

The Link

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Program Overview

Mission: The Link works with youth and families to overcome the impacts of poverty and social injustice. The Link's Dakota County Hotel Emergency Shelter program, originally a COVID-response program, provides hotel vouchers to youth and young families experiencing homelessness. As the need for shelter and housing units exceeds available resources, the program helps fill an important gap in services in Dakota County. Youth who are waiting for access to affordable housing units can stay in the hotel emergency shelter and receive case management services until they are able to transition into a housing program. Each night, The Link's Hotel Emergency Shelter Program provides 10 units of shelter to Dakota County youth and families.

Contract(s): Dakota County has **4** contracts with **The Link** for the following service(s):

Service	Service Description	Funding Source(s)	Contract Term Date
Emergency Hotel Shelter Services for Youth	<p>The Link secures a hotel(s) and ensure three meals a day for clients in hotel(s) as well as other vital services for youth ages 18-24 experiencing HUD homelessness in Dakota County. They conduct an assessment and screening of each shelter referral to determine service needs and confirm that individual meets eligibility requirements for shelter program and provides case management services to each shelter resident.</p> <p>They also provide Housing Search Services to all shelter residents including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting shelter residents with searching for and securing housing Assisting shelter residents with obtaining available housing resources including financial and rental assistance programs. Facilitating referrals to housing and services needed for ongoing housing stability including Housing Support and Housing Stabilization Services. 	100% funded by County Levy	7/1/2025-6/30/2027

Service	Service Description	Funding Source(s)	Contract Term Date
Emergency Hotel Shelter & Housing Search Services	<p>The Link secures a hotel(s), ensure three meals a day for clients in hotel(s) as well as other vital services. Complete Housing Assessment and connect shelter clients to SMAC Coordinated Entry.</p> <p>They also provide Housing Search Services to residents of the hotel program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance securing housing assistance, if needed (through Coordinated Entry, CDA, etc.). • Assistance on behalf of client to find housing. • Advocacy with landlords and other stakeholders. • Referrals to services needed for ongoing housing stability. 	100% funded by Department of HHSSA	9/1/2023-6/30/2027
Local Homeless Prevention Aid for Youth	<p>The Link works to ensure no child is homeless by keeping families from losing housing and helping those experiencing homelessness find housing. The Link provides outreach and case management services for homeless unaccompanied youth. This work includes, but is not limited to, working with schools and community partners to identify homeless youth, providing case management and connecting youth to supportive services, safety, financial assistance and housing stability.</p>	100% funded by grant allocation for Local Homeless Prevention Aid - MN Department of Revenue.	7/1/2023-6/30/2026
Youth Coordinated Entry Drop-In Services	<p>The Link intakes through the County Housing Resource Line for Youth experiencing homelessness. They Coordinate emergency housing placements, connection to homelessness prevention resources and other problem solving as needed by client and conduct a CE assessment.</p>	100% funded by County Levy	1/1/2026-12/31/2027

Strategic Alignment

The Link's work supports and aligns with the following County Board strategies:

Thriving people: Dakota County creates access to opportunities, cares for vulnerable people, and fosters community safety, health and well-being.

Oversight

Emergency Hotel Shelter Services for Youth (levy funded): Quarterly reports are required summarizing the following: number of unduplicated individuals in shelter, basic demographics (age, race, gender),

entry date, exit date, length of time in shelter, number and percent of individuals exiting to permanent housing, exit destination for each participant who left shelter and success stories of shelter residents. Invoices are submitted monthly to the County and include specific budget categories and supporting documentation.

Emergency Hotel Shelter & Housing Search Services (CLI Grant): Quarterly reports are required summarizing the following: number of unduplicated individuals in shelter, basic demographics (age, race, gender), entry date, exit date, length of time in shelter, number and percent of individuals exiting to permanent housing, exit destination for each participant who left shelter and success stories of shelter residents. Invoices are submitted monthly to the County and include specific budget categories and supporting documentation.

Local Homeless Prevention Aid – Homeless Families: Prepare reports semi-annually to share activities, number of persons served, demographics and services provided. As part of the semi-annual report, there will be an assessment of how the program impacts people who are currently experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness as required by Department of Revenue requirements. Provide program information and reports at the homeless prevention and outreach workgroup meeting and Affordable Housing Coalition at least twice a year. Invoices are submitted, at minimum, monthly to the County.

Youth Coordinated Entry Drop-In Services: Quarterly reports are required summarizing the following: number of intake calls, number of turn-aways, number of unduplicated clients, number of Coordinated Entry assessments completed, type of referrals provided, basic demographics (age, race, family status). Invoices are submitted, at a minimum, quarterly and include specific budget categories and any support documentation.

Outcome Measures

Dakota County Emergency Shelter Hotel Outcome Measures:

2025 Calendar Year: The Link's Dakota County Emergency Shelter Hotel Program successfully served 28 youth. Out of the 15 exits, 13 of those were able to have positive and stable exits (83%).

100% of youth within The Link's Dakota County Emergency Shelter Hotel Program were able to be assisted in obtaining basic needs.

Mandates

Mandate Level (Board Decision) – Program Name, Authority for Program (Statute, Resolution, etc.), Program Description

Emergency Hotel Shelter Services for Youth (levy funded): The Board of Commissioners is not mandated to provide or contract for these services.

Emergency Hotel Shelter & Housing Search Services (DHS Grant Funded): The Board of Commissioners is not mandated to provide or contract for these services.

Local Homeless Prevention Aid (Youth): The Board of Commissioners is not mandated to provide or contract for these services.

Youth Coordinated Entry Drop-In Services: The Board of Commissioners is not mandated to provide or contract for these services.

Financials

Total Contracted Payments 2024-2025: \$1,399,427

Service	Contract Budget 2026-2027
Emergency Hotel Shelter Services for Youth (Levy funded):	\$ 68,616
Emergency Hotel Shelter & Housing Search Services (DHS Grant Funded)	\$750,000
Local Homeless Prevention Aid – Homeless Youth (7/1/2023-6/30/2026)	\$ 600,182
Youth Coordinated Entry Drop-In Services	\$102,000