

DHS Update on Shelter-Linked Mental Health Excerpt from the Homeless Youth Act Legislative Report, 2021

Shelter-Linked Mental Health is a new set of mental health focused services targeted to youth experiencing homelessness and youth experiencing sexual exploitation. The reporting section in the Homeless Youth Act Legislation was updated to require information on the Shelter-Linked Mental Health grant be included in this report. The purpose of Shelter-Linked Mental Health services is to integrate mental health services into programs for youth experiencing homelessness and/or sexual exploitation through partnerships between homeless youth and Safe Harbor programs, with community-based mental health providers. Modeled after the School-Linked Mental Health grant program, the Shelter-Linked Mental Health grant program aims to lower barriers to access and support youth in obtaining and maintaining needed mental health services. During the 2019 legislative session, \$500,000 was appropriated for the 2020-2021 biennium for Shelter-Linked Mental Health services. Activities supported by Shelter-Linked Mental Health funds include:

- Programming to prepare youth to receive mental health services
- Assisting youth in obtaining health insurance
- On-site mental health services, including group skills and therapy sessions and individual therapy sessions
- Staff consultation and training
- Ancillary support services

A competitive Request for Proposal process was conducted to award funds. Applications from seven agencies were received, totaling almost \$900,000 in requests. Shelter-Linked Mental Health grants were awarded to five youth serving agencies. Three of the agencies are located in the metro, while two are located in greater Minnesota. The grant period is from February 1, 2020-June 30, 2021.

The Office of Economic Opportunity staff meet with all the Shelter-Linked Mental Health providers and their partnering agencies on a bi-monthly basis to have shared learning and produce even more collaboration.

[Shelter-Linked Mental Health Program Agencies and Activities](#)

Below is a breakdown of agencies funded and services that they are providing with the grant funds:

[Twin Cities Metro Area](#)

180 Degrees: Awarded \$80,000 for the biennium.

- Mental Health Services (including individual therapy and family therapy, medication and diagnostic evaluations) for youth who are uninsured at Brittany's Place and Hope House.
- Mental Health case consultation and training for shelter staff.

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (Hope Street Program): Awarded \$70,000 for the biennium.

- Collaborate with Headway Emotional Health to provide onsite mental health services for youth in the program.
- Provide mental health case consultation and training for staff.

Face to Face Health and Counseling Inc.: Awarded \$260,000 for the biennium.

- Provide Mental Health services at three youth serving organizations in the Twin Cities. These include Face to Face Health and Counseling Inc., Ain Dah Yung, and Avenues for Youth.
- Provide mental health case consultation and training for staff across the three organizations.

Greater Minnesota

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (Duluth): Awarded \$60,000 for the biennium.

- Provide mental health services to youth at Another Door Shelter (site based) and Renaissance Transitional housing (site based).
- Provide mental health case consultation, trauma screening and psychoeducation on trauma to program staff.

MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership, Inc.: Awarded \$30,000 for the biennium

- Provide trauma informed practices training for staff
- Collaborate with Steller Human Services to provide a variety of mental health services for youth experiencing homelessness.

Learnings from Shelter-Linked Mental Health Program Implementation

Implementation of Shelter-Linked Mental Health grant program began early 2020, just as the country began responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shelter-Linked Mental Health providers experienced challenges in their ramp-up of these new services during a pandemic, including:

- Connecting and building relationships with youth virtually rather than in-person.
- Increasing the organizations' capacity to provide services virtually.
- Hiring and onboarding new staff for a new set of services during a pandemic.
- Being unable to provide as many groups as desired and low attendance at groups due to restrictions on in-person services during stay-at-home orders.

Despite challenges, providers also experienced many successes and have expressed that Shelter-Linked Mental Health services have brought great value to their programming and have positively affected the youth in their programs. Successes include:

- Flourishing partnerships between homeless youth and Safe Harbor providers with community-based mental health providers.
- Homeless youth and Safe Harbor program staff have been trained and supported by mental health providers and have increased their capacity to address mental health needs with youth in their programs.
- Uninsured and under-insured youth have accessed individualized mental health services, gained access to insurance, and have also continued receiving mental health services even after exiting homeless youth and Safe Harbor programming.
- Despite the challenges of virtual services, stay-at-home orders and social distancing, providers have been conducting groups, individual therapy sessions, and engaging with youth.
- More mental health services are being provided to youth in culturally specific programming and in a culturally responsive manner due to the partnerships between mental health providers and culturally specific youth programming.

As Shelter-Linked Mental Health services continue through 2021, additional data on numbers served, services provided, and challenges and successes will be collected. These will inform the implementation of Shelter-Linked Mental Health grant program going forward.

Shelter-Linked Mental Health Outputs

Data reported below is collected through semi-annual and annual reports submitted by Shelter Linked Mental Health Grant funded agencies.

Below is a summary of data collected from Shelter Linked Mental Health Grantees for the period of February 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

- There were 208 unduplicated youth who received mental health services with 643 mental health visits
 - 32 of the youth served would otherwise not have been eligible for mental health services due to being uninsured/underinsured.
 - 15 of the youth served didn't have health insurance upon engaging in mental health services and program staff supported them in getting insurance.
- Mental health services provided:
 - 383 one on one therapy sessions.
 - 73 group therapy sessions.
 - 322 Auxiliary /Ancillary services were provided. Auxiliary/Ancillary services includes but is not limited to the following activities; financial assistance with deductibles, transportation support, less formal mental health services, relationship building, help with accessing insurance and any gap services utilized in supporting youth to get mental health services.

There were 42 shelter/ housing staff trainings provided on mental health related topics:

- 462 Staff (duplicated) attended these trainings.