

Homeless strategy 2020-2025:

Making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring

Making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring is at the core of our housing stability strategy. Our initiatives help to keep people in their homes through case management, legal guidance, financial assistance, and social supports. We often help people take the first step out of homelessness, acting as a guide through intensive case management. Once in stable housing, ongoing wraparound services help people maintain and build their housing stability.

This document outlines the priorities that guide our work and our impact so far. Together with our partners, we have achieved progress on many of the goals we set forth as we continue to make affordable housing accessible to all in Hennepin County,

Making homelessness rare

Priorities and progress

1. Expand partnerships with, and build capacity in, systems that interact with at-risk households.
 - Allocated **\$2 million per year** in new funding to Stable Homes Stable Schools in Minneapolis, **increasing capacity by 200-250** families per year.
 - Created the 'School to Housing,' unit, **allocating \$3 million per year** in new funding to assist families in eight public-school districts with the highest rates of homelessness and highly mobile students outside of Minneapolis. Each year, this work will support **200 households with rental assistance** and an additional 200 to 300 households with navigation support and/or referrals to other housing stability resources.
 - **Trained more than 3,000 direct service professionals** in housing resource and best-practice since 2020, for use across behavioral health, child welfare, aging and disability, and corrections systems.
2. Simplify and streamlined delivery of emergency financial assistance.

- Administered **\$58 million in Federal Emergency Rental Assistance** during the pandemic, building a new unit to disburse more than \$30 million of the total. **We used this funding to assist 3,870 households**, ranking Hennepin County among the top 20%-performing communities nationwide.
 - Made the new unit permanent; we **administer more than \$10 million each year** in new state and county funding. This will **assist more than 2,000 low-income residents** who are facing imminent evictions and/or homelessness annually.
 - Launched Tenant Resource Connections (TRC) in January 2020. In 2023, TRC responded to **150 to 200 calls each week** from residents at risk for eviction, resulting in a **weekly volume of 80-100 emergency rental assistance applications**.
3. Establish ongoing rental assistance to at-risk households
 - Created the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) network with four Public Housing Authorities, leading to **100 new rental assistance vouchers for young people who have experienced foster care**, a group at extremely high risk of entering homelessness. As of the end of 2024, 55 vouchers were in use and an additional 75 young people were in the process of applying for FYI vouchers.
 4. Provide case management supports for the most at-risk households.
 - Allocated **\$180,000 per year for support services** in new federal, state and local funds, in addition to the FYI vouchers for youth with foster care involvement.
 - Signed contracts for homeless prevention support services and reconfigured the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program to allow community-based agencies to focus on and specialize in support while the county processes payments. **Provided more than \$2.7 million per year for homeless prevention support services** in the latest biennium.
 5. Ensure legal representation for low-income households facing eviction.
 - Committed **\$2.75 million in annual funding to staff 18.5 full time equivalent employees in Hennepin County Adult Representation Services, ensuring legal representation at Housing Court** for all low-income residents facing eviction. As a result, 100% of low-income residents now have access to this option at Housing Court, against an estimated 10% before the pandemic.
 - Committed **more than \$300,000 in annual Human Services funding to fund three full-time equivalent employees to help residents apply for emergency rental assistance**, expediting access for the most critical cases and helping avoid evictions alongside the legal representation team.

Making homelessness brief

Priorities and progress

1. Help people access community-based resources as an alternative to shelter.
 - Launched the Hennepin Shelter Hotline in January 2023. Funded at **\$1 million per year**, Catholic Charities staff work with callers to help them identify safe alternatives to entering a formal homeless shelter. In 2023 **the shelter hotline helped 40 households every week to find an alternative to entering shelter.**
2. Lower barriers to emergency shelter.
 - **Eliminated self-pay requirements** that were previously in place in all family shelter and 24-hour single adult shelter programs. These shelter programs are now free.
 - **Launched four new shelter programs** focused on previously underserved populations **requiring \$9.7 million in capital funds and \$6.5 million in annual ongoing operating funds.** These included:
 1. American Indian Community Development Corporation Homeward Bound (50 bed, culturally specific shelter)
 2. Avivo Village (100 bed with intensive chemical and mental health supports for people coming from encampments)
 3. Catholic Charities Medical Respite (30 bed with medical supports from Healthcare for the Homeless)
 4. Salvation Army Women's Only Shelter (30 bed small scale shelter for people who identify as female)
 - **Provided \$7.25 million in capital funding toward the acquisition/development of three new shelter buildings** needed to replace and improve existing programs.
 - **Provided \$3.2 million toward physical improvements in other existing shelter programs**, adding storage, laundry, restroom and air filtration improvements.
 - **Increased 24/7 operations** (as opposed to overnight only) in single adult shelters from **20% to 75% of total beds at cost of \$3 million per year, ongoing.**
3. Provide person-centered support focused on urgently moving people to housing.
 - **Invested \$3 million per year to create the 'Homeless to Housing team' of 40+ County full-time equivalent employees** to work with people in both shelter and unsheltered settings toward housing. In May 2024, after two years in operation, the team **housed its 1,000th person from homelessness.** At this point, 96% of those housed have stayed out of the homelessness response system.

- **Invested \$700,000 per year to create the Streets to Housing team, a 7-person county full-time equivalent employee** encampment response team. Streets to Housing was launched in late 2022 and has helped **320 people move to permanent housing** and another 200+ move to shelter, temporary housing and treatment.
 - **Invested \$700,000 per year in increased case management through shelter providers** to help move their guests to permanent housing.
4. Maximize efficient and effective use of homeless-designated resources.
- **Referred 200+ people in shelters or unsheltered settings** to homeless designated housing programs per month, due to the work of the Coordinated Entry System (CES) team.
 - **Increased the CES team capacity by two full-time equivalent employees**, bringing the team to six, strengthening the system and expediting housing outcomes.
 - Prioritized **veterans** experiencing homelessness and people experiencing **chronic homelessness** through the CES, leading to **sustained reductions in homelessness for both groups**.
5. Maximize use of mainstream housing resources.
- Worked with people to pursue personalized housing options, rather than defaulting to only pursue homeless-designated housing programs. The Homeless to Housing team has seen these outcomes:
 1. **15% of housing outcomes to date involve rentals without any subsidies**
 2. A further **15% involve non-homeless subsidies**, including rentals in public housing
 3. A further **5% of housing outcomes involve residential or halfway houses with no homeless criteria (4%) and long-term care facility or nursing home (1%)**.

Making homelessness nonrecurring

Priorities and progress

1. Increase supply of targeted permanent supportive housing.
 - Awarded **\$18.75m to 19 projects** via Hennepin County's Housing and Economic Development Department **to create 541 deeply affordable and supportive housing units** through the by the end of 2023, advancing our Supportive Housing Strategy.
 - Partnered in the creation of **538 new housing opportunities** that started taking referrals in 2023:

1. 43% of these new opportunities were in site-based permanent supportive housing programs
 2. 33% were scattered site permanent supportive housing
 3. 24% were new rapid rehousing opportunities, offering rental assistance and support services for a maximum of two years.
2. Increase supply of single-room occupancy housing.
 - Increased the supply of single room occupancy (SRO) housing, due to efforts led by Hennepin County's Housing and Economic Development (HED).
 - Purchased five motels and assisted a partner in purchasing a sixth between 2020 and 2022.
 - Continued to rehabilitate these properties and convert them into deeply affordable housing with two now fully operational and leased, **providing 83 units of deeply affordable housing.**
 3. Maximize mainstream support services, including Medicaid Housing Stabilization Services.
 - Worked with partners to build capacity to bill Medicaid since the rollout of Medicaid Housing Stabilization Services, adding two staff dedicated to this work and **allocating \$230,000 in capacity building grants to non-profits.**
 - **Increased Medicaid Housing Stabilization Services funding** flowing to 567 Hennepin County-based agencies year-on-year since the program launched in 2020, from \$10 million in 2021 to \$21 million in 2023.
 4. Seek reforms and alternatives to the Housing Support program.
 - Supported Catholic Charities' lead in achieving legislative change for people living in Housing Support community-based settings who will only be required to pay **30% of their income** starting late 2024. This will initially **benefit an estimated 400 households in Hennepin County.**
 - Allocated **\$5 million in capital improvement grants for Board and Lodge** Housing Support facilities in 2022, toward renovations including adding and improving outdoor spaces, air conditioning, private rooms, new bathrooms and laundry rooms.
 5. Create pathways to training and employment.
 - Contracted specifically for Employment Enriched Rapid ReHousing programming, in which **41% of clients maintained or increased their income** from employment in 2023.
 - Developed the Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness Pilot Program in partnership with the Hennepin County Office of Workforce Development. The program has received a total of **218 referrals:**

1. **85% of referrals have resulted in program enrollment** and service participation
2. **52 individuals** enrolled in the program **have obtained either part-time or full-time employment.**
3. **81 individuals have enrolled in a training/education program or paid work exp**