DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News stories

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Minnesota helps 1,700 get housing during pandemic

First-in-nation Medicaid benefit serves those at risk of homelessness

December 7, 2020

A new Medicaid benefit has helped more than 1,700 Minnesotans secure housing during the pandemic, improving their lives while reducing their risk of getting or spreading COVID-19.

Minnesota is the first state to offer Housing Stabilization Services as part of its basic Medicaid program. The services are available to people with disabilities and older adults who are most likely to experience homelessness. The Minnesota Department of Human Services launched the benefit in July as part of Medical Assistance, the state's Medicaid program.

Housing Stabilization Services helps one person at a time with individualized services, adding up to a big impact on the community. Having a safe place to live affects every aspect of a person's life, including lowering their risk of contracting or spreading the coronavirus.

"The number of people experiencing homelessness continues to grow here in Minnesota and across the nation," Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead said. "Helping people find and maintain stable housing is more important than ever as the pandemic continues."

Housing Stabilization Services are for people with disabilities, including mental illness and substance abuse disorder, as well as older adults who are homeless or living in an institution.

Most housing services provide short-term assistance only during a crisis or transition. Challenges such as mental illness and substance use disorder can make it difficult for someone to find housing, manage a budget and keep a home, interact with landlords and neighbors, and understand the rules of a lease. Advocates with Housing Stabilization Services help people address these challenges while finding stable housing.

Community services providers said the program has had a positive impact on the people they serve.

“I have been able to take more time to get to know the individual needs of my clients and to be able to find the time to help meet those needs,” said Maryan Hersi, a Housing Support Specialist for Multicultural Care Center in St. Paul.

Including Housing Stabilization Services in the state’s Medicaid program recognizes the connection between health and stable housing. As a basic Medicaid benefit, the program is more sustainable than grant programs that operate on variable funding cycles.

More than 100 providers now offer Housing Stabilization Services. When the program is fully implemented, an estimated 7,600 people will receive services.

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12/7/2020 12:05:00 AM

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