

HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA



Here. When people need help.

Eligibility and Work Services

Hennepin County **Human Services**

Annual Report • October 2019



Eligibility and Work Services

Every day, Hennepin County residents turn to Human Services, which offers support mechanisms to buffer the stressors and threats to well-being that all people may face at some time. County staff help people meet their basic needs and take steps toward a better life. Eligibility and Work Services staff are passionate about their work and motivated by the opportunity to help people make a difference in their lives.

We strive to help people break the cycle of generational poverty and help them achieve economic stability, become more self-sufficient, and improve their well-being. The tasks to accomplish those goals include:



Gathering information

Taking applications



Determining eligibility

Assessing eligibility for federal and state cash, food, and health care programs



Activating help

Providing access to employment and education services and supports



Making connections

Linking people to resources in their own communities

People helped by Eligibility and Work Services

Our staff serve about 300,000 residents a year at six regional human services offices.

In-person

South Minneapolis	90,731	Northwest Suburban	82,234
Central-Northeast	80,128	North Minneapolis	77,332
South Suburban	32,860	West Suburban	29,488

By telephone

Total calls	617,900
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Connecting people to work

Diversionsary Work Program (DWP) is a four-month program that helps parents quickly find work so they do not need to enroll in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) for financial assistance. A successful exit means that the person has a job when they leave the program. People who need a bit more help while they pursue employment, education and training may be eligible for MFIP or employment and training through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Program 2018	Parents served	Total exits	Successful exits	Average wage at exit of program
MFIP	12,766	2,375	1,032	\$14.06
DWP	2,811	6,116	1,973	\$14.32

Transforming lives beyond entry level

We know that an entry-level job will not lift a family out of poverty. A career can change a life and build independence. Hennepin County has begun to pivot our emphasis with community providers and our own human resources department to create career development paths for people seeking assistance, especially single parents.

Our accomplishments

Eligibility and Work Services is committed to continuous improvement in our ability to serve residents. These are some of the goals accomplished in 2018.

Economic assistance

Making child care assistance more widely available

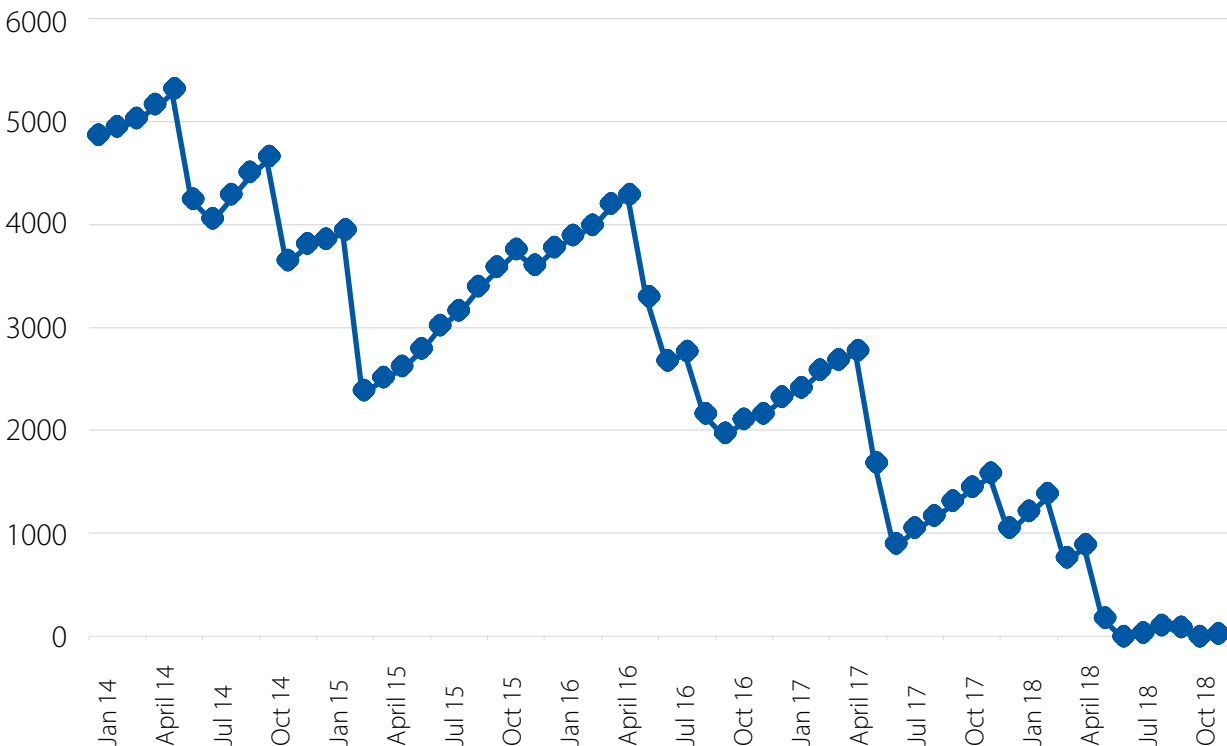
Basic sliding fee child care assistance helps families pay for care so parents can work, and provides children with an environment where they can prepare for school.

Hennepin County traditionally has carried a long waiting list for families needing assistance. The list peaked in 2014 with more than 5,300 families.

After years of dedicated effort and financial management, our team reduced the wait list to just over 1,000 families by January 2018 and by June we were able to open the program to all eligible Hennepin County families. The wait list fell to zero several times that same year. Since then, we have succeeded in keeping the wait list short.

Basic sliding fee child care assistance waiting list

Far fewer families remain on the list at the end of each month in 2019, compared to 2014.



Customer service

Working to offer convenience, efficiency

Our goal is to provide support mechanisms to help people – many of whom are exposed to multiple societal stressors – achieve and maintain well-being and quality of life. Using a complex set of state and federal programs, we help people focus on employment, education and family well-being. The complex programs are often maintained on older state data systems, which slows processing. Our staff have developed efficiencies and process improvements that have greatly improved timeliness for various assistance programs, getting help to people faster. For example, over 90% of SNAP and cash applications were complete within the required 30 days, and nearly three quarters of SNAP applications that were eligible for expedited service were processed within 24 hours, exceeding requirements.

Easier, faster help

Besides improved and more efficient case processing work, we implemented a more effective phone system. More than a third of the calls we receive are status checks that residents can handle quickly without speaking with a representative, and we've worked to help them do so. When clients need a representative, phone response improvements have brought average wait times to a historic low.

2018 Eligibility and Work Services call volume and average speed of answer

Average monthly call volume	Average speed of answer
51,492	4:45 minutes

Our accomplishments

Employment assistance

More opportunities to meet employers

In 2018, Eligibility and Work Services expanded its popular Employer of the Day events to increase access and convenience for residents. The events give candidates an opportunity to meet local employers face to face, learn about current openings, apply for positions and even receive employment offers on the spot.

In 2018, Work Services' 27 Employer of the Day events served 388 people at 10 sites. Our nine additional career fair events served 1,635 people.

More resources for training

SNAP employment and training reimbursement has brought Hennepin County more than \$500,000 of additional federal funds for employment training opportunities. Initially, we partnered with three community organizations. We will add more to increase the number and types of services provided.

Housing assistance

A simpler process to get help with a housing crisis

Between Emergency Assistance for families and Emergency General Assistance for individuals, nearly 10,000 households received funds to help stabilize a housing crisis in 2018. Emergency Assistance has streamlined the application process to allow for phone interviews. The new process eliminated much of the in-office waiting and created capacity for staff to keep applications moving.

Partnerships help prevent homelessness

Several outreach efforts are connecting people in need with emergency help. For example, a Human Services partnership with Hennepin County's Taxpayer Services used Emergency General Assistance in situations where people were in danger of losing housing due to tax forfeiture. We also collaborated with the McKnight and Pohlads Foundations to launch the North Minneapolis Eviction Prevention Initiative, which serves about 300 households.

In focus

The 2018 encampment

A major issue for our community last year was a tent camp of people who were experiencing homelessness. Over several months, hundreds of people – most with complex needs – camped in a small area of south Minneapolis. Hennepin County, with the City of Minneapolis, the Red Lake Nation, Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors and many other organizations, worked to address people’s needs for health, safety and long-term stability.

The shelter team worked with Minneapolis Schools and other organizations to connect families to additional supports to ensure they had a safe place to stay and resources to stabilize their lives.

Confronting inequity in our community

Our region is often acknowledged for its innovations; however, we have some of the largest racial disparities in the country. Our staff are participating in Hennepin County’s efforts to reduce disparities in the areas of education, employment, health, housing, income, justice and transportation.

Eligibility and Work Services staff are increasingly diverse, and now are more than half people of color. The leadership level is also becoming more diverse – more than 60 percent of promotions in 2018 included people of color – as we continue to improve equity in all levels of the organization, and to more closely reflect the changing populations we serve.

Another step toward reducing disparities is the Career Pathways program. Pathways is a skills training program that connects applicants to county job opportunities. Since 2014, more than 70 participants have been hired into Eligibility and Work Services.

Shawanna Rodriguez, Pathways outcome coordinator, says, “Through the Pathways program, Hennepin County has been able to create a more diverse workforce and begin to tackle the disparity issue. By training people from the community and preparing them for jobs within the organization, the workforce can more accurately reflect the populations we serve.”



Encampment outcomes

As part of the county’s overall response to the encampment, our shelter team connected:

- 51 families to shelter
- 80-plus people to emergency general assistance to assist with accessing housing

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