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MHA finds some elderly residents all alone

Nobody to take care of them

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MILLVILLE — They don't have anybody. They need help.

They are aging residents in need of long-term care with little to no family to help them

The Millville Housing Authority has noticed this in implementing its new lease-enforcement program and keeping tabs on public housing residents who lag on their rent.

Often these residents require care beyond that of what the MHA's assisted living program can offer, according to Paul Dice, MHA executive director.

Dice stated officials are finding this problem compounded when the resident has no family to help move them into appropriate care.

"We've recently seen an increase in lease-enforcement situations where their need for care went beyond what we offer — for example, someone who is bedridden — and we find there may be little to no family in

the area," said Dice Wednesday, adding he does not believe the cases themselves are increasing; officials are discovering more of them.

He continued: "We do everything that's humanly and fiscally possible to help these people.

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Members of the board reacted with empathy toward the residents, with MHA Board Commissioner Brian Tomlin stating, "That's sad."

According to Nancy Thompson, head nurse at the MHA assisted living program, officials are currently working on four such cases simultaneously, including two former residents who have been moved into area nursing homes.

Normally, MHA officials handle seven of these cases stretched out over the entire year.

"We work very closely with the office on aging and discuss the issue with the family if they're available — nurses will assess the client and we come to a decision

on where the best place should be," said Thompson.

"We're in the business of housing people and we want it to be clear we're just not throwing people out to the street."

Thompson added that not all cases in which the family is unavailable involve neglect or malice.

"Sometimes, it's not by choice," she said, describing how MHA officials were able to track down a client's relatives living in Texas late in the transition process. "But it does make the whole process of transitioning them to long-term care more difficult."

Dice stated that while the MHA may have to "fine tune" its policies to accommodate these residents who need moving without the aid of family support, the MHA's policies themselves will not have to change.

"The reason I mentioned this to the (MHA) board is because I want them to know how we are interacting with the residents," he said. "With increased scrutiny of lease enforcement, it's important to point out we're not just putting people out on the street who need extensive care."