

The logo for Ventura County Star, featuring the text "Ventura County Star" in a serif font over a background image of a lighthouse on a rocky coastline.

Stimulus funds to fight homelessness locally

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Ventura County and the city of Oxnard will get \$1.9 million in federal stimulus funds to help people stay in their homes or find new ones, the county Board of Supervisors learned today.

The county and the city were notified recently that their grant applications were approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under a stimulus program called "Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing." Oxnard will oversee the program within its city limits, while the county will spend its funds in the unincorporated areas and the county's smaller cities.

Five other cities — Camarillo, Moorpark, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Ventura — have applied for a separate grant that could bring another \$1.2 million.

Oxnard was awarded \$1.1 million and the county will get about \$785,000.

Between them, the three grants could provide assistance to 654 households over the next three years, said Barry Zimmerman, director of the county Human Services Agency.

That assistance could include cash to help pay the rent for up to six months, help finding a new home, credit counseling and other services that will help people stay out of homelessness.

"The program is really targeted for those who have recently lost their home and would have a likelihood of re-establishing a home and being stable, with this assistance," Zimmerman said.

Supervisor Steve Bennett called the grants "a godsend."

"So many homelessness prevention programs have been cut, and this is a wonderful program," he said.

The county will hire four social workers to run the program and find people who qualify for it, Zimmerman said. Since the county is also eliminating social worker jobs in other areas, current county employees will have the first opportunity to apply, he said.



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