



# DAKOTA WOODLANDS

STRENGTHENING FAMILY  
SHELTER & HOUSING STABILITY  
IN DAKOTA COUNTY

# WHO WE ARE

## Dakota Woodlands

- The only family shelter in Dakota County
- Serving families experiencing homelessness with children since 1995 in Dakota County.
- In business since 1981, serving mothers and children.
- Providing safe shelter, trauma-informed care, and supportive services
- Focused on helping families move from crisis to long-term stability



## WHO WE SERVE

Families: Biological and legally adopted

- 69% of individuals identified as BIPOC
- 62% children and teens
- 51% of adults reported a history of domestic violence
- 55% of adults reported annual incomes of \$12,000 or less
- 33% of adults reported a mental or physical disability



# OUR ROLE IN THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

## A Critical Part of the System

Dakota Woodlands serves as two essential components:

- Emergency Family Shelter
- Supportive Services & Stabilization

We:

- Stabilize families in crisis
- Prepare families for permanent housing
- Support long-term success and independence



# PROGRESS IN 2025

## Strengthening Operations & Infrastructure

In 2025, we have:

- Rebranded and created a new work culture
- Stabilized operations during staffing and funding challenges
- Implemented stronger internal systems and accountability
- Expanded programming and partnerships
- Completed major capital repairs thanks to DC CDA

With Dakota County's support, we were able to keep all shelter beds open and move 36 families into permanent housing.



# COUNTY INVESTMENT IN ACTION

\$300,000 yearly until 2027

\$560,000 towards capital

With this investment, we:

- Completed three critical facility repairs
- Maintained consistent services and safety for families
- Avoided reductions in capacity
- Continued serving families without interruption

Thank You!



# 2025 IMPACT METRICS

## What We Delivered

- 225 individuals served (140 children)
- 71 families supported
- 36 families exited to permanent housing
- 100% connected to critical resources
- 20,718 nights of shelter provided
- 2,015 case management sessions
- 87,000+ meals provided
- 4,029 essential items given
- 300+ childcare and program sessions

Success stories: <https://youtu.be/jEuJazdoCNc>



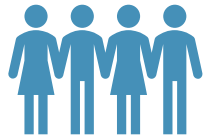
# HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP

## Doing More with Limited Resources

- Partnered with a local college to deliver childcare services
  - After eliminating internal positions due to funding constraints



# COMMUNITY INVESTMENT GROWTH



Partnered with 250+  
volunteers



Engaged 100 new donors  
in 2025



Focused on grassroots,  
small-dollar giving



Strengthened community  
connection and  
awareness

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# WHAT WE SEE

TWO OF THE CHALLENGES WE ARE SEEING  
ACROSS THE SYSTEM

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## Hotel Placements Not a Long-Term Solution

- Estimated cost: \$2,000–\$4,000 per month per family
- Annual cost per family: up to \$48,000
- No on-site case management or supportive services
- Limited access to food preparation, childcare, or programming
- Frequent moves and instability for children

## Increase in mental health and substance use

- Affecting family stability and children
- Can increase CPS calls, recidivism, and generational repetition

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# WHAT WE RESEARCHED

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## People Serving People Hopes Portage

In looking at other counties, we've seen models that include:

- Facility-based family shelter, one-stop shop
- Updated shelter units
- On-site mental health services and programming
- Coordinated systems with nonprofit providers

Outcomes:

- Shelter is intentional and service-connected
- Families are supported from day one
- Focus is on shorter stays and faster exits to housing
- Children benefit from routine and programming
- Services are immediate and consistent



# THE VISION FOR DAKOTA COUNTY

## A Stronger Family Shelter Model

Dakota Woodlands envisions:

- Expanding into a larger, purpose-built facility
- Providing private/semi-private family units
- Offering in-room restrooms and small kitchenettes
- Delivering family shelter services in one stable location
- Increased emergency mental health and family stabilization support on-site

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# LET US CONTINUE TO PARTNER

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## What does it look like?

### Dakota County:

- Invests in shelter operations & facility + system coordination

### Dakota Woodlands:

- Operates shelter
- Provides services
- Leverages community funding

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# A SHARED OPPORTUNITY

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## What Can Be the Outcome?

- Strengthen the front-end of the housing system
- Reduce hotel costs and damage costs
- Allows a nonprofit to manage the shelter, reduce county involvement outside of SHU services
- Improve outcomes for families and provides more stabilization
- Use resources more effectively
- Reduces facility challenges on nonprofit

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# LOOKING AHEAD

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Dakota Woodlands is excited to continue to partner with Dakota County to build a model that:

- Supports families more effectively
- Reduces long-term system costs
- Creates lasting impact in our community
- Provides shared goals and alignment

What does that look like to you?

Let us continue to collaborate on what can be reality.

We're not here with a specific ask today, but we're excited about what continued collaboration could look like together.

Thank you for continuing to invest and support us as your family operating shelter!