

BLUE EARTH COUNTY PROVIDER GUIDE TO HOUSING SUPPORT

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MINNESOTA HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Housing Support is a state-funded program that provides a monthly income supplement to pay for room and board for seniors and adults with disabilities who have low income. The program aims to prevent or reduce homelessness and institutionalization. The amount of a Housing Support payment is based on a federal and state standard of what an individual would need, at a minimum, to live in the community. In some cases, Housing Support may pay a supplemental amount to the basic rate. Licensed or registered settings that can qualify for a Housing Support Agreement can include adult foster care homes, boarding and lodging, supervised living settings, noncertified boarding care homes, housing with additional services establishments and other assisted living, and long-term homeless supportive housing.

In Blue Earth County, the Human Service Department is responsible for the evaluation of all Housing Support Agreements. Providers will also work with the Financial Assistance Department, to facilitate the payments for eligible Housing Support participants. Depending on the type of setting, providers will need to secure all needed State of Minnesota (Department of Human Services and Department of Health) licensing/registrations prior to the approval of a Housing Support Agreement. The providers will also need to secure all needed licensing, variances and inspection certifications required by the local city/township where the facility is located.

This guide is for existing Housing Support providers and providers who are interested in pursuing Housing Support funding. Within the guide you will find the steps necessary to obtain a Housing Support agreement and expectations that come along with the Housing Support agreement.

Before the funds may be used, the participant, the living situation, & provider must meet statutory eligibility requirements.

- Provider eligibility for Housing Support funding is determined by Blue Earth County Human Services department.
- Participant eligibility is determined by Blue Earth County Financial Assistance department and is based on income, assets and disability.

Completing an application is not a guarantee the vendor/provider will be approved for a Blue Earth County Housing Support Agreement. No payments are issued until there is a signed Housing Support Agreement. Funding for eligible individuals can only begin as of the date the Housing Support Agreement is executed.

For more information visit the Housing Support section of the [DHS website](#) and the Minnesota Revisor website for [Housing Support State Statute](#).

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HOUSING SUPPORT RATES

The following provides information on the three Housing Support rates and how they are identified in the Minnesota Department of Human Services payment and information systems. Housing Support is a payment directly to the provider of housing on behalf of the eligible person.

Housing Support Rate:

The Housing Support Rate is based on a federal and state standard of what an individual would need, at a minimum, to live in the community. It is automatically adjusted each year based on changes made in the Federal Benefit Rate (FBR) of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program and changes in the value of food support for an individual.

To receive a Housing Support payment, a person must meet certain eligibility requirements. These requirements include being aged, blind, or over age 18 and disabled according to the criteria used by the Social Security Administration, or certain criteria for Minnesota's General Assistance program. In addition, there are income and asset maximums. Counties administer the Housing Support program for the state and are responsible for determining eligibility.

Supplemental Service rate

The Supplemental Service rate can only be paid in specific types of settings:

- Board and lodge with special services
- Supervised living facilities
- Boarding care homes that are not certified for Medicaid
- Registered housing with services establishments.

New board and lodge with special services beds cannot be added to the system unless a facility closes and a replacement is developed with an equivalent number of beds.

The GRH Supplemental Service Rate was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1993 at a maximum of \$426.37 per month, per recipient. Beginning in 2000, Cost of Living Adjustments and reductions have been applied to this rate. The most recent change was effective July 1, 2013 when the Supplemental Service Rate increased to \$482.84. Counties negotiate the Supplemental Service Rate with providers and cannot exceed the maximum unless the county agrees to pay the amount over the maximum with county funds, or the Legislature has specifically authorized a higher rate for a facility. These facilities typically serve clients who are mentally ill or chemically dependent and are not eligible for a Medical Assistance waiver.

Difficulty of Care

The maximum payment for the Difficulty of Care (DOC) equals the maximum standard for the GRH Supplemental Service Rate.

Housing Support Benefit Payment Structure

Housing Support benefits are paid directly to the Housing Support provider by the county that services the individual's case. Payments may be paid in two ways:

- **Pre-payments:** this type of payment would be issued at the beginning of the month for individuals eligible for Housing Support. The majority of Housing Support providers receive this type of payment.
- **Post-payments:** this type of payment is issued at the end of the month for individuals eligible for Housing Support.
 - Post payments must be issued when:
 - An individual's placement in a Housing Support setting is expected to last 30 days or less.

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GUIDELINES FOR ALL HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Although each Housing Support program is unique, they all share some common components.

Program Requirements

- The “Housing Support Rate” or the “Housing Rate” is to be used for shelter, fuel, food, utilities, household supplies, and other costs necessary to provide room and board. Examples of these expenses may include: toilet paper, bed linens, shampoo, toothpaste, garbage bags, etc.
- A portion of the “Housing Rate” must be spent each month on food for each participant. The amount required to be spent on food may or may not change each year on July 1. This amount is based on determinations of the Federal Food Support Programs (SNAP). The provider must inform individuals they are eligible for SNAP upon discharge from the Housing Support facility and/or program. *Providers may be required to provide documentation to prove food purchase that meet SNAP requirements.*
- Provider must maintain all necessary licenses through the appropriate licensing authority.
- Provide a list of residency requirements that include violations that could result in eviction.
- Background checks are required for all employees/volunteers who have direct contact (face-to-face care, training, supervision, counseling, or medication assistance) with recipients, or who have unsupervised access to recipients, their personal property, or their private data.
- All staff members who have direct contact with recipients must have skills and knowledge acquired through **one or more of the following**:
 - A course of study in a health or human services-related field leading to a bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, or associate’s degree; **or**
 - One year experience with the target population served (can include being a member of the target population served); **or**
 - Experience as a Minnesota Department of Human Services certified peer specialist
- Meets requirements of unlicensed personnel under Minnesota Statutes sections 144A.43 to 144A.483
- Provider and staff are required to complete two online DHS trainings. Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporting from DHS and Housing Support Orientation.
- Staff are required to have valid driver’s license if transporting participants.
- The agreement can be terminated in writing by Blue Earth County **or** the provider, with or without cause, with two calendar months prior notice.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services has the right to suspend or terminate the Housing Support agreement immediately when it is determined the health or welfare of the housing or service recipients is endangered, or when there is reasonable cause to believe that the provider has breached a material term of the agreement.

Individual Eligibility

Determined by the County Financial Assistance Department the participant resides in.

- Must be 18 and older and disabled or elderly.
- Must meet a basis of eligibility for General Assistance (GA) or Social Security Insurance (SSI).
- Countable income: must be less than maximum benefit.
- Countable assets: must be within the asset limit for the program.
- Individual may have to complete a Combined Application Form (CAF) to apply for the program.

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HOUSING SUPPORT SETTINGS

ADULT FOSTER CARE (FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SETTING)

Adult Foster Care (AFC) is a type of housing for people with disabilities and seniors who need some daily care. Some caregivers own and live in the homes they provide care in, which is referred to as Family Adult Foster Care. While others are employees paid to work in the home, which is referred to as a Community Residential Setting (CRS).

AFC/CRS homes house one to four adults with disabilities and seniors who live together, typically each with their own bedroom. The living room, bathrooms, kitchen, and any other rooms are often shared. Housing Support may pay up to the full cost of room, board, and services, depending on the participant's income, eligibility for a AFC-Difficulty of Care rating or eligibility for MA-Waiver programs. Services provided to individuals may also include the delivery of personal care, household and living skills assistance or training, medication assistance and assistance safeguarding cash resources.

**The State of Minnesota has a moratorium on new CRS settings, and has capped the number of homes allowed. Counties cannot grant licenses for CRS applicants unless those providers plan to serve specific individuals who meet certain criteria. The county has no information about when the state will lift the moratorium.*

Program and Building Eligibility

AFC/CRS homes are licensed by the [Minnesota Department of Human Services \(DHS\)](#) which delegates the licensing responsibilities to [Blue Earth County](#).

Participant Eligibility and Application

Beyond the requirements listed in *Guidelines for all Housing Support Programs*, individuals living in an AFC/CRS setting must have some type of functional impairment that make it difficult for them to live alone. MnCHOICES Assessments can help determine if participants would qualify for waiver programs and additional services. For additional information about MnCHOICES assessments, call Blue Earth County Intake at 507-304-4444, option 2.

HOUSING WITH SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

Housing with services establishments provide sleeping accommodations to one or more adult residents, and offer one or more regularly scheduled health-related services, or two or more regularly scheduled supportive services. Supportive services can be offered or provided directly by the establishment or by another entity arranged for by the establishment. Housing with Services Establishments can function as assisted living, customized living settings, or support participants to live independently in the community.

Program and Building Eligibility

Housing with Service establishments must register as Housing with Services through [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#). Housing with Services Establishments who provide home care services for a fee must maintain a Comprehensive Home Care license.

Participant Eligibility and Application

MnChoices Assessments can determine eligibility for 24 hour customized living/assisted living. For additional information about MNCHOICES assessments, call Blue Earth County Intake at 507-304-4444, option 2.

BOARD AND LODGE

Board and Lodging establishments are licensed, congregate settings that offer a room (often shared) and three meals a day to eligible adults and, occasionally, families. Board and Lodges can vary in size, with five or more people living together. Some settings are short-term, time-limited; others may be supportive housing with no specific time limit. Board and Lodges can require participation in skills training or other programming; others have no service requirements. Each Board and Lodge setting can look very different.

Program and Building Eligibility

Board and Lodges are required to be licensed by [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#) for a Lodging Establishment License, and/or a Food and Beverage Establishment License when staff prepare food for participants. Board and Lodges with a Service Rate must also have a Special Services Registration with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

Participant Eligibility and Application

Beyond the requirements listed in *Guidelines for all Housing Support Programs*, the target population may be specialized to one disability group (usually persons with a mental illness or substance abuse diagnosis) or gender, or the setting may serve a mix of persons who need and want the level of care provided.

LONG TERM HOMELESS PROGRAMS

For Program/Building and Individual Eligibility for Long Term Homeless programs please refer to the instructions on the Blue Earth County Website or call Andrew Pietsch at 507-304-4442

<https://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/1210/Housing-Support-LTH-Contract-Application>

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ESTABLISHING A NEW HOUSING SUPPORT AGREEMENT

All programs wanting to access Housing Support funds are required to complete a Blue Earth County Housing Support application.

ADULT FOSTER CARE/COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SETTING AND HOUSING WITH SERVICES ESTABLISHMENTS

Providers interested in establishing a new AFC/CRS or Housing with Services Establishments within Blue Earth County will be required to complete several steps prior to being eligible to receive Housing Support funds.

- Licensed with Minnesota Department of Health as a Housing with Services Establishment and/or Comprehensive Health Care.
- Licensed with Department of Human Services as an AFC/CRS through Blue Earth County Human Services.
- Complete provider enrollment through DHS.
- Mandatory background checks for all staff/volunteers who have direct contact with Housing Support participants.
- Knowledge and experience with target population.
- Completion of two online DHS trainings: Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporting and Housing Support Orientation.
- Requirement for all staff to have valid driver's license if transporting participants.
- Complete a Housing Support application through Blue Earth County Human Services Department. Attach the following documentation to a completed Housing Support application:
 - Current copy(s) of Minnesota Department of Health Housing with Services and/or Comprehensive Health Care licenses
 - Current copy of Minnesota Department of Human Services Adult Foster Care License
 - List of residency requirements that could result in eviction
 - Tenant lease (required for Housing with Services Establishments)
 - Tenant admission/screening process
 - Tenant discharge plan

Existing AFC/CRS and Housing with Services Establishments wanting to establish a new setting in Blue Earth County will be required to follow the steps as outlined above. Blue Earth County may require existing provider to report outcomes of existing programs along with the Housing Support application.

**There is a moratorium on establishing new CRS beds in the state of Minnesota. Blue Earth County will only create new CRS beds with an approved moratorium request.*

BOARD AND LODGE SETTINGS

Providers interested in establishing a new board and lodge setting within Blue Earth County will be required to complete several steps prior to being eligible to receive Housing Support funds.

- A location will need to be identified. The provider will need to receive approval to use the residence as a board and lodging facility from the local city council and zoning commission. Blue Earth County will require proof of this approval/valid rental license.
- The setting will need to be licensed by Minnesota Department of Health.
- Minnesota Department of Health Special Services Registration for Board and Lodges with a Service Rate.

- Mandatory background checks for all staff/volunteers who have direct contact with Housing Support participants.
- Knowledge and experience with target population.
- Completion of two online DHS trainings: Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporting and Housing Support Orientation.
- Requirement for all staff to have valid driver's license if transporting participants.
- Complete a Housing Support application through Blue Earth County Human Services Department. Attach the following documentation to a completed Housing Support application:
 - Current Minnesota Department of Health Board and Lodge licenses
 - Board and Lodges with a Service Rate must attach current Minnesota Department of Health Special Services Registration
 - Lease or house rules that could result in eviction
 - Participant admission/screening process
 - Participant discharge plan if applicable

Existing Board and Lodge providers wanting to establish a new setting in Blue Earth County will be required to follow the steps as outlined above. Blue Earth County may require existing provider to report outcomes of existing programs along with the Housing Support application.

LONG TERM HOMELESS PROGRAMS

Providers interested in establishing a new Long Term Homeless program within Blue Earth County can please refer to the instructions on the Blue Earth County Website or call Andrew Pietsch at 507-304-4442

<https://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/1210/Housing-Support-LTH-Contract-Application>

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RENEWING HOUSING SUPPORT AGREEMENTS

Housing Support Agreements are renewed annually on or before July 1 when the rate changes occur. A staff from Blue Earth County Human Services will send an updated Housing Support agreement to existing providers prior to the rate change. Blue Earth County Human Services staff will verify that the Housing Support provider is still in compliance with all the terms of the Housing Support Agreement prior to an updated agreement being sent.

ADULT FOSTER CARE, HOUSING WITH SERVICES ESTABLISHMENTS, AND BOARD AND LODGE SETTINGS

- Provider must submit all current licenses and registrations.
- Provider will submit a list of residency requirements that could result in eviction (including appeal process).
- Mandatory background checks for all staff/volunteers who have direct contact with Housing Support participants.
- Completion of two online DHS trainings: Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporting and Housing Support Orientation.
- Requirement for all staff to have valid driver's license if transporting participants.
- If county staff have been alerted to concerns about a provider during the year, the provider will be contacted and a plan will be put in place for the provider to get back in compliance with the Housing Support Agreement.
- Blue Earth County may require existing provider to report updates and outcomes from existing programs.
- A Housing Support Agreement will be mailed after verification of submitted materials
- Housing Support Agreement must be signed by provider and mailed back to Blue Earth County Human Services

LONG TERM HOMELESS PROGRAMS

Current Long Term Homeless programs are also required to renew their Housing Support Agreements annually. Long Term Homeless programs within Blue Earth will receive renewal guidance from Andrew Pietsch (507-304-4442).

<https://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/1210/Housing-Support-LTH-Contract-Application>

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TENANCY AND LANDLORD RIGHTS

All units or dwellings must have a lease, or similar legally enforceable agreement, which includes the same responsibilities and protections from eviction as all tenants under landlord tenant law of state, county, city or other designated entity. *If tenant laws do not apply*, the written agreement (house rules/intake paperwork) must address eviction processes and appeals comparable to those provided under the jurisdiction's landlord tenant law. The vendor must submit a list of residency requirements that could result in eviction prior to approval of the Housing Support agreement.

For more information about Landlord/Tenant rights, visit the [MN Attorney General Website](#). Tenant housing advocacy services are also available for both tenants and landlords: [Home Line](#).

Approved Housing Support settings may not be the preferred living situation for many seniors and individuals with disabilities. Housing Support participants should be offered several [housing options](#) and similar services if they choose to live in their own homes or apartments. [Housing Link](#) can help Housing Support participants find affordable housing, and offers landlords to list their own rental properties.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are allowable costs for “housing expenses”?

Answer: Rent, utilities including phone, and furniture. For Board and Lodges, this includes operating costs of a building such as: taxes, insurance, maintenance, building service contracts such as snow removal and yard maintenance, debt service, fuel, food, utilities, household supplies, and other cost necessary to provide room and board. Services to the tenant are not considered housing costs.

2. The new Housing Support statute says licensed and registered settings must ensure that participants have, “food preparation and service for three nutritional meals a day on site.” What does that mean?

Answer: Housing Support providers need to ensure that the three meals a day are nutritious. They can do this in three ways: prepare and serve three nutritious meals daily to each resident, or provide residents with raw food and supervise meal preparation and service three times daily, or otherwise ensure the provision of three nutritious meals daily. For guidance on standards for a “nutritious meal”, providers can consult with public health officials. DHS can also help connect providers with SNAP outreach resources if needed.

3. Are Housing Support providers required to provide special diets such as gluten free, lactose free, or supplemental diets (Boost/Ensure)?

Answer: Housing Support does not require providers to accommodate special diets. Providers should check with their licensing authority for additional requirements.

4. The new Housing Support statute says licensed and registered settings must ensure that participants have, “...cooling, supplies, and parts and tools to repair and maintain equipment and facilities.” What does that mean?

Answer: Housing Support providers need to ensure that the settings where Housing Support recipients live have the materials and resources required to provide for residents' health and well-being. For example, air conditioning is not required if fans or other methods provide for the residents' health and well-being. Providers should use their best judgment to ensure that the minimum standards are met in your particular setting. Providers should check with their licensure for more specific guidance on compliance with physical plant issues.

5. Are phone and internet required provisions of room and board?

Answer: Licensed and registered providers must ensure there is at least one telephone per site is available to residents. Internet service is not required.

6. What are the disabilities that qualify an individual?

Answer: Any physical, mental or chemical disability that prevents a person from obtaining self-supporting employment.

8. What are the new Housing Support changes for individual budgeting and reporting?

Answer: People who receive Housing Support and work will have a Housing Support benefit based on an estimate of income for the next 6 months. If income changes, contact Financial Assistance so they can determine benefit allocation.

9. How will we be notified when they change Housing Support policy? Answer: DHS may release a bulletin on the DHS’s Housing Support page. DHS is also working to establish a forum for sharing information and updates with all vendors and providers across the state.

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PARTICIPANT BENEFITS AND RESOURCES

Most people who receive Housing Support are also eligible for other public benefits that could be affected by income. Medical Assistance and SNAP (food support) are two other common benefit programs individuals eligible for Housing Support may be eligible to access. For the majority of individuals in Housing Support settings they are not eligible for food support. Upon discharge from the Housing Support settings, staff are **required** to inform individuals that they may be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Benefits Planning

It is important for people who receive any public assistance benefit (and the people who help them) to understand how benefits work together and how changes in income, resources and living situation affects each program. It is also important to plan for expected changes such as going from one assistance program to another (e.g., GA to SSI), or physically moving (e.g., Housing Support setting to own apartment) or going to work and having earned income. This is called "benefits planning."

The Disability Benefits 101 web site www.DB101.org is an excellent resource to help understand disability related benefits, how they can work together (or not) and how work might impact those benefits. DB101.org has a live chat option and a direct phone number for the Disability Linkage Line so you can verify benefits and get answers to questions.

If a person is receiving Social Security disability benefits or SSI and is interested in going to work, a great resource is the Minnesota Work Incentives Connection. They can help clearly explain the effect work will have on benefits. **Minnesota Work Incentives Connection (1-800-976-6728)** www.mnworkincentives.com

CONTACTS

Blue Earth County Financial Assistance: 507-304-4335

SNAP, CASH, EA, Child Care Assistance, MNSURE Navigation

Blue Earth County Human Services

Jackie Bobholz- Foster Care Licensor: 507-304-4191

Housing Support Agreements for Adult Foster Care, Board & Lodges, Housing w/ Services

Blue Earth County Support Services:

Andrew Pietsch- Supportive Housing Supervisor: 507-304-4442

Housing Support Agreements for Long Term Homeless

Coordinated Entry

<http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3212>

www.threeriverscap.org/continuum-of-care

On-line Application for County Benefits

<https://applymn.dhs.mn.gov>