



Long-Term Homeless Definitions and Eligibility Questions

Definitions

Homeless (Minnesota): A household lacking a fixed, adequate night time residence (includes doubled up).

Households Experiencing Long-Term Homelessness (Minnesota): Persons including individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Any period of institutionalization or incarceration shall be excluded when determining the length of time a household has been homeless.

Doubled Up/Couch Hopping: Doubled up or couch hopping is considered an episode of homelessness if a household is doubled up with another household (and duration is less than one year) or couch hops as a temporary way to avoid living on the streets or an emergency shelter. **Transitional Housing:** Time spent in transitional housing (TH) is a neutral event. Housing history prior to or after transitional housing should be evaluated to determine if it meets the state's LTH definition. For example, if a household was homeless 8 months prior to entering TH and 4 months after existing TH, the household would meet the LTH definition.

Note: Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition.

Households at Significant Risk of Long-Term Homelessness (Minnesota Housing): Includes (a) households that are homeless or recently homeless with members who have been previously homeless for extended periods of time, and are faced with a situation or set of circumstances likely to cause the household to become homeless in the near future, and (b) previously homeless persons who will be discharged from correctional, medical, mental health or treatment centers who lack sufficient resources to pay for housing and do not have a permanent place to live.

Funding sources that may have this definition attached include:

- General Obligation Bonds (GO Bonds)
- 501c3 Non Profit Housing Bonds
- Housing Infrastructure Bonds

Households at Significant Risk of Long-Term Homelessness (DHS): Families with minor children, or unaccompanied youth that have had two or more episodes of homelessness that have resulted in shelter stays.

Permanent Supportive Housing (Minnesota Housing): Permanent rental housing affordable to the population served where support services are available to residents. Permanent supportive housing is available to individuals and families with multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing, including those who are formally homeless or at risk of homelessness and those with mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and/or HIV/AIDS. Note: HUD requires disability for permanent supportive housing eligibility.

Homeless (HUD): An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- a. A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- b. An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
- c. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Chronically Homeless (HUD): A *homeless* individual or a family with children with a *disabling condition* (adult) who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Difference between Minnesota Long-Term Homeless and HUD Chronic definitions: For HUD Chronic, an adult in the family must be disabled and meet the HUD definition of homelessness the night before program entry. These are not requirements for LTH. The household does not have to be homeless the night before program entry.



Common LTH Eligibility Questions

What is an episode of homelessness?

- A stay in an emergency shelter (could be one night or 2 months)
- Fleeing Domestic Violence
- Couch Hopping or Doubled Up

How long does a household need to stay in a shelter before it's considered an episode of homelessness?

One night. If the household has been in and out of emergency shelters at least four times over the course of three years and needs supportive services to successfully maintain their housing then the household meets the LTH definition.

How long does each episode of couch hopping need to last before it's considered an episode of homelessness?

In general, for a couch hopping event to be considered an episode of homelessness, it should not last longer than 12 consecutive months. The housing history is important information to determine whether there is a pattern or history of unstable housing.

What about board and lodge, group homes, halfway houses?

They are generally considered neutral events if utilized as a temporary transition from an institution or a previous episode of homelessness. If the board and lodge, group home or halfway house were used as permanent housing options for the household, then the event may not be considered neutral.

What about foster care?

Placement in foster care is considered a neutral event. Housing history prior to or after foster care placement (including time spent homeless as an accompanied minor) should be evaluated to determine if it meets the state's LTH definition.

What about motel vouchers instead of a shelter?

Some parts of the state utilize motel vouchers as a form of emergency shelter or individuals/households themselves utilize hotels to avoid shelters. Stays in motels that are less than 12 months are considered an episode of homelessness.

What about refugees?

Long term homeless would apply to persons who have been living in this country for at least one year and have been homeless for that period. Time spent homeless outside of the country is a neutral event. PSH for LTH long-term homelessness is targeted to people who need affordable housing and services to maintain the housing and often have serious mental illness, chemical dependency, or dual diagnosis in addition to other barriers.

How long should a LTH household remain eligible for PSH for LTH?

If the household meets the LTH definition, that household will remain eligible for PSH for LTH as long as the household continues to need supportive services to effectively maintain their housing. Households that continue to need supportive services can choose to move from one PSH for LTH (unit, development or program) to another.

Should I talk with Minnesota Housing to request a waiver if someone is close to meeting the LTH definition and in great need of supportive services?

We consider a waiver if:

- The person/household has a history of unstable housing.
- The person/household needs supportive services to maintain housing and could benefit from the services.
- There aren't other eligible households waiting for the housing.

What types of facilities are included in neutral time and how do you deal with it when shelter stays are on either side of it but the time was for longer than a year? For example, someone's homeless history says they stayed in a shelter in November 2009, then went to treatment from Nov. 15-Feb 15, 2010, then went to Mission Lodge from Feb. 15-November 15, 2010, then went to a shelter Nov 15-current. Does that count as two individual episodes of homelessness?

Yes, this represents 2 episodes of homelessness.

One of my participants was selected back in the fall. She met with me and we verified her LTH status - she was homeless about 3 years. Before we housed her, she entered a treatment facility for 90 days and is about to be placed in an IRTS facility for another 90 days - both positives for her health and well-being. I am assuming she still qualifies as LTH. That treatment and IRTS are "disregarded" and that we can work to house her during the next 90 days so that she can spend only a minimum time at Harbor Light. Does she qualify?

Yes, she qualifies as LTH because the time spent in treatment and IRTS are considered neutral.

Chemically dependent and SPMI clients tend to have long, costly periods of institutionalization. I've seen clients with 5+ years of institutionalization that do not meet the definition. Perhaps they were functioning and barely hanging on to housing prior to those 5 years. Is there any way the LTH definition can accommodate for populations with long periods of institutionalization?

It's likely that the households may be eligible if the household needs supportive services to successfully maintain their housing and has been in and out of institutions for the majority of their housing history. Please contact the Agency so that we can talk through such cases on an individual basis.

When someone goes into transitional housing and then they become homeless again, does the three years you're counting back include the time they are in transitional housing or can you go back and look at their homeless history three years back from their admission date into transitional housing (TH)? Is there a time limit on what is considered a transitional housing program (6 months, a year, 2 years, more)?

Yes, you can go back and review the housing history prior to entering TH. They can count the time before and after the TH to determine LTH.

If someone does not have 12 consecutive months of homelessness due to going into treatment for two months in that last 12 month period, can we go back two more months to get consecutive 12 months?

Yes, treatment is considered neutral time. There is not a time limit on the "look back" time to determine whether the household meets the LTH definition.

Is an episode determined by treatment, transitional housing, hospital, jail, etc., if someone is homeless then goes to treatment or any of the other mentioned, then is homeless again (regardless of how long in those institutions), is that two episodes? Does institution time make an episode?

Yes, this would be two episodes separated by a neutral time in the institution. The institution time is neutral, and not an episode itself, but does separate the episodes of homelessness.

How much leverage are we given to determine the “spirit of LTH”?

Please continue to refer questions to your program contact at Minnesota Housing when you are unsure as to whether a household meets the definition. If a waiver is approved, your file should contain documentation of the waiver. This is also helpful in keeping Minnesota Housing informed about circumstances affecting your program and community.