



**MINNESOTA**  
**INTERAGENCY COUNCIL**  
**ON HOMELESSNESS**

Key Takeaways from COVID-19 Response for People  
Experiencing Homelessness

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# Participants today

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# Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness

The Council is led by Lt. Governor Flanagan, Co-Chaired by Commissioners Harpstead and Ho, and includes the following agencies:

- Department of Corrections
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Rights
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Public Safety
- Department of Revenue
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Housing
- Minnesota Management and Budget
- Office of Higher Education

# Summary of key responses during COVID-19

## Key Strategies

- Guidance and technical assistance to homeless providers (shelters, outreach, public health)
- Funding for shelter decompression, encampment responses and other settings
- Ensure adequate isolation space for people without a safe place to recover on their own
- Proactive distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Extensive engagement of provider community including 1-on-1 technical assistance, newsletters, and weekly webinars

## Major Accomplishments

- Working with local partners to **create over 2,800 temporary shelter options** (typically hotel/motel), cover staffing, and provide food and PPE.
- Contracted with hotels, staffing agencies and food supports to set up isolation spaces
- Partnered with local governments and nonprofits to create ongoing additional emergency shelter capacity for over 300 Minnesotans.
- Innovative use of Housing Support program to promote COVID-safe congregate settings and implement hotel-to-home model connecting people staying outdoors with permanent housing.

# Homelessness is a public health crisis that is compounded by COVID-19.

- Create public-health informed recommendations for how the response to homelessness is implemented.
- Recognize and address the ways in which public health systems have not met the needs of indigenous communities or communities of color or have actively perpetuated harm.
- Formalize and strengthen connections between homeless response and local public health systems, particularly where Health Care for the Homeless programs do not operate.
- Expand Health Care for the Homeless programs and other similar interventions including behavioral health services.

# We must center equity and implement anti-racist policies and practices.

- Frame and implement the response to homelessness as part of the response to racist policies and practices.
- Adopt and expand practices that shift funding, decision-making, and other forms of power to indigenous communities and communities of color.
- Be racially explicit and disaggregated in reporting the impact of funding decisions, program expectations, and program outcomes.

# An accountability structure is needed for the homeless response system.

- Develop policy changes that clarify roles among levels of government for responding to homelessness, to increase accountability and partnership.

# Rapid solutions are possible with adequate resources and staff capacity.

- Take what we have learned in these crises and build a plan and response system that is creative and adaptable.
- Sustain the sense of urgency and imperative for rapid action the problem deserves.
- Continue more intensive interagency work on solutions.



# Stable and sustained funding to support shelter and outreach capacity and infrastructure is needed.

- Document the impact of these investments to motivate sustained investments.
- Model the true cost of responding to homelessness.
- Propose specific policies and budget options to create consistent and robust funding to sustain the homeless response on an ongoing basis.

# Governor's Budget

- \$10 million increase for the **Emergency Services Program** to support emergency shelters, drop-in centers, and outreach programs.
- \$10 million increase for the **Community Living Infrastructure Grant program** for counties and tribes to integrate housing into their human services work.
- \$1 million to establish base funding for the **Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)**.
- \$6.3 million to **support and expand Veteran homelessness efforts** including housing vouchers and wrap around services.
- \$1 million increase for **Homework Starts with Home**, an evidence-based initiative that assists highly mobile families with school-aged children.
- \$4 million increase for the **Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program** which provides support services and short-term rental assistance, security deposits, and utility assistance to households who are homeless or an imminent risk of homelessness.
- \$500,000 increase in **Bridges**, the state's rental assistance program. This program supports people with serious mental illness live in integrated settings in their communities.

Thank you!