

Position Statement

2021

Support Legislative Proposals to Expand Funding for the Community Living Infrastructure Grant

Proposal

Issue:

- Minnesota Counties have been experiencing a shortage of affordable housing across the state for many years that has only worsened with the onset of the pandemic.
- Minnesota Counties have been forced to create alternative shelter access, such as hotels/motels to create social distancing in homeless shelters.
- Due to the pandemic, there is a moratorium on evictions driving vacancy rates lower, while the development of affordable housing continues to lag.
- The lack of stable, affordable housing compounded with high rates of substance use disorder is a key factor in the increase in out of home placements and preventing/delaying family reunification.
- The lack of supported, affordable housing has added to the bottle necking of individuals in mental health and chemical health hospital/residential treatment services and Regional Treatment Centers.
- The lack of stable, affordable and supported housing has driven up costs at the local county level.
- The addition of Housing Stabilization Services as a Medicaid benefit has increased demand on county staff to recruit and support supportive housing providers in enrolling and implementing this new service.

Implementation Strategy:

MACSSA will use this position to support an increase in the available funding for the Community Living Infrastructure Grant by the Department of Human Services.

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

- Equity
- Integrated Services
- Fiscal Framework

Comments: Safe, affordable housing is key to individual and family stability and is interconnected with all social service delivery areas.

Relevant Committee (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- Adult Services
- Behavioral Health
- Children's Services
- Modernization
- Policy
- Self-Sufficiency

Why: The Community Living Infrastructure Grant provides funding for that can be braided to work across all human service systems.

Rationale/Background:

Individuals with disabilities often face significant barriers transitioning into community living from institutions, licensed facilities or homelessness as a result of minimal or bad rental history, criminal background, and other barriers.

In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature passed a comprehensive housing package, adding language to the Minnesota Housing Support Act (Chapter 256I) to increase and improve opportunities for Minnesotans with disabilities to live in the community. The housing package included grant funding aimed at developing and supporting community living infrastructure throughout the state. The new grant funding enables counties and tribal collaboratives to apply for funding related to: 1) outreach; 2) housing resource specialists; and 3) funding for counties, and county and tribal collaboratives to administer the Housing Support program.

Previously, counties were not financially supported to administer and oversee the Housing Support program, limiting capacity to grow access to this benefit for those who qualify. The impact of these grant funds over the past two years has been significant. Utilizing grant funds, counties have expanded outreach services to persons experiencing street homelessness and added county program and financial services staff to increase access to Housing Support benefits. Additionally, the metro counties have piloted regional access to Housing Support by contracting with a centralized Housing Support administrator.

The grant funding authorized in 2017 includes: SFY 2018 \$1.4 million, SFY 2019 \$1.4 million, SFY 2020 \$1.585 million, SFY 2021 \$2.685 million. The grant requests for SFY 2019 were almost \$13 million due to an increase in the number of applicants and the amount that SFY 2018 grantees requested for expansion. Due to the limited funding available, SFY 2018 grantees received fewer grant dollars in SFY 2019 and were forced to reduce services and put all expansion plans on hold, limiting the ability to access state-funded Housing Support benefits for those who are eligible.



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Approved on: