



West Central MN CoC Annual Meeting

March 12, 2026 | 1 to 3 PM
Fergus Falls, MN

Thank you to Otter Tail County!



Lynne Penke Valdes

Deputy County Administrator

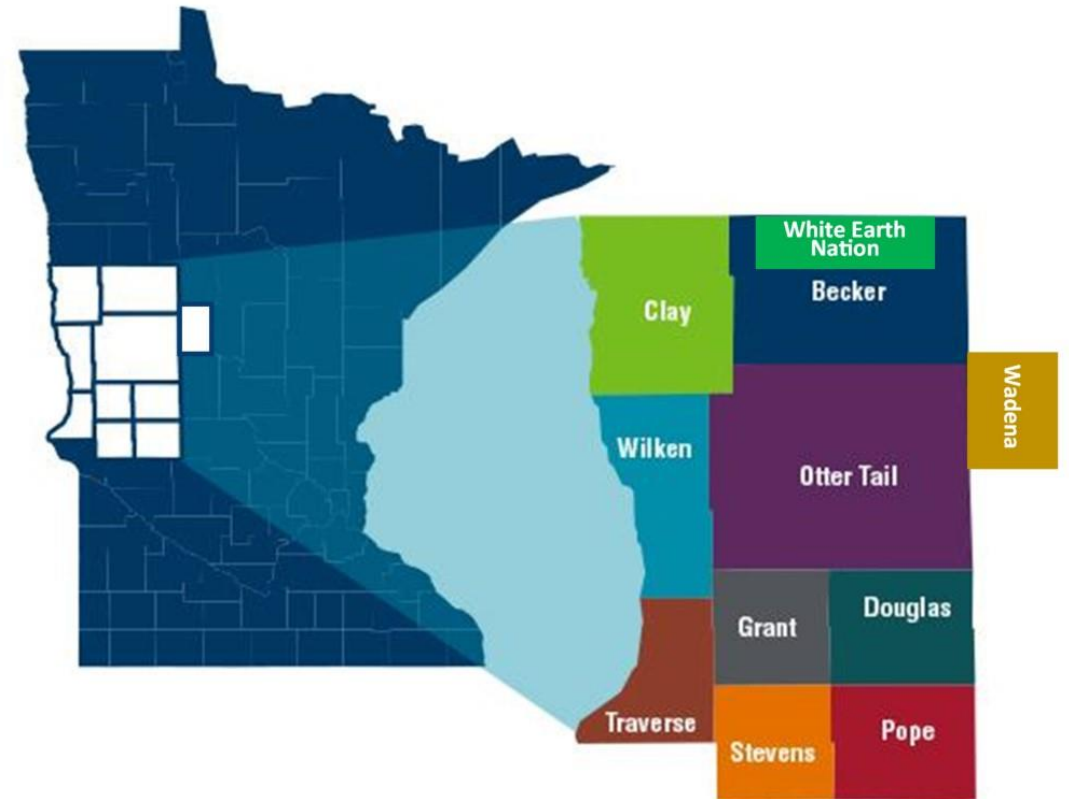


OTTER TAIL
COUNTY - MINNESOTA

West Central Continuum of Care

Mission Statement:

Working together to make homelessness rare, brief and one time



West Central Continuum of Care Staff



Eric Napier

HMIS Manager,
System
Administration

**West Central
Continuum of Care
Regional Lead for
the Institute of
Community
Alliances (ICA)**



Heather Lindula

CARES Specialist:
Assessment,
Assignment &
Prioritization



Jessica Rose

Lived Experience
Engagement
Coordinator for the
West Central
Continuum of Care



Liz Kuoppala

CoC Coordinator for
the West Central
Continuum of Care



Meagan Hernandez

CoC Coordinator for
the West Central
Continuum of Care



Sadie Nelson

CARES Specialist:
Access &
Domestic
Violence (DV)

West Central Continuum of Care Board *Executive Officers*



Amber Holstrom

Family and Community
Services Director at West
Central Minnesota
Community Action
(WCMCA)

Board Chair for the West
Central Continuum of
Care



Sara Opitz, BA, LSW,
LADC

Executive Director and
Co-Founder at The
Lotus Recovery Center

Chair Elect for the
West Central
Continuum of Care



Gina Kautz

Supportive Services
Manager at Clay
County HRA (CCHRA)

Past Board Chair for
the West Central
Continuum of Care



Jamie Lund, LMSW

Homeless Prevention &
Diversion Program
Director at Presentation
Partners in Housing
(PPIH)

Board Secretary for the
West Central
Continuum of Care

West Central Continuum of Care Board *Committee Representatives*



Brenna Becker

Family and Community
Services Lead
Advocate at West
Central Minnesota
Community Action
(WCMCA)

More Than Shelter
Committee
Representative for the
West Central
Continuum of Care



Chandler Esslinger

Executive Director
at Fargo-Moorhead
Coalition to End
Homelessness
(FMCEH)

CARES
Representative for
the West Central
Continuum of Care



Emma Schmit, LSW

Housing Director at
Lakes and Prairie
Community Action
Partnership (CAPLP)

Past Board Chair and
CAPLP Representative
the West Central
Continuum of Care

*CAPLP is the
Collaborative
Applicant*



Evan Peterson

Youth Advisory Board
Representative for the
West Central
Continuum of Care



Jason Urbancyk

Community
Engagement and
Communications
Team Chair with
Homes for All.

Lived Experience
Advisory Board
Representative for the
West Central
Continuum of Care



Meagan Hernandez

Family Development
Director at MAHUBE-
OTWA Community
Action Partnership

MAHUBE-OTWA
Representative for
the West Central
Continuum of Care

West Central Continuum of Care Board *Appointed Members*



Jessica Faunce

Justice North

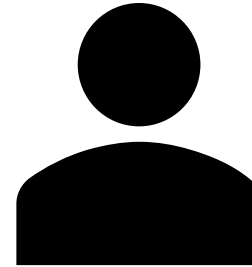
Legal Aid
Representative for
the West Central
Continuum of
Care



Jo Bolte

Someplace Safe

Crime Victim
Services
Representative for
the West Central
Continuum of Care



Mary Gagnon

White Earth Human
Services

White Earth Nation
Representative for the
West Central Continuum of
Care



Shelly Carlson

Mayor of the City of
Moorhead

Business Representative for
the West Central
Continuum of Care

The Year of Impact

- Youth Homeless Demonstration Project
- Tiny Home Project
- Silver Linings
- Housing Supports in Clay County
- Broke ground for 3rd Ave Flat



The Year of Impact

We helped 840 neighbors
find stability in 2025.

That's about the
population size of Battle
Lake, Minnesota!

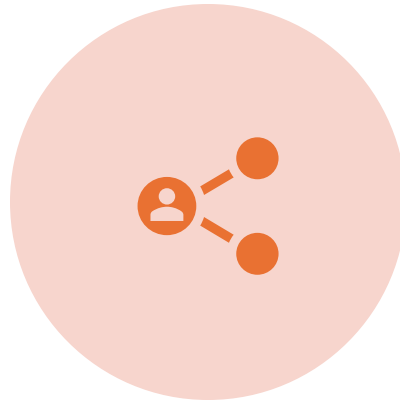




Other Community Updates



COMMUNITY WINS &
SHOUT OUTS



SHARE WITH THE
GROUP



DROP IT IN THE
TEAMS CHAT

Moving People Home

2025 Coordinated Entry Outcomes



Prepared by Heather Lindula and Sadie Nelson

Coordinated Entry Data – HMIS

Calendar Year: 2025

631 - Total Number of households on the Coordinated Entry Priority List on 1/1/2025

1106 - Total number of households entering Coordinated Entry in 2025

1271 - Total number of households exited from Coordinated Entry in 2025

463 - Total Number of households on the Coordinated Entry Priority List on 1/1/2026

Coordinated Entry Data – Alternative Database Calendar Year: 2025

2 - Total Number of households on the Coordinated Entry Priority List on 1/1/2025

94 - Total number of households entering Coordinated Entry in 2025

21 - Total number of households exited from Coordinated Entry in 2025

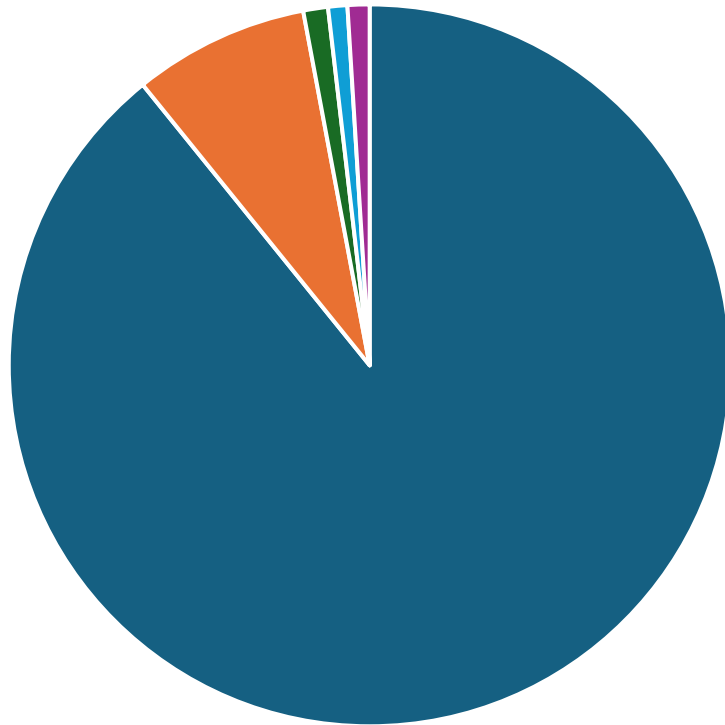
75 - Total Number of households on the Coordinated Entry Priority List on 1/1/2026

An Alternative Database provides a 'secure vault' for sensitive client information, ensuring that survivors of domestic violence can access housing and support services without compromising their safety or privacy.

Exit Destinations - HMIS

Number of individuals exiting Coordinated Entry to permanent housing or transitional housing

Exit Destination of Individuals



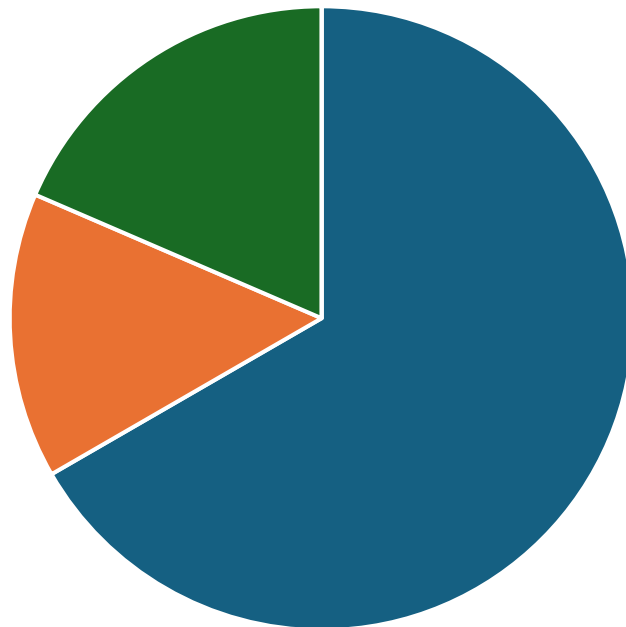
- Permanent Rental
- Permanently with family or friends
- Foster Care, Group Home or Long Term Care Facility
- Owned by client
- Transitional Housing

| Exit Destination | # of Individuals |
|--|------------------|
| Permanent Rental | 725 |
| Permanently with family or friends | 64 |
| Foster Care, Group home or Long-Term Care facility | 9 |
| Owned by client | 7 |
| Transitional Housing | 8 |
| Total | 813 |

Exit Destinations – Alternative Database

Number of individuals exiting Coordinated Entry to permanent housing or transitional housing

Exit Destination by Individuals
(ALT-DB)



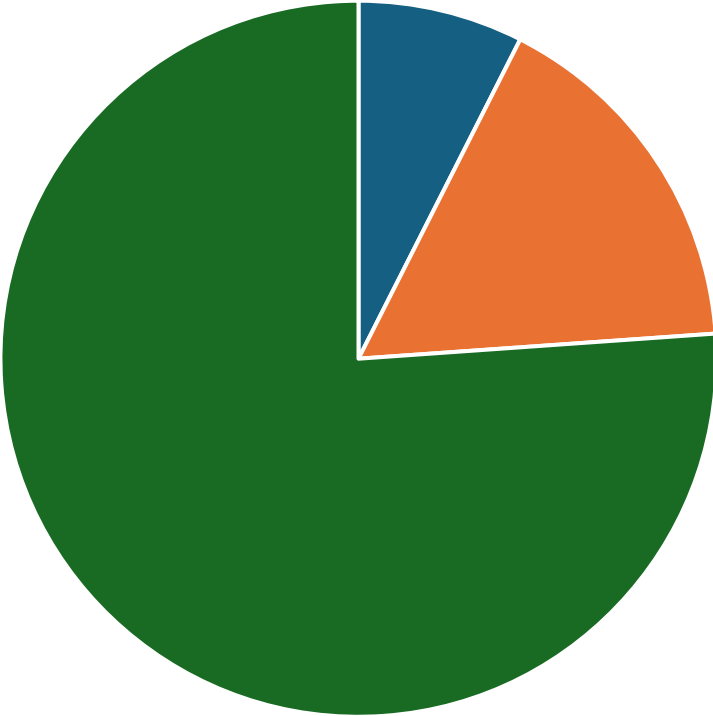
- Permanent Rental
- Permanently with Family/Friends
- Transitional Housing (TH)
- Owned by Client / Other Perm

| Exit Destination | # of Individuals (ALT-DB) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Permanent Rental | 18 |
| Permanently with Family/Friends | 4 |
| Transitional Housing (TH) | 5 |
| Owned by Client / Other Perm | 0 |
| Total Successful Individuals | 27 |

Exit Destinations – HMIS and Alternative Database

Number of individuals exiting Coordinated Entry to temporary solutions

Exit Destinations of Individuals



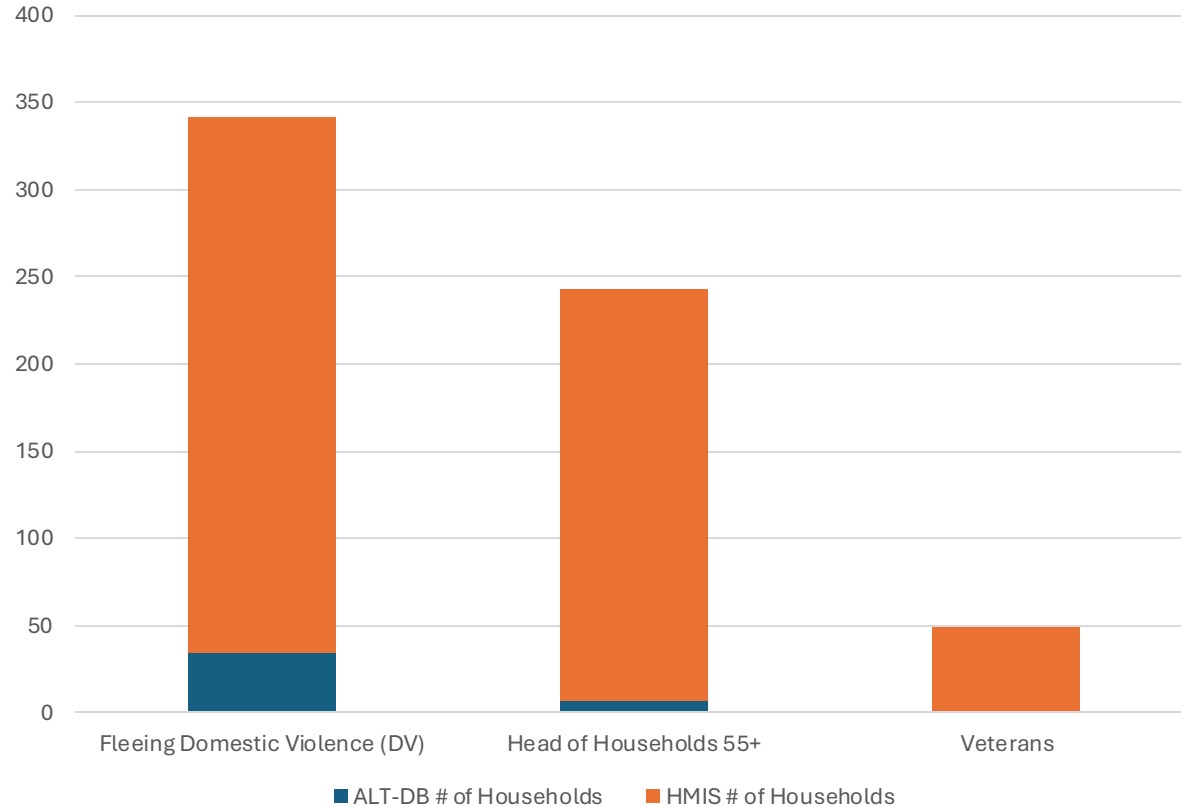
- Hotel or motel without Emergency Shelter
- Treatment or hospitalization
- Staying temporarily with family or friends
-

| Exit Destination | # of Individuals | Individuals (ALT-DB) |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| Hotel or motel without emergency shelter | 5 | 0 |
| Treatment or hospitalization | 11 | 0 |
| Temporarily with family or friends | 51 | 0 |
| Total Individuals | 67 | 0 |

Subpopulation Data: HMIS and Alternative Database

Number of households identified Coordinated Entry

Subpopulation: # of Households

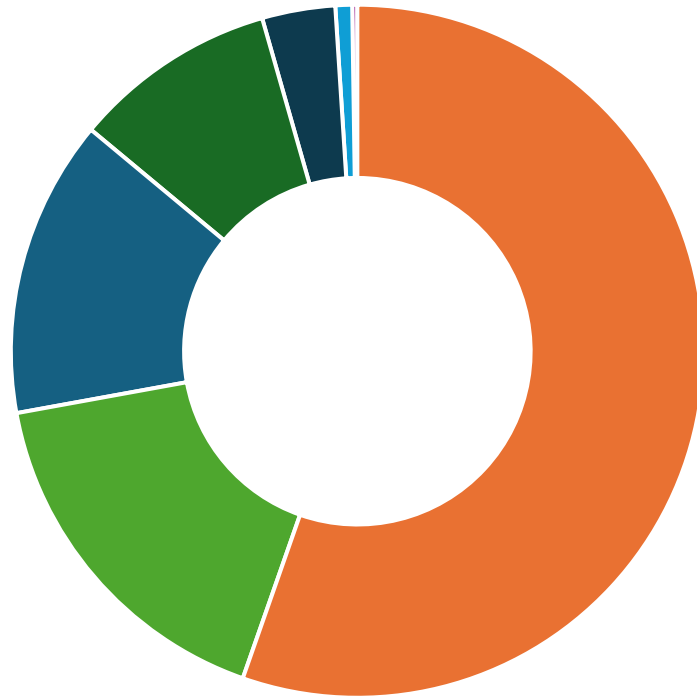


| Subpopulation | HMIS # of Households | ALT-DB # of Households | Combined (HMIS & ALT-DB) # of Households | % of total Households |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Fleeing Domestic Violence (DV) | 308 | 34 | 342 | 18.66% |
| Head of Households 55+ | 236 | 7 | 243 | 13.26% |
| Veterans | 49 | 0 | 49 | 2.67% |

A total of 1,833 households were active in coordinated entry in 2025.

Household composition – This is for the Head of Household ONLY

Number of Heads of Household by Household Composition



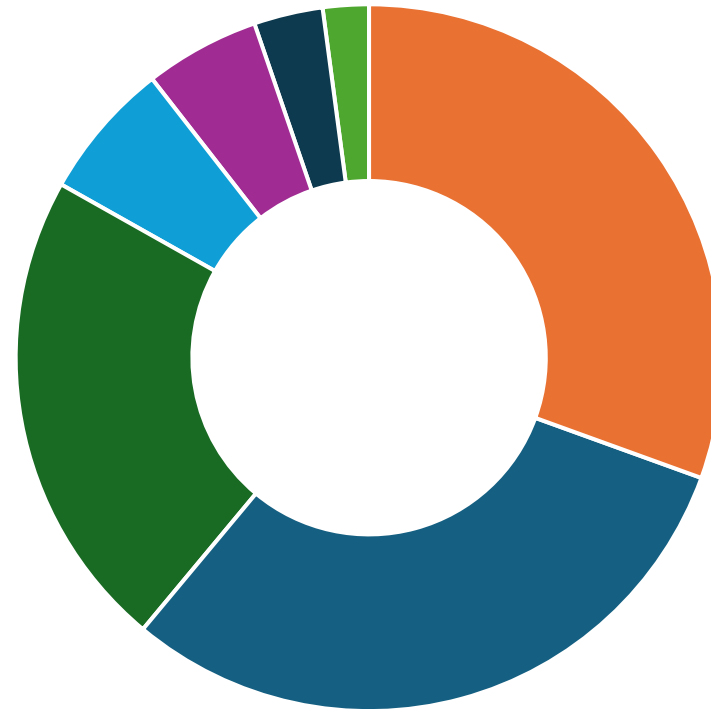
- Single Adults 55+
- Single Adults 25-54
- Single Youth 18-24
- Single children <18
- Families 55+ with children
- Families 25-54 with children
- Families 18-24

| Household Type | Number of Heads of Household |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Single Adults 55+ | 232 |
| Single Adults 25-54 | 924 |
| Single Youth 18-24 | 159 |
| Single children <18 | 13 |
| Families 55+ with children | 4 |
| Families 25-54 with children | 280 |
| Families 18-24 | 57 |

Household composition Alternative Database

This is for the Head of Household ONLY

of Households by Household Composition



- Single Adult (25-54)
- Youth Single (18-24)
- Family Adult (25-54)
- Youth Family (18-24)
- Single Adult 55+
- Families 55+
- Minor Youth HoH (<18)

| Household Type | Count |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Single Adult (25-54) | 29 |
| Youth Single (18-24) | 29 |
| Family Adult (25-54) | 21 |
| Youth Family (18-24) | 6 |
| Single Adult 55+ | 5 |
| Families 55+ | 2 |
| Minor Youth HoH (<18) | 3 |
| Total Unique Households | 96* |

Note: Total reflects unique IDs across the provided 2025 data range.



Advisory Board Updates

Willow Kilcline
Evan Hanson





What is the YAB

- A group of Youth between 17- 24 with homelessness experience
- We as the YAB use our lived experience to combat homelessness within the community
- Active by speaking to legislators, volunteering, etc.



Core Values

Community: We believe in working together with the community to make all voices heard

Empathy: We strive to understand youth in diverse experiences

Supporting Youth: We commit ourselves to uplift and empowering young people



Core Values

Resilience: We value the strength to overcome and adapt to challenges and change

Communication: We commit to being open, honest, and respectful while listening, expressing, and fostering trust

Advocacy: We stand up for the needs and rights of youth



Mission

Our mission is to be a part of a non-discriminatory, supportive, empathetic community that uplifts and supports young people that is able to efficiently support homeless youth and young adults in fostering leadership, independence unity and resilience of young people by helping to raise awareness and make connections.



Vision

We envision being an active and supportive part of the community that recognizes that it takes more than housing to keep someone afloat in life.



Governance & Structure

The YAB is a 10 person board that utilizes a consensus-based voting structure

At least 75% of members need to be present for a vote to pass



Administrative Roles

YAB Chair

Evan Peterson

YAB co-chair

Corina Ramirez-Linn

Secretary/Administrative Assistant

Tobi Ochocki

YAB Public Relations Representative

Willow Kilcline

Ecumen project

With the help of Youthworks we bought the former assisted living and memory care facility Ecumen Evergreens



The plan for the building is for a youth-led transitional housing facility for young adults 18-24 experiencing homelessness

The plan for the project is for 25 out of 30 rooms to be housing with the other 5 for caseworkers





Communal Fund

A funding project split into two different application forms to assist youth (16-24 years old) struggling with or at risk of homelessness with various needs.

These needs are directly connected to preventing homelessness



Thank you!

The West Central CoC Lived Experience Employment Cohort

Pilot Program
Jan-Feb 2026

Presented by Jessica Rose Jungroth
Lived-Experience Engagement Coordinator



**West Central Minnesota
Continuum of Care** 
Working together to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time.

Why This Project Matters



People with lived experience are essential partners in ending homelessness.

Often they are asked to:

- Share their story
- Participate in advisory groups

But rarely supported to:

- Enter employment and leadership roles within the system

The Lived-Experience Employment Cohort was created to help change that.

Program Development



The cohort was developed through the
**West Central Lived Experience Enhanced Engagement Program
(WC-LEEEP)**

Key elements included:

- Curriculum developed in partnership with **Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) School of Social Work**
 - Structured cohort learning model
 - Hybrid learning (Zoom + in-person classes)
 - Barrier-reduction supports for participants
 - Coordination and facilitation through the CoC
- Goal:
Create employment pathways for people with lived experience.

Cohort Overview

Training Format

- January – February 2026
- Classes twice per week
- 3-hour sessions

- 17 applications received
- 13 interviews conducted
- 5 participants selected



Participants were supported with:

- laptops
- technology support
- gas cards for in-person sessions
- 1:1 check-ins w/LE coordinator

Cohort Overview

Participants received:



Financial
compensation



Laptop
access for
coursework



Support
throughout
training (plus
6 additional
months)



College-level
instruction



Expanded
knowledge of
homeless
systems



Certificate of
Completion
from MSUM



Curriculum was developed with faculty from

Minnesota State University Moorhead School of Social Work

Instructors:

Jeremy Carney

Denette Narum

Dr. Melanie Fierstine

This partnership allowed participants to receive college-level training in core human service skills.

What the Cohort Learned



Participants completed

7 professional training modules:

1. Overview & History of Homelessness
2. Case Management Basics
3. Communication Basics
4. Professionalism & Ethics
5. Impartiality & Diverse Populations
6. Safety & Trauma-Informed Service
7. Wellness & Work Readiness

Additional learning included:

- Continuum of Care systems
- CARES / Coordinated Entry
- Understanding the Benefit Cliff
- Hiring Process and Job Skills

Review of Syllabus

Module 1: Overview & History of Homelessness

- History of Homelessness
- System Overview
- Homeless Definitions
- Person Centered Care



Review of Syllabus

Module 2: Case Management Basics

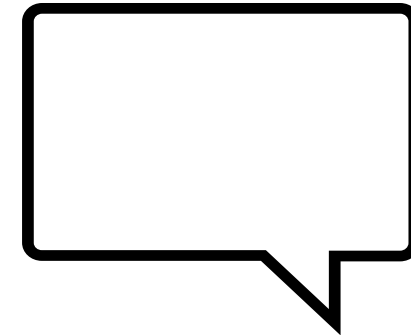
- Case Management Fundamentals
- Professionalism and Ethics
- Case Management Scenarios
- Data Collection and Privacy



Review of Syllabus

Module 3: Communication Basics

- Effective Communication Strategies
- Building Rapport and Trust
- Active Listening Skills
- Motivational Interviewing
- Conflict Resolutions & De-escalation
- Collaboration and Coordination



Review of Syllabus

Module 4: Professionalism & Accountability

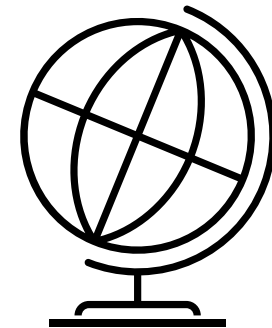
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Ethics and Professional Boundaries
- Managing Dual Relationships
- Professional Relationships with Clients
- Understanding the Value of Lived Experience



Review of Syllabus

Module 5: Impartiality & Diverse Populations

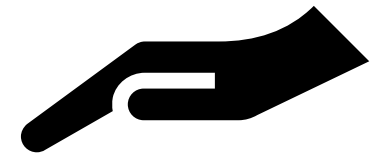
- Working with Diverse Populations
- Cultural Humility and Awareness
- Self-determination and Client Choice
- Understanding Power Dynamics



Review of Syllabus

Module 6: Safe, Healthy & Trauma-informed Service

- Mental Health Basics
- Recognizing Crisis Situations
- Responding Safely to High-Stress Interactions
- Trauma-Informed Care Principles
- Supporting People with Trauma



Review of Syllabus

Module 7: Wellness and Work Readiness

- Self-care and Sustainable Helping Practice
- Recognizing Burnout and Setting Boundaries
- Job Search and Hiring Process
- Skills Agencies Look For

Graduation Celebration!



Participant Feedback

Feedback included:

“I learned a lot in a short amount of time.”

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

“The trainings were very helpful.”

Participants also suggested:

- Additional role-play exercises
- More practice writing case notes
- Job-shadow opportunities



Instructor Feedback



Faculty at the MSUM School of Social Work reported a very positive experience working with the cohort.

Instructor reflections include:

- Participants were engaged and eager to learn
- The group showed interest in applying skills to help others in their communities
- All three instructors said that they would be happy to participate again



One instructor shared:

“Their heart for people who are hurting and hopefulness for their future was inspiring. I feel privileged to have been part of this process.”

Why This Matters

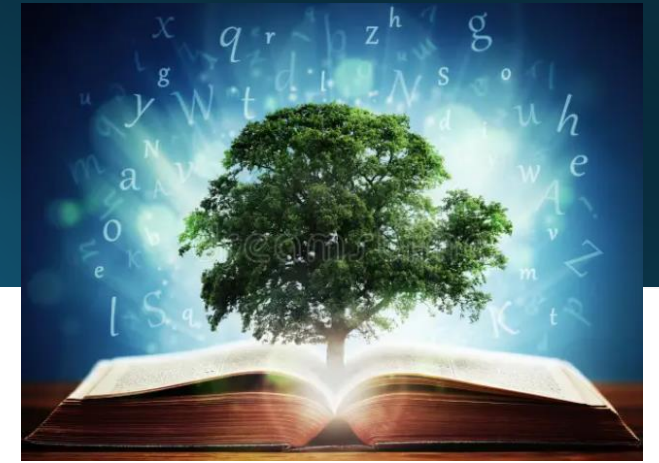


Investing in Lived Experience Leadership strengthens the homelessness response system and beyond.

Benefits include:

- Stronger client-centered services
- Improved system insight
- Expanded workforce pathways
- More authentic community engagement

Looking Ahead



The pilot cohort demonstrated that people with lived experience can successfully complete professional training and move toward roles in the homeless response system.

Future goals include:

- Launching additional cohorts
- Using feedback to improve the program
- Expanding employment and leadership pathways for people with lived experience



Advocacy & Day on the Hill

Jason Urbanczyk

Featured Speakers



Patrick Ness

Executive Director
Foundations for Home



Mary Riegert-Soyring

Deputy Director
MN Interagency Council on Homelessness

Board Business

Call to Order

Board Election

Affirm New and Existing Membership

Board Election

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Past Chair: Gina Kautz

Chair: Amber Holmstrom

Chair Elect: Sara Opitz

Secretary: Jamie Lund

COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

CARES Rep: Chandler Esslinger

MAHUBE-OTWA Rep: Meagan Hernandez

CAP-LP: Emma Schmit

More Than Shelter: Brenna Becker

Lived Experience Advisory Board:
Jason Urbancyk

Youth Advisory Board: Evan Peterson

APPOINTED MEMBERS

White Earth Nation: Mary Gagnon
(White Earth Human Services)

Business Rep: Shelly Carlson
(Moorhead Mayor)

Crime Victim Services: Jo Bolte
(Someplace Safe)

Legal Aid: Jessica Faunce
(Justice North)

Nominations from the floor are accepted

Renewing Members

BCOW AMHI



Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging



New Members



Lutheran
Social Service
of Minnesota

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota



Youthworks



Lotus Recovery, Inc.

Interested in becoming a member?



Scan this QR code to access the new member's form

Or visit

<https://www.homelesstohoused.com/membership> under membership application

The Road Ahead

What is the number one goal for 2026?
Scan the QR code to access Mentimeter



Filling our Cups

What is filling your cup these days?

What do you need from your community to power through the coming year?

What do you need to learn to better apply your skills to the effort of making homelessness rare, brief, one-time?

If you could share encouragement for someone struggling with housing instability, what would you share?

If you could share encouragement for someone just starting work in the field what would you share?

If you had advice for yourself on a hard day, what would you share?

Garitz Grove

1161 Friberg Ave,
Fergus Falls, MN 56537



TOUR