

# Engaging with People Experiencing Homelessness



Committee of the Whole: October 16, 2024

# Introductions



## Panel Members

- Terri Smith, Director, Metro HRA
- Ryane Ottengheime Leifheit, Manager, Outreach and Special Initiatives, Metro HRA
- Sgt. Beverly Rodriguez, Metro Transit Police Homeless Action Team
- Dee Martineau, Consultant with Lived Experience in Homelessness
- Rico Morales, Consultant with Lived Experience in Homelessness

# Council's Role in Addressing Homelessness

## **Metro HRA**

**(Housing and Redevelopment Authority)**

- Housing Vouchers
- Housing search assistance
- Connection to services
- MN Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Continuums of Care Collaborations

## **Metro Transit HAT**

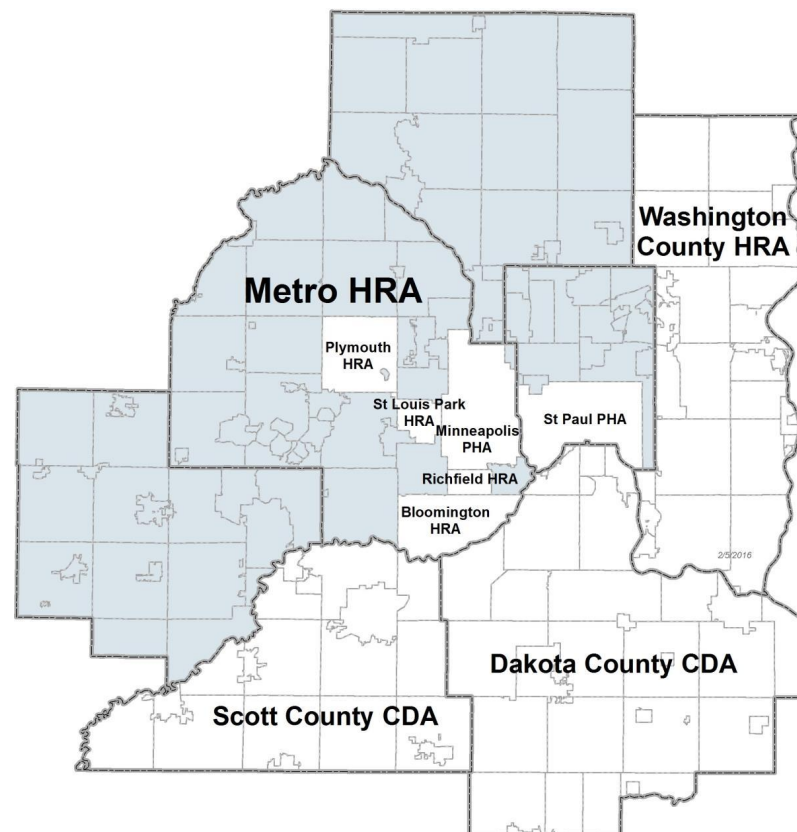
**(Homeless Action Team)**

- Regular outreach on transit system
- Connections to services and housing
- Contracts with organizations to provide case management
- Provides immediate need resources (i.e. snacks, water, clothes, hygiene products)
- MN Interagency Council on Homelessness

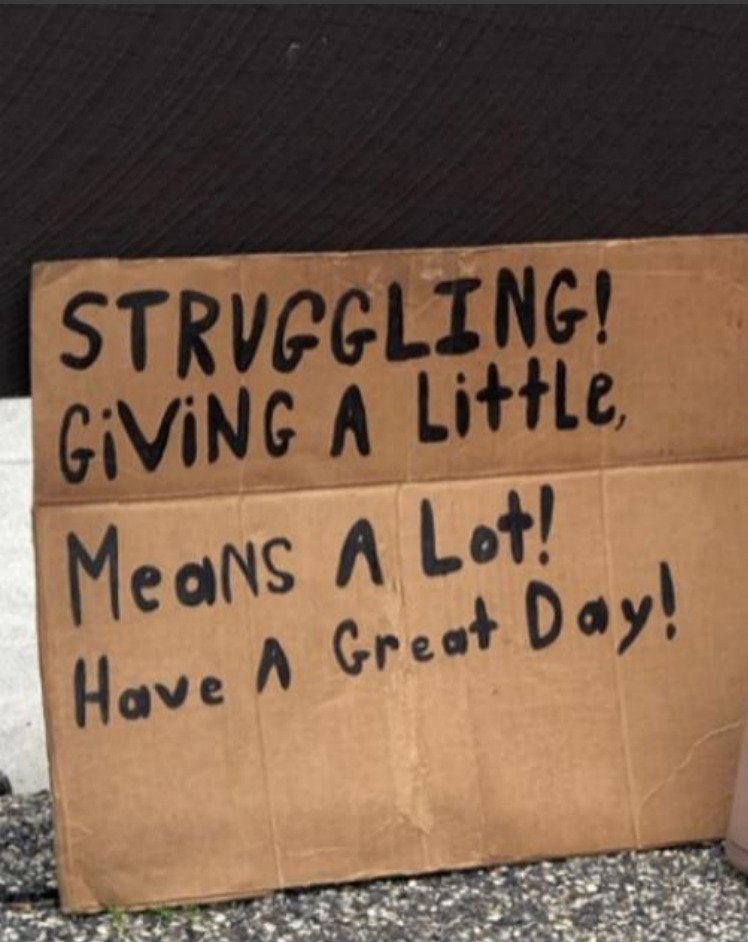
# Metro HRA

## Fast Facts

- Housing Choice Voucher Program
- 7,283 Vouchers
- 9 Programs
- 1,400 Property Owners
- 96 Communities
- \$80 million in subsidy payments



# Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaborations



## What is a CoC?

- Requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness
- Provide funding to nonprofit providers, states, tribally designated entities, and local governments for housing and services

# Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaborations

## \$43 Million annually to (10) Minnesota Continuums of Care

- Met Council Team members – governing board representation

Hennepin  
County CoC  
\$17.9 Million

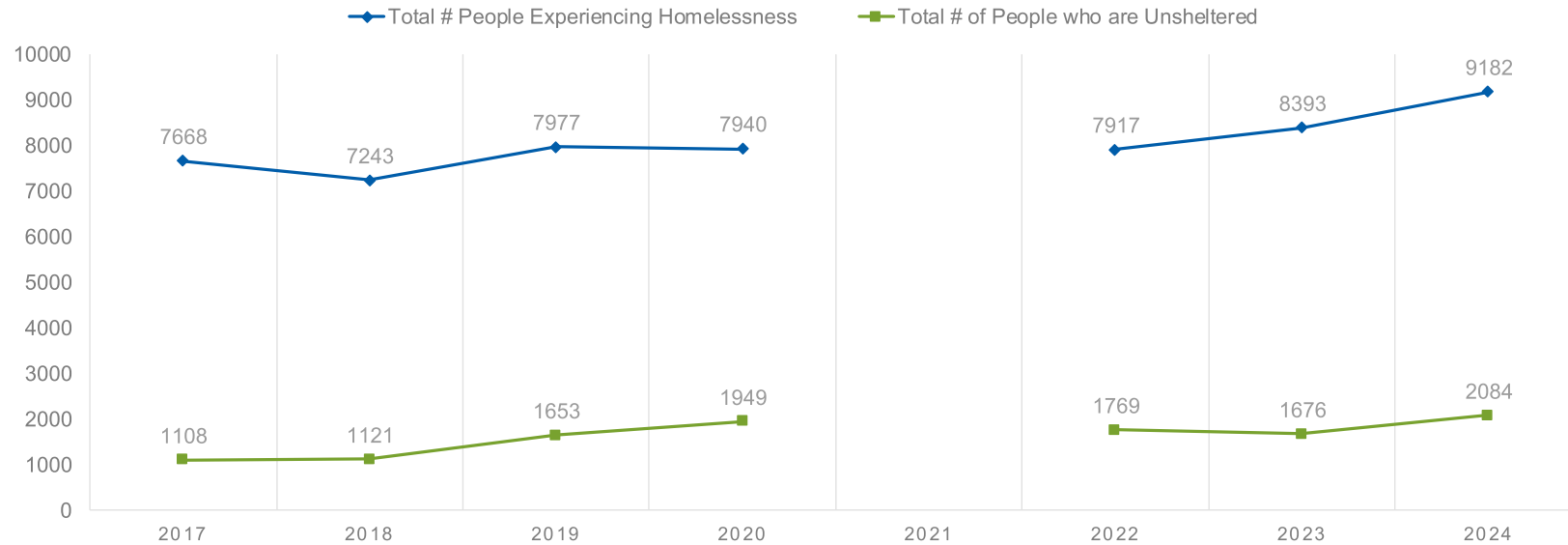
Ramsey County  
CoC  
\$7.1 Million

Suburban Metro  
Area CoC  
\$4.7 Million

# Point in Time Count

## Annual count of all people experiencing homelessness on a single night

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS 2017-2024



# Minnesota Interagency on Homelessness (MICH)



## What is MICH?

- Cabinet-Level body
- Commissioners of State Agencies and Met Council Chair
- Accountable for leading the state's efforts to move towards housing, health, and racial justice for people experiencing homelessness.
- [Crossroads to Justice: Minnesota's New Pathways to Housing, Racial and Health Justice for People Facing Homelessness | Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness \(mn.gov\)](#)



# Met Council MICH Collaboration



## Met Council team participates in action development

- Community Development and Metro Transit Police Homeless Action Team members participate in MICH work
- Crossroads to Justice Plan contains 5 Results
- Met Council has committed Actions under each result
- Council team working with 3 consultants with lived experience
  - Plan development and implementation

# Justice Plan Results

## Result 1

Council agencies will collaborate with impacted communities that have been historically oppressed and excluded

## Result 2

Homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and services and supports are provided to ensure no one returns to homelessness

## Result 3

A robust crisis response, geared towards housing outcomes, supports people who are unsheltered, in emergency shelters and community.

## Result 4

People facing homelessness have access to housing options that meet their needs and honor their choices.

## Result 5

Homelessness is treated as a crucial health and public health crisis whenever it occurs

# Lived Experience Consultant



## Dee Martineau

Dee is a first-generation American and Latina artist, advocate, and elder with disabilities. She is a change management consultant and business owner who thrives on using her skills for racial, housing, and health justice. Dee celebrates her lived experience and is sure the best is yet to come.

# You don't know what you don't know . .



## MICH Lived Experience Implementation Consultants are here to help!

- Strategic Planning
- Evaluating current practices
- Hiring insight
- Community meetings
- RFP evaluation
- Increasing community awareness
- Adding depth and breadth to people's perceptions of unhoused individuals and families

# We are Better Together



## Expertise Areas

- Authenticity
- Diversity
- Shared Experience
- Breadth of Experience
- Knowledge others do not have

# Lived Experience Consultant



## Rico Morales

Rico is a lifelong Minnesota resident. He's an Indigenous person. He's struggled with housing stability for most of his life. He is also one of the leading voices for change in housing support programs – not just for the county, but for the region and the United States of America.

Rico is a dedicated Transit Rider since 1992.

# Lived Experience Consultant



## Sara Engberg

Sara is an impassioned changemaker who relishes diving into the details of public policy to transform the world into a more just and equitable society for all. She enjoys organizing around the intersections of homelessness, child protection, and tenants' rights. Through her family's ongoing journey of searching for their missing relative, Melissa Eagleshield, Sara has developed a passion for working on missing and murdered issues.

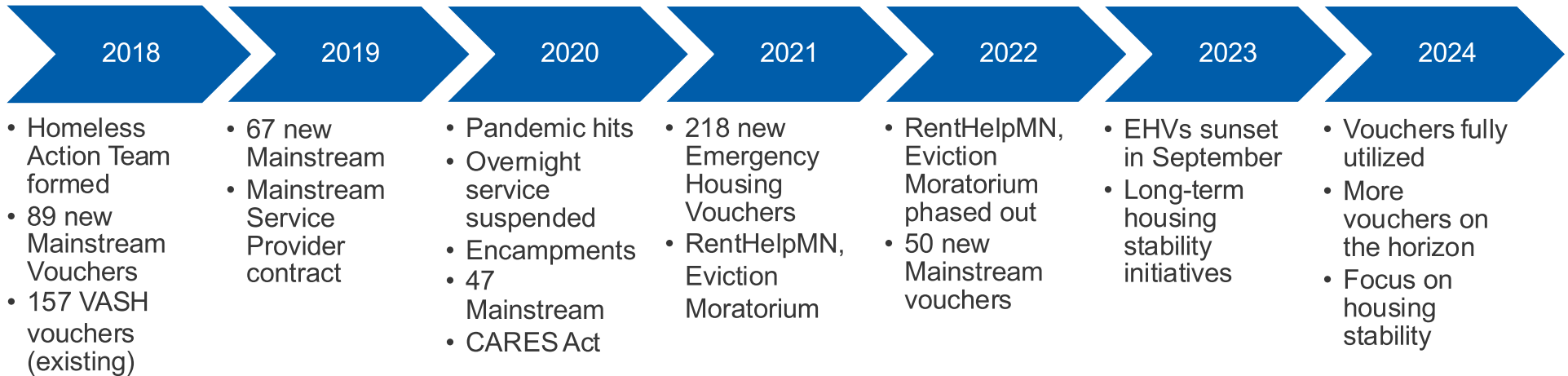
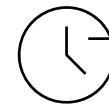
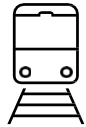
## Metro HRA

Working with people experiencing homelessness through Special Purpose Vouchers

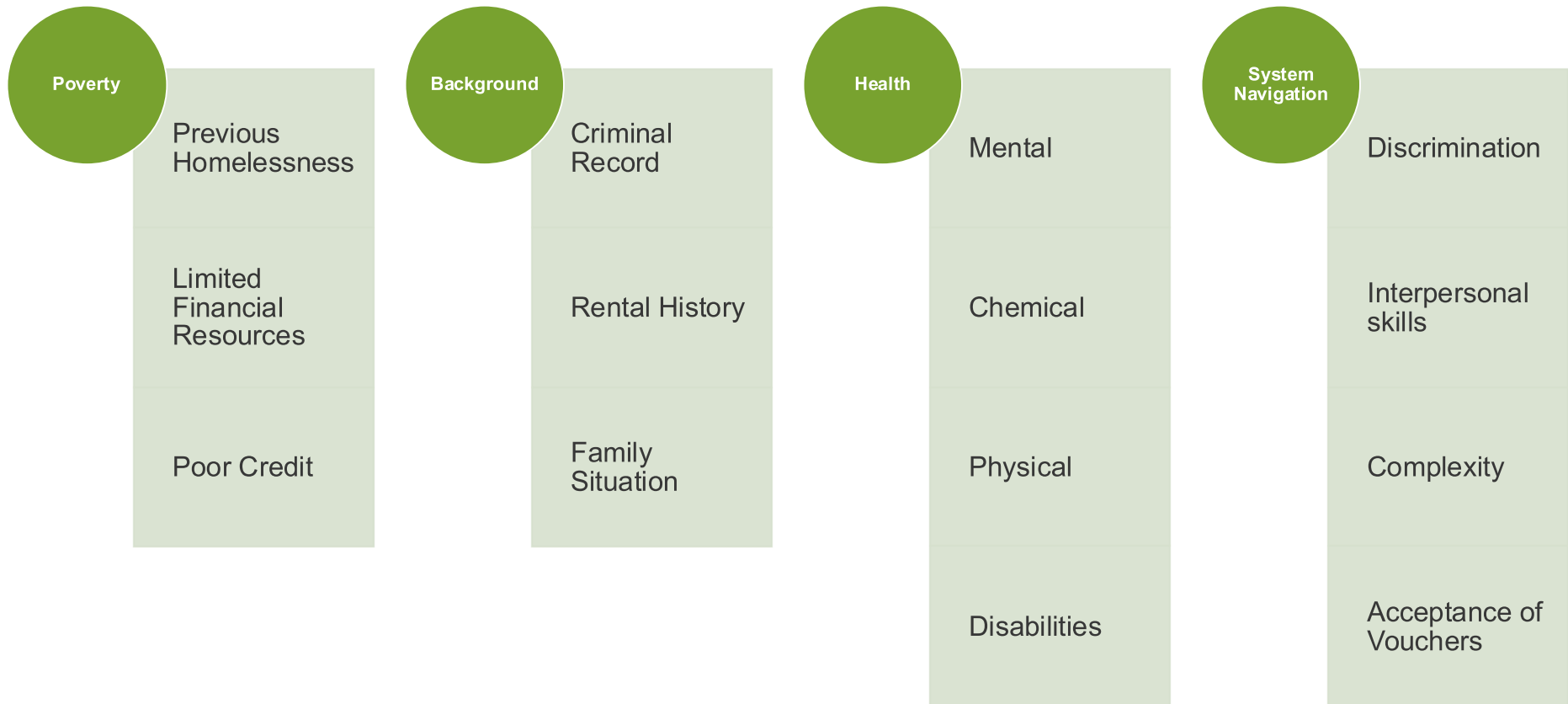




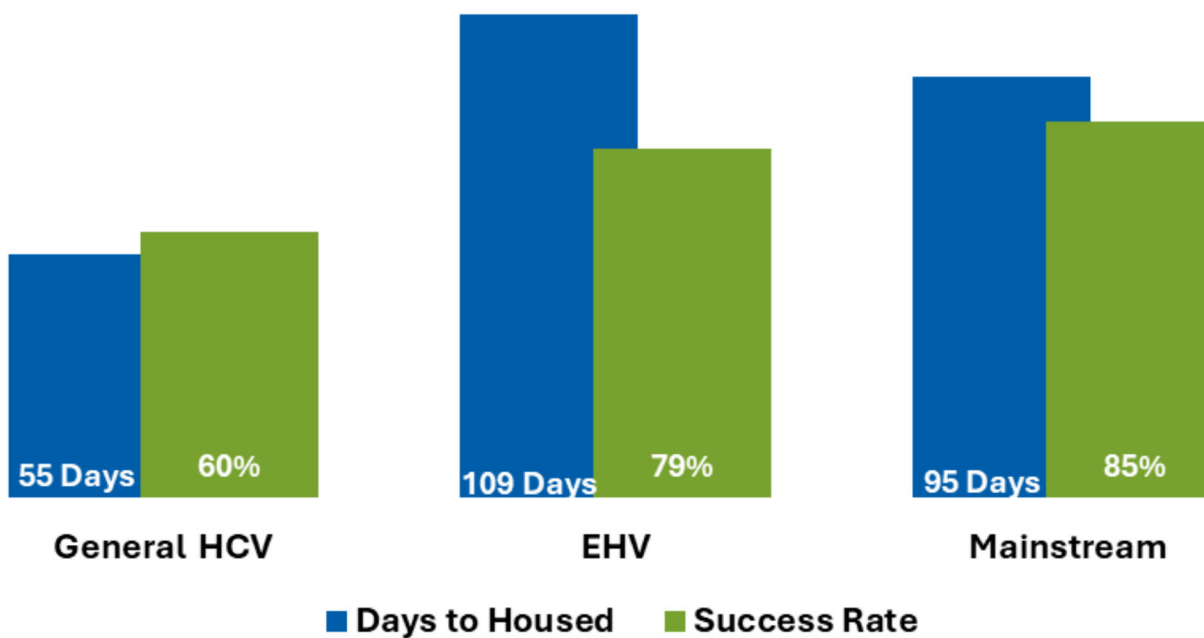
# Voucher Programs Timeline



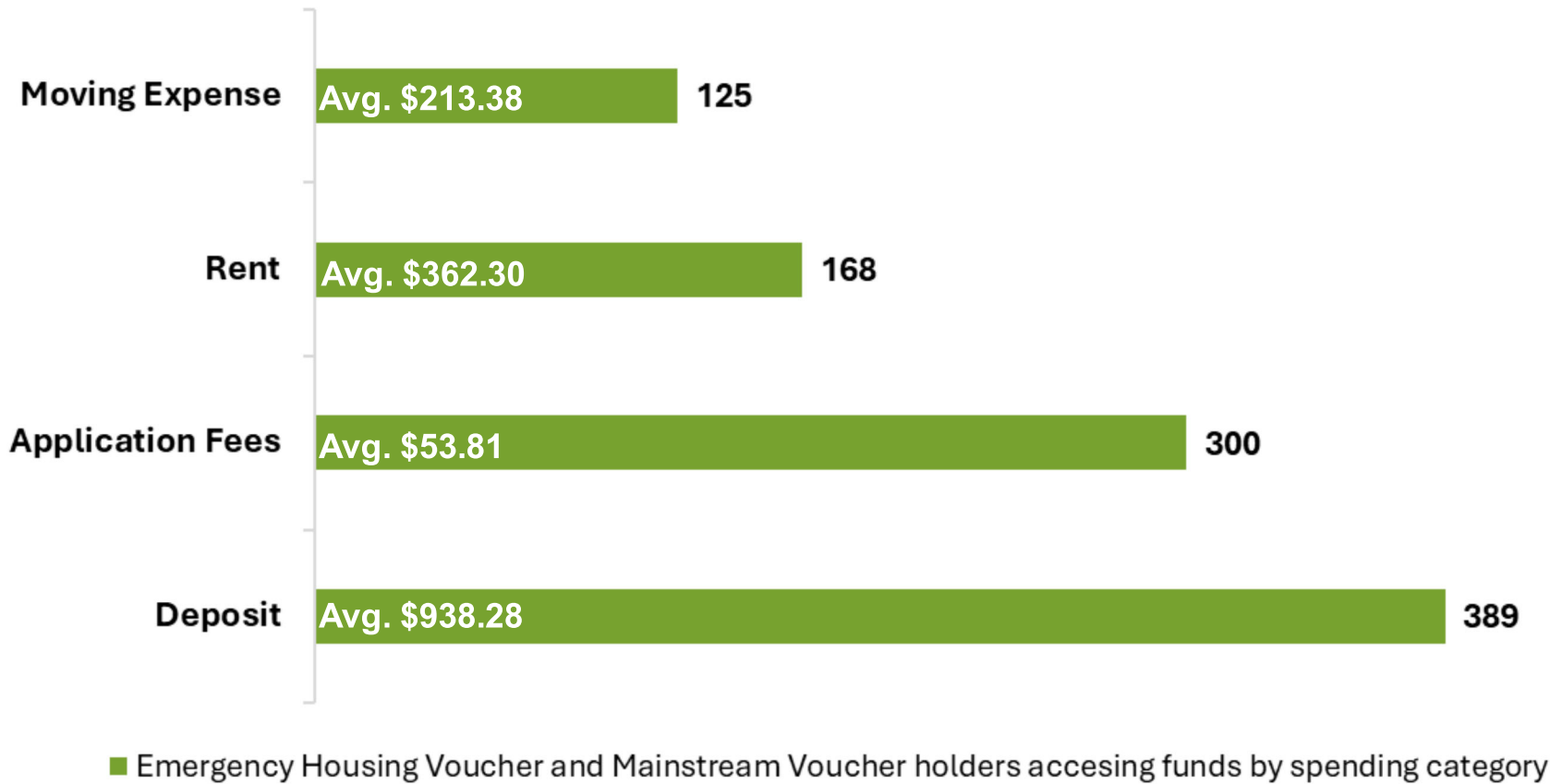
# Support Increases Success for Highest Barrier Families



# Supports Increase Success for Highest Barrier Families



# Funding makes a difference



# Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (VASH)



## Partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

- Serves Veterans experiencing homelessness
  - HRA provides rent subsidy
  - VA provides support services for independent living success and stability
- 202 Households currently housed
  - Includes 231 adults, 68 children

# Impacts of Special Purpose Vouchers



## Over 1200 adults and children housed with Mainstream and Emergency Housing Vouchers

- Mainstream Vouchers
  - 423 adults, 312 children since 2019
  - 74% through HAT referrals (312 adults, 232 children)
- Emergency Housing Vouchers
  - 285 adults and 193 children since 2020
  - Most (97%) housed through partnerships with County Continuums of Care

# Stability of Special Purpose Vouchers

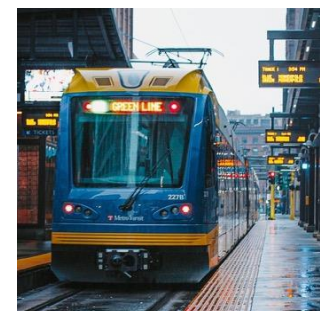
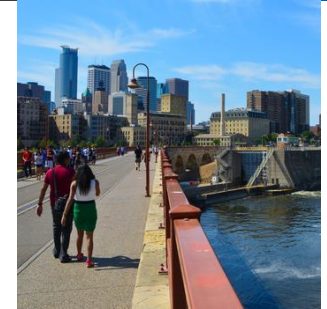
## Stability Initiatives and Partnerships Established 2022

### Mainstream Voucher

- Vouchers remain available to new clients through attrition, 67% stability
- In house services, other referrals as needed

### Emergency Housing Voucher

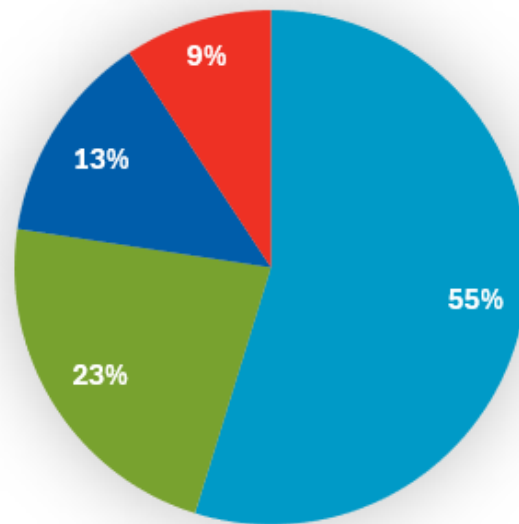
- 6 vouchers lost to attrition since sunset, 99% stability
- In house services, partnership with Hennepin County Housing Stabilization Services, other referrals as needed



# Stability of Special Purpose Vouchers

149 Mainstream, 133 Emergency Housing Voucher holders received assistance

## Intervention Type



■ Systems navigation ■ Lease adherence ■ Referral for services ■ Rehousing assistance



# Metro Transit Police Department - Homeless Action Team (HAT)



# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

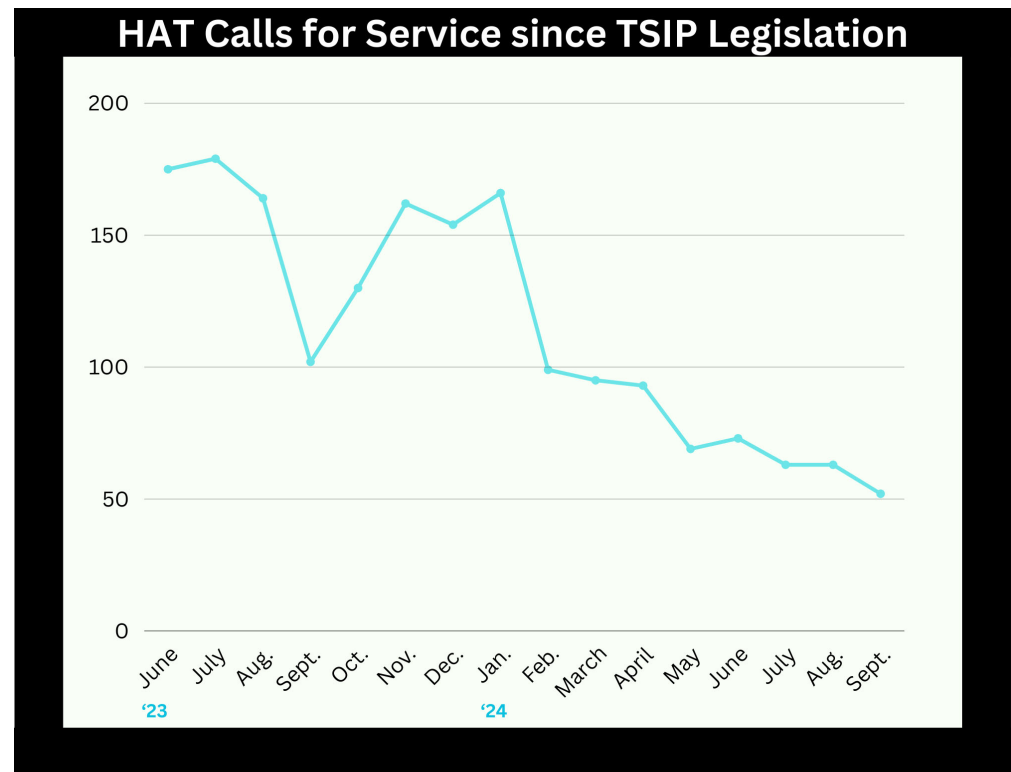
## HAT Data

### Fast Facts:

- HAT consists of 1 sergeant and 3 officers
- Established in 2018 to address issues of unsheltered on transit
- Housed 500+ individuals

### Treatment and Calls for Service:

- As of the end of September, we have sent 39 people from our transit system into treatment
- HAT calls for service have drastically decreased with the implementation of TSIP. (Note that though legislation was passed in June 2023, outreach workers were hired at varying dates through the end of 2023.)



# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

## Street Outreach Focus

- HAT outreach days: two days per week on Blue and Green lines
- Providing:
  - Referrals to resources including shelter, treatment centers, case management, and government resources
  - Immediate social services by "meeting people where they are at"
  - HAT specific vouchers for those who qualify
  - Transportation assistance, encampment clean-ups, and other services with our Mobile Assessment Vehicle (MAV)



# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

## HAT Trainings

HAT Specific training for:

- MTPD Academy
- Metro Transit Bus Operators
- Metro Transit TRIP Agents

Training topics:

- Identifying people experiencing homelessness
- Resources available through HAT
- Steps to contacting HAT officers and other resources
- Showing compassion



*Training is tailored to individual groups*

# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

## Addressing Encampments

1. Make contact with resident(s)
2. Advise of private property
3. Provide resources (shelter/housing information, basic needs)
4. Post "No Trespassing/Notice to Vacate" signs
5. Advise individual(s) to remove belongings and vacate property
6. Schedule facilities clean-up if needed

*HAT follows up with those who may qualify for a housing voucher.*



# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

## Housing Challenges

- Homeless transit riders come with high barriers
- Criminal backgrounds, evictions, poor housing history
- Not all riders are housing ready for independent living with a voucher

## Other Challenges

- Mental health
- Addiction (Drug and Alcohol)
- Winter shelters
- Individuals with pets
- Lack of consistent communication

# Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team (HAT)

## Improving Outreach Solutions

### Community Partnerships

- Catholic Charities
- RADIUS Health
- Hennepin County – Homeless Access Team
- Mental Health MN
- People's Incorporated
- TSIP vendors – ten organizations contracted

*Outreach efforts are relocated based on needed areas*



*HAT Officer Kompelien and Andy Baseman from Mental Health MN*

# Josh Watson's Success Story



Thanks to stories like this, HAT has made treatment programs a focus to best help those we serve.



# Staff Contacts

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Metro Transit Police Department, Homeless Action Team

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