

Dakota County 2025 Policy Priorities – At a glance



VI-2025

MODERNIZE HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS AND TECHNOLOGY

Minnesota's human services programs and technology are complex and outdated. Recent state modernization efforts have not kept up with evolving technology.

The state can change that by providing counties that deliver these services with modernized systems that give clients more control over their services and focus on efficiency and the use of data to improve services. The Legislature should also fund projects and technology that simplify program rules.

Counties will support efforts to rapidly develop solutions that meet these goals.

Dakota County recommends the following legislative actions:

- Support modernization projects that improve client and staff use, while increasing equity and access to services for all Minnesotans.
- Provide implementation funds to cover county costs associated with these investments.
- Establish an innovation fund for counties to co-develop solutions.

SUSTAINABLE CRISIS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FUNDING

Communities across Minnesota face urgent and unprecedented mental health challenges. Dakota County has responded by developing effective crisis services. The county has expanded services to handle crisis calls transferred from Dakota 911, embed social workers in 10 public safety agencies and provide more timely crisis response. It also built the Crisis and Recovery Center in West St. Paul.

Most of the county's expanded services rely on one-time aid, including American Rescue Plan funds. To ensure proven crisis services can continue, the Legislature should create a long-term funding plan. In the meantime, Dakota County recommends increasing funding for crisis services grants, creating an equitable formula for state crisis grant funds and providing \$3.4 million in one-time funding to support existing services.

MNCHOICES REASSESSMENT PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

MnCHOICES assessment and support planning are important for seniors and individuals with disabilities who need home and community-based services. It ensures eligibility, informed choice and identifies cost-effective care options. However, counties, which administer this state program, need a more efficient reassessment process to better serve existing clients and erase a backlog of first-time applications.

An annual MnCHOICES reassessment takes a total of 7-8 hours. That is excessive if the individual's situation has not changed. This lengthy process can be traumatizing to the individual and their family. It also contributes to overall program delays.

Dakota County recommends the Legislature create a shorter and more efficient MnCHOICES reassessment process if an individual's condition is stable and unchanged. The county also recommends the state change the annual comprehensive reassessment requirement to once every two or three years, or sooner if there is a significant change in an individual's condition.

HOUSING SUPPORT OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT ALLOCATION

Minnesota law requires counties and tribes to oversee Housing Support benefits, but they do not receive dedicated funding to carry out this state program.

Housing Support pays for room and board and some supportive services for seniors and adults with disabilities who have low incomes. Dakota County supports 1,198 people on Housing Support. The county maintains 214 Housing Support agreements with vendors for 727 properties.

Housing Support agreements allow providers to collect a 5-percent administrative fee on all housing payments. There is no similar administrative fee available to counties and tribes, yet the state requires them to perform numerous Housing Support functions.

The state should provide a management allocation to counties and tribes for administering Housing Support. Without it, this is an unfunded mandate.

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INCREASED SCORE FUNDING FOR STATE WASTE MANDATES

Metro counties face a growing number of state waste management requirements without a proportionate increase in Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) funding.

In 2024, 27 percent of the Solid Waste Management Tax revenue was still being redirected to the state's General Fund instead of to counties to carry out state-required waste management plans. State funding has not kept pace with the investment needed to achieve state waste objectives. Without this state support, counties must use their own funding.

While the Minnesota Legislature in 2023 redirected an additional 3 percent of the solid waste management tax to SCORE, 77 percent of Dakota County's waste management plan funding is still from other sources.

Increased SCORE funding to metro counties will reduce the reliance on local funding sources to meet state-required waste management objectives.

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