



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Needs assessment for the countywide plan for homelessness prevention

September 2025

## A review of homelessness prevention data

This report is the executive summary of the 2025 Needs Assessment Report, as part of the Hennepin County Homelessness Prevention Strategic Plan. The Needs Assessment Committee reviewed current service inventory, assessed risk and protective factors, and drafted a report of the findings. The full report documents numerous data sets and key findings from our analysis of qualitative data.

The Needs Assessment Report is structured around:

The prevention framework recommended in the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness [Ending Homelessness Before It Starts: Federal Homeless Prevention Framework](#) (released September 2024)

Hennepin County's prevention system goals. The prevention framework defines three categories of homeless prevention that can structure agencies' strategic planning: Primary prevention planning, diversion, and rehousing/stabilization.



**Primary prevention** is interventions that seek to promote protective factors for housing security for populations with high risk factors for experiencing homelessness.

**Diversion** is intended for people who are at imminent risk of experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness.

**Rehousing and stabilization** are a series of targeted resources to support individuals in the rapid transition out of homelessness and to assist with stabilization supports.

Hennepin County has adopted the following definition for homelessness prevention:

***Homelessness prevention*** includes promoting stable housing by increasing protective factors for those with highest risk of future homelessness and helping those who are at imminent risk of homelessness to resolve their housing crisis.

Applicable housing situations include households on leases, unstable temporary housing with friends or family, self-pay hotel/motel stays, and unstable exits from justice or human service systems (i.e. incarceration, foster care, treatment, hospitals, etc.).

The homelessness prevention system’s purpose is to **prevent homelessness for all Hennepin County residents**. Hennepin County developed system goals oriented toward this North Star and based on the most prominent prior living situations from which residents enter homelessness following a change in or loss of housing. These goals are situated within each corresponding prevention category.

## Primary prevention

### System capacity

In addition to the three population-oriented homelessness prevention system goals, we developed a fourth goal that centers around the capacity of the prevention system to reach its North Star of preventing homelessness for all Hennepin County residents. Needs Assessment data also produced insights that relate more broadly to system capacity across a range of themes including cross-agency coordination, stakeholder collaboration, data tools and systems, operational practices, etc. The system goal and its corresponding insights with the Needs Assessment are summarized below.

<b>System Goal 1:</b> <b>Strengthen and grow the capacity of the prevention system.</b>	
<b>Summary insights – needs and gaps</b>	<b>Structural, funding, and policy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded investments in homelessness prevention from the state and federal levels.</li> </ul>
	<b>Services and assistance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued or expanded focus on building a trauma-informed and empathetic workforce that is aware of individual biases and equipped to serve people with barriers to housing.</li> <li>Limited availability of peer supports.</li> <li>Continued or expanded focus on tenant rights education.</li> <li>Increased focus on basic skills education for households with an emphasis on financial literacy and employment skills.</li> </ul>
	<b>System access and design:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued or expanded focus on culturally specific services for disproportionately impacted communities.</li> <li>Strengthened engagement with property managers related to eviction prevention resources and tenant rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>Improve public and partner awareness of prevention system strategies, eligibility, funding, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness about prevention resources among renter households, people in precarious housing, and people exiting institutions.</li> </ul>
	<b>Operations and coordination:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepened collaboration among partners and stakeholders in decision-making for the prevention system.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued focus on improving cross-agency coordination and streamlining access to prevention assistance across access points and referral sources.</li> </ul>
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<b>System Goal 2:</b> <b>Build housing stability among low-income renter households at imminent risk for eviction.</b>	
<b>Summary insights – needs and gaps</b>	<b>Structural issues, funding, and policy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient supply of and access to affordable housing.</li> </ul>
	<b>Services and assistance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient emergency rent assistance available at the system level to meet the demand of households at imminent risk for eviction.</li> <li>Insufficient housing-focused case management for households at imminent risk for eviction.</li> <li>Lack of interventions tailored to households at persistent risk for eviction (i.e. multiple eviction filings within given year).</li> </ul>
	<b>System access and design:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for continued (or expanded) access to assistance through community-based points of entry.</li> <li>Need for continued (or expanded) onsite assistance.</li> <li>Barriers to appearance at housing court are significant and currently not addressed by the prevention system.</li> <li>Continued or expanded focus on ensuring equitable access to eviction prevention resources for groups most disproportionately impacted by eviction (e.g. zip codes with highest eviction rates).</li> <li>Limited insights into the characteristics that place a household facing eviction at greatest risk for homelessness.</li> </ul>
	<b>Operations and coordination:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued improvements needed in delivering emergency rent assistance quickly and prior to an eviction outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative data</b>	More than 60,000 households in Hennepin County are severely housing cost-burdened, with 80% of those households under 30% area median income (AMI).
	Households under 30% AMI are more than four times as likely as households between 30 and 50% AMI to be severely housing cost-burdened.
	9,000+ eviction filings in each of 2023 and 2024 (75-90% for nonpayment of rent).

	Approximately 8,000 evictions were filed in each of 2023 and 2024 for nonpayment of rent, compared to approximately 4,500 in 2019 (representing a 90% increase).
	County-contracted and County-operated emergency rent assistance reached approximately 3,500 households at imminent risk for eviction in 2024 (approx. 44% of eviction filings due to nonpayment of rent).
	16% of all RentHelp Hennepin (RHH) users experience multiple eviction filings within a 12-month period of time, representing persistent risk for eviction that may require a more intensive intervention than one-time assistance such as ERA.
	Most common income bracket for RHH recipients is \$0 - \$14,999.
	51.5% of tenants with an eviction filing did not attend any of their court hearings, leading to default eviction judgments in many cases.
<b>Focus group data</b>	The County paying rent keeps people housed and prevents eviction.
	Emergency rent assistance is a short-term intervention that does not currently meet the full demand in terms of the amount of emergency rent assistance available and its ability to fully resolve a housing crisis.
	<b>System recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff are trauma-informed, empathetic, and aware of biases</li> <li>• Ensure property managers and tenants are aware of resources to help</li> <li>• Integrating case management would help towards achieving housing stability</li> <li>• Stronger coordination from the county to provide more programmatic strategy, ongoing updates for funding, guidelines for eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Request to be included for more impactful decision making in the prevention and coordination systems while bringing more transparency to how decisions are made</li> </ul>
<b>Survey data</b>	77% of respondents would prefer to find help in person.
	82% of respondents are most comfortable asking for help or applying at a community agency.
	77% of respondents received assistance in time to stay in their home.
	59% of respondents had to reach out to two or more agencies before finding an agency that could offer assistance, and 71% recommended making it easier to find prevention assistance.



	Participants identified lack of affordable housing and lack of income as two primary barriers to stability.
<b>Disparities data</b>	Black households are 4.5x more likely to seek prevention assistance than White households because they are disproportionately more likely to experience unstable housing.
	Similar to overall eviction risk, Black and Indigenous households are most disproportionately overrepresented among households at persistent risk for eviction (i.e. multiple eviction filings within a given year).
	Underserved populations include people who are Indigenous/American Indian, Somali, elderly/seniors, singles under 55, and people who are fleeing domestic violence.
	Five of the seven zip codes with the highest eviction rates in Hennepin County are in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park. The zip code with the highest eviction rate countywide is 55412 (North Minneapolis) at 30% higher than the zip code with the second-highest eviction rate (55403).

#### Diversion (Secondary) Prevention

<b>System Goal 3:</b> <b>Foster short- and long-term housing stability for households residing in unstable, temporary housing situations.</b>	
<b>Summary insights – needs and gaps</b>	<b>Structural, funding, and policy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adverse impacts from benefits cliff in mainstream benefits programs.</li> </ul>
	<b>Services and assistance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited availability of support services including housing search assistance for people in precarious housing.</li> <li>Rent assistance is largely unavailable for people in precarious housing.</li> <li>Diversion resources are limited for households in precarious housing facing immediate housing loss.</li> </ul>
	<b>System access and design:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited awareness and take-up of prevention assistance among all populations in precarious housing with additional underrepresentation among select groups (e.g. Indigenous families with limited take-up in School to Housing).</li> <li>Limited insights into the geographic and demographic characteristics of all people in precarious housing.</li> </ul>
	<b>Operations and coordination:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited knowledge of specific risk factors for homelessness among all households in precarious housing.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for continued or expanded coordination between the prevention system and front doors of the homeless response system (e.g. Hennepin Shelter Hotline).</li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative data</b>	An estimated 10,000 Hennepin County households reside in precarious housing on any given day.
	61% of all households entering homelessness (2022 to 2024) lived temporarily with family or friends prior to becoming homeless. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64% are families</li> <li>52% are singles</li> </ul>
	Black/African-American (56%) and Latinx (65%) households are most likely to reside with family or friends prior to their episode of homelessness.
	44.7% of Diversion/Adult Shelter Intake callers most recently resided temporarily with family/friends.
	On average, 60 to 70% of Homeless and Highly Mobile (HHM) students identified by school districts are doubled up (staying with others).
	National studies show doubled up/precariously households receive only 24 hours of advance notice on average before losing housing.
	48% of School to Housing applicants have no income.
	Households newly experiencing homelessness have an average of \$6,000 in annual income (with 36% reporting no income).
<b>Focus group data</b>	Households cannot access resources when doubled up because they are not considered homeless. They are penalized for staying for family/friends and not entering shelter.
	People fear getting family/friends in trouble with their benefits or losing their housing by staying with them.
	If housed, many lack the skills or knowledge to stay housed.
	<b>System recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer services and homelessness resources to households that are doubled up.</li> <li>Offer peer support for families and individuals from someone who has been through this before and can offer support and a sense of community.</li> <li>Offer basic skills classes, such as financial literacy, renter skills, employment/resume building, how credit works, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey data</b>	Services to avoid homelessness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>48% received help with understanding tenant rights and responsibilities</li> <li>48% received assistance with finding housing</li> </ul>

<b>Disparities data</b>	More than 90% of students identified by School to Housing partner districts as Homeless and Highly Mobile are students of color.
	Indigenous students comprise 5% of the Homeless and Highly Mobile population in partner districts and 2% of families enrolled in School to Housing in 2024.
	43% of Hispanic/Latino(x)(a) population resided temporarily with family prior to homelessness, compared to 22-28% among all other race/ethnic groups.

### **System Goal 3: Promote housing stability for people involved in and exiting justice and human service systems.**

<b>Summary insights – needs and gaps</b>	<b>Structural, funding, and policy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justice and human service systems operate within distinct funding and policy contexts, creating complexities in cross-system coordination strategies.</li> </ul>
	<b>Services and assistance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for culturally responsive, low-barrier, and person-centered services for people exiting institutions at risk for homelessness.</li> <li>Continued or expanded focus on a housing first approach.</li> <li>Continued or expanded youth-specific support services and rent assistance for youth exiting foster care at risk for homelessness.</li> </ul>
	<b>System access and design:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build awareness around broader prevention resources and population-specific housing resources (e.g. Transitional Housing for the reentry population) among relevant justice and human service system staff.</li> </ul>
	<b>Operations and coordination:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify mental health and substance use treatment facilities most frequently accessed by people at greatest risk for homelessness with a focus on disproportionately impacted groups (e.g. Indigenous residents exiting substance use treatment).</li> <li>Identify hospitals and other medical facilities most frequently accessed by people at greatest risk for homelessness with a focus on disproportionately impacted groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative data</b>	<p>Among all households experiencing homelessness (2022 to 2024), 16% entered homelessness following an exit from an institution, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3% from a correctional facility</li> <li>5.7% from a hospital or other medical facility</li> <li>5.1% from substance abuse treatment facility</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.5% from a mental health or psychiatric facility</li> <li>• 0.5% from foster care</li> </ul>
	25% of individuals leaving state correctional facilities experience homelessness.
	6% of probation clients (n=1,224) in Hennepin County were homeless as of 12/31/2024.
	52% of Minnesota youth aging out of foster care lack stable housing by age 21 and 20% of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County report lifetime experience with the foster care system.
<b>Focus group data</b>	Success of housing-focused service models
	Lack of awareness by tenants and systems (probation officers) of the services, supports, and referral and eligibility processes for supportive or transitional housing programs.
	Lack of property managers willing to rent to people with criminal backgrounds.
	<b>System recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and incorporate peer support.</li> <li>• Provide financial literacy, independent living skills, and employment support to maintain housing, especially for young adults.</li> <li>• Education for housing programs and property owners on working with individuals with criminal, eviction, or poor credit histories.</li> </ul>
<b>Disparities Data</b>	54.7% of people experiencing homelessness following an exit from a correctional facility were Black/African American, 33.2 % White, and 7.8% American Indian/ Alaskan Native.
	Gender nonbinary/transgender residents, as compared to gender binary and cisgender residents, are 2x as likely to experience homelessness following an exit from foster care and 4x as likely following an exit from mental health treatment.
	7.2% of the Indigenous people finishing a substance use treatment program exited into homelessness, which is more than twice as high as 4 out of the other 5 race/ethnicities.