

Position Statement

For 2024 Session

MACSSA has an organizational priority of “Strategic Position Development” with the goal of addressing challenges and leading innovation through thoughtful analysis that incorporates fiscal implications, systemic policy concerns, and legislative strategies in the development of policy and legislative positions.

Housing Support Infrastructure

Proposal

Issue: Counties recognize the significant increase in homelessness and barriers households currently face coupled with the lack of deeply affordable housing and related subsidies across the State of Minnesota.

Housing Support serves as a significant part of the solution, supporting households struggling with mental illness, substance use, and other conditions rooted in trauma to access housing. However, Housing Support does not currently have adequate funding and does not meet the growing needs of counties, Tribes, and people served. Additionally, regulations make it cumbersome and complex; we need simplification.

Sustainable and adequate funding for quality housing support programming and households facing homelessness and/or housing instability is critical to maintaining this infrastructure and to support much needed growth. This includes stable funding for county staff administering the program and responsible for quality assurance – both for current CLI grant recipients and for counties considering participation. The CLI grant has been a pilot beginning to this type of funding – counties seek expansion to all counties and stable, adequate funding for staff roles and direct assistance.

Implementation: MACSSA will support legislative action for a Community Living Infrastructure (CLI) Grant Base Increase (vs competitive two-year grant cycles) that includes formula funding for county positions at ratio of beds/units and Direct Assistance for counties and Tribes.

Systemic Priority/Paradigm Trend Alignment (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- **Equity:** Promote racial equity and eliminate racial disparities in the human services system for all people across the state. *(systemic priority)*
- **Workforce:** Advocate for strategies to sustain and equip the workforce, and simplify work given the forecasted labor shortages. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Technology:** Collaboratively seek state investment in systems transformation and modernization which must include appropriate county collaboration, oversight, and guidance. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Governance/Partnerships:** Co-create state/county governance that results in clear accountability, appropriate allocation of resources, stabilized service delivery, and improved outcomes for people served. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Resident Service:** Adapt to individual needs to support real choices *(paradigm trend)*

Equity: We know that there are serious disparities across the state within our housing and homelessness response system. Expanding CLI resources, including direct assistance, can reduce the barriers that many households face in accessing assistance and supportive housing.

Workforce: Increasing CLI resources and funding supports the growth of the program which equates to increased job opportunities, especially for people with lived experience who work in Housing Support programs. Counties support changes

to the Net Study 2.0 background checks that are currently required as this automatically closes the door for many supportive housing providers to hire people with lived experience who may have a criminal background.

Governance: By supporting staffing in relation to a ratio of beds/units by county/Tribe a more equitable allocation of resources and stabilization of service delivery would be achieved. These positions provide quality assurance for people served and technical assistance for providers and need sustainability to achieve those expectations. Additionally, providing ongoing/permanent direct assistance and the quality assurance will lead to improved outcomes for people served through better services/supports and assistance in maintaining or obtaining housing from homelessness

**Operational Priority (Committee) Alignment
(highlight all that apply and explain why)**

Adult Services
Behavioral Health

Children's Services
Equity

Healthcare
Modernization

Policy
Self-Sufficiency

Why: Housing is critical for all humans to be able to thrive, not just survive; hence the breadth of intersectionality across committee alignment. Access to deeply affordable housing with quality supportive services as well as direct assistance is critical for individuals and families to lead stable and productive lives.

Rationale/Background:

In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature added language to the Minnesota Housing Support Act (Chapter 256l) to increase and improve opportunities for Minnesotans with disabling conditions to live in the community. The housing package included grant funding aimed at developing and supporting community living infrastructure (CLI grants) through the state, totaling \$2.8 million through June of 2019, \$1.5 million for July 2019 through June 2020, \$2.6 million for the current biennium. These funds continue to be approved as grant funds, through competitive solicitations, for each biennium period. Counties believe these are building new infrastructure at the county level that requires ongoing funding to sustain the quality assurance role being transitioned to willing counties.

County Example: The funding has allowed St. Louis and other counties to create a new system that streamlines, monitors, and administrates the Housing Support Program. In 2022, St. Louis County had 23 board and lodge sites and 13 long-term homelessness (LTH) supportive housing providers, providing housing for 911 households. The LTH program grew by 62 percent in the past year. In May of 2022, St. Louis County had 261 LTH units and by the end of 2022, was up to 302 units. Currently in St. Louis County there are 325 Community based beds and two new expansions in the works that could potentially equate to up to 468 community beds (most of which are LTH) within the next one to two years. The impact of this program equated to 157 individuals moving into permanent housing. Outreach through CLI connected with 580 individuals, with more than half agreeing to navigation services. Additionally, 244 households were assisted with direct assistance (rent, security deposits, essential furnishing and /or utility set up fees). The CLI direct assistance funding equated to \$330,000 and utilized as a funding source of last resort. It was depleted within six months. St. Louis County currently has two staff dedicated to supporting these programs and managing the CLI grant, partially funded with this grant.

Sustainable and adequate funding for quality housing support programming and households facing homelessness and/or housing instability is critical to maintaining this infrastructure and to support much needed growth. Housing support serves as a significant part of the solution, supporting households struggling with mental illness, substance use, and other conditions rooted in trauma to access housing. CLI is often used as leverage for other State and Federal programs like Continuum of Care funding and MA Housing Stabilization Services. However, Housing Support is currently not adequately funded and does not meet the growing needs of counties, Tribes, and people served.

High-level, one paragraph description of the issue and its importance:

Transitioning from biennium competitive grants for Community Living Infrastructure to consistent, base infrastructure funding is necessary for this infrastructure role. To maintain the current level of housing support and quality of services, let alone support growth, an increase in base funding and permanent positions are critical. In order to allow counties and Tribes

to provide the level of support to providers and quality assurance to the program desired by the State, an allocation to counties and Tribes to support staff in relation to total number of beds/units is requested structured so that same/similar level of funding is available to current participants and additional funding is available to other counties who would opt into the program.



MACSSA
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