

# Housing Assistance Programs

This information brief provides descriptions of several programs that provide housing assistance and are administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) or the Department of Health. These programs include: emergency services grants; transitional housing programs; long-term homeless supportive services; the Homeless Youth Act; housing support services; Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) housing assistance; medical assistance (MA) housing support services; Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) housing assistance grants; housing with supports for adults with serious mental illness grants; and safe harbor for Minnesota’s sexually exploited youth. Also included is a brief description of several housing programs administered by other state agencies.

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Minnesota provides a variety of housing assistance programs through several state agencies. This information brief focuses on the housing assistance programs administered by the Departments of Human Services and Health. The first section provides an overview of programs and services for people who are homeless. Subsequent sections provide overviews of programs and services: (1) for public assistance enrollees; (2) for persons with mental illness; (3) for sexually exploited youth; and (4) administered by agencies other than the Departments of Human Services and Health.

## **Programs and Services for People Who Are Homeless**

The programs and services described in this section include emergency services grants, transitional housing programs, long-term homeless supportive services, and the Homeless Youth Act.

### **Emergency Services Grants**

The emergency services grant program was established by the legislature in 1997 and is a state-funded grant program administered by 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.<sup>1</sup>

Eligible organizations are local governmental units or nonprofit organizations providing or seeking to provide emergency services for homeless persons. During the 2016-2017 biennium, 16 agencies received emergency services grant funds.

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 2017, the emergency services grant program served 6,242 people with state expenditures of \$844,000.

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<sup>1</sup> [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.<sup>2</sup>

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. During the 2016-2017 biennium, 54 agencies received transitional housing funding.

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).

Follow-up support services are an assessment service that: (1) identifies the needs of individuals for independent living; and (2) arranges or provides 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 fiscal year 2017, the transitional housing program served 2,419 people in 972 households with state expenditures of \$3,177,643.

## **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.<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256E.33.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256K.26.](#)

<sup>4</sup> See [Minn. Stat. § 256K.26](#), subd. 3, cl. (1).

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

In fiscal year 2017, long-term homeless supportive services served 2,839 people in 1,357 households with state expenditures of \$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.<sup>5</sup>

Eligible grant recipients include providers who are committed to serving homeless youth and youth at-risk of homelessness. During the 2016-2017 biennium, 35 agencies received funding to operate 54 program activities for homeless youth—17 street and community outreach and drop-in programs, 9 emergency shelter programs, and 28 integrated supportive housing and transitional living programs.<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>5</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256K.45](#).

<sup>6</sup> *Homeless Youth Act Biennial Report*, Minnesota Department of Human Services, February 2017.

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
- 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 refer youth 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 year 2017, the Homeless Youth Act provided housing to 1,098 youth in 851 households and provided shelter to 708 youth with state expenditures of \$4,119,000.

## Data on Households Served and Expenditures

The table below shows the number of households served and expenditures for fiscal years 2013 to 2017 for the programs and services for people who are homeless.

	<b>Emergency Services Grants</b>	<b>Transitional Housing Program</b>	<b>Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services</b>	<b>Homeless Youth Act*</b>
2013 Households	3,567	1,393	1,495	N/A
2013 Expenditures	\$344,000	\$2,934,000	\$5,459,900	\$119,000
2014 Households	5,723	1,200	1,367	N/A
2014 Expenditures	\$594,000	\$3,184,000	\$5,910,000	\$2,119,000
2015 Households	5,969	1,271	1,130**	265 shelter 527 housing
2015 Expenditures	\$594,000	\$3,184,000	\$5,910,000	\$3,119,000
2016 Households	6,242	1,000***	1,365	698 shelter 851 housing
2016 Expenditures	\$844,000	\$3,010,000	\$6,910,000	\$4,119,000
2017 Households	6,242	972	1,357	708 shelter 851 housing
2017 Expenditures	\$844,000	\$3,178,000	\$6,910,000	\$4,119,000
* Funds used to support outreach and drop-in activities are not included in these numbers.				
** Lower number attributed to a data entry issue				
*** First year with new HMIS System Administrator				

## Programs and Services for Public Assistance Enrollees

The programs and services described in this section include housing support services; Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) housing assistance; Medical Assistance (MA) housing support services; and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) housing assistance grant.

### Housing Support Services

Housing support (formerly known as Group Residential Housing) is a state-funded income supplement program administered by DHS that pays for room-and-board costs for low-income adults residing in a licensed or registered setting with which a county human services agency has negotiated a monthly rate.<sup>7</sup> The legislature established this program in 1992 as a revision to a law known as the Negotiated Rate Act.

<sup>7</sup> [Minn. Stat. ch. 256I.](#)

In order to be eligible for housing support services, a person must have county approval for residence in an approved setting and must: (1) be aged, blind, or over 18 years old and disabled, and meet specified income and asset standards; or (2) belong to a category of individuals potentially eligible for General Assistance and meet specified income and asset standards.

Beginning July 1, 2017, the housing support basic room and board rate is \$893 per month. Recipients in certain settings may also qualify for a supplemental payment that is in addition to the housing support basic room and board rate. Housing support pays for room and board in a number of licensed or registered settings, including:

- adult foster care;
- board and lodging establishments;
- supervised living facilities;
- noncertified boarding care homes; and
- various forms of assisted living settings registered under the Housing with Services Act.

Persons residing in a setting with a housing support rate are usually considered to be living in the community in their own home. As such, these persons can receive services from most community sources, such as home care and home and community-based waiver programs.

In fiscal year 2017, 20,291 average monthly recipients received housing support services with expenditures of \$160,506,803.

## **MSA Housing Assistance**

MSA is a state program administered by DHS that provides supplemental cash assistance to aged, blind, and disabled persons who are Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients, or who would qualify for SSI except for excess income. Disabled MSA recipients who are under age 65; are relocating into the community from a residential facility, are eligible for personal care assistance, or are home and community-based waiver recipients living in their own home or rented or leased apartment; and qualify as in need of housing assistance receive an additional amount to help cover housing costs.<sup>8</sup> An eligible individual who receives this benefit prior to age 65 may continue to receive this benefit after age 65.

To qualify as in need of housing assistance, a person must incur housing costs in excess of 40 percent of the person's gross income before the application of the special needs standard.

Currently, the MSA housing assistance benefit is equal to the maximum allotment authorized by the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for a single individual (\$194 for federal fiscal year 2017). However, beginning July 1, 2020, the MSA housing assistance benefit will be equal to one-half of the maximum federal SSI payment amount for a single individual (the federal benefit rate for a single individual in 2017 is \$735, one-half that amount is \$367.50).

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<sup>8</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256D.44](#), subd. 5, para. (g).

In fiscal year 2017, 1,121 people received MSA housing assistance with state expenditures of \$1,937,866.

## **MA Housing Support Services**

MA housing support services were established by the legislature in 2017, will be administered by DHS, and will provide housing support services to an individual with a disability that limits the individual's ability to obtain or maintain stable housing to support an individual's transition to housing in the community and increase long-term stability in housing.<sup>9</sup>

MA housing support services will be provided to an individual with a disability who:

- is 18 years of age or older;
- is enrolled in MA;
- has an assessment of functional need that determines a need for services due to limitations caused by the individual's disability;
- resides in or plans to transition to a community-based setting; and
- has housing instability.

MA housing support services include housing transition services and housing and tenancy sustaining services. Housing transition services include:

- tenant screening and housing assessment;
- assistance with the housing search and application process;
- identifying resources to cover onetime moving expenses;
- ensuring a new living arrangement is safe and ready for move-in;
- assisting in arranging for and supporting details of a move; and
- developing a housing support crisis plan.

Housing tenancy and sustaining services include:

- prevention and early identification of behaviors that may jeopardize continued stable housing;
- education and training on roles, rights, and responsibilities of the tenant and the property manager;
- coaching to develop and maintain key relationships with property managers and neighbors;
- advocacy and referral to community resources to prevent eviction when housing is at risk;
- assistance with housing recertification process;
- coordination with the tenant to regularly review, update, and modify housing support and crisis plan; and

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<sup>9</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256B.051](#).

- continuing training on being a good tenant, lease compliance, and household management.

In addition, a housing support service may include person-centered planning for individuals who are not eligible for person-centered planning through another service, if certain conditions are met.

Service providers will be eligible for reimbursement under MA housing support services if the provider:

- is enrolled as a Medical Assistance Minnesota health care program provider and meets all applicable provider standards and requirements;
- demonstrates compliance with federal and state laws and policies for housing support services;
- complies with statutory background study requirements and maintains documentation of background study requests and results; and
- directly provides housing support services and does not use a subcontractor or reporting agent.

This program has not been implemented yet and is subject to federal approval.

## **MFIP Housing Assistance Grant**

The MFIP housing assistance grant was implemented in fiscal year 2016, is administered by DHS, and provides \$110 per month in housing assistance to MFIP assistance units who are not: (1) receiving rental subsidies provided through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, a portion of which is subject to being counted as unearned income; or (2) a child-only MFIP case.<sup>10</sup>

MFIP is a jointly funded, federal-state program designed to provide income assistance to eligible low-income families.

In fiscal year 2017, an estimated 69,016 average monthly recipients, or 22,581 families, received MFIP housing assistance with estimated state expenditures of \$12,887,413 and estimated federal expenditures of \$18,312,354.

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<sup>10</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 256J.35.](#)

## Data on Recipients and Expenditures

The table below shows the average monthly recipients and expenditures for the programs and services for public assistance enrollees for fiscal years 2013 to 2017. MA housing support services were just enacted in 2017, so there are no numbers for those services.

	Housing Support Services	MSA Housing Assistance	MA Housing Support Services	MFIP Housing Assistance Grant
2013 Average Monthly Recipients	19,031	438	N/A	N/A
2013 Expenditures	\$130,187,929	\$1,020,634	N/A	N/A
2014 Average Monthly Recipients	19,488	577	N/A	N/A
2014 Expenditures	\$138,708,619	\$1,343,838	N/A	N/A
2015 Average Monthly Recipients	19,461	692	N/A	N/A
2015 Expenditures	\$141,396,622	\$1,610,006	N/A	N/A
2016 Average Monthly Recipients	19,627	768	N/A	46,249
2016 Expenditures	\$149,460,915	\$1,788,486	N/A	\$11,008,788 (federal) \$12,573,317 (state)
2017 Average Monthly Recipients	20,291	1,121	N/A	69,016
2017 Expenditures	\$160,506,803	\$1,937,866	N/A	\$18,312,354 (federal) \$12,887,413 (state)

## Programs and Services for Persons with Mental Illness

This section describes the grant program for housing with supports for adults with serious mental illness.

### Housing with Supports for Adults with Serious Mental Illness Grants

Housing with supports for adults with serious mental illness (HSASMI) grants are available each year through a funding agreement between the DHS Adult Mental Health Division and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, to provide a range of supportive services in permanent housing settings for persons with severe mental illness who meet certain homeless criteria.

HSASMI grants are awarded to service providers to develop permanent lease-based or ownership-based housing opportunities and supportive services to adults with severe mental illness in settings that maximize community integration. Grant recipients provide the following services:

- direct assistance with initial housing-related costs
- outreach and assessment
- housing transition services
- supports to sustain tenancy long-term, such as tenant links to mental health services and community supports, tenancy education and coaching, crisis planning, and dispute resolution

A qualified mental health professional must supervise staff providing these services. The service provider must also partner with property owners or other housing agencies, and the local mental health authority, regional adult mental health initiative, or tribal mental health entity.

In order to access HSASMI opportunities, a person must have a severe mental illness that “seriously limits a person’s capacity to function in primary aspects of daily living such as personal relations, living arrangements, work, and recreation.”<sup>11</sup> This includes transition-aged youth and persons with co-occurring substance use disorder. Additionally, a person must meet one or more of the following homeless criteria to be eligible for HSASMI:

- reside in an institution or other segregated setting and be homeless upon discharge
- be homeless for one year or more, or more than once in the last three years
- be currently experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness<sup>12</sup>

This grant program was created by the 2015 Legislature. In fiscal year 2017, this grant program served over 1,900 people with expenditures of \$2,827,000.

## **Programs and Services for Sexually Exploited Youth**

This section describes the program for safe harbor for Minnesota’s sexually exploited youth.

### **Safe Harbor for Minnesota’s Sexually Exploited Youth**

The Department of Human Services administers a state-funded grant program to fund emergency, transitional, and long-term housing for sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation. DHS provides grants to six nonprofit organizations for housing beds around the state. Youth may use an emergency shelter bed for up to 90 days, and a program may request a variance to allow a participant to stay longer than 90 days. Transitional and long-term housing are provided for longer-term stays. Some programs limit a stay in transitional housing to two years, and others do not have a time limit. Some settings are for females only, and other settings

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<sup>11</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 245.462](#), subd. 20, para. (a).

<sup>12</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 245.4661](#), subd. 9, para. (a), cl.

(2).

serve females, males, and transgender youth. These shelter and housing settings provide appropriate security and on-site supportive services, which may include case management services; mental health and chemical dependency support or counseling; educational services; health care; and resources to assist with basic needs, parenting, legal, and social and emotional issues.

Individuals eligible for emergency, transitional, and long-term housing are youth 24 years of age or younger who are sexually exploited or at risk of sexual exploitation. A sexually exploited youth is an individual who:

- is alleged to have engaged in conduct which, if committed by an adult, would violate any law relating to being hired, offered for hire, or agreeing to be hired to engage in sexual conduct;
- is a victim of a criminal sexual conduct or solicitation crime, or a crime related to sexual performance or sexual conduct by a minor;
- is a victim of a federal crime related to sexually explicit depictions of a minor for importation into the United States, transportation for illegal sexual activity, transmission of information about a minor for purposes related to sexual activity, or sexual exploitation of a minor; or
- is a sex trafficking victim.<sup>13</sup>

In fiscal year 2017, Safe Harbor grants provided housing for 199 youth ages 24 and younger, funding 43 housing beds with an appropriation of \$1,833,000. The table below shows Safe Harbor households served and expenditures for fiscal years 2014 to 2017 (these programs were not open in 2014, which was the start-up phase).

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Households	0	74	128	199
Expenditures	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,833,000

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<sup>13</sup> [Minn. Stat. § 260C.007](#), subd. 31.

## Data on Recipients and Expenditures

The table below shows the number of recipients and state expenditures for fiscal year 2017 for the housing programs administered by DHS.

**Housing Programs, 2017 Number of Recipients and State Expenditures**

Program	# of recipients	State Expenditures
Emergency Services Grants	6,242	\$844,000
Transitional Housing Program	2,419	\$3,177,643
Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services	2,839	\$6,910,000
Homeless Youth Act	1,098 (housing) 708 (shelter)	\$4,119,000
Housing Support Services	20,291	\$160,506,803
MSA Housing Assistance	1,121	\$1,937,866
MA Housing Support Services	N/A	N/A
MFIP Housing Assistance Grant	69,016	\$12,887,413
Housing with Supports for Adults with Serious Mental Illness	1,912	\$2,827,000
Safe Harbor	199	\$1,833,000

## 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.

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. The Department of Corrections provides information and funding for ex-offenders for transitional, supportive, and emergency housing for both men and women. More than 500 people were served by these Department of Corrections-funded programs in 2017.

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 County Veterans Services Officers, MACV, the Homeless Veterans 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 Keys for Heroes program, which helps veterans obtain housing by working with landlords in the program.

Finally, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency 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. For more information on programs administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, see House Research, *State-Funded Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Programs*, November 2017.

*For more information about assistance programs, visit the health and human services area of our website, [www.house.mn/hrd/](http://www.house.mn/hrd/).*