

Homeless Elders



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Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population and have complex needs requiring special considerations.

- A majority of older adults experiencing homelessness in Minnesota have complex health conditions, like a chronic physical health condition (75%), serious mental illness (54%) or a cognitive impairment (38%).
- 90% have a disability limiting their ability to work or complete activities of daily living, like eating, bathing and dressing.
- Older adults experiencing homelessness are disproportionately Black, Indigenous or people of color.

Catholic Charities' Homeless Elders Program helps low-income older adults without homes move into stable housing. Catholic Charities' staff specialize in intensive case management and serve 120+ vulnerable individuals each year. Their culturally-competent and person-centered services help individuals:

- Find safe, affordable housing in the community of their choice.
- Live and age in place with dignity and support.
- Connect to and apply for programs like Medical Assistance, Housing Stabilization Services and/or waivers to address chronic illness and provide needed supports.

Staff also provide trainings and materials to share best practices with others, all aimed at improving health and housing outcomes for older adults experiencing homelessness not just regionally but statewide and nationally, too.

The wait list to receive assistance through Homeless Elders averages 60 individuals and 3-4 months. With an increasing number of older adults entering shelter, the demand for Homeless Elders services exceeds capacity, leaving already vulnerable individuals at risk for poorer health outcomes and premature death.

HF2845 (Fischer) / SF2813 (Xiong) would provide \$1.5 million in stable, annual funding for Homeless Elders and reduce waiting periods. This investment would strengthen the homeless response system and enhance quality of life while preserving dignity and autonomy for aging Minnesotans.

For more information: Contact Lorna Schmidt,
Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, at lorna.schmidt@cctwincities.org.



Ruth's story

A few years ago, 74-year-old Ruth hopped on a Jefferson Lines bus in South Dakota and knew one thing for sure. She needed to get home. Ruth didn't tell her family where she was headed, or even that she was leaving, but the mother and grandmother wasn't trying to keep any secrets. A nurse for more than 30 years and an ordained minister, Ruth had spent her life helping those in need. Suddenly, she was the one in need of help.

Ruth stayed on the streets, slept on the floor at Catholic Charities' Dorothy Day Place, where she was referred to the Homeless Elders Program, and was later admitted to a hospital and then a geriatric psych unit. There, she received the diagnosis of dementia and started on the path back to stability. Her case manager from Catholic Charities was instrumental in getting Ruth the help she needed, from connecting her with medical caregivers and other professional services to helping her find a permanent home.

She now has a warm place to sleep each night at an assisted living facility in Minneapolis. Staff are on-site delivering the services she needs to be safe, and she's reconnected with family. She's taking the proper medication and spends her time reading her Bible or looking at the photos of her family, their names written above each face. She's become a quiet woman with few words, but when she looks at her case manager a slight smile forms on her face and she utters three simple, yet powerful, words. "I am thankful."