



AspireMN

**An association of resources and advocacy for children, youth and families**

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## **Shelter-Linked Mental Health Grant**

**HF3613/SF3249**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS & SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN MINNESOTA**

Youth accessing the safety and stability of shelter and housing from the Homeless Youth and Safe Harbor Systems have experienced high levels of trauma and many have significant mental health needs as they journey forward. Mental health needs of all young people have reached an unprecedented level during the complex time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our continuum of supports for youth experiencing homelessness has become a final safety net for youth experiencing mental health challenges.

Street outreach workers, shelter staff, and other providers have been sharing story after story of young people with housing needs borne of mental health breakdown. One organization reports an increase in reported mental health challenges for youth served up from 66% in 2019 to 86% in the current year – one of many indications that mental illness for youth continues to spike for all populations, and is especially prevalent for youth relying on our homeless youth systems.

#### **SHELTER-LINKED MENTAL HEALTH WORKS – ONE VITAL SOLUTION**

Established by the MN Legislature in the 2019 session, Shelter-Linked Mental Health grants bring youth-focused mental health supports into sites serving youth who have experienced homelessness and sexual exploitation to integrate mental health care into the service with . Trained staff provide:

- Engagement with youth to support access to mental health services
- On-site mental health services including group and individual therapy sessions
- Staff consultation and training

Mental health staff have become critical members of shelter teams, equipping staff with enhanced skills, resources and active support to care for young people.

### **IMPACTS**

- Services support young people to maintain their housing and access mental health care
- Remove barriers so youth are able to be forward-looking and actively plan for their future
- Establish a relationship with a therapist who can continue to provide care
- Equip staff with skills and resources to provide a more therapeutic environment for youth
- Foster positive experiences with mental health that encourage youth to access treatment now and as needed into the future

### **THE ASK \$1.65M A YEAR**

With mental health needs of youth requiring more of Minnesota's homeless youth and Safe Harbor services, and the Shelter-Linked grant delivering such clear benefit, HF3613/SF3249 proposes to build on what works and deliver this effective care model to an expanded number of service sites. Fifty-five sites statewide are eligible to establish this care model and this investment would allow for needed growth to substantially improve mental health access for youth.

**AspireMN improves the lives of children, youth and families served by member organizations through support for quality service delivery, leadership development and policy advocacy.**