



Legislative Report

An assessment of needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota

**Homelessness, Housing, and Support Services
Administration**

March 2026

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Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 3.197, requires the disclosure of the cost to prepare this report. The estimated cost of preparing this report is \$1,949.12.

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Executive summary

It's challenging to focus on paperwork when you don't have a safe place to stay, haven't eaten (and your children haven't eaten), and are dealing with trauma. This feels particularly true for youth and young parents who are just transitioning to adulthood under such challenging circumstances. What happens to them now, and whether or not they can access resources, can shape the course of their lives and their children's lives.

—2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey respondent

This report was prepared in response to Laws of Minnesota 2024, chapter 115, article 14, section 2, requiring a study of the prevalence and needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Minnesota Legislature about the prevalence of youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant and parenting, the capacity of the system to serve this group of youth, the characteristics of youth who are pregnant and parenting, and the needs of this group of youth experiencing homelessness.

Summary of key findings

The human services and housing continuums of care do not currently address the unique challenges faced by youth (age 24 and younger) who are juggling parenting responsibilities without a stable place to live. Young families need access to housing that is affordable, safe, and meets their unique needs.

Finding 1: Over 5,000 people in more than 1,930 young families were served by the homeless prevention, assessment, shelter, and housing system across all parts of Minnesota in 2024. These families included 2,900 children with their youth parent.

Finding 2: There were only 18 emergency shelter units and 143 transitional, rapid rehousing, or supportive housing units dedicated specifically to young families. Most youth parents stay in the adult system. The adult system is not designed to meet the unique developmental and safety needs of vulnerable youth.

Finding 3: The majority (83%) of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness are Native American or people of color. In the 7-county Twin Cities metro area, nearly all (95%) pregnant and parenting youth are Native American or People of Color. These racial disparities are even more severe than those of other population groups experiencing homelessness.

Finding 4: Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness face many unique difficulties because of their age, traumatic backgrounds, histories of foster care placements, and lack of connections to resources. They struggle to figure out where to go for help and how to get safe and stable housing.

Finding 5: Complex program rules and funding requirements make it hard for young parents to navigate emergency shelter and housing resources available to them. Even providers face challenges navigating the system. Clearer guidance and technical assistance are needed to address barriers experienced by young parents throughout the system, including documentation requirements, benefits eligibility requirements, Coordinated Entry

processes, licensing requirements, and the unique legal considerations for minor parents (consent, leasing limitations, etc.).

Finding 6: Young parents put their families first and need individualized support and access to flexible funding. Young parents prioritize their needs around mental health, family counseling and coaching, and money to cover emergency expenses. Young parents also have a strong desire to be good parents and want long-term support that will help them improve their lives and their children’s lives, such as mentorship and parenting support. This suggests that services should be designed to reflect the specific needs and responsibilities of young parents, rather than treating them as youth who may not have caregiving responsibilities.

Finding 7: Across the board, young families face huge obstacles in accessing affordable quality childcare and transportation. Young parents and providers prioritize the need for help with accessing and paying for high quality, trauma-informed childcare. Young parents also talk about transportation as a barrier to finding jobs and stable housing. Young parents explain that transportation challenges often intersect with childcare needs, particularly for before- and after-school care—and create barriers to employment and stable housing.

Finding 8: Young fathers want to lead successful lives and be good parents. However, they do not feel that there are programs designed for them. They particularly want help with getting good jobs, mentors to help them develop parenting and life skills, and therapeutic support.

Summary of recommendations

The following recommendations are based on themes that emerged from data from the variety of sources included in this report. These recommendations are a first step in developing strategies and service design for pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota.

Because of the generational impact and the relatively small size of the population, investing in these young families can have a ripple effect and lasting impact. Creating safe, accessible spaces and services, especially those that address trauma, mental health, and the developmental needs of young parents—is critical to solving the problem in the long term.

Please refer to Section VI of the full report for more detail about each of these recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Increase the number of shelters and housing options that are designed specifically for young families.

- ✓ Funding and eligibility requirements for these programs must be flexible enough to support the realities of parenting. Programs should allow additional time beyond youth age cutoffs and not require that youth prove they are eligible. Programs and services should be inclusive and welcoming of all young parents, including young fathers.

Recommendation 2: Focus intensive efforts on preventing and ending homelessness among young families who identify as Native American or People of Color.

- ✓ This includes moving upstream to address the generational impacts of historically discriminatory policies in out-of-home placements and housing and ensure that youth who identify as Native American or people of color get individualized support so that they can access and keep stable housing once they are on their own.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that there is funding available so programs can provide staffing and a responsive service delivery system to meet the developmental needs of young families.

Beyond physical shelter and housing, programs need sustained operational funding to support well-trained staff, and flexible financial support to meet the individual needs of young parents and their children. Staff should be trained in the unique developmental needs of young people under age 24.

Recommendation 4: Develop a response and information hub so that young families in crisis can easily access the support they need.

Information must be provided in a streamlined centralized way, to reduce fragmentation and barriers. Because the system is so hard to navigate, many youth could have used help before they became homeless, as well as continued support after maintaining housing. Young parents also specifically mentioned the importance of a central service hub where families can access information, life skills training, and mentoring all in one place.

Recommendation 5: Address complex rules and requirements that make things more difficult for young families.

Solutions need to focus on issues related to complex definitions and requirements that limit how and when youth qualify for assistance and constrain providers' abilities to meet immediate needs of youth. Key barriers include long waiting lists, definitions that limit how and when young families qualify for assistance, and rights of parenting minors. Solutions need to be developmentally appropriate and grounded in how young parents define family.

Recommendation 6: Address the specific barriers that young fathers face and invest in programming to support them.

- ✓ Develop programs that allow young men to develop their parenting, employment, and life skills. Enable equitable access for fathers to all available resources and services.

Recommendation 7: Ensure an adequate response system for young families facing homelessness.

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive system with a robust continuum of care that responds to the complex and varied needs of pregnant and parenting youth. The needs of young parents are dynamic, and one size does not fit all in developing or providing support.

I. Legislation

This report was prepared in response to Laws of Minnesota 2024, chapter 115, article 14, section 2, which directed the commissioner of human services to conduct a study on the prevalence and needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness, through a one-time appropriation of funds from the State of Minnesota.

Section. 2. **PREGNANT AND PARENTING HOMELESS YOUTH STUDY.**

(a) The commissioner of human services must contract with the Wilder Foundation to conduct a study of:

(1) the statewide numbers and unique needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness;
and

(2) best practices in supporting pregnant and parenting homeless youth within programming, emergency shelter, and housing settings.

(b) The Wilder Foundation must submit a final report to the commissioner by December 31, 2025. The commissioner shall submit the report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over homeless youth services, finance and policy.

II. Introduction

Purpose of report

This report was prepared in response to Laws of Minnesota 2024, chapter 115, article 14, section 2, requiring a study of the prevalence and needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness.

This legislative directive emerged from growing concerns that existing services to address housing instability and homelessness among parenting youth were unable to meet their unique developmental needs (and the needs of their young children). Youth parents experiencing homelessness and housing instability have often experienced trauma and generational poverty. Homelessness compounds other challenges that young families face.

Wilder Research was asked to examine numbers, characteristics, and needs of pregnant and parenting homeless youth in Minnesota. The goal of this work is to understand more about the system-wide need for shelter, housing, and support services for young families, as well as offer ideas for how those needs can be addressed.

The primary research questions guiding this work include:

- How many young families experience homelessness in Minnesota, and what is the homeless system capacity to serve them?
- What are the characteristics of young families experiencing homelessness in Minnesota?
- What are the needs of young families experiencing homelessness in Minnesota?

Wilder Research examined the following information sources to complete the needs analysis and produce this report:

1. Data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
2. The HUD Point-in-Time (PIT) Count (conducted in January each year)
3. 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study Counts (including Reservation Homeless Study)
4. 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study Interviews (does not include Reservation Homeless Study due to agreements made to respect Tribal sovereignty)
5. Minnesota Student Survey 2016 (triennial survey conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education, an anonymous, statewide school-based survey)
6. 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey (online survey of young parents with lived experiences of homelessness; N=45)
7. In-person focus groups with young fathers (N=18)
8. In-person discussions with Youth Services Network parenting youth advisory group (PYAG) members
9. Youth Services Network (YSN) leadership, including executive directors of youth-serving agencies
10. 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey (online survey of Homeless Youth Act-funded and non-Homeless Youth Act funded providers; N=42)

More details about data sources can be found in Section VII, Appendix A.

Report contents

The remainder of this report is organized into the following sections:

- Estimated numbers and shelter capacity,
- Characteristics of young families,
- Needs of young families,
- Recommendations, and
- Appendices with detailed information about methodology and data tables from various sources that informed this report.

Glossary of terms for populations and programs described in this report

Populations

Youth:¹ People aged 24 or younger experiencing homelessness without their parent or guardian (without a head of household older than age 24).

Young families (young parents, parenting youth):² A household in which the parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) and their chosen partners are age 24 or younger, experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and pregnant or with one or more children.

Pregnant and parenting youth:¹ People age 24 and younger who are pregnant or have a partner who is pregnant OR who have children with them.

Youth homelessness:¹ Homeless people under the age of 25 who are:

1. Literally homeless
2. At imminent risk of homelessness
3. Homeless under other federal statutes
4. Fleeing domestic violence

Programs

Coordinated Entry: HUD requires Continuum of Care programs to operate a coordinated system to assess and match people experiencing homelessness, as quickly as possible, with available housing and services that meet their needs. The Coordinated Entry System is intended to prioritize needs, offer fair and equitable access, and connect people with a range of housing models, including emergency shelter, rapid-rehousing, transitional

¹ Definitions come from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Determining-Homeless-Status-of-Youth.pdf>

² Members of the study's Youth Advisory Board prefer the term "young families" vs. *young parents or parenting youth*.

housing, permanent supportive housing, and vouchers for scattered-site programs.³ A completed assessment is not a guarantee for housing referral.

Emergency shelter: Emergency shelters offer immediate and low-barrier access to individuals and families facing a housing crisis.⁴

Rapid re-housing: Rapid re-housing programs provide short-term rental assistance and services to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed.⁵ Rapid re-housing is one component of the Housing First evidence-based approach to addressing homelessness.⁶

Supportive housing: Supportive housing programs combine affordable housing assistance with a broad array of services and supports, which are offered to help people and families experiencing homelessness maintain stable housing. Intensive case management and services support participants with their mental health, physical health, employment status, and other areas as determined by participants, and are not time-limited.⁷ Supportive housing is one component of the Housing First evidence-based approach to addressing homelessness.⁶

³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017. <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/17-01cpdn.pdf>

⁴ National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/toolkits-and-training-materials/emergency-shelter/>

⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/toolkits-and-training-materials/rapid-re-housing/>

⁶ National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/research-and-analysis/how-much-would-it-cost-to-provide-housing-first-to-all-households-staying-in-homeless-shelters/>

⁷ Supportive Housing 101, Corporation for Supportive Housing (2022b). <https://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-101/>

III. Estimated numbers and shelter capacity

Counts of youth experiencing homelessness that are included in this report should be considered a minimum number (i.e., an undercount) rather than a maximum, as they miss the hidden homeless population; they are an undercount of youth “couch hoppers,” youth who are housed in precarious situations, and others who do not use shelters or other homeless services. In addition, very few data sources collect information on pregnant youth who are not yet parenting. Thus, this particular group of youth is underrepresented in this report. The needs of youth who are pregnant or parenting are likely greater than the currently available data can quantify.

Number of youth parents experiencing homelessness

The Minnesota Homeless Study counted 322 parenting youth who were homeless on October 26, 2023 (Figure 1). These young families included 353 young children. Sixty-three percent of the young families were in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area. (See also Appendix A.)

Figure 1. One night count: parenting youth and their children experiencing homelessness in Minnesota

Population	In shelters	Not in shelter	Total
Minors under age 18	4	1	5
Young adults age 18-21	117	26	143
Young adults age 22-24	145	29	174
Total number of youth parents	266	56	322
Children with youth parents	293	60	353
Total number of people in young families	559	116	675

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study counts (including Reservation Homeless Study).

An analysis of the Minnesota Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data indicated that approximately 1,930 young families were served by the homeless prevention, assessment, shelter, and housing system in 2024. These families included 2,900 children with their youth parents receiving homeless services (Figure 2). (See also Appendix A.)

More than 900 parenting youth were served in homeless prevention programs (with about 1,300 children), and approximately 600 were assessed by coordinated entry (with about 850 children).

- Of the 900 young parents served in homeless prevention programs in SFY24, approximately 25% had also been served by shelter and housing programs.
- Of the 600 young parents assessed by Coordinated Entry in SFY24, almost 60% received services from shelter, housing, or homelessness prevention programs.

Figure 2. Approximate 1 year count: parenting youth and their children experiencing homelessness in Minnesota (July 2023–June 2024)

Population	In emergency shelters	In housing programs ^a	In Prevention programs	Coordinated entry assessment	Approx. total (unduplicated)
<i>Number of youth-led families</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Minors under age 18	10	15	5	5	30
Young adults age 18-24	315	725	900	600	1,900
Total youth-led families	325	740	905	605	1,930
<i>Number of people</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Youth parents	450	850	1,075	650	2,250
Children with youth parents	450	1,150	1,325	850	2,900
Total number of people in young families	900	2,000	2,400	1,500	5,150

Sources: Minnesota Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Note: Any given household can appear in multiple types of programs and services, so the columns will not add up to the totals from left to right.

^a Includes transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing.

Two other data sources provide some additional context about this population in Minnesota. (See Appendix A.)

Minnesota Student Survey (2016): 5% of 9th and 11th grade females statewide said they experienced homelessness and had been pregnant in the past 12 months.

Comparisons to national Point-in-Time count: In Minnesota, young parents make up 3% of the total population of people experiencing homelessness (2023 Minnesota Homeless Study) compared to just 1% nationally (January 2024, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Point-in-Time Count).

Estimated capacity of shelter and housing programs for young families

Because the housing and homeless service system is fluid and not centralized, it is not currently possible to get an exact count of the number of emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing units that are designated for or available to young families. The 2024 Housing Inventory Count (HIC) for Minnesota was used to estimate the number of beds dedicated to parenting youth (age 18 to 24) households. HIC does not collect information on pregnant youth, and it also does not have information on beds/units dedicated to parenting youth under age 18. Note that not all organizations that provide shelter to homeless youth participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and Tribal data are excluded from this analysis.⁸ (See Appendix A.)

According to the 2024 Housing Inventory Count, there were 161 units dedicated to young families (about 350 beds). Of the dedicated units for young families statewide, about 60% were transitional housing or rapid rehousing programs, 30% were permanent housing programs, and 10% were emergency shelter programs (Figure 3).

Of the 1,000 parenting youth households who used shelter or housing programs that reported into HMIS, about 200 were served by programs with dedicated parenting youth units. The remaining 800 parenting youth households were served by programs that do not have units dedicated to parenting youth, a possible indication of significant demand for additional parenting youth programs.

Looking at the 1,000 parenting youth households' use of dedicated shelter beds by type of shelter shows substantial differences in patterns of use.

- Young families served in emergency shelters are extremely unlikely to be served by a program with dedicated youth family beds; less than 2% of the 300+ young families in emergency shelter were served in a program that had dedicated youth units.
- In transitional housing and rapid-rehousing settings, this figure climbs to approximately one-third of young families who were served by a program with dedicated units.
- In permanent supportive housing, about 15% of the 300+ young families served were served by programs with dedicated youth units.

These patterns were generally consistent between the 7-county Twin Cities metro area and Greater Minnesota.

⁸ HIC data were collected during the last week of January 2024. These data were provided by the Institute for Community Alliance, which administers Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Figure 3. Homeless system estimated capacity: analysis of SFY24 data based on usage

Shelter type	Parenting youth units (N)	Youth-led families served in adult units
Emergency shelters	18	325
Transitional housing/Rapid rehousing	92	275
Permanent supportive housing	51	275
Total	161	800
Region	-	-
7-county Twin Cities metro area	74	520
Greater Minnesota	87	280
Total	161	800

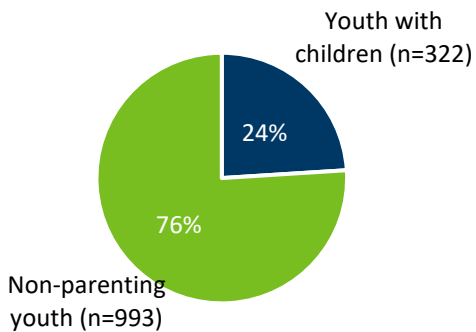
Sources: Minnesota Housing Inventory Count and Homeless Management Information System.

Note: Youth-led families could be served in more than one type of shelter. Therefore, the number of youth-led families in each shelter type does not add up to the total unduplicated number served across all shelter types.

IV. Characteristics of young families

The 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study counted 1,315 unaccompanied youth (age 24 and younger) who were homeless on October 26, 2023. Of these youth, 322 were parenting and had their children with them (24%; Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of parents vs. non-parents in the homeless youth population (age 24 and under)



Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study counts (includes 2023 Reservation Homeless Study counts).

Background characteristics of pregnant and parenting youth

In addition to the counts, the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study included in-depth 1-on-1 interviews with 156 youth who were pregnant (or had a partner who was pregnant) or had children of their own.

Not all young parents are staying with their children while experiencing homelessness; this is especially true for young fathers.

Half of youth parents (83 of 155; 52%) had their children with them (Figure 5). Another 15% were currently pregnant (or had a partner who was pregnant) but did not have other children.

One-third of young parents experiencing homelessness (32%) were not staying with their children (and were not currently pregnant). Young women were far more likely to be staying with their children while homeless compared to young men (79% vs. 29%). There are a variety of circumstances that may have led to young parents who did not have their children staying with them. For example, some families split up to access shelter, some families find temporary housing for their children with relatives and friends, and some parents are no longer with their partners.

Figure 5. Young parents experiencing homelessness while with their children or not with their children, by gender identity

Current family living status (N=155)	Women	Men	Non-binary	Total (N)	Total (%)
Young parents who have children staying with them	70	12	1	83	52%
Youth who are pregnant (or have a partner who is pregnant) but are not yet parenting	14	9	0	23	15%
Young parents whose children are not with them	19	30	0	49	32%
Total	103	51	1	155	100%

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews.

Note: There was missing or unknown information for one youth. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

A shockingly high 8 in 10 pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness identify as Native American or a person of color.

In the 7-county Twin Cities metro area, nearly all (95%) youth who were pregnant or parenting were Native American or people of color (Figure 6 and Figure 7). In Greater Minnesota, two-thirds (66%) identified as Native American or people of color (and this proportion would likely be more if Reservation Study data were included).

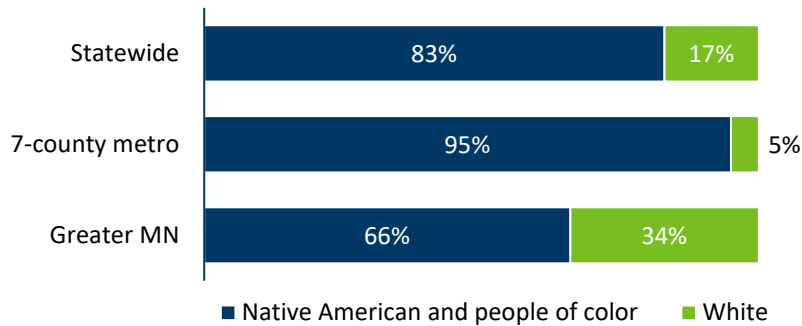
Figure 6. Racial/ethnic identity of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness

Identity	7-county Twin Cities metro area parenting youth	Greater Minnesota parenting youth	Total (N=156)
Black or African American	57%	16%	41%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	31%	23%	28%
Native American	23%	35%	28%
Asian	5%	5%	5%
Middle Eastern/North African	-	2%	1%
Total identifying as Native American or person of color (including multi-racial)	95%	66%	83%
White (only)	5%	34%	17%

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. Does not include 2023 Reservation Homeless Study data.

Note: Respondents could identify more than one racial/ethnic identity. For those who identified as white and another race, their responses were categorized under their non-white identities.

Figure 7. Proportion of young parents who were Native American or people of color



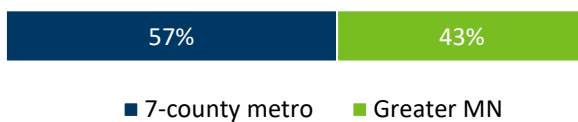
Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews (N=156). Does not include 2023 Reservation Homeless Study data.

To better understand young families experiencing homelessness, Wilder Research staff conducted a special analysis of 106 youth who were currently pregnant (or had a partner who is pregnant) or who were actively parenting (had at least one of their children with them) at the time of the study. The remainder of this section reports findings from the results of that special analysis.

Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness live across Minnesota, and many have had to piece together places to stay each night.

Although over half (57%) of parenting youth experiencing homelessness were in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area, 43% were in Greater Minnesota (Figure 8). The majority of pregnant and parenting youth grew up in Minnesota (61%), and three-fourths (71%) had lived in Minnesota for three or more years

Figure 8. Proportion of pregnant and parenting youth in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area vs. Greater MN



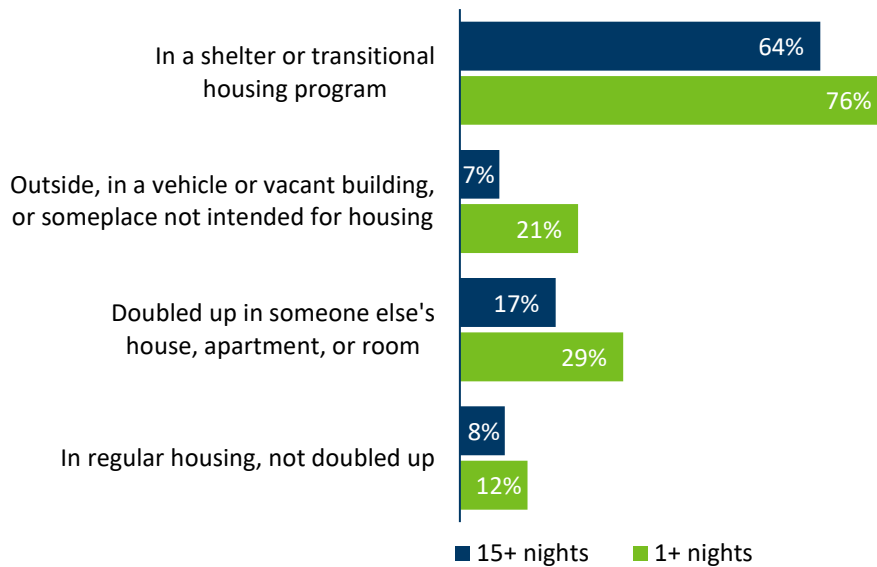
Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=106)

Other information about pregnant and parenting youths' histories of homelessness:

- On average, youth became homeless for the first time at age 16.
- Two-thirds (67%) stayed with friends or family when they first became homeless.
- Nearly all (91%) had been without a permanent place to live for at least one month, including 41% who said it had been at least one year.

Two-thirds of young parents (64%) spent the majority of the prior month (15 or more days) in shelter programs (Figure 9). Young parents piece together places to stay, with 21% saying they spent at least one night unsheltered or outside in the past month, and 29% had couch hopped or doubled up for at least one night during that period.

Figure 9. Where young parents stayed in previous month: 15+ nights vs. 1+ nights



Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=99; 7 cases had missing data on these items)

One third (32%) of young parents reported having been turned away from a shelter in the last three months because there was no space. When that happened, over a third (38%) stayed at a friend or family member’s house or apartment, 19% stayed in another shelter, and 16% stayed outside, in a car, or other unsheltered location.

Most pregnant and parenting youth have experienced trauma or violence.

The traumas that people experience early in life can have a profound impact on their health and well-being. Adverse childhood experiences (or ACEs) can cause children to experience high levels of stress for extended periods of time. This “toxic stress” can impact children’s brain development and contribute to long-term cognitive, behavioral, and physical health problems.⁹

The most common adverse childhood experiences among young parents experiencing homelessness were witnessing abuse of another family member (56%); having a parent who struggled with mental health issues (53%); living with a problem drinker, alcoholic, or drug user (53%); or being physically or sexually mistreated (52%). In addition, more than half (55%) said they had an out-of-home placement or were in corrections as a child.

Although rates are high for both groups, young parents were less likely to have at least one adverse childhood experience (71% vs. 83%) and to have been physically or sexually mistreated (52% vs. 62%) compared to other youth experiencing homelessness (Figure 10).

⁹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *About adverse childhood experiences*. <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html>

Figure 10. Prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood, young parents compared to other youth

Experience with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)	Pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness (N=106)	Other youth experiencing homelessness (N=413)
At least one adverse childhood experience	71%	83%
Three or more adverse childhood experiences	57%	64%
Physically or sexually mistreated	52%	62%

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews.

Interpersonal conflict is the reason most often cited for becoming homeless

Almost half of pregnant and parenting youth age 20 and younger (48%) said the main reason for being currently homeless was fighting frequently with their families versus 34% of other youth age 20 and younger experiencing homelessness.

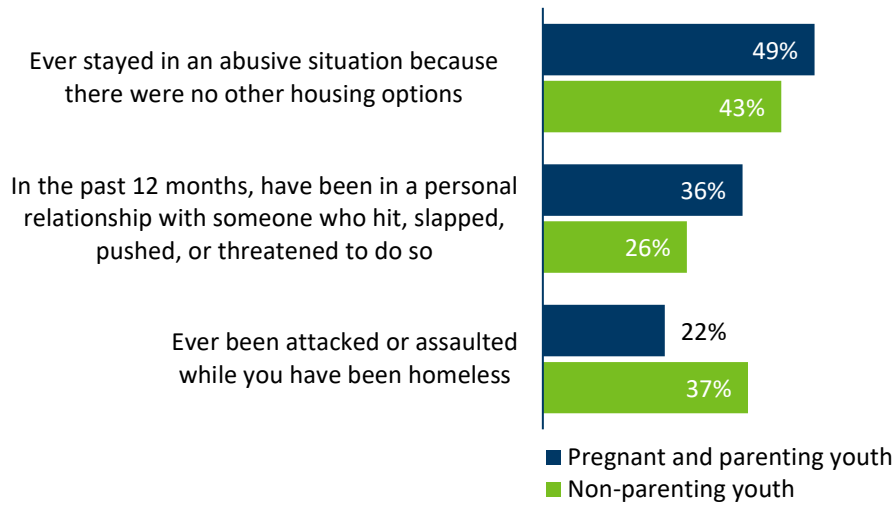
More than one-third (36%) of all pregnant and parenting youth left their last permanent housing because of problems or conflicts with people.

Experiences of violence while homeless

While experiencing homelessness, nearly half of pregnant and parenting youth (49%) said they had stayed in an abusive situation because there were no other housing options, including over one-third (36%) who said they had been in a personal relationship with someone who hit, slapped, pushed, or threatened to do so (Figure 11). Almost one quarter (22%) had been attacked or assaulted while homeless.

Compared to other youth experiencing homelessness, pregnant and parenting youth were less likely to have been attacked or assaulted (22% vs. 37%) but more likely to have been in an abusive relationship (36% vs. 26%). Pregnant and parenting youth were also slightly more likely to have stayed in a relationship that was abusive because they had no other housing options (49% vs. 43%).

Figure 11. Experiences with violence while homeless



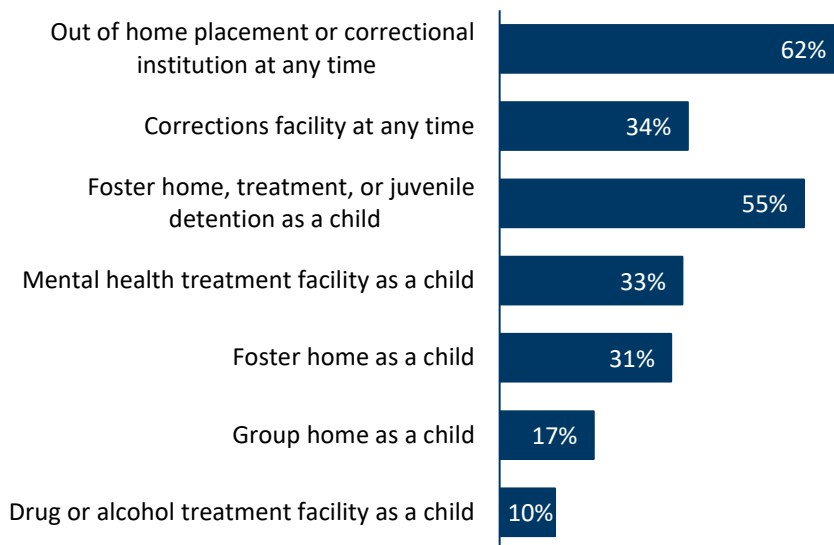
Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=106 for Pregnant and parenting youth; N=407 for non-parenting youth)

Note: The number of respondents varies slightly by item due to skipped questions.

Trauma can also lead to and stem from placement in foster care and other facilities.

An additional childhood trauma, not included in the list of Adverse Childhood Experiences above, is involvement in the child welfare system. Youth who are involved in foster care or other out-of-home placements as children have often experienced some type of abuse or neglect that led to their placement, and many experience trauma as a result of the disruption of being placed outside of the home. Over half (55%) of young parents were placed in foster care or other institutional settings when they were under 18 years of age. Including their placements as young adults, 62% had been placed in these settings at some point in their lives (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Histories of out-of-home placement



Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=106)

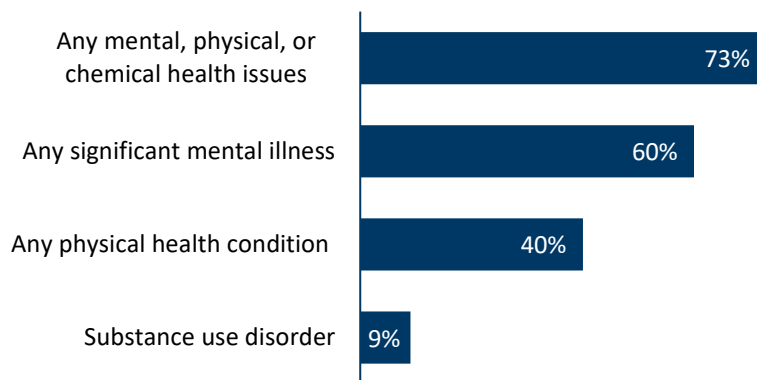
Youth are juggling their own health challenges while parenting their young children.

Three-quarters of pregnant and parenting youth have been diagnosed with chronic health conditions, including mental health, physical health, or chemical dependency (Figure 13).

A surprising 4 in 10 young parents have chronic physical health condition, most frequently asthma (27%) and chronic pain (16%).

Six in 10 pregnant and parenting youth have a significant mental illness. The most frequently reported diagnoses were anxiety or panic disorder (49%), major depression (46%), and PTSD (42%). Rates of mental health issues and substance use are lower than the non-parenting youth population; rates of physical health issues are similar.

Figure 13. High rates of health diagnoses



Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=106)

Young parents experiencing homelessness have very low incomes as well as barriers to getting jobs.

Half of parenting youth were receiving benefits from the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), a cash assistance program that helps families with children meet their basic needs. Similar numbers of youth listed MFIP (34%) and steady employment (33%) as their main sources of income (Figure 14). Fourteen percent of youth said they had no income.

Figure 14. Most frequent income sources

Income sources in the past month	A source (N = 106)	Main source (N = 83)
MFIP (MN Family Investment Program)	48%	34%
Steady employment	34%	33%
Support from family or friends	19%	15%
General Assistance	19%	6%

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews

Note: The number of respondents varies slightly by item due to skipped questions.

The median monthly income for pregnant and parenting youth was \$700. To put affordability into context, the median income for young parents in Greater Minnesota was \$862 per month and \$625 in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area (Figure 15). In the Twin Cities metro, median rent was nearly two times that amount (\$1,115); in Greater Minnesota, median rent was just under that amount (\$812). Housing is considered affordable if the occupant spends 30% or less of their income on housing costs.¹⁰ Therefore, to afford the median rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in the Twin Cities, a young parent will have to earn at least \$3,717 per month; in Greater Minnesota this amount would be \$2,707. In addition, families with multiple children may need more than one bedroom, and these apartments are harder to find and more expensive.

Figure 15. Median monthly income for young parents, compared to median monthly rent in 2023



Source for median monthly rent: Housing Link. (2024). Rental Revenue data.

More than one-quarter (28%) of pregnant and parenting youth said they lost their last housing because they lost their job or had their hours cut. Nearly 4 out of 10 youth parents (39%) did not have a high school diploma or GED.

Among pregnant and parenting youth interviewed for the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study who were not employed, nearly half (46%) cited transportation issues, 37% cited lack of childcare, and 31% identified lack of other resources, such as an ID, clean clothes, or a phone, needed to work or look for work (Figure 16).

This finding was confirmed by respondents to the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey. Most youth parents (83%) indicated that they needed help with searching for a job.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://archives.hud.gov/local/nv/goodstories/2006-04-06glos.cfm>

Figure 16. Biggest barriers to getting a job

Barriers identified by those pregnant and parenting youth unemployed and looking for work	Percentage who identified issue as a barrier
Transportation issues	46%
Lack of childcare	37%
Lack of resources needed to work or look for work	31%
Unable to find appropriate work opportunities	25%
Lack of housing or stable housing	22%

Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=43)

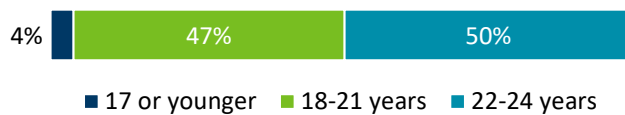
Results of the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study illustrate the traumatic experiences and instability that have made the experience of finding housing so difficult for young families. This background is helpful context towards understanding the complexity of the needs as described in the next section.

V. Needs of young families

You need a home for feeling safe. –Youth with lived experience

Due to their age alone, as well as challenges experienced in their childhoods, the needs of young families are developmentally different than for other people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. This is especially true for youth who became parents while under the age of 18. Half (50%) of young parents are aged 21 or younger (Figure 17), and the average age is 21. As mentioned previously, the average age of first homelessness for this population was 16.

Figure 17. Age proportions of pregnant or parenting youth



Source: 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study interviews. (N=105)

Youth in young families have needs that are distinct from those of older families.

Youth shelter providers were asked about the biggest priorities and needs for young parents. Many services available to young families rely on restrictive definitions and other adult-centric assumptions about youth and young families. Staff from provider agencies identified the following key ways in which youth in young families have different needs:

- Limited rental history and credit;
- Limited income;
- Ongoing brain development that affects decision-making and planning;
- Limited experience developing independent living skills;
- Age-related barriers that affect school enrollment, employment pathways, and legal system interactions. If they are under age 18, they may not be legally able to access services and supports; and
- Less knowledge of resources and how to access supports that they are eligible for.

Exhibit A highlights key differences between adult and youth shelters and programs.

Exhibit A. In what ways are adult shelters and programs different from youth shelters and programs?

In Minnesota, youth shelters and their staff focus on the specific developmental needs of young people (age 24 and younger). This focus led local providers to work with researchers to develop the [9 evidence-based guiding principles to prevent and end homelessness](#) (Homeless Youth Collaborative on Developmental Evaluation, 2014). These principles include:

1. Journey-Oriented: Interact with youth to help them understand the interconnectedness of past, present, and future as they decide where they want to go and how to get there.
2. Trauma-Informed: Recognize that most homeless youth have experienced trauma; build relationships, responses, and services on that knowledge.
3. Non-Judgmental: Interact with youth without labeling or judging them on the basis of background, experiences, choices, or behaviors.
4. Harm Reduction: Contain the effects of risky behavior in the short-term and seek to reduce their effects in the long-term.
5. Trusting Youth-Adult Relationships: Build relationships by interacting with youth in an honest, dependable, authentic, caring, and supportive way.
6. Strengths-Based: Start with and build upon the skills, strengths, and positive characteristics of each youth.
7. Positive Youth Development: Provide opportunities for youth to build a sense of competency, usefulness, belonging, and power.
8. Holistic: Engage youth in a manner that recognizes that mental, physical, spiritual, and social health are interconnected and interrelated.
9. Collaboration: Establish a principles-based, youth-focused system of support that integrates practices, procedures, and services within and across agencies, systems, and policies.

Adult shelters are less likely than youth shelters to offer or have knowledge of the networks of youth-friendly services available. They may also be more compliance-based with expectations that may be difficult for young people to attain. Because of their developmental needs, youth have a high need for autonomy with long-term relational supports that adult shelters may not be able to offer. Finally, adult shelters may not have the capacity to provide the level of system navigation support that young people (with little experience of the system) need; adult-focused shelters are designed for adults and lack youth-specific programming.

Young parents experiencing homelessness face multiple barriers in finding housing, including long waiting lists, a lack of affordable housing, and complex eligibility requirements or rules.

According to the Minnesota Homeless Study, 43% of pregnant and parenting youth said they are on a waiting list for public or subsidized housing, and nearly one-quarter (24%) said they have been unable to get on a waiting list because it [the waiting list] was closed. Another 47% said the top difficulty for them in getting housed is the lack of housing they can afford. Other top difficulties youth cited for getting housed include credit problems (30%) and no local rental history or references (26%).

Young parents and providers who completed the 2025 online surveys confirmed long waiting lists for housing as a top challenge for young families, with 82% of youth and 71% of providers saying this (Figure 18). Long delays can cause young parents to fall through the cracks.

One youth described their experience with the waiting list in this way:

To get housing takes a really long time. I got my house just before my child was born. I was on the waiting list for a house long before their birth. —Youth with lived experience

Figure 18. Top factors identified by youth and providers that make it difficult for youth to get shelter and housing

Factors that make it difficult for youth	According to youth (N = 45)	According to providers (N= 42)
Long waiting lists for housing	82%	71%
Eligibility requirements/complex rules about funding and qualifications	80%	74%

Source: 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey and 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey. Multiple responses possible.

Eighty percent of young parents and 74% of providers described eligibility requirements or complex rules about funding and qualifications as a top barrier for youth (Figure 18). Providers also identified complex rules about funding and qualifications (89%), inflexible funding (81%), and restrictive definitions (74%) as challenges in their own work (Figure 19).

They described their frustrations about eligibility requirements in the following ways:

We need to change the definitions of homelessness to include doubling up/couch hopping and other temp options to be eligible for Coordinated Entry and other services. —Provider

Reduce barriers (paperwork, income rules) that block families from qualifying. —Youth with lived experience

Income guidelines for programs and services, including the benefits cliff, hit young families particularly hard. They often don't have access to support systems and safety nets. They could be ineligible for childcare assistance or rental subsidies, and then experience a crisis very quickly. This creates increased risk of homelessness and perpetual public assistance needs. —Provider

Figure 19. Top factors identified as significant or moderate challenges for providers

Factors that create challenges for providers	Significant or moderate challenge
Complex rules about things like funding or qualifications	89%
Restrictive or inflexible funding for providers to use	81%
Restrictive definitions about who qualifies as homeless	74%

Source: 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey. Multiple responses possible. (N=42)

Not all young parents can access the benefits they need and are eligible for.

Most of the time [youth] are unaware of the resources that are available to them. You need someone to share that information and do referrals and then assist with that first set up so

that it is completed. Most of the time with the trauma that they have been through, they cannot help themselves. –Provider

The truth is that for the young families we serve, one of the greatest hardships in crisis is that benefits don't function as a whole system. –Provider

The majority of pregnant and parenting youth interviewed in the Minnesota Homeless Study received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (68%) in the past month, and nearly half received Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits (48%) and Women Infants and Children (WIC) food program benefits (46%; Figure 20). Considerably fewer youth had received General Assistance (19%) and Emergency Assistance (13%). More than half (54%) of young parents said SNAP was the most helpful benefit they received. SNAP was also the benefit young parents most often said they had lost in the past 12 months. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of pregnant or parenting youth reported losing one or more benefits in the past year; of those, 63% reported losing SNAP benefits.

The need for expanded access to benefits to stabilize young families is corroborated by both youth and providers. Sixty-four percent of youth who completed the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey (N=45) reported emergency cash assistance as a service they need a lot more of. When asked to expand on support that could better prevent young families from becoming homeless, the most cited benefits were financial assistance and emergency funding. One respondent described these funds as important for dealing with “unexpected hardships.” Additionally, according to the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey, 80% of providers identified direct assistance/flexible funds and 72% of providers identified emergency assistance as high-impact strategies to support young families experiencing homelessness.

Figure 20. Benefits received in the past month

Benefits	Percentage receiving the benefit
Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP)	68%
MN Family Investment Program (MFIP)	48%
Women, Infants and Children Food Program (WIC)	46%
General Assistance	19%
Emergency Assistance	13%

Source: 2023 MN Homeless Study. (N=106)

Note: The number of respondents varies slightly by item due to skipped questions.

Young parents experiencing homelessness are not consistently accessing the services that can most help them.

[Youth with extra challenges] benefit from wraparound supports—stable housing paired with case management, therapy, and life skills. They need low-barrier, trauma-informed programs that build trust and ensure safety. Across all populations, coordinated entry, outreach, and removing bureaucratic hurdles make services more reachable and effective. –Provider

Pregnant and parenting youth depend on an array of services and support to meet their families’ basic needs, but they often struggle to access preventative and stabilizing services, as well as to navigate systems when needed services are not effectively coordinated. Just knowing where to begin looking for assistance is a challenge—91% of young parents who completed the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey said they need more help finding assistance, and 89% said they want more coordination of systems that provide support. One provider noted that needed services “are all interconnected and are required for long-term success. ... You can set up mental health counseling, but if the family/youth doesn't have transportation, then what is the point?”

According to the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study, only half (49%) of pregnant and parenting youth had received support in the past month with finding housing, as well as with basic needs such as medical/dental care (46%), transportation (38%), and food from a food shelf (37%; Figure 21). Only 1 in 5 youth received employment assistance. Only 60% of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness had a valid ID.

Figure 21. Services received in the past month

Services	Percentage receiving the service
Coordinated entry or finding housing	49%
Medical/dental care	46%
Free hot meals	45%
Transportation assistance	38%
Food from a food shelf	37%
Help getting signed up for benefits	37%
Free clothes at a clothing shelf	30%
Outreach services	30%
Help from a drop-in or opportunity center	30%
Minnesota Family Investment Program employment services	20%
Help searching for or applying for a job	20%

Source: 2023 MN Homeless Study (N=106)
Note: The number of respondents varies slightly by item due to skipped questions.

Access to mental health services is a significant need, according to young parents and providers. While just 18% of young parents interviewed for the Minnesota Homeless Study said they had received mental health services in the past month, another 15% said they had been unable to get the mental health services that they needed. This is concerning, given that 58% of young parents said they had received at least one mental illness diagnosis in the last two years. Of the young parents who completed the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey, nearly half (47%) reported they needed a lot more mental health or chemical dependency services for themselves or their family. Young fathers shared their desire for increased availability of mental health services, such as therapy or a men’s group.

Providers also echoed this, with 85% of those who completed the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey saying that increasing the availability of mental health care would have a high impact, and 62% saying substance abuse treatment would have a high impact.

Additionally, 83% of young parents reported needing more support in finding a job. The desire for more employment assistance was a common theme throughout the online survey, Parenting Youth Advisory Group, and young fathers focus groups, in which youth shared the need for job mentorship and training in schools, accessible childcare so young parents can work, and more employers willing to hire them. Ninety percent of providers who completed the online survey said that increasing the availability of services to help youth get and maintain a job would have a high or moderate impact.

One focus group participant described the importance of jobs in this way:

If I had a million dollars, I would invest in jobs—giving hope. Allowing us to be self-sufficient, we can learn and do for ourselves. To help the youth family epidemic. –Young father

Other non-housing services identified by providers as having a high impact include direct assistance or flexible funds (80%), wrap around services (77%), crisis services (74%), transportation assistance (74%), domestic violence services (72%), emergency assistance (72%), and medical care (64%).

Finding and affording child care is a significant barrier for young parents.

Childcare is hard to find and [programs] are very expensive. –Young fathers discussion group participant

Childcare and other family-specific resources are a significant need for young families. More than one-quarter (27%) of parenting youth interviewed for the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study said they were unable to obtain regular childcare. Of the top five services for young families that youth respondents to the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey (N=45)¹¹ said they needed more of, four were related to resources for childcare and baby supplies:

- Low- or no-cost baby supplies (91%)
- Help finding childcare (91%)
- Emergency childcare (91%)
- Help paying for childcare (89%)

Providers also highlighted the importance of childcare-related resources, with 85% saying that increasing the availability of child care assistance funds and 80% saying affordable or sliding fee child care would make the highest impact in supporting young families. Young parents with lived experience of homelessness also highlighted

¹¹ Because the number of respondents was small (N=45) and respondents could select multiple needs, the repeated 91% values reflect that many respondents selected several related childcare and baby supply items. These results show patterns among respondents rather than precise statewide rates.

the need for consistent and trustworthy childcare, and described resources such as a crisis nursery, having childcare onsite at housing programs, sliding scale fees, and schools with daycare available.

Young parents need more education and mentorship to help them navigate parenthood and homelessness.

They don't simply need 4 walls and call it "good." They need supportive services as well as the majority of young families have not had any guidance and/or support raising children.

–Provider

While safe and affordable housing is a fundamental need, young parents also described the support and information they need to be good parents and to provide for their children. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of parents said that “not knowing where to start” makes it difficult to get shelter and housing.

In group discussions, young parents expressed a significant need for education and mentorship, with many noting that they lack knowledge related to life skills (e.g., financial literacy), parenthood, and adulthood, and did not have the opportunity to learn them from family or other trusted people. This sentiment is also reflected in the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey—87% of parenting youth said they need at least some more mentoring or parenting education.

Specific types of supports young parents mentioned they believe would help them navigate challenges and focus on stability include:

- Peer support groups, with opportunities to build community,
- Independent living skills education, and
- Ongoing support from a case manager or mentor.

Youth shared the following descriptions of their needs:

We need more than shelter, SNAP, GA. We need long-term support, like learning to keep a job. Young families need more support. A lot of us have broken homes and no guidance.

–Youth with lived experience

[We] need someone to teach us about all the life things, someone to help keep track of everything, someone to explain what to expect when you're on your own. Lots of youth don't have family to help or never taught them these things, or don't find what they've learned useful.

–Youth with lived experience

Providers concurred and shared the following descriptions of the needs of young parents:

Independent living skills, increase social supports, legal document acquisition, drivers education program that pays fees, translator, parent/family mentor, and vehicle purchase program to teach about the commitment and credit impacts. –Provider

Finally, young parents highlighted their desire for perinatal support, to fill critical gaps and create preventative safety nets. From pre-birthing classes, education on breastfeeding and lactation, and a coach or navigator during pregnancy and post-partum, young parents believe such supports could strengthen their ability to thrive long-term.

Some young families face even greater obstacles.

We simply don't have enough shelter and services for any youth (families and single youth) experiencing homelessness and it becomes increasingly difficult when youth/young families need specialized support. –Provider

Providers identified populations of young families that experience particularly great difficulties in accessing shelter and services to help them find housing.

The top populations identified by more than 90% of providers as having the greatest difficulties include youth:

- from Tribal nations (identified by 100% of providers),
- with criminal backgrounds (97%),
- living in rural areas (96%),
- who are immigrants or refugees (93%),
- with mental health or substance use disorders (93%), or
- who identify as Native American or persons of color (91%).

Solutions suggested by providers to better address the needs of young families in these populations include:

- Staff that reflect the age, race, ethnicity, and lived experiences of youth being served;
- Less restrictive funding that can support providers in offering tailored services; and
- Services that are culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and located where it makes sense for these youth.

One provider explained this in the following way:

[Pregnant and parenting youth] experiences are so different from their peers'. This underscores the need for culturally responsive and appropriate programming and settings, so they can maintain their cultural traditions and experiences, too. Very unique and targeted response needs to take place. –Youth Services Network member

Young fathers struggle with a lack of services and support designed to help them care for their children and be adults.

Being homeless makes it difficult to feel safe and be with your kids. You can't have your children in the streets with you. You can't live in the right way for your child that way. –Young father

Young fathers who participated in the focus groups emphasized their desire to be good fathers and provide for their children but believe that most services for young families focus on mothers. Many explained that they don't know where to start or the questions to ask and feel alone without guidance on life skills and parenting.

Young fathers identified shelters and housing that are just for young families as top needs. Safe housing is particularly critical, because they know that streets and shelters are not safe places for their children. Mirroring the factors identified by other young parents, the young fathers in the focus groups identified long waiting lists, not knowing where to start, and eligibility requirements as top barriers to getting shelter and housing.

Low- or no-cost baby supplies and help finding and paying for childcare were also priorities for young fathers. Other support they said they wanted help with include:

- Parenting skills,
- Managing family relationships,
- Life skills that will allow them to be self-sufficient, and
- Access to job training and help with job searches.

Representative comments that illustrate the perspectives of young fathers include the following:

A lot of men feel alone. There are not a lot of people they can talk to. [We need] free family therapy. A lot of my family problems are from not being able to communicate. –Young father

Mentoring will also be helpful. When dealing with homelessness as a father, your feelings of self-worth [are challenged]. That plays on your mental health. Being mentally sound contributes to being physically healthy. You will be in a better position for your child if you are healthy. –Young father

To combat homelessness, you have to create some advantages to address this issue. There should be some types of trade or something available to youth in the transitional period (18–19-year-olds), and while in school, to prepare them for when they get out. Also, teach them about life. –Young father

[If I had a million dollars, I would] invest in something before people get to homelessness; something transitional. Giving people something substantial like a trade; a program to give a stipend until they transition into stability. Give them a jumpstart. Providing transitional opportunities to get them into something stable like a Job Corps but better. To encourage them not having the mindset of relying on something or others, learning independence. –Young father

VI. Report recommendations

Youth who are parenting are still youth and have different developmental needs than an older adult/family experiencing homelessness. We have very little capacity in our state to provide emergency shelter and housing for minors who are pregnant and parenting while they are experiencing homelessness. –Provider

The following summary of recommendations draws from themes that arose across the varied data sources used for this report, including findings from the Minnesota Homeless Study population-specific analysis, gaps identified by the Homeless Management Information System, experiences and recommendations from parenting youth, insights from providers who serve this population, and Youth Service Network (YSN) advisory board members. Throughout the recommendations, we include quotations from providers and parenting youth with lived experience to illustrate the needs of that population.

These recommendations are a preliminary step, informing future planning and service design for young families experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. There is a clear need for homelessness and housing services and support that can effectively meet the needs of young families. Because of the generational impact and the relatively small size of the population, investing in these young families can have a ripple effect and a lasting impact. Creating safe, accessible spaces and services, especially those that address trauma, mental health, and the developmental needs of young parents—is critical to solving the problem in the long term.

Recommendation 1: Increase the number of shelters and housing options that are designed specifically for young families.

Funding for these programs must be flexible enough so that youth do not struggle to prove they are eligible or struggle with aging out or timing out of programs. Young parents need extra time beyond the age cutoffs for youth programming. Programs and services should be inclusive and welcoming of all youth, including young fathers.

[Need] more youth shelters that can take parenting youth, additional shelter space for youth over 21 (the ones that go up to 24 fill up fast and many youth do not want to access some of the adult shelters and have expressed more anxiety/trauma around them), more shelters that may provide single stay rooms for people who may have trauma in shared spaces and avoid accessing shelter. –Provider

Permanent housing program wait lists are too long and too hard to access, and then some of the programs that are accessible don't provide enough of a transitional support. People who are trying to pull themselves out of poverty have to choose between barely getting by with supports in poverty or moving to middle class with no supports and struggling even more. Something to bridge the gap would help families be more successful following transition out of poverty. –Youth with lived experience

While young families need greater access to shelter and affordable housing overall, they also need options that work for them, their needs, and their safety. Housing programs should be age appropriate and created with families in mind, affording as much privacy and safety as possible. Additionally, several young parents from the advisory group and discussion groups noted that the available emergency shelters are not always suitable for their family, with many noting that they felt unsafe around older men and uncomfortable bringing their children into that environment. Additionally, many felt shelters carried an overall negative stigma. As one discussion group participant put it, “A shelter should not be an unclean environment, or have everyone in a huge room with a cot.”

In addition to increasing the system capacity of housing for young families, parenting youth will also likely need support accessing and navigating these resources. Over three-fourths of respondents (79%) to the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey indicated that collecting or completing paperwork for housing posed a unique challenge for young families. A similar percentage (74%) said young families experience unique challenges with complex rules about funding or qualifications.

Housing services should also be responsive and able to stabilize and house young families in a timely manner. Nearly half (45%) of pregnant youth surveyed in the Minnesota Homeless Study reported having been turned away from a shelter because there was no space. Additionally, as stated previously, waiting times for housing are a significant challenge.

The greatest proportion of youth respondents (71%) reported they needed a lot more housing specifically designated for young families. Nearly all providers (91%) reported insufficient affordable housing options where people want to live as a significant challenge. Additionally, 79% of providers indicated that insufficient affordable housing options posed a unique challenge for young families.

Recommendation 2: Focus intensive efforts on the crisis of preventing and ending homelessness among young families who identify as Native American or people of color.

This includes moving upstream to address the generational impacts of historically discriminatory policies in out-of-home placements and housing and to ensure that youth who identify as Native American or people of color get individualized support so that they can access and keep stable housing once they are on their own.

Systemic racism, including a history of genocide, slavery, segregation, and anti-Black and Brown policies, has created huge racial disparities in wealth and home ownership in our country. Discriminatory policies have affected multiple generations of Native American and people of color, as evidenced by the disproportionate representation among pregnant and parenting youth in this study. The policy of forced separation of children from their families is one such policy that has ripple effects caused by the impact of childhood trauma on

developing brains.¹² This type of trauma continues with the over-representation of children who are Native American or people of color in the child welfare and out-of-home placement system.

This overrepresentation demonstrates the need for responses to youth homelessness that recognize the legacy of racism and colonialism, and center culturally responsive approaches as core to the solution. Reducing disparities requires targeted strategies that address both early risk factors and urgent needs of pregnant and parenting youth. When asked what could help to prevent young families from becoming homeless, one respondent to the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey said, “Racial equity, cultural understanding, and competence. Knowledge and education on what puts families in these situations.”

Although racial disparities occur across many sub-populations of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness, the fact that nearly all pregnant and parenting youth in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area and the vast majority in Greater Minnesota are Native American or people of color is alarming. Solutions must focus on preventing and immediately addressing homelessness and housing instability of these young families to break the cycle of generational trauma impacted by policies that impacted Native Americans and people of color in Minnesota.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that there is funding available so programs can provide staffing and a responsive service delivery system to meet the developmental needs of young families.

In addition to bricks and mortar, there needs to be increased and sustained funding for well-trained staff and flexible financial support to meet the individual needs of young people and their children.

Providers say that funding¹³ is inadequate, too restrictive, and piecemeal. In the 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey, 88% of providers said that not enough funding for supportive services was a significant or moderate challenge, and 81% reported that restrictive or inflexible funding created a significant or moderate challenge for them in providing services for young families.

Providers explained funding challenges in the following ways:

Less restrictive funding to support these populations and that would be enough to pay people what they're worth to run these programs. Funding that isn't reimbursement. –Provider

¹² Evans-Campbell, T. (2008). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska Communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(3).

¹³ In this section, “funding” refers to supportive services funding and funding rules providers described as restrictive or inflexible, based on survey responses.

We need more comprehensive funding for services and resources. We are seeing growth in youth and young families seeking services and resources while funding stays flat or in some cases decreases. We can't hire more staff and provide more resources without having the resources ourselves to do that. –Provider

We need to have a concerted effort by the agencies that serve those populations to work more cohesively together. And we need policymakers to take this seriously and consider bills that could speak to the dynamics of each demographic. There is no one-size-fits-all. –Provider

In addition, it is critical that staff serving young families are trained in the unique developmental needs of youth. The adult system is not designed to meet the critical needs of youth who are navigating the transition to adulthood while parenting their own young children. Youth described wanting both autonomy and help accessing youth-friendly services.

Both providers and youth talked about the benefit of providing flexible funds that can be offered directly to low-income young families to meet their unique needs, including emergency help for getting stabilized before things get more difficult. They frequently talked about the need for funds to cover food, transportation, childcare, and housing subsidies. In addition, 80% of providers said that increasing direct assistance and flexible funds would be among the strategies that would have the highest impact on supporting young families.

Recommendation 4: Develop a responsive information hub so that young families in crisis can easily access the support they need.

Information must be provided in a streamlined, centralized way.

In a subset of pregnant and parenting youth age 20 and under interviewed for the 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study, two-thirds (68%) said they had received help finding services from shelter staff or a youth worker. In discussions with youth conducted for this report, participants talked about the value of the help they have received from trusted youth organizations and staff. However, because the system is so hard to navigate and fragmented, many youth say they could have used help before they became homeless, as well as continued supports after maintaining housing.

Information and support could include assistance with breastfeeding, supplies for their children, medical care for both parents and their children, parenting coaching and mentoring, life skills education, finding and paying for childcare, family counseling, and jobs support. Young parents also specifically mentioned the importance of a central service hub where families can access information, life skills training, and mentoring all in one place.

If I had a million dollars I would find a property to invest in, a big apartment building for young parents and families. They would have their own apartment, and services and resources would be in the same building. –Young father

I would invest in a facility with workers or case workers. I would also create an app. It would give people access to get help, resources, free to low-cost advice. –Young father

Expand affordable housing for families that offer wraparound services and mental health and life skill supports. –Provider

*We need financial literacy classes in middle school and high school, and career training.
–Youth with lived experience*

*Each family has one long-term worker who helps youth navigate all the above systems.
This builds trust and strengthens communication. –Provider*

Recommendation 5: Address complex rules and requirements that make things more difficult for young families.

Solutions need to focus on complex eligibility rules, narrow definitions, and administrative requirements that make it difficult for young families to access assistance and limit providers’ ability to respond to urgent needs. These include long waiting lists, definitions that limit how and when young families qualify for assistance, and rights of parenting minors.

*[Housing programs] expect a lot out of us when we’re already going through so much.
–Youth with lived experience*

Eligibility requirements and complex rules are significant barriers for providers and young parents and add another layer of complications to already difficult circumstances. Many members of the parent advisory group described facing challenges with having to “prove” their need to programs or landlords while trying to secure housing for their families.

It is essential that solutions are developmentally appropriate and reflect young parents’ own definitions of family. Reducing administrative complexity would allow providers to respond more effectively to urgent needs and help young families access stable housing and supportive services sooner.

Youth or families that are young don't know how to ask for help or even fill out necessary forms to receive help or benefits. I see a lot of young people who don't know how to navigate through the system to ensure if they meet the eligibility requirements for assistance. –Provider

Recommendation 6: Address the specific barriers that young fathers face and invest in programming to support them.

The current system is not designed to support and integrate the needs of young fathers. Align policies, eligibility rules, and programs to ensure equitable access for young fathers across housing and support services.

We have support, but not as much as women. It is harder for us to get the supplies we need to get.
–Young father

Young fathers experience systemic barriers related to legal issues and a lack of understanding about the consequences of not being listed on custody, birth certificate, and other records related to their children. In addition, many shelters are not designed to keep young families together, forcing some fathers to separate from their children or family to access shelters. Finally, there is very little programming available specifically for young fathers. Young fathers express the desire for parenting programs, mentorship, help with employment, and mental health care.

Recommendation 7: Ensure an adequate response system for young families facing homelessness.

Develop a comprehensive system with a robust continuum of care that responds to the complex and varied needs of pregnant and parenting youth. The needs of young parents are dynamic, and one size does not fit all in developing or providing support.

Youth Services Network (YSN) providers identified 12 universal components and 10 program models necessary for a comprehensive system that can respond to the complex and varied needs of pregnant and parenting youth, which are based on the reality of practice, experiences of frontline providers, and current program operations (Exhibit B, Models 1–10). Investing in a well-coordinated menu of housing models will better ensure stability and long-term success for young families experiencing homelessness by more closely meeting the levels of support and independence they may be looking for at a given time. As one YSN leader stated, “Having tiered models [lets] young people graduate between them or use them how they need, allowing them to get as much support as they need, but not more than they need.”

Exhibit B. Universal components necessary across a comprehensive system for pregnant and parenting youth

Universal components

- “Family” as defined by members
- Two-generation approach
- Culturally rooted practice
- Parenting and child development supports
- Parenting-centered life skills
- Embedded early childhood supports
- Non-punitive, developmentally appropriate structures (dependent upon age)
- Safe, stable environments
- Warm handoffs to systems
- Autonomy-building
- Flexible funds
- System navigation assistance

Model 1: Prevention and diversion

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Short-term, problem-solving interventions that stabilize a young family before they enter homelessness by leveraging natural support, mediation, flexible financial assistance, and rapid engagement.	Prevention and diversion reduces trauma by avoiding shelter entry entirely. For young families who often have extremely limited rental history and strained caregiver relationships, early intervention prevents deeper system involvement and preserves family, school, and community stability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-centered diversion: Ensuring temporary stays with family/friends is safe and supportive for both the youth and their children. • Mediation and conflict-resolution strategies tailored to young parents and their developmental stage.

Model 2: Emergency shelter for young families

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Immediate, short-stay crisis housing that provides safety, stabilization, and rapid connection to long-term housing pathways for young parents and their children.	Shelter is often a young family’s first safe environment after fleeing instability. It provides immediate safety for infants and children and acts as an entry point into the broader continuum (rapid rehousing, transitional housing program, Host Homes, etc.). Without youth-designed family shelters, young parents often face adult-family shelters that are inappropriate for their developmental stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private or semi-private family rooms. • Developmentally responsive staffing: Training on youth development, early childhood development, trauma-informed care, and cultural humility as well as other DHS required training for programs that support minors. • On-site childcare or partnerships to allow parents to engage in school, work, or case management.

Model 3: Congregate and Supervised Transitional Housing Programs (THP)

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Medium-term (typically up to 18 months) supervised housing with intensive services to build stability, life skills, education, and parenting capacity.	THPS provide time to finish school, build parenting skills, and learn independent living. They bridge the gap between crisis and independence, especially important for young families who are still developing adult skills while raising children.	See Universal Components (above)

Model 4: Host homes for young families

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Voluntary community-based housing arrangements where screened hosts provide a private room and supportive relationship for a young family, while agencies offer case management and financial supports.	Host Homes create community-based, relational stability. These programs are often the least institutional and most culturally flexible option. For young parents with minimal support networks, Host Homes rebuild the “village” needed for parenting success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts trained to support infants/children, not just youth. • Safety expectations adapted to young parent households.

Model 5: Rapid rehousing for young families

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Short- to medium-term rental assistance for up to 24 months with mobile case management designed to help young parents obtain and retain market-rate housing quickly.	Rapid rehousing provides quick access to independent housing, which many young families prefer. It builds natural autonomy while still offering support, allowing youth to stabilize in their own community and avoid long stays in congregate programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-friendly landlord engagement given limited credit/rental history. • Two-generation planning including childcare, school enrollment, and early childhood screening.

Model 6: Permanent supportive housing for young families

Definition	Significance	Key elements
Long-term, non-time-limited housing with wraparound services for young parents experiencing chronic homelessness, disabling conditions, or significant barriers.	Permanent supportive housing anchors the continuum. For young parents with complex needs, it provides long-term stability and prevents child protection involvement, intergenerational homelessness, and return to crisis systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family-appropriate units: Multi-bedroom options, safe environments for infants/toddlers, on-site child play spaces. • Mental health services for both parent and child, including dyadic therapy, parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), or culturally rooted healing supports. • Transition planning as youth age out at 24. • Longer service horizons: Recognizing that young parents need more time to stabilize and develop adult roles compared to older adults.

Model 7: Parenting-focused transitional or supportive housing (MN-specific youth models)

Definition	Significance	Key elements
<p>Transitional or supportive housing designed explicitly for young families, blending youth development approaches with family support services.</p>	<p>These models meet the unique intersection of being both youth and parents. They address developmental needs while supporting safe parenting and child development simultaneously.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong peer community: Other young parents in the same program, reducing isolation and providing natural support networks. • On-site or closely linked education pathways: High school completion, postsecondary access, and employment preparation.

Model 8: Supportive shared housing for young families

Definition	Significance	Key elements
<p>Shared homes or apartments in which multiple young families live together with structured support and onsite staff.</p>	<p>Shared housing offers a middle-ground option between congregate settings and independent apartments. It provides built-in community, social connection, and skill-building for families who benefit from shared support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family-appropriate household design: Private bedrooms for each family, shared common areas, child-safe environments. • Child-focused amenities: Play areas, quiet spaces, appropriate storage for child items. • Peer support among families raising children in similar circumstances.

Model 9: Independent living with mobile youth services

Definition	Significance	Key elements
<p>Scattered-site apartments with voluntary, youth-tailored case management for young families who can maintain stability with light but consistent support.</p>	<p>This model supports families who do not need intensive services but still benefit from youth-informed guidance. It prevents regression into homelessness and allows young parents to build durable independent-living skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support navigating benefits critical to family stability (childcare assistance, SNAP, MFIP). • Autonomy-focused approach that respects young adults' decision-making.

Model 10: Culturally rooted community-based housing models

Definition	Significance	Key elements
<p>Housing and support models grounded in cultural identities, traditions, and community practices, especially for Indigenous youth and youth of color disproportionately affected by homelessness.</p>	<p>For many young families, cultural identity is a stabilizing force. These models address disparities, restore cultural protective factors, and provide community belonging which is key to long-term stability and intergenerational healing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally matched staffing and programming: Elders, aunties/uncle models, traditional parenting supports. • Community-embedded safety net: Extended family, cultural kinship supports, community healing practices. • Values-aligned definitions of family: Recognizing kinship caregiving, chosen family, and multigenerational connections. • Support for cultural birth and parenting practices, early childhood teachings, ceremonies, and community traditions.

Source: Provided by Youth Services Network advisory group.

VII. Appendix

A. Methodology

This Appendix outlines and describes the multiple methods used to collection information for this report.

Sources for information included:

1. Data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
2. The HUD Point-in-Time (or PIT) Count (conducted in January each year)
3. 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study Counts (including Reservation Homeless Study)
4. 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study Interviews (does not include Reservation Homeless Study due to agreements made to respect Tribal sovereignty)
5. Minnesota Student Survey 2016 (triennial survey conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education, an anonymous, statewide school-based survey)
6. Online survey of young parents with lived experiences of homelessness (N=45)
7. In-person focus groups with young fathers (N=18)
8. In-person discussions with Youth Services Network parenting youth advisory group (PYAG) members
9. Youth Services Network leadership including executive directors of youth serving agencies
10. Online survey of providers (Homeless Youth Act funded and non-Homeless Youth Act funded) (N=42)

HMIS and HIC data

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): Not all organizations that provide shelter to homeless youth participate in HMIS, and Tribal data are excluded from our analysis. Even with these limitations, the statewide HMIS Core Demographics and Outcomes report for shelter and housing programs in Minnesota for SFY24 (state fiscal year 2024, 7/1/2023 to 6/30/2024) allowed us to estimate the number of parenting youth households, including minor parenting youth under age 18. We used the unique client ID in the file to make our estimate. However, unique IDs are not necessarily unique. For instance, when an individual goes to a program, the worker may not be able to find that person in the HMIS system and assign a new ID, or the system may show that person as being open in another program. Therefore, we say our estimate is an approximate number and, due to data collection limitations, is probably an undercount.

Two other HMIS reports were analyzed. The Core Demographics and Outcomes report for homeless prevention programs for SFY24 was used to identify the number of parenting youth at risk of homelessness. The Core Demographics and Outcomes report for homeless coordinated entry assessments for SFY24 was used to identify the number of parenting youth assessed.

The 2024 Housing Inventory Count (HIC) for Minnesota was used to estimate the number of units dedicated to parenting youth (age 18 to 24) households. HIC data was collected during the last week of January 2024. This data was provided by Minnesota's HMIS. The HIC data on number of beds for youth with children and for number of family beds was used to estimate the number of units dedicated to parenting youth age 18 to 24. HIC does not

collect information on pregnant youth, and it also does not have information on beds dedicated to parenting youth under age 18.

The HUD Point-in-Time (or PIT) Count

The PIT Count is a nationwide annual count required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted in January of each year. It includes HUD-defined individuals and households experiencing homelessness and may exclude people who are temporarily couch hopping or homeless in areas that don't have formal shelters or areas that do not participate in HUD counts (such as some Native American reservations). For this report, we used the data collected in January 2024.

2023 Minnesota Statewide Homeless Study

The Minnesota Homeless Study has been conducted every three years since 1991 and includes two primary methods of data collection: 1) one-on-one interviews with homeless individuals throughout the state on one night, sheltered and not sheltered, and 2) counts of people who are sheltered on that night. This report presents counts of parenting youth and data from interviews with pregnant and parenting youth age 24 and younger. Further information is available at www.mnhomeless.org/about

Minnesota Student Survey

The Minnesota Student Survey is a triennial survey conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education. It is an anonymous, statewide school-based survey. Questions can vary by year and vary by grade level. The last time there was a question about pregnancy was in 2016, and it was asked of 9th and 11th graders.

Perspectives of youth with lived experiences of homelessness

Several methods were used to collect information from young parents with lived experiences of homelessness.

Parenting youth advisory group

Five Youth Services Network (YSN) agencies recruited young parents from their networks to serve on a youth advisory group. The purpose of the group was to seek input from youth experiencing homelessness who were also parents about their experiences, what they found helpful, and how services and support should be improved. They were also asked to share their perspectives on data collection, outreach and engagement, and the final conclusions and recommendations for this report.

The group met three times over the course of the project, in April, June, and October 2025. The meetings were facilitated by staff from YSN and Wilder Research and attended by up to three youth from each agency, as well as the YSN director and other agency staff. Attendance at each of the three sessions ranged from 9 to 16 youth. Each youth received a stipend of \$75 for each meeting they attended, and Wilder also provided meals at each event.

Focus groups with young fathers

With assistance from Youth Services Network staff, Wilder Research arranged two focus groups with youth served by the programs. The purpose of the focus groups was to hear directly from young fathers with lived experiences of homelessness. The focus groups were conducted in person, the responses of youth remained anonymous, their participation was voluntary, and they were not required to answer any questions they preferred not to answer. After the focus groups, each participant received a \$50 gift card to thank them for their time. A total of 18 young fathers participated in the focus groups.

At the beginning of each focus group, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire with questions about the services and supports they thought there should be more of in Minnesota, and the barriers that make it hard for young families to find and keep housing. Responses to these questions were used as a springboard for the focus group discussions. Participants were also asked to answer several questions about basic demographic characteristics, including race or ethnicity, age, their children, where they live, and gender and sexual identity.

Other topics covered in the focus groups included:

- Priority services for young fathers and young families experiencing homelessness;
- Ways to address the barriers faced by young fathers;
- Supports, services, or changes to the system that could help prevent youth from becoming homeless; and
- What they would like legislators and policymakers to know about and address regarding young families experiencing homelessness.

Online survey of youth in young families with lived experience of homelessness

To supplement the input of the youth advisory group and focus groups and extend the reach of the data collection outside of the 7-county Twin Cities metro area, Wilder Research created a brief online survey. Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) staff asked providers and agency staff to distribute the invitation to youth served through their programs who met the criteria for this study, based on age and parenting status. A total of 45 pregnant or parenting youth completed at least part of the online survey. The survey was accessed another 23 times, but individuals did not meet the age and family status criteria for the survey.

Topics covered in the online survey included:

- Services and support that had been the most helpful to young families while they were experiencing homelessness;
- Services or supports youth thought there should be more of in Minnesota to meet the needs of youth who are pregnant and/or parenting;
- Priority services for young families experiencing homelessness;
- Supports, services, or changes to the system that could prevent young families from becoming homeless; and
- Basic demographic information about race or ethnicity, age, and where they live.

Online survey of providers

Wilder Research developed an online survey for providers and sent links to individuals in agencies that receive Homeless Youth Act (HYA) funds for services for youth and young families experiencing homelessness in Minnesota and to non-HYA providers who work with young families experiencing homelessness.

108 potential respondents received an email with information about the survey, along with an electronic link to the online survey. Respondents received additional reminders to complete the survey at two points. A total of 42 providers completed the survey.

Providers were asked to respond to questions about:

- Factors that create unique challenges for young families experiencing homelessness to access and sustain stable housing;
- Specific populations of young families that experience challenges in accessing shelter and services and what would help address difficulties faced by these populations;
- Strategies that could have an impact on improving the ability of young families across the state to move from being unhoused to housed;
- Suggestions for immediate expansion of high-impact strategies; and
- Basic information about their program and the services offered.

Youth Services Network leaders

Wilder Research staff met regularly with a sub-group of leaders from the Youth Services Network (YSN), approximately once a month, starting in November 2024. Regular attendees from YSN included the YSN director and at least one representative from each of the five partner agencies, which included Avenues for Youth, the Bridge for Youth, Face to Face, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, and The Link.

In the early planning phase of the study, Wilder and YSN leaders collaborated to shape the overall vision of the project and identified priority research questions and strategies for engaging youth throughout the process, including the formation of the parenting youth advisory group. During the data collection phase, YSN leaders supported both the youth survey and provider survey by providing feedback on the content and language of the surveys, as well as by disseminating information about the surveys to potential respondents. Several YSN leaders also suggested the facilitation of the young father's discussion groups and supported in recruitment and coordination of the groups.

In November 2025, Wilder presented preliminary findings and recommendations to the broader YSN group. Attendees were asked to provide initial reactions and feedback to the presented materials and voice suggestions for additional recommendations, context, and considerations to incorporate into the final report.

B. Data tables

2023 Minnesota Homeless Study detailed data (N=106)

B1. Parenting youth demographics and characteristics

Demographics and characteristics	Percentage
Age	-
Range	16-24 years
Average	21 years
Age distribution	-
17 or younger	4%
18 to 21	47%
22 to 24	50%
Race (multiple responses possible)	-
Black/African American	41%
Hispanic/Latino	28%
Native American	28%
Asian	5%
Middle Eastern	1%
White (only)	20%
Native American or person of color	80%
Gender identity	-
Woman	79%
Man	20%
Non-binary/gender fluid, another gender identity	1%
Bisexual, pansexual, queer	16%
Current location	-
Greater Minnesota	42%
7-county Twin Cities metro area	58%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Sleeping situation 15+ days of the previous month	-
In a shelter or transitional housing program	64%
Outside, in a vehicle or vacant building, or someplace not intended for housing	7%
Doubled up in someone else’s house, apartment, or room	17%
In regular housing, not doubled up	8%
Sleeping situation 1+ days of the previous month	-
In a shelter or transitional housing program	76%
Outside, in a vehicle or vacant building, or someplace not intended for housing	21%
Doubled up in someone else’s house, apartment, or room	29%
In regular housing, not doubled up	12%
Where stayed when turned away from shelter	-
At a friend or family member’s house or apartment	38%
Outside, in a vehicle or vacant building, or someplace not intended for housing	16%
At another shelter	19%
Systems involvement	-
Drug or alcohol treatment facility as a child	10%
Group home as a child	17%
Foster home as a child	31%
Mental health treatment facility as a child	33%
Foster home, treatment, or juvenile detention as a child	55%
Corrections facility at any time	34%
Out-of-home-placement or correctional institution at any time	62%
Experience of ACEs	-
At least one adverse childhood experience	71%
Three or more adverse childhood experiences	57%
Physically or sexually mistreated	52%
Experience with violence while homeless	-
Ever been attacked or assaulted while you have been homeless	22%
In the past 12 months, have been in a personal relationship with someone who hit, slapped, pushed or threatened to do so	36%
Ever stayed in an abusive situation because there were no other housing options	49%

Physical and behavioral health challenges	-
Any mental, physical, or chemical health issues	73%
Any significant mental illness	60%
Any physical health condition	40%
Substance use disorder	9%
Barriers for getting a job	-
Transportation issues	46%
Lack of childcare	37%
Lack of resources needed to work or look for work	31%
Top factors that make it difficult to get shelter	-
There was no housing you could afford	47%
Credit problems	30%
No local rental history or references	26%
You had no transportation	19%
Criminal background	13%
People who have helped youth (20 and younger) in the last 12 months (N=30)	-
Shelter staff or youth worker	68%
County social worker	50%
Friend, partner, or other people in family	46%
Parent or guardian	23%
Teacher or school staff	15%
Foster or Host Home parent	4%
Tribal worker	0%
Guardian ad Litem or other court staff	0%

Main reason for becoming homeless, multiple answers possible (20 and younger, N=30)	-
You were fighting frequently with your parents or guardians	48%
You didn't feel safe with the people in your household	22%
Your parent's or guardian's use of drugs or alcohol	17%
Your home was too small for everyone to live there	17%
Neglect, or your parents or guardians were not attending to your basic needs	13%
You were not willing to live by your parents' rules	9%
Your own use of drugs or alcohol	5%
Lack of tolerance for your sexual orientation or gender identity	4%
You left foster care or a group home or other placement without a permanent place to go	4%

Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Youth Survey tables (N=45)

B2. Youth respondent demographics and characteristics

Demographics and characteristics	Percentage
Race	-
Black/African American/African	56%
White	40%
Native American	19%
Hispanic/Latino	7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2%
Other	5%
Gender identity	-
Woman	61%
Man	37%
Non-binary/gender fluid, another gender identity	2%
Identify as LGBTQIA2S+	16%
Age	-
Range	16-24 years
Average	21.7 years

Current location	-
Minneapolis or St. Paul	55%
Greater Minnesota	25%
7-county Twin Cities metro area, but not Minneapolis or St. Paul	11%
Prefer not to answer	9%
Current living situation of youth	-
Living in a place you can stay in for a long time	53%
Staying with a friend or family member for a few nights	16%
Living in a housing program	16%
Living in a shelter	7%
Staying outside	4%
Staying in a car or vehicle	2%
Other: getting evicted	2%
Location youth lived before age 16	-
Minneapolis or St. Paul	41%
Another place, outside MN	21%
Greater MN	16%
7-county Twin Cities metro area, but not Minneapolis or St. Paul	11%
Prefer not to answer	11%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B3. Services for young families youth say they need more of

Services related to young families and children	Need a lot more	Need some more	Have enough now
Housing just for young families	71%	24%	4%
Low- or no-cost baby supplies	67%	24%	9%
Help finding childcare	64%	27%	9%
Help paying for childcare	58%	31%	11%
Emergency childcare	53%	38%	9%
Shelters just for young families	53%	38%	9%
Changing eligibility requirements so youth can qualify for housing or financial assistance	51%	38%	11%
Mentoring or parenting education	49%	38%	13%
Pre- and post-birth medical care	44%	40%	16%

Services related to young families and children	Need a lot more	Need some more	Have enough now
Lactation support	27%	42%	31%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B4. General services youth say they need more of

General services youth say they need more of	Need a lot more	Need some more	Have enough now
A good way to access housing or shelter for youth at-risk of homelessness	71%	27%	2%
Emergency cash assistance	64%	27%	9%
Help with finding assistance	60%	31%	9%
Help with searching for a job	56%	27%	18%
Health/dental care	51%	36%	13%
Coordination of systems that provide supports	47%	42%	11%
Mental health or chemical dependency services for self or family	47%	36%	18%
Outreach services or drop-in centers	44%	44%	11%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B5. Factors that youth say make it difficult for young families to get shelter and housing

Factors	Percentage
Long waiting lists	82%
Eligibility requirements	80%
Not enough programs available	73%
Lack of rental subsidy	64%
Not knowing where to start	62%
Not feeling comfortable with shelter or housing options available	53%
Lack of transportation	53%
Age bias	40%

B6. Supports, services, benefits that youth say could better prevent young families from becoming homeless (N=34 respondents) (Note: this question was an optional, open-ended question)

Comments about supports, services, benefits <i>Examples of representative comments</i>	Number of mentions
Financial assistance, emergency funding <i>“More access to cash and food benefits”</i> <i>“Rental assistance and emergency funds for unexpected hardships”</i>	10
More, better, affordable housing <i>“Better housing and affordable”</i> <i>“More housing programs”</i>	9
Classes to support career information, financial literacy <i>“Access to career jobs in school and financial literacy in school”</i> <i>“Financial literacy in middle school and high school and career training”</i>	8
More/better general programs and assistance <i>“More drop-in centers”</i> <i>“Mental health and family counseling services”</i>	6
Policy changes <i>“Make emancipation a real thing and let emancipated kids get housing”</i> <i>“Allow rental property management companies to accept more different vouchers for rent and deposit”</i>	4
Easier access to services and programs <i>“Easier access to public benefits without long wait times”</i>	4
Access to jobs <i>“Need more jobs that are willing to actually hire!”</i>	4
Programs and housing just for youth <i>“More shelters for just young parents. More outreach and programs that offer assistance to young people”</i>	2
Empathy and understanding for the person <i>“Racial equity and cultural understanding and competence. Knowledge and education on what puts families in these situations.”</i>	1

B7. Comments about priorities for addressing homelessness among young families (N=16 respondents)
 (Note: this question was an optional, open-ended question)

Comments about priorities <i>Examples of representative comments</i>	Number of mentions
Empathy and understanding for the person <i>“Everyone is worth helping”</i> <i>“Support, affirmation and empathy skills”</i>	6
Financial assistance, emergency funding <i>“More income-based programs”</i>	4
Policy changes <i>“Reduce barriers (paperwork, income rules) that block families from qualifying”</i>	4
More/better general programs and assistance <i>“Need more resources”</i>	3
Assistance specific to fathers <i>“Provide free legal representation for young fathers in paternity cases”</i>	3
Easier access to services/programs <i>“Make services easier to navigate and available in one place”</i>	2

Young fathers focus group tables (N=18)

B8. Demographics and characteristics of young fathers

The overall N=18 reflects total focus group participants. Item-level counts reflect only those who spoke to that theme.

Demographics and characteristics	Number
Race (N=13)	-
Black/African American/African	12
White	2
Native American	2
Latino	2
Other	1
Prefer not to answer	1
Age (N=16)	-
Range	14-24 years
Average	21 years

Demographics and characteristics	Number
Partner is currently pregnant	-
Yes	2
No	9
Don't know	3
Currently living with their children	4
Children (N=17 fathers)	-
Number per father (range)	0-3
Age range	<1-12 years
Average age	3 years
Location grew up in (N=17)	-
Minneapolis or St. Paul	12
Greater Minnesota	1
7-county Twin Cities metro area, but not Minneapolis or St. Paul	1
Another place outside Minnesota	3

B9. Services for young families young fathers say they need more of (N=17)

Services related to young families and children	Need a lot more	Need some more	Have enough now
Low- or no-cost baby supplies	12	4	1
Mentoring or parenting education	10	7	0
Housing just for young families	10	5	2
Help paying for childcare	9	6	2
Shelters just for young families	9	6	2
Pre- and post-birth medical care	8	7	2
Help finding childcare	8	6	3
Changing eligibility requirements so youth can qualify for housing or financial assistance	8	6	3
Emergency childcare	7	8	2

Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey tables (N=42)

B10. Provider characteristics

Characteristics	Percentage
Service area	-
Minneapolis or St. Paul	49%
7-county Twin Cities metro area, but not Minneapolis or St. Paul	23%
Greater Minnesota (outside the Twin Cities metro area)	41%
Native American reservation	8%
Services provided	-
Shelter	46%
Transitional housing	72%
Permanent supportive housing	49%
Outreach services	74%
Other shelter or housing related services	54%
Non-housing related services	69%
Referral paths into program	-
Coordinated entry	90%
Self-referral	90%
County worker	84%
Law enforcement	63%
School	63%
Have program vacancies (N=15)	20%
Have specific training or expertise on young families	82%
Have culturally specific program focus	31%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B11. Factors that create challenges for providers

Factors that create challenges for providers	Significant challenge	Moderate challenge	Small challenge	Not a challenge
Not enough affordable housing options where people want to live	91%	7%	0%	2%
Long waitlists for housing	83%	14%	2%	0%
Not enough affordable housing options located near necessary resources	76%	19%	5%	0%
Not enough funding for supportive services outside of housing	71%	17%	12%	0%
Restrictive or inflexible funding for providers to use	60%	21%	14%	5%
Restrictive definitions about who qualifies as homeless	48%	26%	14%	12%
Complex rules about things like funding or qualifications	48%	41%	7%	5%
Problems for individuals with collecting or completing paperwork or other documents for public assistance benefits	48%	38%	14%	0%
Difficulties for providers to stay in contact with people who are waiting for housing	45%	29%	24%	2%
Discriminatory policies and practices/structural racism	45%	38%	7%	10%
Time limits for supports and services	43%	45%	12%	0%
Problems for individuals with collecting or completing paperwork or other documents for housing	41%	43%	17%	0%
Provider staff shortages	36%	48%	14%	2%
Local laws that screen out applicants	31%	29%	29%	12%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B12. Factors providers say create challenges unique for young families

Factors creating challenges for young families	Percentage
Not enough affordable housing options where people want to live	79%
Problems for individuals with collecting or completing paperwork or other documents for housing	79%
Problems for individuals with collecting or completing paperwork or other documents for public assistance benefits	76%
Not enough affordable housing options located near necessary resources	74%
Complex rules about things like funding or qualifications	74%
Long waitlists for housing	71%
Not enough funding for supportive services outside of housing	69%
Time limits for supports and services	69%
Restrictive or inflexible funding for providers to use	67%
Difficulties for providers to stay in contact with people who are waiting for housing	64%
Restrictive definitions about who qualifies as homeless	62%
Discriminatory policies and practices/structural racism	62%
Provider staff shortages	57%
Local laws that screen out applicants	50%

B13. Providers’ views on populations experiencing difficulties accessing shelter and services to help them find housing

Providers were allowed to select more than one population. Only a small number of providers responded, so many of the percentages fall in a similar range (91–100%). Some groups also overlap—for example, youth from Tribal nations may also be counted under Native American or persons of color. These numbers show general patterns providers reported, not exact population counts.

Populations experiencing difficulties	A great deal of difficulties	Some difficulties	No difficulties	Do not work with this population (N=41)
Youth living in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area (N=26)	73%	27%	0%	37%
Youth living in rural areas (N=26)	96%	0%	4%	37%
Youth from Tribal nations (N=27)	100%	0%	0%	34%
Youth who identify as BIPOC (N=32)	91%	9%	0%	22%
Youth who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ (N=33)	82%	18%	0%	20%
Youth who are immigrants or refugees (N=30)	93%	7%	0%	27%
Youth whose first language is not English (N=30)	90%	10%	0%	27%
Youth exiting foster care (N=36)	81%	19%	0%	12%
Youth with disabilities (N=37)	87%	14%	0%	10%
Youth with mental health or substance use disorders (N=40)	93%	8%	0%	2%
Youth who have experiences sexual exploitation or violence (N=37)	78%	22%	0%	10%
Youth with criminal backgrounds (N=39)	97%	3%	0%	5%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

B14. Providers’ views on the impact of increasing availability of services or strategies

Services or strategies	Highest impact	Moderate impact	Low impact	No impact
Mental health care (trauma-informed, culturally responsive)	85%	10%	5%	0%
Childcare assistance funds	85%	8%	8%	0%
Permanent supportive housing (scattered site)	80%	15%	5%	0%
Direct assistance/flexible funds	80%	15%	5%	0%

Services or strategies	Highest impact	Moderate impact	Low impact	No impact
Affordable or sliding fee childcare	80%	13%	5%	3%
Wrap-around services	77%	13%	10%	0%
Crisis services	74%	21%	5%	0%
Transportation assistance (transit pass, funding for rides)	74%	18%	8%	0%
Domestic violence services	72%	26%	3%	0%
Emergency assistance	72%	23%	5%	0%
Transitional housing	69%	26%	5%	0%
Permanent supportive housing (building-based)	69%	26%	3%	3%
Crisis child care	69%	18%	8%	5%
Parenting support and parent education	67%	21%	10%	3%
Medical care (trauma-informed, culturally responsive)	64%	31%	5%	0%
Section 8 or other subsidized housing	64%	28%	8%	0%
Services for youth who have experienced sexual exploitation (Safe Harbor)	64%	28%	5%	3%
Substance abuse treatment	62%	33%	3%	3%
Shelter capacity or availability	62%	28%	10%	0%
Services to help people get and maintain a job	62%	28%	8%	3%
Legal services	59%	28%	13%	0%
Supports for fathers	56%	31%	10%	3%
Benefits navigators	54%	31%	15%	0%
Public housing	54%	33%	13%	0%
Housing navigators	51%	39%	10%	0%
Supports for LBGTQIA2S+ families	51%	33%	10%	5%
Street outreach	39%	33%	28%	0%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Acknowledgements

Wilder Research would like to acknowledge the following individuals and agencies that made this report possible:

Minnesota Department of Human Services—Homelessness, Housing, and Support Services Administration
Minnesota Homeless Management Information System

Youth Services Network leadership advisors

Corey Magstadt, Executive Director

Avenues for Youth – Rachel Hatch

The Bridge for Youth – Lisa Mears

Face to Face – Rachel Greenwald

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota – Jen Fairbourne

The Link – Beth Holger

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Karlista Sahiti

Ronesha Trice

Thai'Lyn Washington

TaShonda Williamson

Taty (last name withheld)

Anyia (last name withheld)

Homeless Youth Act funded and non-Homeless Youth Act funded providers

Young parents experiencing homelessness who completed the online survey

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With support from:

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Walker Bosch

Jen Collins

Thalia Hall

Heather Loch

Dan Swanson