

Programs and Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

February 2024

Overview

Minnesota provides a variety of programs and services to support people experiencing homelessness. The programs and services are targeted to specific populations; they include emergency services grants, transitional housing programs, long-term homeless supportive services, the Homeless Youth Act, safe harbor shelter and housing, the homeless youth cash stipend pilot project, and emergency shelter facilities grants. Many of these programs and services are administered by the Department of Human Services. This publication provides basic information about the programs and services and provides information on recent appropriations and numbers of people served.

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General Program Information and Funding

The Department of Human Services administers a number of different programs and services for people experiencing homelessness. The following table lists those programs, the intended recipients, and how the funds are used. More detailed information about each program can be found below the tables.

State-Funded and DHS-Administered Programs for Persons Experiencing Homelessness

Program	Recipients	Use of Funds
Emergency Services Grants	Local government units and nonprofits serving homeless persons	Grants to provide emergency shelter and essential services
Transitional Housing Program	City housing and redevelopment authorities; community action agencies; nonprofits	Grants to provide transitional housing and support services to homeless persons
Long-term Homeless Supportive Services	Counties and Tribes	Funding to provide integrated services to stabilize people living in supportive housing
Homeless Youth Act	Providers who serve homeless youth and at-risk youth	Grants to provide street and community outreach and drop-in programs, emergency shelter programs, and integrated supportive housing and transitional living programs
Safe Harbor Shelter and Housing	Providers who serve sexually exploited youth or youth at risk of sexual exploitation	Grants to provide street and community outreach, emergency shelter, and supportive housing programs
Homeless Youth Cash Stipend Pilot Project	Youthprise	Stipends to be given to youth in Hennepin and St. Louis Counties
Emergency Shelter Facilities Grants	Cities, counties, Tribal governments, not-for-profits, and housing and redevelopment authorities	Grants to improve or expand emergency shelter options

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated money to fund these programs. The following table lists appropriations by program through fiscal year 2027.

State Funding for DHS-Administered Programs for Persons Experiencing Homelessness, FY 2024-2027

Program	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Emergency Services Grants	\$22,094,000	\$21,594,000	\$31,844,000	\$36,844,000
Transitional Housing Program	\$6,221,000	\$6,221,000	\$6,221,000	\$6,221,000
Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services	\$6,910,000	\$6,910,000	\$6,910,000	\$6,910,000
Homeless Youth Act	\$20,648,000	\$20,648,000	\$20,648,000	\$20,648,000
Safe Harbor	\$4,925,000	\$4,925,000	\$4,050,000	\$4,050,000

Program	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Homeless Youth Cash Stipend Project	\$5,302,000	NA	NA	NA
Emergency Shelter Facilities Grants	\$98,456,000	NA	NA	NA

Note: The fiscal year 2024 appropriations for the homeless youth cash stipend project and emergency shelter facilities grants are available until June 30, 2028.

Emergency Services Grants

The emergency services grant program was established by the legislature in 1997 and is a state-funded grant program administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to “provide homeless persons essential services and emergency shelter in safe, sanitary, and decent facilities.” The grant program helps eligible organizations improve the quality of existing shelters, make available other emergency housing, meet the operating and maintenance costs of shelters, and provide essential services to homeless persons.¹

Eligible organizations are local governmental units or nonprofit organizations providing or seeking to provide emergency services for homeless persons.

Emergency services include:

- providing emergency shelter for homeless persons; and
- assisting homeless persons in obtaining essential services, including:
 - access to permanent housing;
 - medical and psychological help;
 - employment counseling and job placement;
 - substance abuse treatment;
 - financial assistance available from other programs;
 - emergency child care;
 - transportation; and
 - other services needed to stabilize housing.

In fiscal year 2021, the emergency services grant program served 6,956 people. The fiscal year 2024 appropriation is \$22,094,000.

¹ [Minn. Stat. § 256E.36.](#)

Transitional Housing Program

The transitional housing program was established by the legislature in 1984 and is a state-funded program administered by DHS to initiate, maintain, or expand programs to provide transitional housing and support services for persons in need of transitional housing, which may include up to six months of follow-up support services for persons who complete transitional housing as they stabilize in permanent housing.²

Eligible recipients of transitional housing funds include city housing and redevelopment authorities, community action agencies, and private nonprofit organizations. Programs receiving funding include congregate facilities and scattered-site transitional housing.

“Transitional housing” is housing designed for independent living and provided to a homeless person or family at a rental rate of at least 25 percent of the family income for a period of up to 24 months. (However, up to 10 percent of transitional housing funds may be used for persons needing assistance for longer than 24 months.)

“Support services” provide assessments that: (1) identify the needs of individuals for independent living; and (2) arrange or provide for the appropriate educational, social, legal, advocacy, child care, employment, financial, health care, or information and referral services to meet the identified needs.

DHS is required to fund at least two programs located in the seven-county metropolitan area and at least one program located outside of the metropolitan area. DHS may fund programs designed primarily to serve families with children, single persons, and persons leaving a shelter for family abuse.

In the 2022-2023 fiscal biennium, the transitional housing program served more than 1,400 people per year. The fiscal year 2024 appropriation is \$6,221,000.

Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services

Long-term homeless supportive services were implemented in 2005 and are state-funded services administered by DHS to provide integrated services needed to stabilize individuals, families, and youth living in supportive housing.³ Long-term homelessness is defined as “lacking a permanent place to live continuously for one year or more or at least four times in the past three years.”⁴

Counties and Tribes are eligible for long-term homeless supportive services funding. However, priority is given to proposals submitted on behalf of multicounty and Tribal partnerships.

² [Minn. Stat. § 256E.33.](#)

³ [Minn. Stat. § 256K.26.](#)

⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 256K.26](#), subd. 3, clause (1).

Currently, seven regional partnerships that integrate housing and long-term support services receive the long-term homeless supportive services funding.

Eligible supportive services include all services needed to maintain households in permanent supportive housing, as determined by the counties or Tribes administering the project or projects.

In fiscal year 2022, long-term homeless supportive services served 3,158 people. The fiscal year 2024 appropriation is \$6,910,000.

Homeless Youth Act

The Homeless Youth Act was established by the legislature in 2006 and is a state-funded grant program administered by DHS to provide street and community outreach and drop-in programs, emergency shelter programs, and integrated supportive housing and transitional living programs to reduce the incidence of homelessness among youth.⁵

Eligible grant recipients include providers who are committed to serving homeless youth and youth at risk of homelessness. During the 2022-2023 biennium, 33 agencies received funding to operate 74 program activities for homeless youth: 25 street and community outreach and drop-in programs, 14 emergency shelter programs, and 35 integrated supportive housing and transitional living programs.⁶

A homeless youth is a person age 24 years or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and who has no shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. A youth at risk of homelessness is a person age 24 years or younger whose status or circumstances indicate a significant danger of experiencing homelessness in the near future. A runaway is defined as an unmarried child under the age of 18 years who is absent from the home of a parent or guardian or other lawful placement without the consent of the parent, guardian, or lawful custodian.

Youth drop-in centers must provide walk-in access to crisis intervention and ongoing supportive services. Street and community outreach programs must locate, contact, and provide information, referrals, and services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness, and runaways, including:

- family reunification services;
- assistance in obtaining temporary emergency shelter;
- assistance in obtaining food, clothing, medical care, or mental health counseling;
- counseling regarding violence, sexual exploitation, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;

⁵ [Minn. Stat. § 256K.45](#).

⁶ Runaway and Homeless Youth Report, Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 2022.

- assistance with education, employment, and independent living skills; and
- homelessness prevention.

Emergency shelter programs must provide the following services:

- referral and walk-in access to emergency, short-term residential care;
- safe, dignified shelter, including private shower facilities, beds, and at least one meal each day; and
- reunification with the family or legal guardian when required or appropriate.

In addition, services provided at emergency shelters may include, but are not limited to:

- individual, family, and group counseling;
- assistance obtaining clothing;
- access to medical and dental care and mental health counseling;
- education and employment services;
- advocacy and referral services;
- independent living skills training;
- aftercare and follow-up services;
- transportation; and
- homelessness prevention.

Integrated supportive housing and transitional living programs must assist homeless youth and runaways with finding and maintaining “safe, dignified housing.” The program may also provide:

- rental assistance and related supportive services, or referrals to other agencies or organizations that provide those services;
- educational assessment and referrals to educational programs;
- career planning, employment, work skill training, and independent living skills training;
- job placement;
- budgeting and money management;
- assistance in securing housing appropriate to needs and income;
- counseling regarding violence, sexual exploitation, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;
- referral for medical services or chemical dependency treatment;
- parenting skills;
- self-sufficiency support services or life skills training;
- aftercare and follow-up services; and
- homelessness prevention.

In fiscal years 2021-2022, the Homeless Youth Act provided outreach to 2,938 youth, drop-in services to 5,486 youth, housing to 1,287 youth, and shelter to 950 youth. The fiscal year 2024 appropriation is \$20,648,000.

Safe Harbor Shelter and Housing

The safe harbor shelter and housing grant program was established to provide grants to providers who are committed to serving sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation. Grants must be used to provide street and community outreach programs, emergency shelter programs, or supportive housing programs to address the specialized outreach, shelter, and housing needs of sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation.⁷

Youth 24 years of age or younger are eligible for all shelter, housing beds, and services provided under this program and all services, support, and programs provided by the Department of Health to sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation under the safe harbor for sexually exploited youth program.

Street and community outreach programs must locate, contact, and provide information, referrals, and services to eligible youth, including:

- family reunification services;
- assistance in obtaining temporary emergency shelter;
- assistance in obtaining food, clothing, medical care, or mental health counseling;
- assistance with education, employment, and independent living skills;
- aftercare services; and
- services to address the prevention of sexual exploitation and homelessness.

Emergency shelter programs must provide eligible youth with referral and walk-in access to emergency short-term residential care. The services provided at emergency shelters may include, but are not limited to:

- specialized services to address the trauma of sexual exploitation;
- family reunification services;
- individual, family, and group counseling;
- access to medical and dental care and mental health counseling;
- education and employment services;
- advocacy and referral services; and
- aftercare and follow-up services.

⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 256K.47](#).

Supportive housing programs must help eligible youth find and maintain safe and dignified housing and provide related supportive services and referrals. Supportive housing program services may include, but are not limited to:

- specialized services to address the trauma of sexual exploitation;
- education and employment services;
- budgeting and money management;
- assistance in securing housing appropriate to needs and income;
- self-sufficiency support services and independent living skills training; and
- services to address the prevention of sexual exploitation and homelessness.

The fiscal year 2024 appropriation is \$4,925,000 for safe harbor shelter and housing grants.

Homeless Youth Cash Stipend Pilot Project

The homeless youth cash stipend pilot project was established by the 2023 Legislature to provide a direct cash stipend to homeless youth in Hennepin and St. Louis Counties. For purposes of the pilot project, “homeless youth” is defined as a person 18 to 24 years of age who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.⁸ Homeless youth who live in Hennepin or St. Louis County at the time of initial enrollment are eligible to participate in the pilot project.

The commissioner of human services must contract with Youthprise to administer the pilot project, including determining a stipend amount for eligible homeless youth who participate in the pilot project. The cash stipends are prohibited from being considered income, assets, or personal property for purposes of determining or recertifying eligibility for a variety of economic assistance programs and medical assistance.

The commissioner of human services, in cooperation with Youthprise and Hennepin and St. Louis Counties, must submit annual reports to the legislature on the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the pilot project.

The pilot project received a onetime appropriation of \$5,302,000 in fiscal year 2024. The appropriation is available until June 30, 2028.

This pilot project expires June 30, 2027.

⁸ [Laws 2023, ch. 70](#), art. 11, § 13.

Emergency Shelter Facilities Grants

Emergency shelter facilities grants were established in 2023 to improve or expand emergency shelter options by:

- adding additional emergency shelter facilities by renovating existing facilities not currently operating as emergency shelter facilities;
- adding additional emergency shelter facility beds by renovating existing emergency shelter facilities;
- adding additional emergency shelter facility beds through acquisition and construction of new emergency shelter facilities;
- improving the safety, sanitation, accessibility, and habitability of existing emergency shelter facilities; and
- improving access to emergency shelter facilities that provide culturally appropriate shelter and gender-inclusive care.⁹

Eligible applicants include statutory or home rule charter cities, counties, or Tribal governments, not-for-profit corporations, or housing and redevelopment authorities.

The commissioner of human services is required to use a competitive request for proposal process to identify potential projects and eligible applicants on a statewide basis. At least 40 percent of the appropriation for this grant program must be awarded to projects located in greater Minnesota, unless the commissioner does not receive sufficient eligible funding requests from greater Minnesota to award at least 40 percent of the grant funds to projects located in greater Minnesota.

An emergency shelter facilities grant may be used to pay for 100 percent of total project capital expenditures or a specified project phase, up to \$10,000,000 per project. All projects funded with an emergency shelter facilities grant must meet all applicable state and local building codes at the time of project completion.

Emergency shelter facilities grants received a onetime appropriation of \$98,456,000 in fiscal year 2024. The appropriation is available until June 30, 2028.

Other Programs and Services

This section provides a brief overview of several housing assistance programs and services that are administered by other state agencies, including the Departments of Corrections and Veterans Affairs, and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA).

Other state agencies have appropriations to help specific populations who struggle to obtain and keep housing. Individuals who have been incarcerated often have trouble finding housing due, in part, to landlord concerns over offender-tenants re-offending and the presence of

⁹ [Laws 2023, ch. 70](#), art. 11, § 14.

offender-tenants diminishing the value and desirability of rental properties and surrounding neighborhoods. The Department of Corrections provides information and funding for ex-offenders for transitional, supportive, and emergency housing for both men and women. In 2021, the legislature established an offender homelessness reporting requirement for the Department of Corrections. The agency must report annually to the legislature on offender homelessness and efforts to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate offender homelessness.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) provides funding and programs to assist veterans with housing. MDVA provides funding to the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV), which has homes and apartment buildings throughout Minnesota and offers structured independent living and permanent housing with supportive services. MDVA also provides funding to the National Association of County Veterans Services Officers, MACV, the Homeless Veteran Registry, and the Homeless Management Information Services, which are programs that connect veterans who are homeless or at risk of being homeless with resources for employment, housing, and public benefits. MDVA also operates the Homes for Veterans program, which helps veterans obtain housing by working with landlords in the program.

Finally, the MHFA administers a variety of programs to help Minnesotans fix up their homes, access supportive services, prevent and end homelessness, afford housing near jobs, and achieve homeownership. In addition, the MHFA administers the Homework Starts with Home program which provides grants to address homelessness and housing instability among students and their families. For more information on programs administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, see House Research, [State-Funded Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Programs](#), May 2022.



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