

Quick recap

This meeting was a training session led by Lori Montis and Crystal from Human Services to introduce various assistance programs available in Lincoln County, South Dakota. The presenters covered multiple programs including Emergency Relief, which provides financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical expenses, transportation, and other basic needs on a walk-in basis from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM, with applications processed by caseworkers who arrive at 8:00 AM. They discussed Medical Assistance for uninsured hospitalizations, Veteran Services offered through two county VSOs, Safe Home - a 33-bed permanent supportive housing facility for chronically homeless individuals with alcohol dependency, and reentry programs for justice-involved individuals. The session also covered Community Engagement navigators who help connect clients with various resources, and housing navigation processes through a new online system called Housing Now. Participants asked questions about eligibility requirements, documentation needs, income thresholds, and specific scenarios involving over-income applicants and cross-county assistance limitations.

<https://minnehahacounty.gov/dept/hs/hs.php>

Lori Montis: (605)978-7021 lmontis@minnehahacounty.gov

Collaboration

- Attendees: Refer Neighbors who may benefit from the jail re-entry (Alliance) program to the program manager for assessment.

<https://minnehahacounty.gov/dept/hs/alliance/alliance.php>

- Attendees: For Neighbors needing housing assistance, contact Brett Johnson to discuss their situation and get direction.

The Community Engagement Division facilitates connection to safe, affordable housing options and supportive services for households who are at risk of, or are currently experiencing, homelessness.

Our team offers the following services:

- ☐ Voluntary, client-centered, strength-based case management
- ☐ Planning and prioritization of needs
- ☐ Housing search and placement
- ☐ Short-term financial assistance
- ☐ Advocacy for health; promoting wellness and autonomy
- ☐ Referrals and warm handoffs to community supports

Brett Johnson - Community Services Engagement Manager (605)367-4217

Contact: https://web.minnehahacounty.gov/conForms/email_hs_communityEngagement.php

- Attendees: When working with Neighbors who have applied for emergency relief, ask the client for their Notice of Action document for information and plan of action.
- Attendees: Encourage Neighbors to bring all required documentation (Photo ID, proof of income, lease, etc.) when applying for emergency relief to expedite the process.
- Attendees: For veterans, refer them to the County Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to start the application process for benefits. <https://minnehahacounty.gov/dept/hs/vet/vet.php>

Summary

South Dakota Assistance Programs Overview

Lori at Human Services, introduced a discussion on various assistance programs available in South Dakota counties, focusing on emergency relief and additional services beyond financial assistance. She highlighted that all 66 counties are mandated to provide certain services under South Dakota Statute 28-13, with Union County having a larger budget due to its status as a market city. The programs discussed included emergency medical assistance for uninsured hospitalized individuals, Veteran Services, Safe Home housing, grants, and an advocacy program for the homeless.

Emergency Relief Program Operations

They explained the emergency relief program's hours of operation, which start at 7:30 AM with applications accepted on a walk-in basis until 3:30 PM. They outlined the types of assistance offered, including rent deposit, utilities, medical assistance, transportation, and food items, as well as the required documentation such as photo ID, proof of income, and lease information. They also discussed referral processes for cases that don't meet eligibility criteria and noted that they are seeing increased demand due to recent changes in assistance programs.

Emergency Assistance Program Guidelines

They discussed the guidelines and exceptions for emergency assistance programs, explaining that while there are strict eligibility rules, the commission allows for exceptions in verified emergency situations. They provided examples of when assistance could be provided, such as unexpected medical expenses affecting rent payments, and noted that while they cannot help with moving between counties, they can make exceptions for ongoing assistance in the same year under emergency circumstances.

County Assistance Programs Overview

They discussed county assistance programs, including lien policies where Minnehaha County does not pursue collections but maintains no-interest loans, with only about \$100,000 annually being repaid from a \$4 million budget. They explained how liens can affect home purchases and sales, particularly when buyers need to satisfy outstanding obligations before closing. The discussion also covered a housing assistance program for certain qualified individuals and a medical assistance program for uninsured hospital patients, noting that Medicaid expansion has reduced new applications in this area.

Assistance Programs Eligibility Requirements

They discussed eligibility requirements and processes for various assistance programs, including medical costs, emergency relief, and veterans' benefits. They explained that the county acts as a resource of last resort and outlined specific criteria for residency and eligibility, including factors like employment and asset ownership. They also described the role of county VSOs in assisting veterans with benefit applications and emphasized the importance of starting the application process locally before submitting to the state.

Safe Home Housing Program Overview

They presented information about Safe Home, a permanent supportive housing program for individuals with chronic alcohol issues and homelessness that has operated for 14 years. The program houses 33 people with strict rules including a daily alcohol limit of 12 ounces consumed in residents' rooms, and requires participants to be 21 years old, homeless for at least 6 months, and have alcohol dependency. While there is currently only one opening available, the program has gained national attention and interest, though they noted that residents often return to previous lifestyle challenges after leaving the facility.

Jail Reentry Program Overview

They explained the jail reentry program designed to connect low-level offenders transitioning out of jail with community resources and support services to help prevent reoffending. They described two programs for individuals with incarceration history, including Alliance which offers daily walk-in services from 9 to 3, and mentioned that anyone can refer participants who have been justice-involved. The discussion concluded with a brief mention of Community engagement as another support program, though details were not fully elaborated.

Resource Specialist Program Overview

They explained the organization's resource specialist program which helps families and individuals navigate various services including housing, health care, and social security. They described how the navigators work with multiple programs including schools, shelters, and housing boards to assist clients with complex needs. The discussion focused on the multidisciplinary approach and information flow processes, though the full presentation on housing was not completed in this segment.

Housing System Implementation Updates

They discussed a new housing system that allows case managers to access real-time openings through an app, with early implementation involving a combination city and county staff member to help agencies get involved. They explained the emergency relief process, noting that while applications are typically processed within 30 days, some cases can take up to 90 days depending on complexity. They outlined income guidelines and assistance limits, explaining that while the standard is 40% of income for rent (50% if utilities are not included), exceptions are made based on circumstances and sustainability, with maximum assistance ranging from \$500 for a studio to \$1,200 for a 4-bedroom apartment.