

1.01 How to Rapidly Expand Temporary Shelter Options



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Key Elements from Prior Rapid Expansion of Shelter

- State is a key partner
 - Often contracting with facility owners is done through state administrative division.
 - State departments of emergency management provided key interagency coordination, legal support, and logistics.
 - Janitorial services contracted through state.
- Funding is mixed with one source paying for rental, another paying for social services, and sometimes a third for site operations.
- Several major cities utilized arenas, recreational vehicles, large congregate tents, and hotels as options for rapid shelter expansion.
- Any large expansion of shelter is going to benefit from local healthcare provision and close communication with community leaders.

Winter Shelter Planning During the Pandemic

This resource was designed for system leaders and planners to help congregate shelters maintain reduced capacity to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Communities should maximize **Alternative Spaces for Winter Sheltering** and increase **Diversion Strategies** to reduce the need for congregate shelter.



1 Supporting Alternative Spaces for Winter Sheltering

- Utilize hotel/motel rooms or other non-congregate shelter options
- **Increase Alternative Sheltering Options**
- Expand medical respite programs
- Maintain active outreach to encampments to ensure survival and safety. Provide the following:
 - Assistance in winterizing tents
 - Food and water
 - Hygiene and disinfection supplies/equipment
 - Connections to non-congregate shelter or housing

2 Strengthening Diversion Strategies

- Expand Diversion programs that help people resolve housing crises instead of entering the homeless system
 - Flexible cash assistance
 - Connections and mediation with family/friends
 - Connection to benefits and community based resources
- Consider a dedicated hotline to triage needs

3 Sustaining Congregate Shelters at Reduced Capacity for COVID-19

- Congregate shelters must have referral options and resources to maintain reduced capacity
 - Maintain low barrier access
 - Provide funding for short term motel vouchers for people seeking shelter to maintain reduced shelter capacity
 - Provide transportation to alternative shelter space

APPROACH TO WINTER PLANNING:

PLAN C - Substantial Surge

HUD encourages communities to adopt a contingency planning approach to winter planning—versatile strategies that can adapt to changing local conditions, varying inequities found in systems of care, and escalating levels of shelter need this winter. The strategies are divided into [Plan A \[Projected Need\]](#), [Plan B \[Marginal Surge\]](#), and [Plan C \[Substantial Surge\]](#). Plan C reflects a response to a substantial surge of shelter demand which extends beyond the homeless system's capacity in every area (i.e., budget, staffing, facilities, supplies) and requires complete governmental support.

STAFFING

To maintain life-sustaining services during COVID-19 surges, you may need to augment staffing with disaster responders. Should you also need to utilize homeless service provider staff, ensure that compensation includes hazard pay.



TRANSPORTATION

Local public transportation may also be utilized to enhance movement of people experiencing homelessness to safe spaces in an equitable manner.



FACILITIES

Larger cities might decide to use the local civic center for decompression strategies. Ensure equitable access to those sites.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Make sure you have sufficient PPE to meet demand and that people are complying with protocols.



CRITICAL PARTNER ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

Include critical partners such as Health Care for the Homeless, front-line staff, public health, stakeholders, and emergency management organizations. Ensure your office of emergency management and government planners are on board with your plans.





Lessons Learned: Rapidly expanding temporary shelter

Danielle Werder - Senior Department Administrator, Hennepin County Office of Housing Stability

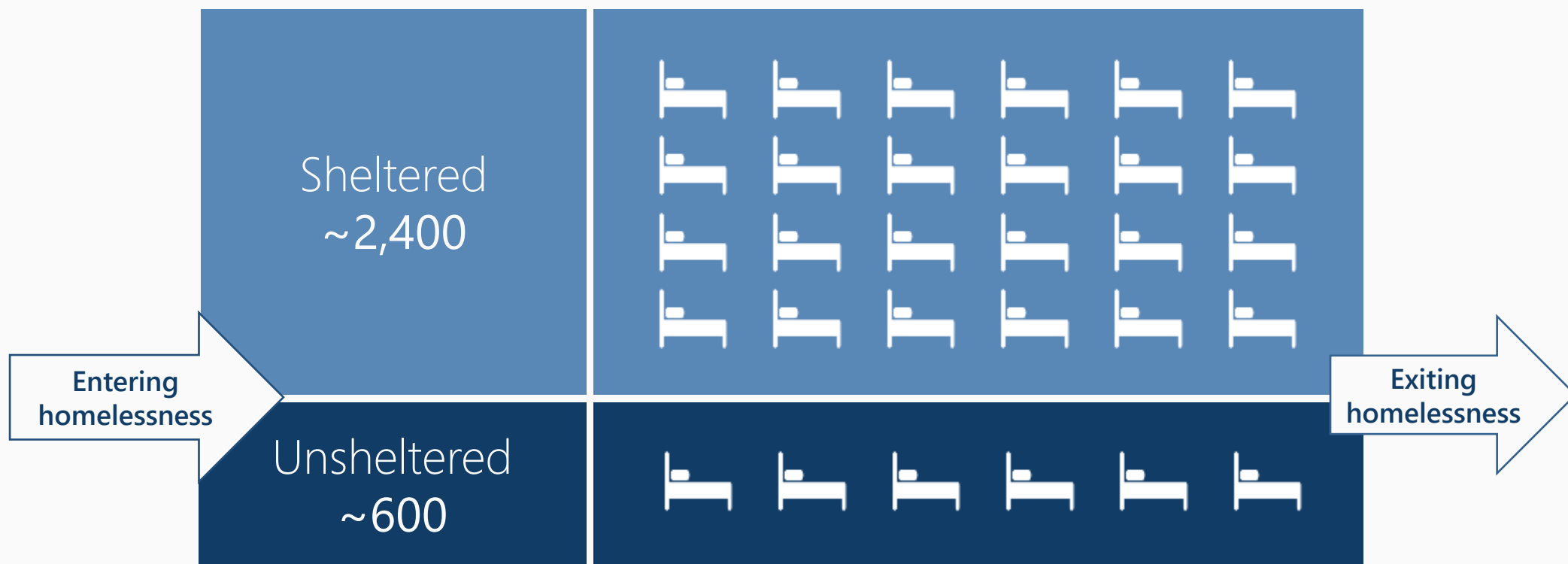
Rapidly expanding temporary shelter

A last-resort crisis response with an explicit housing focus and exit plan in place, and:

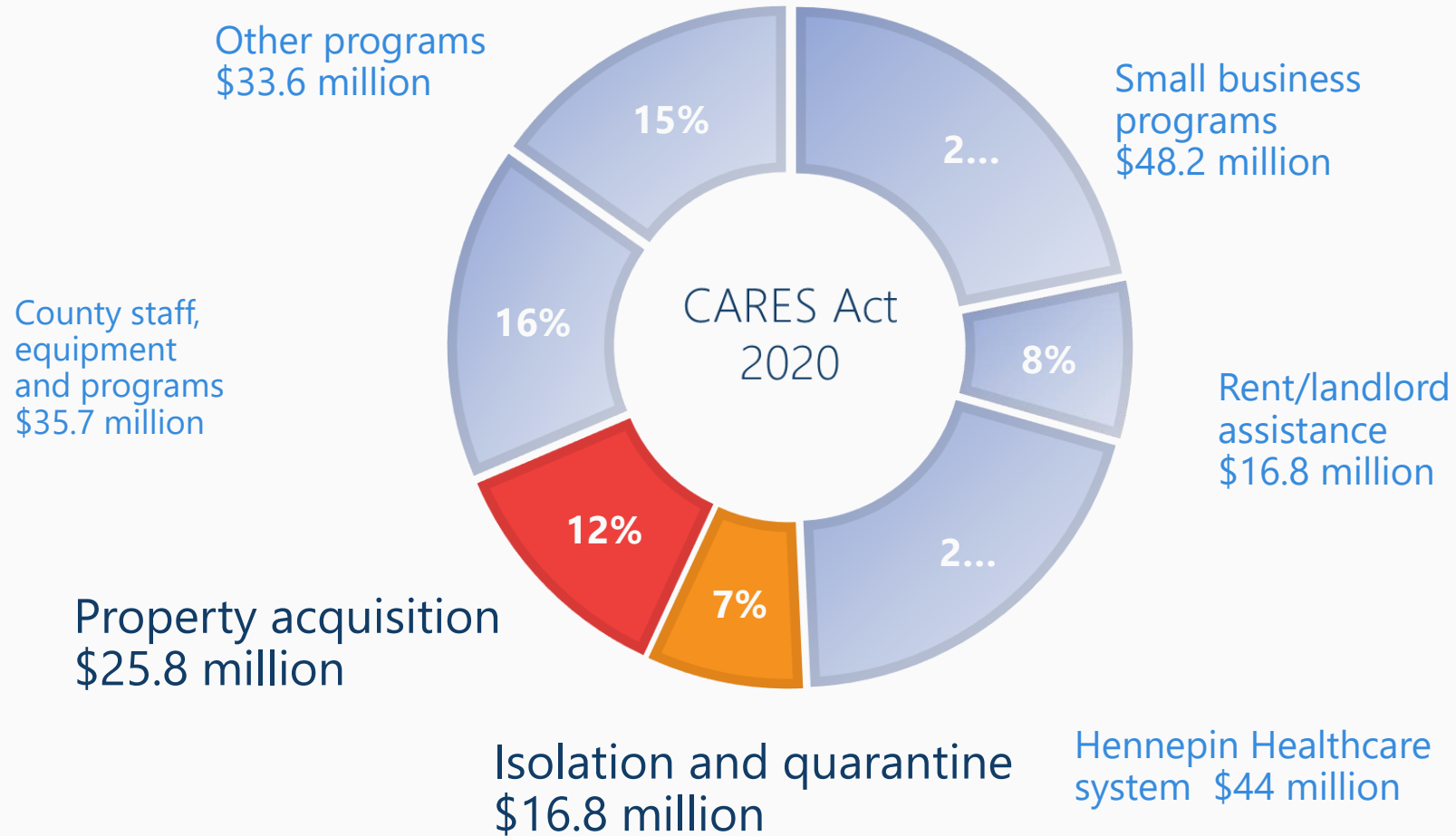
- A well-resourced housing focus case management team.
- Effective housing-focused, person-centered engagement policy.
- An attrition and closure plan should be in place right away.
- Centralized reservation system - quickly able to absorb new programming.



Homelessness in Hennepin County 2020

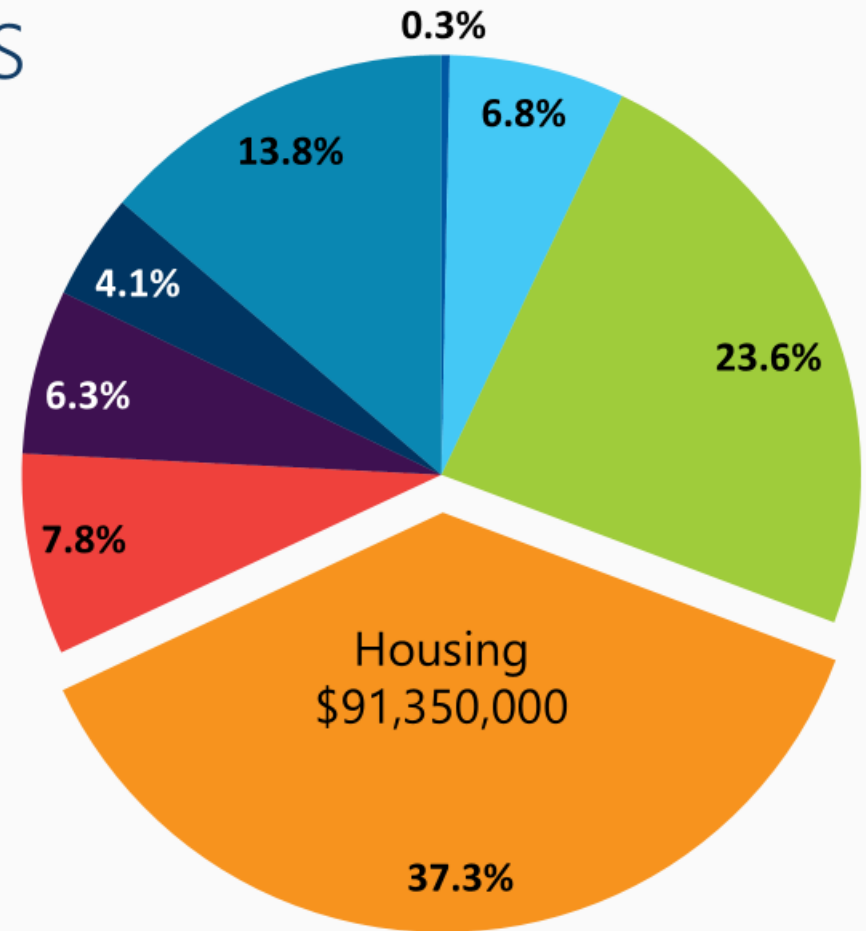


Federal pandemic response funding



\$91.35M pandemic recovery funds for housing and homelessness

\$46M	Multifamily housing, single-room occupancy, homeownership
\$14.1M	Housing focused case management
\$25.55M	Homelessness recovery
\$3.5M	Simpson shelter
\$2.2M	Eviction prevention





COVID19 Pandemic response

- Moved medically fragile and older adults into pandemic response hotels and opened isolation space.
- Deconcentrated congregate spaces.

Hennepin County committed to supporting all guests to move into permanent housing using:

- Housing focused case management
- Flex-funding for barrier busting
- Well-resourced and trained team, prepared to meet the need.

Impacts of COVID-19 response at hotels

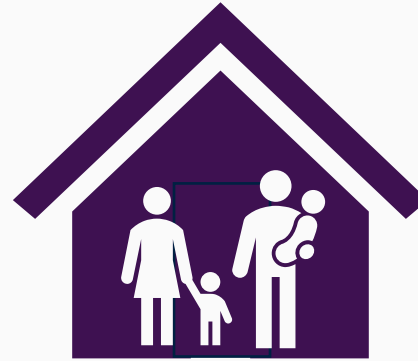


- Housed 464 people from hotel settings.
 - Still at 96% percent of people housed having not returned to our homelessness response system
- Created a foundation of housing focused services that has influenced our homeless response across settings and demographics

Conditions
that could lead
to needing to
quickly expanding shelter



Public
health
emergency



Strain on
family
shelter
system



Extreme or
dangerous
weather

Travel back in
time to 2020:

Lessons from
COVID-19
strategy



Impacts of COVID-19 response at shelters



- Infection rate in shelters less than public
- \$10.4 million in investments in capital investments, improving health and safety and quality of guest experience.
 - All contracted shelters open to guests 24/7
 - 3 gap-filling shelter programs added to system – adding 180 housing-focused shelter beds.
- 2,165 total exits to permanent housing in 2020 alone

Lessons learned:

Overall goals of
Homeless to
Housing
program, 2022-



- Provide housing-focused, person-centered services to single adults
- Be accessible and physically present in sheltered and unsheltered settings
- Use our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as a shared, real-time care coordination tool
- Begin exit planning at intake, connecting people to case management resources to assist with housing stability
- Supplement housing-focused services that currently exist in the system

Lasting innovations

- Shelter system improvements – becoming housing focused
- Emergency rental assistance
- Strategic property acquisition
- Better utilization of HMIS including real-time by-name-list



Applying lessons around standing up temporary shelter to Hennepin County's Family Shelter System

Expanding and contracting Family overflow shelter, 2023 to present

Longstanding – shelter-all family policy: No child sleeps outside

Late 2022 - Demand for family shelter grew drastically necessitating additional overflow shelter spaces

Late 2023 – Family shelter system reached 400% 'normal' capacity

2024 to present:
Implementation:

- 'Family Overnight Safe Space' - tirage/assessment space
- A team of 12 well-resourced housing-focused case managers
- A person-centered, housing-focused engagement policy

Expanding and
contracting Family
overflow shelter

Accomplishments
2023 to present

- Held strong with shelter-all policy for families with children
- Improved initial access and assessment process
- Created better system processes and flow for families
- Brought family shelter census down by 52%; outflow has exceeded inflow for the past 12 months
- Housed more than 281 families during this time.

Applying lessons learned to standing up winter shelter services

Incorporating lessons learned into system

Winter shelter Request for Proposals (RFPs)

- Starting in 2022, Hennepin County launched annual RFPs to provide gap-filling services during cold winter months
- Services online from November through April

Additional services added:

- All-day drop-in centers with services on-site
- Extremely low-barrier overnight drop-in spaces
- Additional emergency shelter beds added through centralized access system.

Impact of system improvements through data

Metric 1: Number of people experiencing homelessness

- 9,806 people in emergency shelter and transitional housing in 2024, a 5% decrease from 2023 (10,287)

Metric 2: length of time people experience homelessness

- 29% of heads of households experiencing homelessness in 2024 had been homeless for one year or more or four or more times in past three years, a 35% smaller proportion than 2023

Metric 3: percentage of people exiting homelessness to permanent destinations

- 20% of all people in street outreach, emergency shelter, coordinated entry, and transitional housing in 2024 exited to a permanent destination, an 18% larger proportion than 2023
- 2024: N=2,995 2023: N=2,712
- 47% of those with a recorded exit destination exited to a permanent destination in 2024