

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 31, 2018

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**FEDERAL GRANT AIMED AT TREATING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS
AMONG THE HOMELESS AWARDED TO STEPPINGSTONE**

(Fall River, MA) – AUGUST 24 – This week, Steppingstone Incorporated, a local provider of substance abuse and mental health treatment as well as housing for the homeless, received notice of a \$2.5 million federal grant award to address the mental health crisis among the homeless population. National research has shown that the majority of homeless individuals suffer from untreated mental health and substance use disorders, and that these are often major barriers to escaping the cycle of homelessness. The five-year grant project, known as Project FAIHR (Focused Achievements in Housing and Recovery), will operate in the Greater Fall River and New Bedford areas and provide supportive housing combined with integrated treatment for co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. Participants will receive case management to help them maintain their health and housing stability and connect with peer support groups, vocational development programs, transportation, child care, and other wrap-around services. FAIHR will perform outreach in local homeless shelters in both cities, including Steppingstone’s First Step Inn shelter in downtown Fall River, to engage homeless individuals with the most severe needs. The Project aims to serve 500 individuals and families over the grant term.

“Our Agency is honored to take on this responsibility and provide these much needed services to address the mental health treatment needs of the homeless in Fall River and New Bedford,” said Kathleen Schedler-Clark, Steppingstone’s Executive Director. “Project FAIHR will utilize evidence-based treatment interventions to stabilize the health of participants and set them up for long-term success in permanent housing. This will be a community-wide effort – FAIHR will integrate with Steppingstone’s Outpatient Program, emergency shelter, peer support center, and our many permanent supportive housing units, as well as with other community-based providers and groups.”

Steppingstone’s project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which operates under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of this grant program is to support the development and/or expansion of the local implementation of an infrastructure that integrates behavioral health treatment and recovery support services for individuals and families with a serious mental illness or co-occurring substance use disorder. The goal is to increase capacity and provide accessible, effective, comprehensive, coordinated, integrated, and evidence-based treatment services, peer support and other recovery support services, and linkages to sustainable permanent housing. As a provider of similar services for the homeless in Fall River and New Bedford for decades, Steppingstone has proven capable of achieving these project goals over the next five years.