

Definitions

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

Homeless (HUD): HUD has four categories of homeless definitions for eligibility for different types of programs. Eligibility for Supportive Housing uses the following two definitions:

An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low income individuals); or
- An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;

Any individual or family who:

- Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;
- Has no other residence; and
- Lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, and faith based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

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.

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.

Long-term Homelessness (LTH) Eligibility

Households Experiencing Long-Term Homelessness (LTH) (Minnesota)

*Note that eligibility for LTH units has expanded for families and youth
See:*

New Eligibility for Families and Youth on page three for details

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. Time spent in an institutional care or correctional facility shall be excluded when determining the length of time a household has been homeless except in the case where an individual was in a facility for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility.

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) and couch hops as a temporary way to avoid living on the streets or in an emergency shelter.

Transitional Housing (TH): Time spent in transitional housing is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless when determining LTH eligibility.

Institutions: Time spent in an institutional care (treatment, hospital, foster care, etc.) or correctional facility (jail or prison) is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless except in the case where an individual was in a facility for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility. That time can be considered time homeless.

Evaluate the housing history prior to and after TH or an institutional stay to determine if it meets the state's LTH definition.

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

Chronically Homeless (HUD)

A "chronically homeless" individual is defined to mean a homeless individual with a disability who lives either in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility.

In order to meet the "chronically homeless" definition, the individual also must have been living as described above continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven.

Chronically homeless families are families with adult heads of household who meet the definition of a chronically homeless individual.

Difference between Minnesota Long-Term Homelessness and HUD Chronic definitions		For HUD Chronic, an adult in the family or minor head of household must be disabled and meet the HUD definition of homelessness the night before program entry. These are not requirements for Minnesota LTH. The household does not have to have a member with a disability or be HUD homeless the night before program entry. Minnesota's LTH definition also does not consider the total length of time for the four episodes of homelessness.		
Homeless Type	Homeless status at time of application acceptance	Disability required?	Length of time homeless for each episode	Total time homeless for the 4 episodes
LTH	HUD homeless, doubled up, institutional stay	No	No set length	No set length
Chronic	HUD homeless	Yes	At least 7 days of a living situation between homeless episodes	The time homeless for the four episodes must equal 12 months

New Eligibility for Supportive Housing for Families and Youth

In 2016, Minnesota Housing expanded the eligibility criteria for families and youth for Supportive Housing units selected in the 2016 RFP. Eligibility for families and youth now includes LTH, households at significant risk of LTH, or households assessed as needing permanent supportive housing through Coordinated Entry (CE). This will apply to new projects funded in the 2016 and 2017 Multifamily RFP.

Common LTH Eligibility Questions

1. What is an episode of homelessness?

A stay in an emergency shelter (could be one night or 2 months)

Sleeping in a place not meant for habitation (street, camping, abandoned buildings, car, condemned housing, etc.)

Fleeing domestic violence

Couch hopping or doubled-up (Minnesota definition only)

An episode of homelessness might include multiple instances of any of these situations. Multiple consecutive stays in any of these situations is only *one* episode of homelessness. The episode ends when the household obtains their own housing. An institutional stay can also break a homelessness episode (see questions 9 and 10).

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

One night; however, it would be extremely unusual for a household to be homeless for only one night. They are likely to be alternating shelter stays with doubling up, camping, etc. Note that the LTH definition does not require someone to be in a shelter before entry into housing.

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

There is not a specific minimum time, but is generally more than just a few days (could be multiple locations). Overall, for a couch hopping or doubled-up event to be considered an episode of homelessness, it should not last longer than 12 consecutive months in the same housing situation. Carefully consider the relationship of the homeless household to the person(s) with whom they are staying. Could they continue staying there without jeopardizing the occupant's lease? Is it safe? Do they have their own bedroom or private place to sleep? The housing history is important information to determine whether there is a pattern or history of unstable housing.

4. 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.

5. 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 Minnesota's LTH definition. Youth aging out of foster care can be considered at high risk of LTH.

6. 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 with an emergency voucher are considered an episode of homelessness.

7. What about refugees?

LTH 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. Permanent supportive housing for LTH is targeted to people who need affordable housing and services to maintain the housing and often have serious mental illness, chemical dependency or a dual diagnosis in addition to other barriers.

8. How long should an LTH household remain eligible for Permanent Supportive Housing (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.

9. 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?

Hospital stay, in-patient treatment, Intensive Residential Treatment Services (IRTS), jail, prison, foster care, and board and lodge that is considered temporary or transitional are considered “facilities/institutions”. They are not considered as housing or homelessness situations so they are treated as neutral situations. However, if an individual was in a facility/institution for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility, that time can be considered time homeless.

Transitional housing is a neutral situation. It is not considered as housing or homelessness.

If there are shelter stays/homeless episodes before and after the neutral event, you can consider the homelessness as one continuous episode OR as two separate episodes.

10. Does an institutional (treatment, transitional housing, hospital, jail, etc.) stay separate episodes of homelessness? For example, if someone is homeless then goes to treatment and then is homeless again, is that two episodes or one continuous episode?

An institutional or transitional housing stay is neutral, so you can consider the time homelessness before and after the institutional stay as one continuous episode OR as two separate episodes (depending on if you are trying to come up with 12 consecutive months or 4 episodes over three years).

For example, if a household was homeless 8 months prior to entering a facility and 4 months after exiting the facility, the household would meet the LTH definition for a continuous 12 months. It could also be courted as two homeless episodes.

Also see question 9 about an institutional stay that is less than 90 days.

11. 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. I assume she still qualifies as LTH because treatment and IRTS are "disregarded" and we can work to house her during the next 90 days so that she spends a minimum amount of time in shelter. Does she qualify?

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

12. 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?

The household may be eligible if the household needs supportive services to successfully maintain housing and has been in and out of institutions for the majority of their housing history. Please contact Minnesota Housing staff so that we can talk through such cases on an individual basis.

13. 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? 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. You can count the time before and after the TH to determine LTH. TH is temporary housing for up to 24 months.

14. 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. You can also consider time in treatment that is less than 90 days as time homeless.

15. Should I talk with Minnesota Housing to request a waiver if someone is close to meeting the LTH definition and really needs supportive services?

We consider a waiver if:

The person/household has been assessed through Coordinated Entry and determined to need permanent supportive housing

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

16. 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.

17. GRH LTH eligibility: Please contact DHS GRH staff for questions about LTH eligibility.