is **partially forgivable** over time. This means you will have to pay back **some, but not all**, of the money we loan you.
 - At the time the loan is signed, the first **10%** of the cost of the repairs **is forgiven**. You will never be responsible for paying back more than **90%** of the loan amount.
 - On the **6th year anniversary** of your loan, another **40%** of total cost is forgiven. At this point, you would only be responsible for paying back **50%** of the loan amount.
 - On the **10th year anniversary** of your loan, another **25%** of the cost is forgiven. At this point, you would only be responsible for paying back **25%** of this loan amount.
 - The loan amount **will never** go completely away.



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How long will I wait on the waiting list?

We regret that we are unable to provide time estimates. We are required to answer all inquiries in the order they are received. Due to this fact, we unfortunately cannot provide immediate assistance with emergency or unexpected home repairs. Some emergency repairs, such as those directly caused by inclement weather, may be covered by your homeowners' insurance.

What are the eligibility and application requirements?

We will work with you to gather information on the following, and we will present it to the office at Northampton County that administers the Program. **Please understand that all eligibility determinations are made by Northampton County.**

- **Household income.** When you meet with us for their initial application appointment, the first thing we must do is make sure your household falls within income limits. We will review the documents on the separate checklist. For quicker review of your application, please bring all needed documents or send us copies along with your application.
- **Previous housing rehabilitation.** We will need to determine if you have received home repairs from this or a similar program within the past five (5) years. If you have, we regret that we will not be able to provide you with repairs. If the program was simply a home weatherization or handicap accessibility program, we could still repair your home.
- **Floodplain status.** We will need to determine if your home is located in a 100-year or 500-year floodplain. We will check this for you. If your home is located in a 100-year and/or a 500-year floodplain, we regret that not be able to provide you with repairs. Repairs to homes in the floodplain are at the County's discretion.
- **Title search.** We will order a title search on your home at no cost to you. The County will need to determine what outstanding loans and liens there are on your home, to ensure you will be able to pay back the loan.
- **Real estate tax payments.** We will need to ensure you are up to date with all real estate tax obligations to your borough or township, your school district, and Northampton County. We will obtain tax certificates at no cost to you.
- **Payment for municipal utility accounts.** We will need to ensure you are current on all accounts for utilities provided through your local municipality. While these may vary from location to location, they often include garbage, sewer, and water service. We will contact the appropriate municipal utilities to determine if your accounts are current. Please note this requirement does NOT apply to utilities offered through a private company (PPL, Met-Ed, UGI, PA American Water, private garbage haulers, etc.) rather than a municipal utility.



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If you meet this first set of requirements, we will send inspectors to your home to review the following. We will need to determine that we can complete all work needed within the \$25,000 limit before we can get your loan approved.

- **Needed repairs.** Our Program inspector will visit your home, walk through with you, and determine any health, safety, and code compliance issues needing repair to meet the Minimum Housing Quality Standards.
- **Lead-based paint.** If your home was built before 1978, there may be lead-based paint in your home. If this applies to you, we will send a third-party lab to complete a lead test in your home. This test will take place at no cost to you. We will be required to address any lead-based paint hazards found as part of your loan.
- **Electrical inspection.** We will send in an electrician to inspect your home's electrical wiring and equipment. This inspection will occur at no cost to you. Any unsafe, outdated, or incorrect electrical work will need to be addressed as part of your loan.
- **Radon test.** If your home does not already have a working radon mitigation system, we will complete a radon test at no cost to you. If radon levels come back high, we will be required to install a radon mitigation system as part of your loan.

What happens once I am approved?

After we have confirmed that both you and your home are eligible for the program, we will write a "scope of work." This document will describe all the work a contractor would need to do to fix the health, safety, and code issues in your home. We will work closely with you so the scope may be to your satisfaction. The scope of work will then be bid out to a list of general contractors who we know to do good work. The construction manager will schedule a pre-bid walk-through with you. This meeting will give interested contractors a chance to see the items in need of repair, and ask both us and you questions about specific items.

At the date and time bids are due, we will open and thoroughly review them. We will identify the contractor who provided the lowest bid, and make sure they followed directions and understood all items in the scope of work. The lowest bidder who meets these two criteria will be considered the "lowest qualified bidder," and Northampton County will fund your repair loan in the amount of their bid. You can choose one of the higher bidders, but you will be responsible for covering the gap between their price and the low price.

When it is time for the work to begin, you will sign your repair loan paperwork and the construction contract with the contractor at the same time. Once you sign a paper called "Notice to Proceed," the contractor can begin working on your house. The contractor will be provided with thirty (30) days to "mobilize," or complete all preparations for the job, and sixty (60) days to complete the work. On behalf of Northampton County, we will pay the contractor directly for their work.



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Our staff will keep in close touch with both you and the contractor throughout the work. We will routinely inspect the contractor's work to make sure it is of high quality. If any materials used come in multiple colors, designs, or styles, you will be given the opportunity to select your preferred choices. The construction contract will allow the contractor to get paid at certain points during the job. Once the contractor reaches one of these points, the construction manager will inspect their work. You and our staff must sign off to accept the contractor's work and authorize payment.

The specific work items, materials, and costs are "set in stone" when the construction contract is signed. (If the contract says you will receive new windows, repairs to your boiler, and a handrail on your stairs for \$14,000, you can count on receiving exactly these work items for exactly this loan amount.) This is meant to provide you with a clear understanding of what specific work the contractor is required to complete, and what your loan amount will be.

Once the job starts, there are some circumstances where it is appropriate to add work to the scope. This usually occurs because you request additional work, or the contractor discovers "hidden conditions" in the course of their work. If work needs to be added, we help the contractor put together what is known as a "change order." We will ask the contractor to provide a proposed price for the needed work items, and confirm that the contractor's price is reasonable. You, our staff, and the contractor will then all sign the change order. The change order cost will be added to your repair loan amount. As usual, all change order work will be inspected, with signatures required for payment as described above. The contractor will not be able to request extra money for the work unless everyone agrees to it ahead of time through this change order procedure.

When the contractor says that everything is done, we will inspect the work. You should be there to point out any final concerns that you might have. After that inspection, a list will be made of all the things that the contractor must do to get the final payment. Once this work is done, you will sign a paper stating that the work is complete. If there were any change orders, you will also sign updated repair loan paperwork as described above. Once construction is all complete, you will have a one-year warranty period on all work done by the contractor.

Who manages the program?

This program is managed by Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV), a nonprofit based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to email us at mhandzo@caclv.org. You can also leave us a voice message at (610) 691-5620. When leaving a message, please tell us your name, phone number, home address, and the best time to call you. We will call you back within less than a week.



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Are there other programs available?

Yes. There are at least three different programs that you may also qualify for. Please note that these programs are not affiliated with CACLV or the Northampton County County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program, and that we have no decision-making authority over these programs.

- 1) Loans and/or grants are available from the USDA if you live in an area that the USDA considers rural. Owners 62 years old or older may qualify for grants up to \$7,500. Owners younger than 62 years old may qualify for a repair loan at a low interest rate. Income restrictions apply.
- 2) Anyone in Northampton County may qualify for a Keystone Renovate & Repair Loan from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). Even if you do not have equity in your home you may still qualify. Call 1 (800) 822-1174 for more information or for a referral to PHFA's local contact.
- 3) Community Action Committee's Weatherization Program may be able to provide additional assistance if you are below their income guidelines. Call (610) 691-5620 and ask about getting weatherization services.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Email Coordinator Mike Handzo at mhandzo@caclv.org or leave us a message at (484) 893-1061.

We look forward to serving you!

DISCLAIMER: *This packet, or any other informational material, phone call, or visit provided during your contact with the Northampton County County-Wide Housing Rehabilitation Program, is not meant as a determination of your eligibility for the program. It also does not create any obligations for us to complete any repairs to your home. We will not be held responsible for the completion of any repairs to your home other than those specifically written out in a construction contract and signed by you, us, and a general contractor. Verbal information from our staff or our contractors is meant for informational purposes only.*



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Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley is a private, non-profit organization, and is, therefore, obligated to adhere to certain laws and the requirements of its funders in order to provide services to the public. Some of those requirements include the collection of data about persons using our services in order to document eligibility to receive services, ensure that Federal Civil Rights laws are adhered to, and that recipients of services do not experience discrimination.

Program Application for Repair Loans Through Northampton County

Name: _____ Date: _____

First M.I. Last

Address: _____ Apt. # _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

County: _____ Municipality: _____

Phone #: (Home) _____ (Cell) _____ (Work) _____

Best time to call: _____

Email: _____

Do you have health insurance? __ Yes __ No

(If yes, circle all that apply)

Adult Basic C.H.I.P. Medical Assistance Medicare
 Medicare/Private Private Other

Does anyone in the household receive food stamps (SNAP)? __ Yes __ No Amount _____

Does anyone in the household have an automobile? __ Yes __ No Amount _____

Is the applicant for services homebound? __ Yes __ No Amount _____

*Housing Information:

Are there any mortgages on your home? __ Yes __ No How Many? _____

Have you paid all of your property taxes? __ Yes __ No

Do you have homeowners' insurance on your home? __ Yes __ No

*Family Type: __ Single Parent/ Female __ Single Parent/Male __ Two Parent Household
 __ Single Person __ Two Adults – no children __ Other

Repairs Requested: __ Roof and/or Gutter Repair __ Interior Water Damage
 __ Increased Insulation __ Window and/or Door Repairs
__ Mobility-Related Changes __ Heating System Repair __ Foundational Problems

Quality of Living Situation __ Good __ Adequate __ Poor

Has your household received property rehabilitation assistance funding through this program or any other housing rehabilitation program in the past five (5) years?

Yes No

* This does not include home weatherization or programs providing accessibility modifications.

Number of People in the Household:

_____ Number of Adults (18+) in household _____ Children (0-5 yrs) _____ Children (6-17 yrs)

Total Annual Household Income \$ _____

***Household Income Sources: (Check all that apply and enter monthly amount of each) (Documentation will be required for each source of income)**

- Employment only _____
- Employment + other _____
- Unemployment _____
- Child Support _____
- General Assistance _____
- TANF _____
- Social Security _____
- SSI _____
- Pension _____
- SS Disability _____
- Alimony _____
- Unearned income _____
- Other (Explain) _____
- No Income(explain) _____

Owner Information

Social Security # _____ - _____ - _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____

Gender: Male Female

Race (Please select **one or more** statements which best describes your racial composition):

- I am White.
- I am Black or African American.
- I am Asian.
- I am American Indian or Alaska Native.
- I am Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- I am American Indian or Alaskan Native & White.
- I am Asian & White.
- I am Black or African American & White.
- I am American Indian or Alaskan Native & Black or African American.
- I am Other Multi-Racial.

Ethnicity (please select one):

- I am Hispanic/Latino
- I am not Hispanic or Latino

***Are you Disabled?** Yes No

Are you a veteran? Yes No

Do you have a drivers's license Yes No

Primary Language _____

Marital Status: Single Separated Divorced
 Partner Widowed Married

Highest level of Education: 0 -8th Grade 9th- 12th Grade (non-graduate)
 High School Graduate/GED 12+ (Post Secondary)
 2 or 4 year College Graduate Master Degree PhD

Employment Status: Full-time Part-time
 Have two part-time jobs Never employed
 Retired Unemployed
Unemployed over 3 months

Are you currently employed? Yes No **Name of Employer:** _____

Co-Owner Information

Relationship to Primary Participant: _____

Name: _____
First M.I. Last

Social Security # _____ - _____ - _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____

Gender: Male Female

Race (Please select **one or more** statements which best describes your racial composition):

Ethnicity (please select one):

- I am White.
- I am Black or African American.
- I am Asian.
- I am American Indian or Alaska Native.
- I am Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- I am American Indian or Alaskan Native & White.
- I am Asian & White.
- I am Black or African American & White.
- I am American Indian or Alaskan Native & Black or African American.
- I am Other Multi-Racial.

- I am Hispanic/Latino
- I am not Hispanic or Latino

Are you Disabled? Yes No

Are you a veteran? Yes No

Do you have a drivers's license Yes No

Primary Language _____

Do you have health insurance? Yes No

(If yes, circle all that apply)

- Adult Basic C.H.I.P. Medical Assistance Medicare
- Medicare/Private Private Other

Marital Status: Single Separated Divorced
 Partner Widowed Married

***Highest level of Education:** 0 -8th Grade 9th - 12th Grade (non-graduate)
 High School Graduate/GED Some Post-Secondary
 2 or 4 year College Graduate Master Degree PhD

Employment Status: Full-time Part-time
 Have two part-time jobs Never employed
 Retired Unemployed
 Unemployed over 3 months

Are you currently employed? Yes No **Name of Employer:** _____

I/we certify that all information on this certification is true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief and understand that the information given is subject to verification by the funding local municipality and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I am not aware of any potential changes in the income of any household member that may occur during the next six months that were not disclosed in this application. I understand that if I knowingly or willfully make any false statements in the certification or other supporting documentation, I will be required to reimburse the full amount of any assistance provided.

STATEMENTS "UNDER PENALTY" - A person commits a misdemeanor of the third degree, if he or she makes a written false statement which he does not believe to be true, on or pursuant to a form bearing notice, authorized by law, to the effect that false statements made therein are punishable by law.

Owner Signature

Date

Co-owner Signature

Date

Print Name

Print Name

Please mail or deliver your application to:



Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
Attn: Mike Handzo
1337 East Fifth Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015

You can also fax the application to us: (484) 821-2305

Documentation Checklist

When you meet with us for their initial application appointment, the first thing we must do is make sure your household falls within income limits. With this in mind, please bring the following documents for all members of your household with you at your first meeting with us, or send us complete copies along with your application.

- Income documentation from **all** members of your household. This includes **any and all** of the following that may apply to the members of your household:
 - Paystubs for the past three months of employment.
 - Social security or disability award letters.
 - Statements of unemployment compensation.
 - Written official proof of the amount of pensions.
 - Written documentation of any income source not listed above.
- Federal income tax returns including all schedules and W-2 forms for the last 2 years.
- Proof of alimony (if applicable).
- Proof that property taxes are current (includes local, county, & school tax).
- Driver's license or other I.D.
- Proof of current home owner's insurance.

We recognize that all household income situations are different.

If you have any questions about the documents we need,

please feel free to call us at (610) 691-5620!

