



# Human Services

2019 Annual Report

Better lives, stronger communities





# 2019-2020

## A challenging year

As we have faced the challenges that 2020 has thrown at us, it would be easy to be overwhelmed. In the Hennepin County Human Services Department, though, we are spurred on by our mission to work with the people of Hennepin County to increase the quality of their lives.

As we have faced tremendous change, we are guided by the sets of values and outcomes we have set for ourselves and the people we serve. This report is structured to highlight how our work adheres to those axioms.

Our desired outcomes for the people we serve, safety, stability, self-sufficiency and well-being, guide what work we do. Our values of community connections, people first and commitment to service and system excellence guide how we do that work. We are striving to better understand the communities we serve, to view residents as people, not problems, and to continually examine our own processes to maximize our strengths and find better ways to work.

At the same time, we know that our residents of color are disproportionately affected by the impacts of discrimination in housing, employment, justice and more, so we try to view everything we do through a lens of racial equity. We also know that achieving equity will help us – and our residents – achieve those outcomes.

Our experience over the past few years, and the County Board resolution naming racism as a public health crisis have only sharpened our focus on this vital work.

We hope that you will join us.

Jodi Wentland

Assistant County Administrator–Human Services  
Hennepin County

# Human Services

Better lives  
stronger communities



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### About the data

Unless otherwise noted, data in this report reflects the time period of September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020.

Initial planning for this report began after the arrival of the coronavirus, and as our community met challenge after challenge, we realized we had to reflect both the difficulties and the work to address them.

When this midyear-to-midyear data was not available, we used calendar year 2019 or federal fiscal year 2020, as noted.



# Community Connections

Commit to working with communities to support our residents by passionately understanding the barriers they face so we can work cohesively to build solutions within our communities.



Residents of Hennepin County know they can count on Human Services in moments of personal crisis – a lost job, fears of eviction, and more.

In 2019 and 2020, our community has faced both local and global crises – starting with the fire at the Francis Drake Hotel on Christmas Day, then the emergence of the coronavirus in March and the killing of George Floyd and related civil unrest in May. Each of those tragedies took a tremendous toll on our communities. Together, they have required an unprecedented human services response that Hennepin County has stepped up to meet.

Meanwhile, our residents continued to need help with unemployment, housing instability and physical and mental health crises. Whether to respond was never in question, but the onset of coronavirus created new challenges as we worked to serve residents while maintaining health and safety for them and our staff.

Crises have made us rethink how we work during this global pandemic. Waivers from the state allowed us to explore new ways of working – some of the residents we serve have reported that they experience better service delivery than they had before. We are proud of our innovations, and we continue to move toward a business model that is not only safe, but also comprehensive and equitable.

Over the past several months, we have been nimble and innovative as we responded to changing terrain. In many cases, crisis was the catalyst we needed to break from old ways of doing things.

Above: George Floyd memorial at East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, Minneapolis

# Drake Hotel fire

December 25, 2019

*A fire broke out at 3 a.m. on Christmas Day at this downtown Minneapolis hotel. 250 people were displaced and three were hospitalized.*



## Finding a home after tragedy

The fire at the Drake Hotel displaced single adults living at the Drake, an important resource for low-barrier, low-income housing, as well as families using the building as emergency shelter. In a single day, staff had to find emergency shelter or housing options for 272 women, men and children who lost their homes and all their belongings. Over the next few months, most of them transitioned through shelter and into permanent housing.

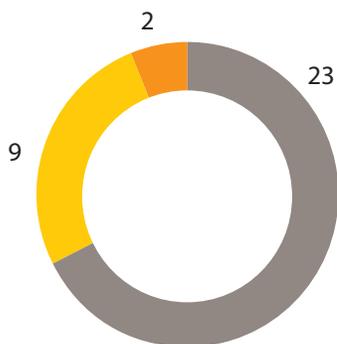
### Christmas Day blaze displaced

#### 119 single adults

all found shelter with family and friends or transitioned into permanent housing

#### 34 families in emergency shelter

- **\$75,000** in flex funds distributed to families to cover expenses in the months after the fire
- **\$13,000** disbursed to 17 of the families after COVID-19 to ensure their housing remained stable



Housing scenarios for families displaced by Drake fire

- still in shelter
- staying with family and friends
- transitioned into permanent housing and remain stably housed

### About the Drake Hotel

416 South 10th Street, Minneapolis

#### 1926

built with 108 apartments and 50 hotel rooms

#### 1983

began operating as emergency and transitional housing

#### 1997

reopened to offer low-cost permanent housing

#### 2011

used as emergency shelter after tornadoes in North Minneapolis

#### Recent years

used by Hennepin County for low-cost housing and shelter overflow

Hotel guest Lery James says he's thankful for a safe place to stay as he gets help finding permanent housing.



## COVID-19

March 16, 2020

*Black, Hispanic and Native Americans experience higher rates of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and death. Contributing factors include health disparities, in-person work, and housing situations that make isolation difficult.*



### Supporting a community through a global pandemic

The threat of the coronavirus led to Hennepin County's state of emergency declaration on March 16. Like our Public Health colleagues, we worked to limit the spread of the virus.

#### We limited COVID-19 exposure

Services remain accessible to residents, and we are identifying best practices to take with us into the post-COVID world.

- Instead of traveling to a county building, residents can initiate benefits and ask questions by phone and online, from the safety of their homes.
- Most residents experienced no interruption in their economic benefits.
- Service and wait times improved in many cases.

#### Preventing eviction and foreclosure

Between June and mid-October, the county disbursed more than \$4.2 million in CARES Act-funded rent assistance, in the form of 1,600 grants to help people affected by pandemic-related income loss.

#### Connecting young people to stipends

90 independent youth who did not receive COVID-19 stimulus checks received up to \$1,200 in economic aid from the Graves Foundation.

#### Preventing outbreaks in our homeless shelters

Moving at-risk people out of shelters allowed remaining residents to have more space and cleaner environments. Hennepin County shelters meet CDC public health protocols for COVID-19.

#### Supporting county-involved youth

We provided remote learning support to kids and teens in out-of-home placement at six shelters and one family foster home. We provided:

- 38 laptops
- 19 hotspots for internet connectivity

**544**

at-risk, elderly or ill people moved from shelter to protective spaces at hotels.

**700**

Economic Supports and Office Supports staff pivoted to manage a transition from face-to-face service to remote service in order to preserve staff and resident safety.



**1,600**

grants to low-income residents

**\$4.2 million**

in CARES Act-funded rent assistance

# Death of George Floyd and social unrest

May 25, 2020

## Adding urgency to disparity reduction work

At Hennepin County, we have long known that we have an important role to play in the work to reduce racial disparities in our community and beyond. Many people of color face unique challenges in areas of education, income, employment, housing, health, transportation and justice.

The whole world witnessed a tragic example when George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer on Memorial Day. Long-simmering bitterness boiled over into peaceful protests – and violent unrest. The community is working toward recovery, and our work toward equity has taken on even more urgency.

**June 30, 2020** The county board adopted a resolution naming racism as a public health crisis.

## Committing anew to view all our work through a lens of racial equity

We are aware that our communities of color continue to face the same disparities they did before George Floyd's death – and destruction from the unrest exacerbated existing barriers to food, housing, employment and more. Our residents need not just basic necessities, but reassurance and authentic action. We are recommitted to not only short-term help for residents, but also long-term system changes and an examination of the attitudes that affect our work.

*4 suburban cities accounted for 48% of 911 to the Hennepin County Sheriff Office dispatch center calls for mental health issues: Brooklyn Center 488, Brooklyn Park 908, Plymouth 339, Minnetonka 306*

### Training to view work through equity lens

The first of 53 Human Services Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) champions began training to begin the work of examining and questioning the department's policies and actions in terms of their impact on people of color, and their work to engage voices of those affected by our actions.

### Social worker adds expertise at dispatch

Hennepin County has embedded a clinical social worker at 911 dispatch, as part of a pilot project to better understand how people use 911 for mental health-related calls, and how to help dispatchers and police respond most appropriately.

# Safety

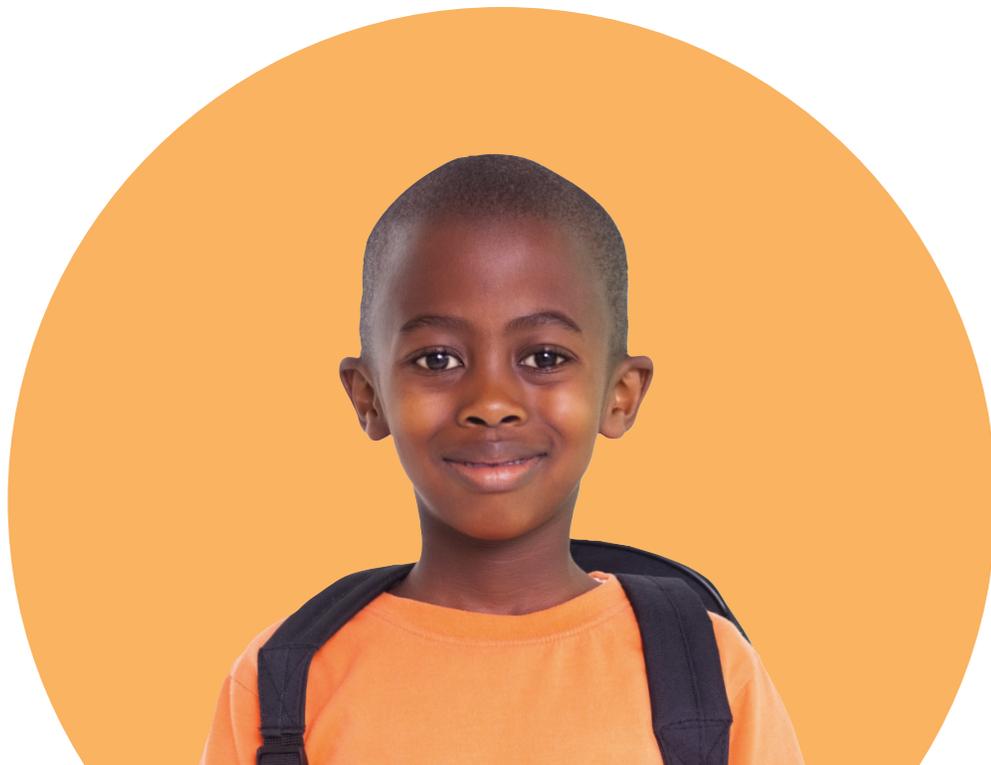
## People are free from harm

**Our most foundational work is to help people achieve physical and psychological safety, in their homes and communities**

In our work with state and federal systems, we help qualifying families and individuals get resources to fill critical needs. Hennepin County is poised to respond when our children, our elders and people with disabilities are in danger.

The work of helping people to be safe also includes helping families and adults find a place to stay when they don't have permanent housing, and standing with people who experience mental health crises or acute substance abuse problems.

As we do this vital work, we are also examining our outcomes with a disparity reduction lens to try to identify and reduce the impact of implicit bias on our systems.



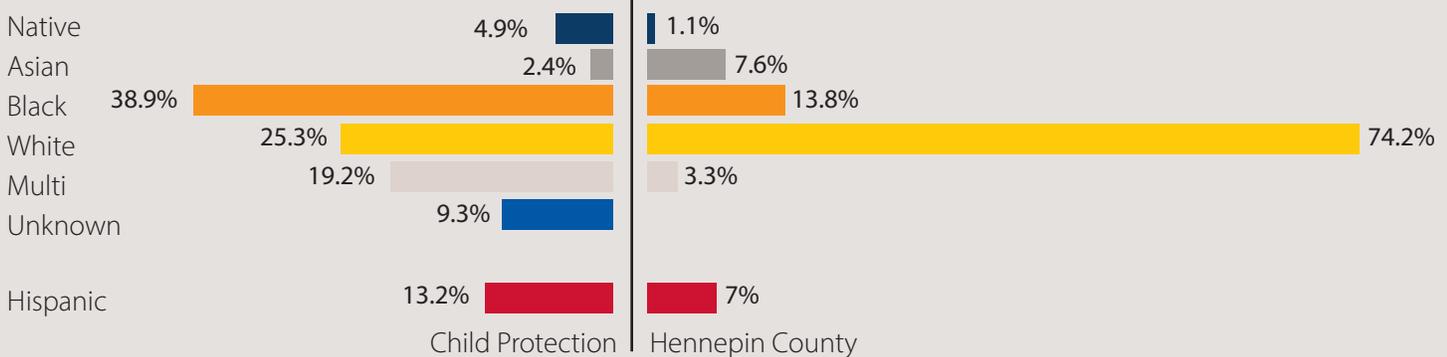
Life expectancy is **20 years** greater

For people who do not experience six or more adverse factors, such as abuse, neglect and family dysfunction

## Child protection reports

# 14,148

### Child protection reports by race compared to county population



*Families of color are disproportionately represented in our child protection cases.*

## Protecting the vulnerable

### Finding strength in a family network

389 families and their support circles joined with social workers to create and implement plans to safeguard children and youth.

With Family Group Decision Making, extended family members, friends, clergy and others join county workers to help identify families' strengths and needs and determine what kids need to be safe and thriving while their parents work through a case plan. COVID-initiated video tools helped to engage a broader network of support.

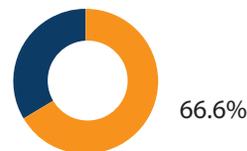
### Children in Family Group Decision Making

In the first eight months of 2020:

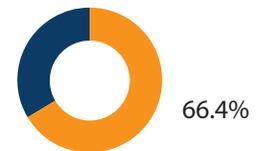
**35%** Black **30%** Multiracial

Children placed with family members have less frequent placement moves, and are more likely to retain a relationship with family members.

### Percent of kinship placements and adoptions



out-of-home placements with family and friends



adoptions finalized for children in the child protection system with people they already knew

*Caretaker drug abuse is the primary condition for which a child is removed from a home.*

### Primary removal conditions for youth entering out-of-home placement



### Giving babies a healthy and safe start

Project CHILD helps pregnant women get clean and stable before their children are born.

**95%** babies born drug-free

**90%** mothers allowed to keep babies at discharge

# Protecting the vulnerable

## Standing up for vulnerable adults

We have the responsibility to ensure that adults who are elders or who live with disabilities independently or with help can do so without fear of physical, psychological or financial harm. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact, we have continued to meet our goals for ensuring that vulnerable adults' basic needs are met, and that maltreatment, when it occurs, is caught and put to an end.

While serving vulnerable adults in 2019, we were able to ensure:

**98%**  
had basic needs provided

**92%**  
had maltreatment end

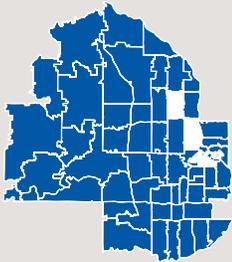
*Nationally, 8% of Latinas and 20% of Black women are evicted each year*

Evictions in 2019

**1,942**

**35%**

of the county's evictions occur in 5 zip codes



Taking a closer look at those areas

**\$25,640**

median income

**25%**

below poverty

**51%**

on public assistance

Hennepin County

**\$50,354**

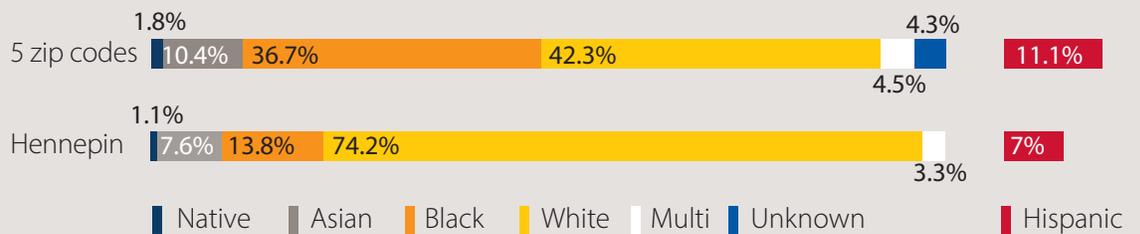
median income

**11%**

below poverty

**19%**

on public assistance



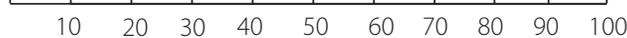
## Getting a roof over families' heads

Percent of people experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered

Hennepin County (January 2020)

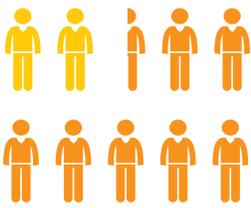


US (2019)



## Providing a place for families

Hennepin County has a shelter-all policy for families. That means families with children can get shelter and help finding and transitioning into stable housing.



*Too many people cycle in and out of the Hennepin County jail.  
In 2019 and early 2020:*

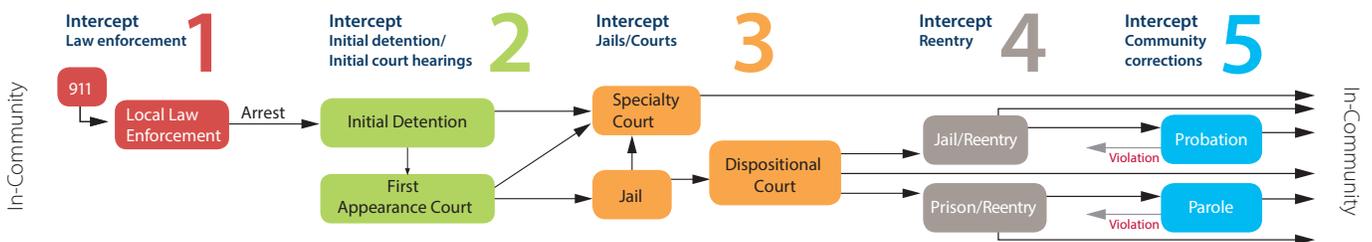
- 75% had been booked before
- 20% screened positive for serious mental illness

## Focusing on better alternatives for people

### Sequential Intercept Model guides reform in behavioral health care

Hennepin County has followed guidance from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as we work to separate behavioral health issues from criminality.

We are five years into a plan to provide social welfare expertise and support to our partners in law enforcement and the courts, and to offer residents alternatives to jail and hospitalization.



■ Offering mental health expertise and resources to first responders

■ Right-sizing and tailoring courts for people's needs

■ Offering social service and mental health resources to people in jail

■ Providing behavioral health treatment in the community

### Behavioral Health Care Center at 1800 Chicago

6,596 people with chronic mental or chemical health problems have gotten help at an interdisciplinary resource center in Minneapolis. Services include:

- Inpatient withdrawal management, medication-assisted treatment, peer support and care coordination (64 beds)
- Inpatient mental health stabilization (16 beds)
- Walk-in medical and behavioral health care

### Support for people in custody

522 people interacted with a multidisciplinary and interagency team that helps inmates apply for economic and health benefits, administers mental health assessment and develops plans to link people to services in the community, including ongoing support.

### Providing help for addiction in the community

#### 144 people got stable housing

through the KOLA program, a collaboration with the American Indian Community Development Corporation, which offers permanent supportive housing, primarily to Native American people who have experienced unsheltered homelessness and who have serious substance use issues.

#### 82 people received help

through the DART program, which also provided case management, nursing care and connections to treatment and permanent housing for people currently using drugs.

**1,468**

visits to the DART Wellness Recovery Room

**77**

peer recovery groups

# Stability

The ability to maintain an acceptable level of functioning for a family or individual in one or more of the following areas: employment, housing, finances or basic needs.

**People who have reached stability are able to fulfill their basic needs. They can move beyond the daily struggle for the tangible to get established in their communities.**

When people are able to account for those basic needs, they can adopt tools to make that stability sustainable for themselves and their families. In some cases, these relationships, with family, neighbors, friends and community organizations can sustain them as they move forward to continue to improve their lives.

Housing plays a key role in helping people manage their physical and mental health, maintain employment and create connections to their communities. Reliable and dignified housing is at the foundation of our work to help people achieve stability.



Children experiencing homelessness are sick,  
go hungry and have learning disabilities

**at 2X the rate of other children**

people placed in permanent housing **2,107**

## Finding a home to stay



Giving people opportunity and tools for permanent housing

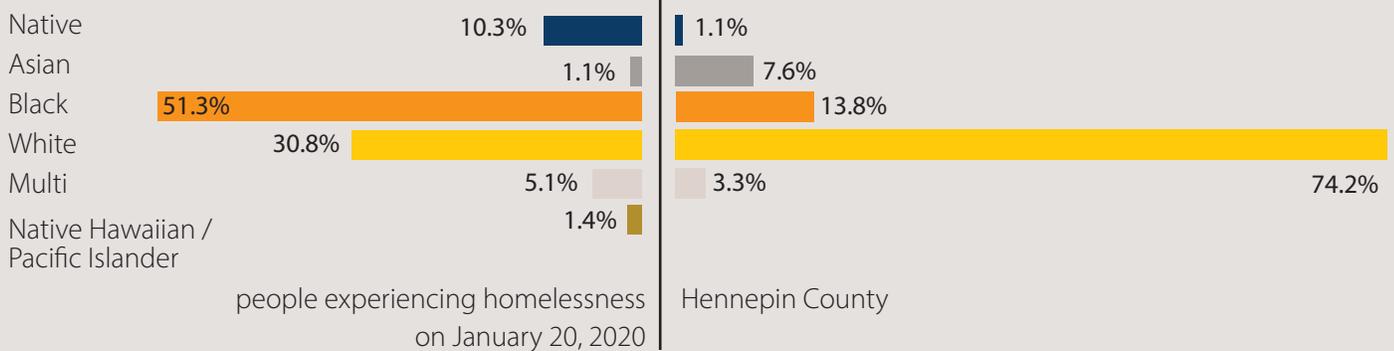
Homelessness has devastating effects on children’s mental health and educational development. Children who experience homelessness are more likely than others to experience homelessness as adults.

**340**

families received services to eliminate barriers to long-term stability through Stable Families, a partnership with Goodwill Industries. Since 2015, the number of families returning to shelter has decreased by half.

*Nationwide, families of color disproportionately experience homelessness.*

People experiencing homelessness compared to Hennepin County population



*Veterans are 44% more likely than others to experience homelessness*

**126**

Hennepin County veterans were experiencing homelessness

on August 20, 2020



days to enter permanent housing, on average\*

\*As with others, the duration of homelessness depends on the types of barriers veterans face.



**48,593**

total veterans in Hennepin County

**637**

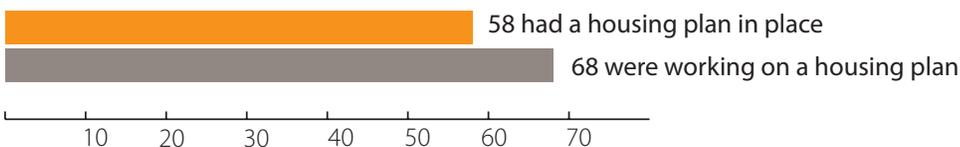
families experiencing homelessness

**259**

families transitioned into permanent housing

**530**

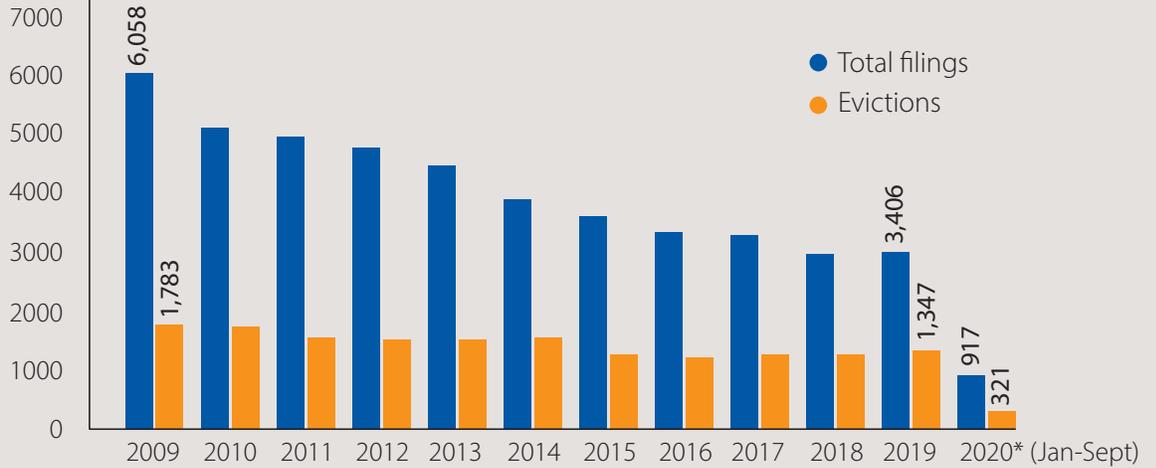
did family case conferencing with a multiagency, multidiscipline team to optimize services



An eviction is the most common reason people are denied housing.



Year over year eviction filings and evictions



\*The number of evictions plummeted in 2020 with Governor Walz' eviction moratorium.

Nonpayment of rent was listed as the cause for more than 90% of evictions.

## Imagining a better future

### Moving from shelter to home

Members of the shelter team troubleshoot alongside families, and connect them to employment as well as county and community resources to help make the move and to make it sustainable. Workers also help them think creatively about how assistance in one area may give them more flexibility elsewhere.

### Working together to prevent eviction

997

people worked with the Tenant Resource Center to stabilize housing.

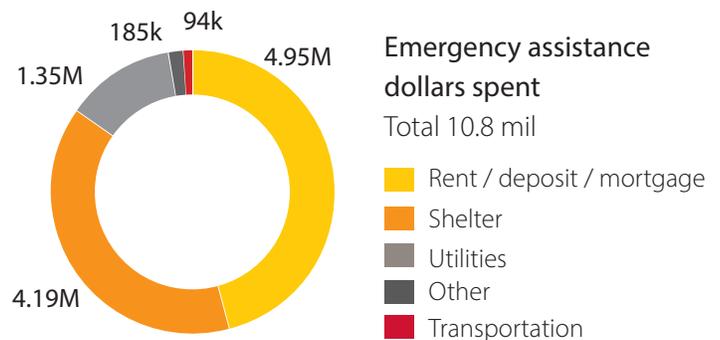
The Tenant Resource Center is a multiagency resource for people experiencing housing instability. The program opened in January at the Urban League's Glover Sudduth Center, in a community with high numbers of evictions. Since the pandemic began, the program has continued to offer remote service, connecting people to emergency assistance, legal help, mediation and employment assistance.

## Assistance for emergency situations

### Alleviating a crisis with a cash infusion

Some families and individuals live on a margin that's so slim that an injury or illness can cause a financial emergency and eviction. Emergency assistance is available once in a year to help people attain or maintain stability.

6,052 households received emergency assistance.



# Bringing in income to sustain a household

## Economic supports

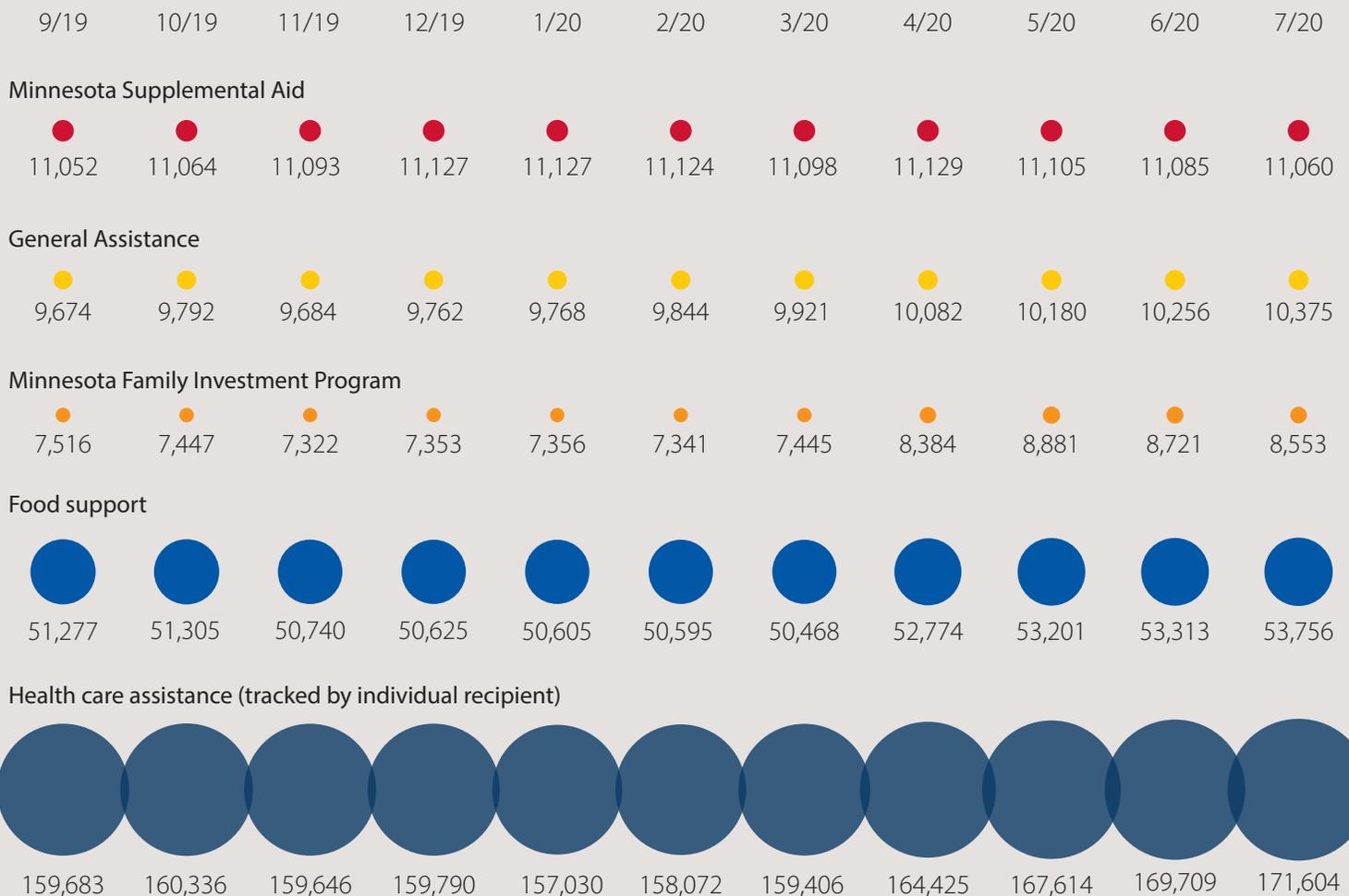
Before people can move forward, they need to stop falling behind. The Economic Supports area connects families and single adults to short-term and longer term state- and federally funded assistance programs including food, cash, and especially health care. In many cases, people receive other county and community resources – especially help with employment – to help them move forward.

**611,524**

people calling for economic support

When people need to initiate benefits, or have questions about an existing case, they call a single number and are routed to an area of specialty.

Total number of households receiving economic supports by month and type



The number of people seeking economic support did not spike with the COVID-driven recession in March, possibly because an eviction moratorium and federal stimulus and employment benefits helped people get by. Health care assistance saw the largest increase, about 8.5% between February and August.



# People First

Value all people, encourage their development, and respect their individuality and unique perspectives.



For the past several years, we have increasingly worked from the realization that our services and the ways we deliver them must be as unique as the strengths and needs of the people we serve.

We know many of our clients and partners value those times when we can be flexible and prioritize residents' needs. Though the coronavirus-driven closure of nearly all of our physical spaces has necessitated different ways of working, existing innovations prepared us for the shift.

Above: Homeless access team member Tina Armstrong, Sasina Samreth of the American Indian Community Development Corporation, and Health Care for the Homeless nurse Eddie Weibye prepared for a day helping people at the hygiene services area in Minneapolis.



## Working in the community to serve people experiencing homelessness

The nine-member homeless access team offers support at shelters, drop-in centers, libraries, encampments and anywhere else they can connect with people. The team works with other Hennepin County and public- and private-sector partners to begin the process of connecting people to medical and behavioral health care, food and shelter.

people experiencing unsheltered homelessness  
on January 20, 2020

## Starting treatment in place

*During 2015-2018 nearly 30% of opioid-related deaths in Hennepin County happened within a year of release from jail.*



Hennepin County received a \$248,060 State Opioid Response grant to provide medication-assisted treatment to people addicted to opioids.

**12**

people in withdrawal management at the Behavioral Health Care Center

**279**

people treated while incarcerated at the jail or Adult Corrections Facility

**291**

total people receiving treatment under the state grant

**66**

pregnant women are receiving medication assisted treatment

## Meeting people where they are

**After listening to residents' voices, we are more aware that some groups need a different approach.**

We are working with youth to refine the language we use to communicate with them. We are engaging community leaders to help us improve the ratio of Native American and Black children in out-of-home placement who can stay with people in their own family circles. We are meeting critical, life-stabilizing needs, such as housing, to people who face high barriers, such as active addictions.

We have learned that some of the technology we adopted because of COVID-19, such as videoconferencing, is working well for some residents. They no longer need to drive downtown, and some are simply more at ease in their own homes. Similarly, digital document sharing means Economic Supports staff can focus on complex cases, and residents don't need to hand-deliver documents for routine renewals.

**350**

people served in their homes as they live with severe behavioral health issues or developmental disabilities. Their living situations range from adult foster care to their own homes, with help from case managers and treatment providers. That support helps them maintain stability and reduces emergency or hospital care.

*Although they account for about one-sixth of U.S. workers, immigrants make up more than one-third of the workforce without digital skills.*

## Working to overcome access challenges for new Americans

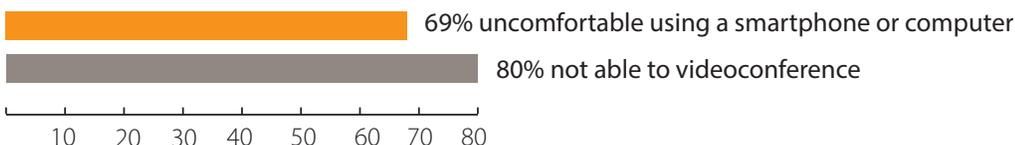
For new Americans, the Office of Multi-Cultural Services (OMS) is a gateway to county and community resources. The OMS staff is looking for better ways to safely serve clients who may not be comfortable in a digital environment.

**500,000+**

connections with New Americans over 20 years

### Digital environments prove challenging for OMS clients

In response to a survey during the pandemic about accessing county services:



**30**

languages spoken by OMS staff

# Self-sufficiency

The ability to be the primary resource in sustaining one's self or family unit.

**A person has reached self-sufficiency when they are able to consider their lives beyond the day-to-day and can make decisions for their future lives.**

This is the place where people can begin to integrate the services they receive with work to address the root causes of the barriers they have faced. They can use those resources as they work to create a stronger future.

Some of our economic support programs serve as supplements to government benefits or to residents' earned income. These are the programs that can give families and individuals the boost they need to achieve self-sufficiency and more.

Employment is an integral step in a journey to self-sufficiency. Hennepin assists with: career fairs, goal-setting, job search, and training. Much of the face-to-face employment assistance we offer moved online and to the phone during the pandemic, and we are working closely with our public- and private-sector partners.

With support, residents who live with a disability can prosper in their homes and communities.



In the United States in 2017, compared to households with a full-time worker, non-working households with children had a poverty rate that was

**31 percent higher.**

# Removing barriers to employment

**947**

people participated in 13 in-person hiring events

**300**

people participated in 12 virtual hiring events

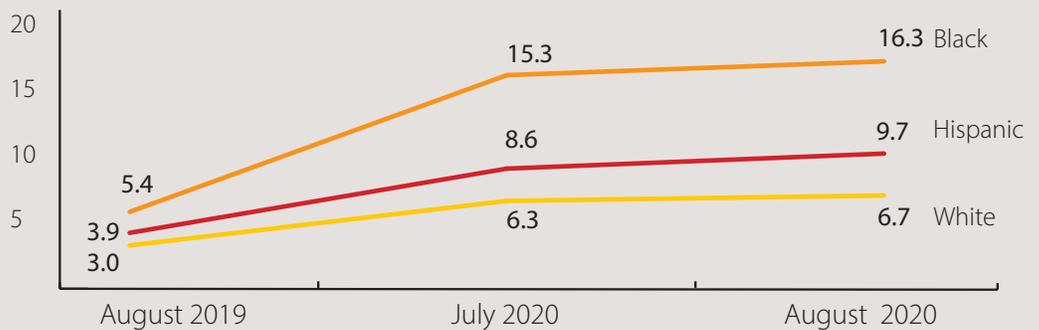
**55**

people participated in a community resource fair

**8.9%**

Hennepin County's unemployment rate  
September 2020

Minnesota unemployment rates by race



*People of color have lost employment during the pandemic at a higher rate than white counterparts.*

**249**

parents got employment services from Stepping Stones, a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development that provides intensive case management to connect people with resources to reduce and eliminate complex barriers in maintaining successful employment and achieving educational goals.

*In the U.S. in 2016, the median wealth for nonretired Black households 25 years old and older was less than one-tenth that of similarly situated White households.*

**8,786**

families received child care assistance

Child care assistance makes working work for families

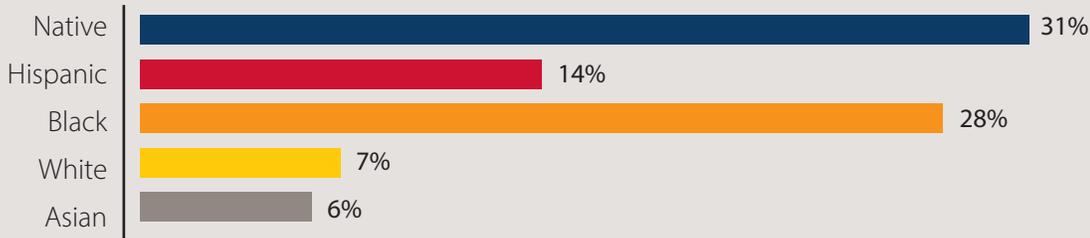
Aid helps parents pay for certified child care while they work, look for a job or attend school.

We've used data to understand patterns of use for Basic Sliding Fee child care assistance, which has allowed us to reduce or eliminate the waiting list for this program, which helps parents stay employed and increase income to stabilize their families.



**64%** of families receiving child care assistance identified as Black or African American

### People living below the poverty line in Hennepin County



*People of color disproportionately live in poverty.*

*55.4% of Minneapolis Public School students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.*



## Preventing and overcoming poverty

**74,100**  
households  
participated in SNAP

### Putting food on the table

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) is available to help people with low incomes – including people who are employed – buy food for good nutrition. Participants also can participate in a voluntary employment and training program for job readiness and life skills.

**210,116**  
households received  
health care assistance

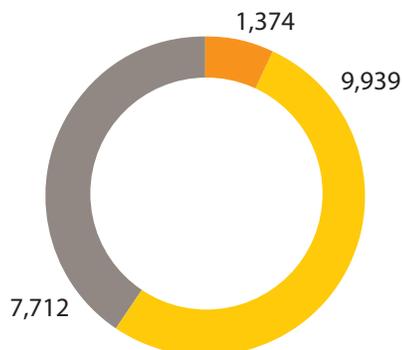
### Connecting to quality health care

One injury or illness can send people who lack affordable health care coverage into a spiral of debt and financial crisis. Hennepin County navigators help residents through the process of applying for and maintaining their health care coverage.

**72.9%**  
current support  
obligations were paid

### Supporting families

Child support is a strong antipoverty tool; helping parents make use of all their resources helps prevent need for some deeper-end programs. At the same time, efforts to right-size payments for their incomes has empowered noncustodial parents to be successful as they try to help support their children.



### Breakdown of families receiving child support by public assistance status

Current support paid, may or may not be paid in full Federal fiscal year 2020

- Receiving public assistance
- Formerly receiving public assistance
- Never received public assistance

**1,263**  
residents guided by  
regional navigators

The regional navigator program started in its current form in November 2019. Navigators help residents connect to health care programs, housing, furniture, community organizations, financial resources or social service support, through the county or community organizations.

**9,160**  
people called  
for intakes

Front Door Social services is a service area that connects people to resources such as long-term services and supports, children's mental health, chemical health, personal care attendants and more.

## Supporting people in their communities

### Helping people live more independently

We know that people who have disabilities are better off living with the support of their communities instead of in institutions. Hennepin County is the conduit for many programs that help make that possible.

### Offering supports for people with disabilities

Hennepin County administers and oversees programs to help people who qualify for Medical Assistance and who participate in state programs for senior citizens and people with disabilities. These programs apply to a range of services and supports, including personal care, equipment, food, life skills training, cleaning, and respite for caregivers.

### Initial applications during 2019

**6,222**

initial assessments

**12,752**

annual assessments

### Distribution of case managers at the end of 2019

**1,609**

county providers

**13,626**

contracted providers

*Research shows that employment helps people living with mental illness to be healthy in their communities because the work gives them a purpose and connections to other people.*

**126**

people with mental illness  
got and kept jobs

### Promoting employment for people with mental illness

The vocational rehabilitation services program connects people living with mental illnesses with jobs and support to retain them. Of the people who participated in our vocational support program in 2019:

**77%** were hired by local companies.

**51%** retained their jobs for a year, at an average wage of \$16.50 an hour.

# Well-being

The extent to which a person can live the life they have reason to value.  
A multi-dimensional concept relating to an overall sense of one's standard of living.

**Once a person is achieving well-being, they are empowered to make decisions for themselves.**

At this stage, the human services approach is the most tailored, person-centered and interactive. Generally speaking, once a person or a family has achieved well-being, they are less likely to cycle back

into the system – they are able to move forward independently, to not only care for their own needs, but to nurture personal connections and contribute to overall community well-being.



**1 in every 5 children**

in America received financial assistance from noncustodial parents. (2016)

# Strengthening families

## Child support has benefits for custodial and noncustodial parents

In addition to bolstering child support claims, paternity tests have an important role in strengthening connections between children and noncustodial fathers.

We know that children do better when their dads are involved. They have:

- Better social skills
- Closer family ties
- Fewer risky behaviors as teens
- Fewer delinquent behaviors

Engaged fathers also see benefits, including:

- Better employment outcomes
- Community involvement
- Better health
- Improved mental and physical health

**39,561**

Children with open support cases have had paternity established

**1,583**

Relationships were established during Federal fiscal year 2020



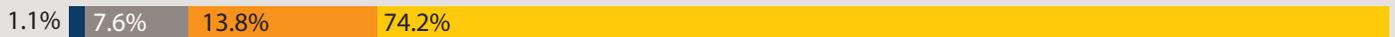
### Families receiving child support services by race

■ Native ■ Asian/Pacific Islander ■ Black ■ White

Custodial and noncustodial parents with open child support cases



Hennepin County population



Not every case identifies families' races.

*Families of color, make up a disproportionate amount of families served by child support.*

## Creating a framework for stronger family ties

Hennepin County works with the courts to help establish a legal parental relationship and/or set a payment that the noncustodial parent can handle. Payments don't need to be large to make a difference for families.

Right-sizing obligations helps more noncustodial parents make their required payments.

**66%**

paid at the original obligated amount

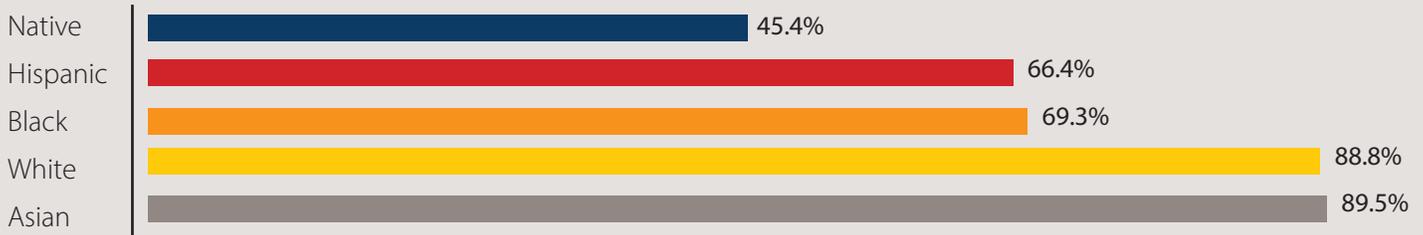
**75%**

paid at the right-sized amount

# 100%

of young people in the wraparound program remained living in the least restrictive settings (birth family, relative, adoptive family) when families received support for their severe emotional issues, avoiding foster care or residential treatment.

## Hennepin County students able to graduate within 4 years, 2018-2019 school year



*Native, Hispanic and Black youth have lower graduation rates than their White counterparts.*



## Stabilizing children and families

### 1,600

kids get transportation to their home schools.

### Maintaining normalcy for kids in placement

1,600 children and youth who are in out-of-home placement retain the stability of friends and teachers in their home schools as part of ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) with coordination between the foster care system and school districts.

### 1,937

residents worked with PSOP including 1,314 children and teens.

### Providing basic needs to reduce family stress

The Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) helps families with the kinds of stressors that can make parenting difficult. The voluntary program connects families to wraparound services— everything from basic needs such as food and clothing to mental and physical health services, substance use treatment, economic supports, housing and employment support and more. Families receive referrals from county and community partners.

64% of PSOP participants identified as Black or African-American



Of all 2019 PSOP participants::

### 74%

had not had a child protection report screened in

### 95%

did not have a future maltreatment finding

### 97%

kept custody of their children



## Supporting veterans

### Keeping our promises to veterans and their families

When people vow to defend the United States, the rest of us are making a promise to care for them and their families. Not every veteran comes to Hennepin County for help navigating the Department of Veterans Affairs and other systems, but we are available to help those who do.

We work with service members to remove barriers to housing and employment, and to connect them to educational resources. We provide resources and guidance to help them access vital therapies for the physical and mental health care they need.

**15,680**

Veterans used VA health care

**13,165**

Veterans received compensation

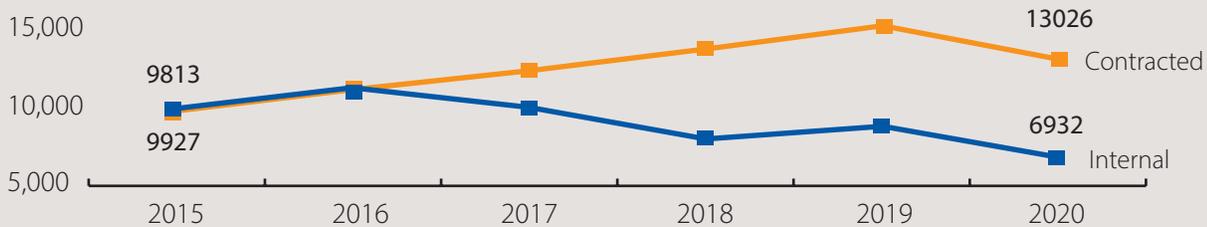
**614**

Veterans received pension

from 2019 calendar year

*In the long-term service and support area, we have been working for years to change the balance of internal versus contracted case managers.*

Clients served by Hennepin County and contracted providers



## Leveraging the strength of the community

### Partners provide local touchpoints

It's vital for people to make connections in their communities. That's one reason we are increasingly working with community partners to provide services. In addition to being located in the neighborhoods where residents live, these nonprofit organizations offer help that is culturally sensitive and in the languages residents speak.

### Measures make equity more accessible

A contracting equity work group is actively engaged in dismantling racial inequities and improving community outcomes by contracting with a mix of providers that reflect the needs and composition of communities. Strategies include providing technical assistance, expanding recruitment methods, dedicating funding for smaller providers and setting racial equity goals and feedback as performance measures.



# Commitment

**Service & System Excellence: Maximize our shared knowledge, operate with integrity, and build upon diverse perspectives to foster engaging conversations.**

Child protection social worker Audrey Gibson participated in a leadership development program from her home.



The systems we use in Human Services are as complex as the people we serve. But every day, we are strengthened by the caliber of our staff, our partners and the technological tools available to us.

Commitment to excellence means maximizing the wisdom, strengths and diverse perspectives of our staff, nonprofit partners and residents, to make the work more responsive and relevant.

We are working every day to challenge assumptions and ask questions at each stage of our work, especially when it comes to practices that reinforce racial disparities. Pointed questions and data guide us, as we right-size and evaluate the effectiveness of the services we offer.

## Creating leaders at all levels

30 Human Services staff members participated in a pilot leadership development program, with the idea that leadership is not a title or formal role, but a means of approaching daily work.

Diversity was one significant consideration as participants were chosen from among their peers.

**13**

supervisors

**2**

managers

**15**

front-line staff

## Working differently

**96% (2,775)**

of Human Services staff converted to a remote work environment in just

**4 days.**

**100**

office support staff jobs transformed from 100% face-to-face work to 100% remote.

### Responding to changing work conditions

When the pandemic closed our workplaces, Human Services had to pivot to a remote work model. Staff were forced to adopt new practices to continue serving residents.

As the pandemic gave us duties that didn't exist before and necessitated new ways to do old work, some people transitioned to new positions or adapted to new or unfamiliar technology.

### Group helps service areas match technology to process changes

When Human Services work teams need technological help to update or standardize practices, they can turn to the process analysis and improvement team, which works with practitioners to determine which virtual tools might enhance their work.

In the COVID-19 environment, some of that work included moving from hard-copy documents to scanned and electronic documents marked with electronic signatures, practices that keep workers and residents safer while also improving service and speed.

*Nearly 42% of the U.S. labor force was working from home full-time in June 2020, compared to about 5% pre-COVID-19.*

### Sharing information

Increasingly, we are benefiting from two-way communication with our community partners. As some areas share data and outcomes, the insight makes us better able to identify trends, match up work and find solutions together. Diverse perspectives help us provide better service to a diverse resident base.

### Giving people the choice of safer options for service

COVID-19 forced us to think about face-to-face services in a new way. Though some residents say they are looking forward to more in-person visits in behavioral health, children and family services, adult protection, economic supports and other areas, we have discovered that many others like having a choice of options for how to interact with us. We are working toward a business model that provides access, equity and choices for residents.

### Putting feedback into practice

After reaching out to both residents and economic supports workers, we transformed their concerns and feedback into process changes to provide better service that will increase access and convenience beyond the pandemic:

- Replacing long holds with call-backs
- Implementing digital drop boxes



**3000**

Residents responded to a survey about remote service.

**26**

Economic supports workers participated in focus groups to discuss their work.

# Addressing disparities in service areas

Our nation's racial reckoning has only added to the urgency of our work in Hennepin County to reduce disparities and barriers for people of color in our communities.

Each of our service areas is different, but we all strive to recognize the barriers people face and evaluate institutional bias that contributes to those barriers. That examination gives us tools to both address flaws in our systems and serve people with dignity as they work to overcome barriers as they experience them, and achieve and sustain a better life.

## Access, aging and disability services



Seniors and people living with disabilities can turn to Hennepin County's Aging, Access and Disability Service area for help with assessments and connections to services to help them live as independently as possible.

People with disabilities and older adults have greater disparities in income compared to the general population. Though the system has improved to provide more opportunities than past generations had, the added impact of racial disparities in health and income magnifies that difference for seniors and people living with disabilities.

Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota are particularly interested in understanding demographic differences in use of home- and community-based programs.

### Participation differs

We know in Hennepin County, participants in home care programs are 71% non-White (Jan 2018). Depending on the program, waiver recipients range from 25-55% non-White. There are efforts at the statewide level to understand if disparities account for the differences we see.

### Equitable access

From 2014 to 2018, Hennepin County has seen an increase in overall enrollment in programs, and we have increased the percentage for most non-White populations at a faster rate than for the White population. This was not due to a specific formal goal, rather an overall strategy of ensuring equitable access to information and programs. This is supported, in part, by the adoption of the MnCHOICES tool for assessments. With MnCHOICES, all programs for which a person may be eligible are more readily a part of the conversation, versus separate home care and waiver assessments.



## Behavioral health

Children and adults living with mental illness, substance use disorder or both can receive integrated, person-centered, recovery-focused interventions. Our approach involves coordinating services, policies, resources and data in a countywide framework.

The rate of people living with mental health issues is consistent across racial communities, but the negative impact of living with those conditions is compounded when things like access to care or housing or insurance are provided unevenly. In addition, people of color tend to come into contact with law enforcement at greater rates, and face stigma and criminalization of their mental health.

As a county, we have identified mental health as a No. 1 priority action item. We are proud of the multiagency collaboration that went into the new Behavioral Health Care Center. Already, more than half of the people who have used the clinic there have been people of color. We hope that the facility will be a powerful tool to counter racial disparities in behavioral health care.

### **Tool to examine outcomes**

We are committed to reviewing our work and outcomes by race and applying the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) in our decision-making process.

### **Community voices**

We are engaging communities of color in particular – in order to:

- Better understand the services they want us to prioritize to help them heal and achieve recovery, from their perspective
- Diversify community-based mental health treatment programs to include culturally responsive therapeutic services

We need to understand that mental illness is understood differently in different communities. That awareness can contribute to how or whether people want to receive services, where they turn to for healing, and more.

## Children and family services



Children and their families can receive a range of services aimed at preventing maltreatment, or finding safety and stability apart when abuse occurs. We work with families and community partners to find the best solutions to keep children and teens safe.

The families we serve commonly experience many disparities well before they enter our system – in housing, income, health and more. We see inequity in our system, too, with unbalanced impacts for White families and families of color, from initial reports to permanency decisions.

To address disparities in the child protection system, Children and Family Services is bringing more perspectives to the table, working against bias and inviting the community to join our work. Together, we can ensure children and youth are thriving in safe and stable families in Hennepin County.

### More perspectives

We're involving families in decision-making. Critical family meetings take place with the family and the agency, identifying the best place for kids to safely reside and planning together to make that happen.

### Work to identify bias

Most child protection referrals are made by professionals mandated to do so, but bias can affect the quality of those reports. Implicit bias training for mandated reporters builds knowledge in our community, and knowing better means doing better – for all of us.

When law enforcement is involved, reducing disparities in removal also means reducing trauma to children and families. During a rapid intake response, child protection workers use their expertise to ask the right questions and make a plan to keep kids safe and with their families whenever possible.

### Community involvement

Intake review team meetings bring a multidisciplinary group together to screen reports, with diversity of thoughts and expertise shaping collective decisions.

## Child support



We work with families to ensure that children can count on their parents for the resources they need to be healthy and successful. We strengthen noncustodial and custodial parents by establishing paternity and collaborating to set payments.

Our caseload reflects the county's population, with the state's largest percentage of non-White residents, and a large share of residents who currently receive or formerly received public assistance. We are using data to guide us to a system that is aware of the impact of disparities, and that eventually is more fair to all of our communities.

### Opportunities to learn, listen

A national conference staff attended in 2019 inspired them to find better ways to listen to the people we serve, to better hear and understand their needs. Out of that work, staff developed a simulation training on the challenges faced by those returning from incarceration.

More recently, in response to unrest in Minneapolis, staff has held listening sessions, where they come together to listen, share, and support each other. The intent of these sessions is to listen,

understand, and decide on action steps we can take to reduce disparities within the service area as well as for the people we serve. Staff have identified several ideas, and will vote on which ones to further explore and implement.

### Increased participation increases equity

Other areas of our routine work also help to reduce disparities for residents:

- Virtual court hearings, adopted due to the pandemic, have resulted in increased participation and will result in more right-sized orders.
- Establishing paternity supports family relationships by ensuring that children have needed support from both parents. Having a legal father involved in their lives also improves outcomes for children.

## Economic support



People who need help meeting basic needs can turn to the Economic Supports service area for resources. We work to help people break the cycle of generational poverty, and help them achieve economic stability to become more self-sufficient.

The residents we work with are the same people who are daily harmed by racism and racial disparities. Programs like SNAP, medical, family shelter, cash and emergency assistance were designed to provide a safety net. But they can be an insufficient lifeline for people.

While the presenting need is usually straightforward (buying food, for example), the person or family before us is often there as a result of systemic racism. The process and policies of the programs we administer also include structural barriers. Our approach is to try to change the system and also reform practices to remove barriers.

### System change

We continue to advocate for high-level changes that will make benefits more accessible and sustainable, and help people stay self-sufficient. For example, we are advocating for legislative changes to improve access to basic sliding fee child care and streamline MFIP processes.

### Staff support

We are building staff skills and leveraging diversity and lived experience on our team. The Economic support team is among the most diverse in Hennepin County and includes many members with lived experience and people of color in leadership.

### Service enhancements

We are working to simplify and dignify the process of applying for and maintaining benefits, using technology tools and providing multiple options for residents to connect. For example, we are building an online “portal” to communicate about SNAP benefits and we’ve partnered with community to work on reducing the administrative burden felt by residents with a housing crisis who use emergency assistance programs.

## Housing stability



Community members can access and sustain safe and stable housing with help from the housing stability service area. We provide resources to people currently experiencing homelessness, and provide resources for sustainable housing in the future.

Those experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County are overwhelmingly people of color. In addition to higher rates of poverty, people of color face compounding factors based on racial inequities from different systems, and they tend to pile up. Less access to well-paid jobs and affordable housing makes it hard for many people of color to find stable homes, and disparity-related barriers including criminal convictions and evictions make it difficult to secure the housing that exists.

We must identify disparities in housing to help us identify where the barriers are, and how we shift programming to respond to specific needs.

### **Funding power**

We can center our funding and contracting decisions around racial equity. When we make important decisions about who will receive our contracts and partnership, we ask direct questions and prioritize those programs that will best serve our underserved populations.

### **Lived experience matters**

We are making better-informed decisions about our work with shelters, with guidance from the organization Street Voices of Change and the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness.

### **Driven by data**

We gather data and make it work for us. As we track who enters and exits homelessness at what rate, and whether they achieve stability, we are better able to make vital decisions, such as engaging culturally specific community partners who share our mission and vision, and bring cultural competency, expertise and training that could make the difference for the people we serve.

## Internal supports



Human Services is the county's largest department, with multiple service areas and more than 3,200 employees who represent a diversity of work and life experience. Our work across the department provides a broad view that qualifies us to leverage each other's strengths, skills, knowledge and ideas to achieve sustainable outcomes and make Hennepin County a better place for all.

### Tools for growth

We guide the department's charge to expand the way staff think about the people we serve. We encourage them to regularly ask questions about unintended impacts our work has on diverse communities and to think about how to partner differently with residents.

To support staff, we partnered with the Disparities Reduction line of business to create a countywide training, Disparity Reduction 101; we have embedded more than 50 Racial Equity Impact Tool champions; we use the Collaborative Safety approach to review our work; and we value CliftonStrengths as a tool to better understand, celebrate and leverage staff assets.

### Authenticity in action

We demonstrate commitment to excellence in staff development, engagement, contract management and information technology.

- We use Safe and Connected™, a collaborative model for decision-making in child protection, and person-centered thinking to coach staff to think of residents as people first, and not as problems.
- We use International Association for Public Participation guidelines to provide a structure for community engagement and inclusion.
- We allocate dollars to work with emerging providers and we support them to meet contracting requirements. We include people with lived experience with human services in provider selection panels. We include racial equity goals in contract performance measures.
- We provide electronic invoicing to more easily and quickly pay our community partners. We connect people to emergency assistance in person and we use innovative solutions to serve them remotely.



## Veterans services

Veterans and their families can get help accessing government benefits from Veterans' Service area staff. Our work is to help our community of veterans to live their best lives by providing resources for income, health care and other support.

The residents who we are charged with serving are as diverse as the U.S. military, representing everyone from wealthy former service members to veterans who are experiencing homelessness.

In addition to the disparities people may face stemming from race, gender or sexual orientation, they also may face discrimination from being part of another group: military veterans. Service in the military is difficult and dangerous. Veterans face challenges from the physical disabilities incurred during active duty, as well as the mental health issues they may face as a result of the trauma they may experience during their service.

### **Strengths-based service**

We get to know service members to find out what strengths they bring with them and what might hold them back. We work to learn veterans' interests and skills and assess the extent of their disabilities and other challenges. That's how we decide whether their best resources are education, physical and mental health care, employment coaching, economic supports or a combination of those services.

### **Help getting benefits**

We work with veterans to help them overcome barriers to benefits. For example, we can assist with discharge upgrades for people who are not yet eligible for benefits. We help people to identify the documents and evidence they need and walk them through the process to finalize their applications.

## Well-being



Residents can get help achieving and sustaining better lives with help from the Well-Being line of business. Our work is to connect people with resources and support, including employment, education and wraparound care.

People come into our systems facing an array of barriers to the life they want to live. Some of those are structural and systemic, such as criminal convictions, or a history of poverty, homelessness or trauma. We know that non-White people in our communities are more likely to have these negative experiences than White people.

Some of the barriers are existential: The barriers they have faced in their past often have the effect of limiting their hopes and dreams for their futures. Others are all too real: Without help, the systemic hoops people must jump through can seem insurmountable.

What we see, however, is that once people have overcome those barriers, they are ready and willing to start a new journey.

### **Remove barriers**

People want to move ahead with plans for their lives. They might need help expunging criminal records, connecting to child care assistance or job training, stabilizing their housing and gaining tools to continue independently.

### **Help moving ahead**

We work with people to help them release the baggage their previous traumas or setbacks have created. We work with people to create individualized plans to identify their strengths and their dreams to create a plan for their lives.



# Human Services

Better lives, stronger communities

## Hennepin County Human Services Leadership team

### **Jodi Wentland**

Assistant County Administrator-Human Services

### **Betsy David**

Financial Administration Director

### **Chris Lancrete**

Business information Officer

### **Veterans' Service**

#### **Neil Doyle**

Senior Department  
Administrator

### **Children & Family Services**

#### **Joan Granger-Kopesky**

Director

#### **Michelle Lefebvre**

Senior Department  
Administrator

#### **Ann Ahlstrom**

Child Well-being and  
Permanency Senior  
Attorney

### **Internal Services**

#### **Bob Jackson**

Director

#### **Ashley Everett**

Internal Services  
Senior Department  
Administrator

#### **Ayanna Farrell**

Internal Services  
Senior Department  
Administrator

### **Housing Stability, Behavioral Health, Access, Aging and Disability**

#### **Mike Herzing**

Director

#### **Leah Kaiser**

Behavioral Health  
Senior Department  
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#### **Louella Kaufer**

Access, Aging &  
Disabilities Senior  
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#### **David Hewitt**

Housing Stability  
Senior Department  
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### **Economic Supports, Child Support and Well-being**

#### **May Xiong**

Director

#### **Kate Heffernan**

Economic Supports  
Senior Department  
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#### **Casey White**

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#### **Pat Avery**

Well-being Senior  
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