

Human Services budget: Focusing on immediate priorities

Overview

Minnesota made careful investments in 2024 to address the most immediate needs in human services. That includes improving options for people with complex needs who are stuck in hospital emergency departments because of too few appropriate care settings. Another step forward will expand capacity where it's most needed in DHS-operated psychiatric hospitals. And a new Medicaid demonstration project will seek to improve outcomes for people who are at risk of homelessness and drug overdoses as they leave prisons and jails.

2024 legislation

Removing systemic barriers for people with complex support needs in hospitals

The state will take steps to address systemic barriers that keep people with disabilities and complex support needs in hospitals, including in emergency departments. Minnesota's current acute-care backlog affects both the acute and long-term care systems. Measures approved in 2024 will improve outcomes for children and adults who are currently stuck in hospitals, helping them to get the care they need to live and thrive at home or in their communities.

Addressing substance use disorder and other needs for Minnesotans leaving incarceration

A new Medicaid demonstration project will allow the state to cover physical and behavioral health services in correctional settings in the 90 days before a person reenters the community. Ongoing funding for the Bridging Benefits project will help people at high risk of recidivism connect with food, housing and other supportive services. These transformative strategies will support the success of people leaving incarceration, reduce the risk of overdoses, and help ensure public safety, racial justice and equitable behavioral health outcomes.

Providing resources to address the impact of opioids on the child welfare system

The state will update the way it distributes child welfare funding from fees paid by opioid manufacturers and distributors. The change will make funding available to cover prevention efforts that help families before they get involved in the child welfare system. Minnesota will also eliminate a sunset on the opioid fees to ensure continued resources to mitigate the harmful impact of opioids on the state's people and communities.

Supporting child welfare workers with system modernization

Critical work to transform outdated information technology systems will move forward with an investment to begin modernizing the Social Services Information System, or SSIS. Problems with performance and stability in the current system has resulted in high turnover among child welfare workers who use the system. The upgrades will give workers more time to spend with children and families to ensure the child welfare system provides the support they need.

Expanding treatment capacity and improving access to mental health care

Following recommendations from the Governor’s budget and Priority Admissions Task Force, the state will add mental health treatment capacity, increase admissions to DHS-operated psychiatric hospitals, and provide investments to assist people experiencing mental health episodes in the community and in correctional settings.

Repurposing the substance use disorder program in St. Peter will add 16 beds to the Forensic Mental Health Program. These additional beds will take pressure off the Anoka-Metro Regional Treatment Center, allowing for dozens more admissions there each year. A funding increase will allow the Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Hospital in Willmar to operate at its full 16-bed capacity. Other investments include a pilot to improve mental health medication administration in jails, a pilot partnership with jail facilities for case consultation to improve supports for people in jails, planning for additional mental health capacity in Direct Care and Treatment facilities, and investing in community capacity growth.

Improving child care licensing standards through a weighted risk system

A weighted risk system for licensed child care settings will prioritize resources for providers who most need technical assistance and support, while improving the consistency of licensing statewide. The new, quantifiable standard was developed through extensive engagement with child care providers and will replace the “Fix-it Ticket” system. Each regulation will be weighted based on the level of risk a violation poses to children in care.

Increasing capacity to meet emergency needs

A new Human Services Response Fund will offer support to people and communities during emergencies. Building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the fund will enable the human services commissioner to respond to emergencies in a flexible and timely manner.

Reducing childhood hunger during the summer

Beginning this summer, ongoing funding for state administrative costs will help the families of 400,000 Minnesota children buy food. The new federal Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program, or Summer EBT, provides \$120 per eligible child for low-income families with school-aged children during the summer. Benefits come on pre-loaded cards that families can use to purchase groceries. The federal government covers 100% of the benefits and 50% of the state’s administrative costs, shared by the Minnesota Department of Education and DHS. The DHS portion of Summer EBT will move to the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Improving access to behavioral health services in the community

Minnesota will make new investments to improve access to behavioral health services in the community. Mental health service rates will increase by an average of 4% as the state takes initial steps toward implementing the recommendations of the Medical Assistance Outpatient Rate Study. Rates for substance use disorder services in residential settings will rise 3%. Hospitals will receive a one-time increase in payments for mental health services. Rates for adult day treatment services will receive annual inflationary updates. The state will also provide more funding for respite services and school-linked behavioral health services. Medical Assistance will expand access to child and family psychoeducation services in schools, while developing future community-based benefits for people who need behavioral health services.

For More Information

DHS 2024 session fact sheets: <https://mn.gov/dhs/media/fact-sheets/2024-session-fact-sheets.jsp>