

Report:



**PROJECT
HOMELESS
CONNECT**

***A Look at the 2007
Minnesota Events***

*Report prepared by Alison Legler, Minnesota Dept. of Human Services, June
2008*

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providing HMIS data analysis and reporting. Reports prepared by Wilder
Research on Project Homeless Connect events can be found here:
http://www.wilder.org/reports.0.html?&no_cache=1.*

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Highlights

Project Homeless Connect Events in Minnesota in 2007 were held in **eleven counties** and served **4,390 guests**, including nearly **800 families** with children.

Over **500 agencies** and **1,200 volunteers** participated in events throughout the state.

The events reached out to over **1,600 households that identified as homeless** on the day of the event. About half of these households had not been receiving services from an agency participating in the state's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) before coming to the event.

Around **487 households accessed services** from an agency participating in HMIS in the **60 days following the event**; 41 percent of those households had not previously been connected to services.

Guests at Project Homeless Connect identified **housing, employment, and dental care** as the three top services sought.

Introduction

The first Project Homeless Connect was held in San Francisco in 2004 and has grown in popularity throughout the country as a national best practice. The concept of Project Homeless Connect is to provide a one-day, “*one-stop shop*” approach to providing and coordinating services for people who are experiencing homelessness. The aim is to *expedite outcomes* for guests by bringing a variety of resources and services to one location, rather than asking them to go to multiple places across the community to get the services they need. Project Homeless Connect also attempts to *reduce barriers* by making services as accessible and convenient as possible. Accordingly, there are no special eligibility requirements for a person to receive services at an event. The idea is to be “*consumer-centric*” by focusing on the needs and wants of the guest. Some evidence suggests that this approach is helpful in reaching the “hardest-to-serve” of the homeless population—that by offering services in a friendly, low-barrier manner those who would not normally engage in these systems can be reached.

Project Homeless Connect is also an excellent opportunity to *involve the larger community*. Community members find it to be a relatively easy way to *volunteer* while still making a real difference in someone’s life. It provides an opportunity to *dispel myths* about homelessness. When a community member volunteers at one of these events, they are able to connect with an individual or family experiencing homelessness and hear their unique story. They see how accessing local community resources and services can be more difficult than one might think, even when it is all in one location. In addition, Project Homeless Connect enables *new partnerships* between the traditional homeless services system and businesses, law enforcement, medical institutions, the media, and others.

Ultimately the goal of Project Homeless Connect is to provide an impetus for *systems change*. These events are not simply “charity” events; they are part of a larger plan to *end homelessness*. During Project Homeless Connect, service providers are able to come together to work more efficiently as a whole. Project Homeless Connect can also help in the *prevention* of homelessness when individuals and families are able to find the resources and services they need before a crisis results in homelessness.

“Project Homeless Connect shows me people are there when you need them”

The hope is that one day we will no longer need to have events like Project Homeless Connect.

Project Homeless Connect in Minnesota

Minneapolis/Hennepin County was the first community to organize a Project Homeless Connect event in Minnesota. Since then, communities across the state have decided to start their own Project Homeless Connect events. In 2007, seven separate communities held an event: St. Paul/Ramsey County, Fargo/Moorhead, Project Youth Connect in Minneapolis, Minneapolis/Hennepin County, Duluth/St. Louis County, Central Minnesota, and Faribault/Rice County.¹ Each of these events looked slightly different depending on the unique needs of the local community and homeless population. The following is a summary of data collected about these events. The data was collected with the state's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). (Note: Project Youth Connect did not collect data through HMIS, therefore the data from this event is only included in the total number of people served).

Statewide Data²

Demographics

4,390 people served (approximately a 40% increase from the previous year)

- 3,154 households
- 74% were singles or couples without children
- 25% were families with children
- 2% were unaccompanied youth

Average age of heads of households was 40 years.

Race/Ethnicity

- 40% African-American
- 38% White
- 11% American Indian

11% were military veterans

Slightly less than half (40%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 53% were currently homeless
- 18% met the state's definition of long-term homelessness
- 40% were not currently homeless
- 185 people reported having spent the last night in a place not meant for habitation

Income

- 61% reported receiving public benefits
- 35% reported having no income

¹ A map highlighting the locations of each of these events is available in Appendix A.

² Appendix B details the data collection methods used for this report.

- 17% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 52% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 43% reported receiving food stamps
- 14% reported receiving Medicare

16% reported having previously been to an event like Project Homeless Connect

Top services sought by guests¹

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental care

More than 500 agencies participated

Involved over 1200 community volunteers

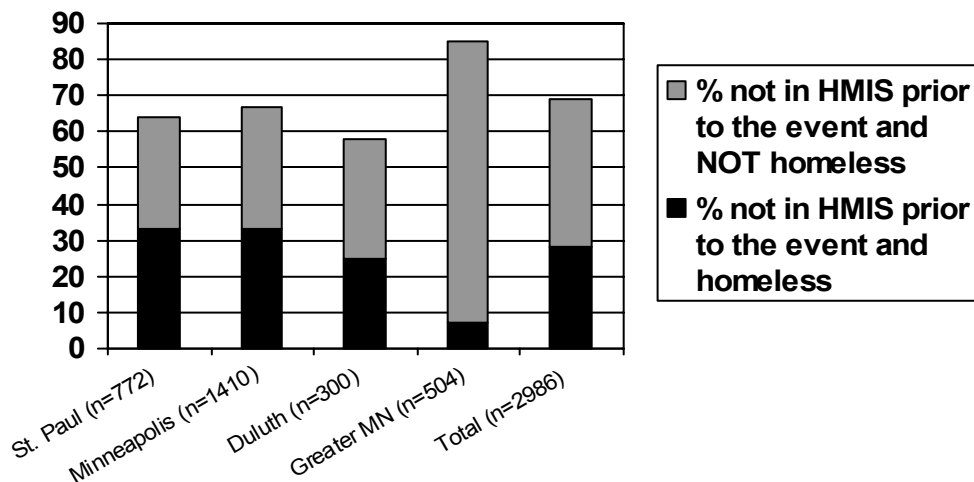
¹ Appendix C provides a comprehensive list of the services types of provided by Project Homeless Connect events throughout Minnesota.

Research Questions

Does Project Homeless Connect reach households that were not previously engaged with services?

Project Homeless Connect is designed, in part, to engage people who would not normally participate in services or who are struggling but do not know where to go for help. To determine whether the events are reaching the population it is intended to, each participant's identifier was matched with other areas of HMIS to determine if they had received services by an agency participating in HMIS at any point prior to the event. The results of this matching show that the majority of the households who come to the event do not show up as being served by an agency in HMIS prior to the event, and slightly less than half (41 percent) of those identified were also currently homeless. (See chart below.)

"There are a lot of resources I didn't know about"

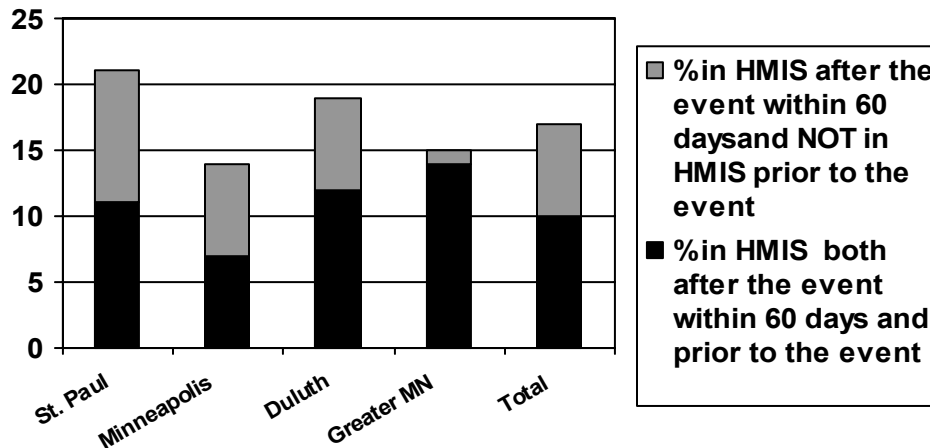


Overall, the data show that Project Homeless Connect events in Minnesota in 2007 reached 830 households who were currently homeless and not connected to services. It is important to keep in mind that these figures likely represent an over-count, because 1) not all agencies who serve the homeless in the state use HMIS, and 2) data is not matched if a person is entered in anonymously or if they use a different name at the event than was used when getting services.

Do guests remain connected to services after the event?

One of the goals of Project Homeless Connect is to enable connections that result in long-term positive outcomes. Although data specifically related to long-term outcomes was not collected for the majority of guests, participants'

identifiers were matched with other services in HMIS to determine whether or not they received help from an agency using HMIS within 60 days after the event. The results reveal that around 20% of the total households were found to have received services in HMIS after the event, and one-third of those were also not previously engaged in services. (See chart below.)



According to the data, 487 households were able to access services in the 60 days following the event (this figure is likely *under-counted* for the reasons stated above); 41 percent of those households had not previously been connected to services.

Are there significant differences in the demographics between the homeless, long-term homeless and non-homeless guests who come to Project Homeless Connect?

Homeless guests served in Minnesota at the 2007 Project Homeless Connect events were twice as likely to be employed and three times as likely to have a disability of long duration as non-homeless guests. Furthermore, long-term homeless guests were twice as likely to have a disability of long duration as those who were first-time homeless.

Comparisons between Project Homeless Connect events in Minnesota

Number of guests served. The number of guests served varied greatly depending on whether the event was held in an urban or rural area. The two largest events were held in Minneapolis (1,780 people) and St. Paul (1,081); the two smallest events were held in Fargo/Moorhead (311) and Faribault (82).

Household composition. Some of the events focused on serving families with children, while others seemed to attract more single adults. Central Minnesota had the highest rate of families with children (52 percent), while Duluth and St. Paul had the lowest (18 and 11 percent, respectively).

*“Keep having
Project Homeless
Connect until
nobody else is
homeless.”*

Race/Ethnicity. In the Twin Cities, nearly half of the guests served identified as African American. Both Duluth and Fargo/Moorhead served relatively large numbers of American Indians (around one-third of the total guests).

Disability of long-duration. The percent of guests who indicated that they suffered from a long-term disability varied between the events. Fargo/Moorhead and Duluth had the highest rates (56 and 54 percent, respectively), and Faribault had the lowest (22 percent).

Housing status. St. Paul and Fargo had the highest rates of guests who were currently homeless (65 percent). Minneapolis also had a higher rate at 61 percent. Central Minnesota had the lowest rate, with only 7 percent reporting as currently homeless.

Income. Guests coming to events in the Twin Cities were more likely to report having no income (48 percent in Minneapolis and 33 percent in St. Paul). Only around 15 percent of guests at the Greater Minnesota events reported no income. Guests at the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth events were also less likely to report income from employment.

St. Paul/Ramsey County

2nd event held on June 19, 2007

Location: St. Paul Armory

Guests

1,081 people served (15% increase over the previous event)

- 815 households
- 89% singles or couples without children
- 11% families with children
- 3% unaccompanied youth

Average age of the heads of households was 44

Race/Ethnicity

- 47% African American
- 36% White
- 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native

14% were military veterans

Nearly half (48%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 65% were currently homeless
- 21% met the state's definition of long-term homeless
- 31% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family
- 62 people reported having spent the last night in a place not meant for habitation

Income

- 63% reported receiving public benefits
- 33% reported having no income
- 12% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 51% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 46% reported receiving food stamps
- 15% reported receiving Medicare

20% reported having previously been to a Project Homeless Connect

96% of guests felt it was worth their time to participate

35% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

Services provided

74 agencies participated (97% rated the event favorably)

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental care

Most common services provided

- Housing (408 services)

- General Advocacy (334)
- Health care (279)

What guests felt were the most important services they received

- Medical care
- Housing information
- Backpack/sleeping bags

Follow-up on services¹

- 38% of participants had further contact with an agency they connected with at the event
- 5% were scheduled for housing placement
- 11% received help with their application for Social Security benefits
- 4% were assisted with getting help for their chemical dependency

Top Donations Distributed

Backpacks
 Bus Cards
 \$5 Target gift cards

Volunteers

226 volunteers from the community and Target
 96% felt that the event was a “valuable opportunity for the participants”

Successes

A June 2008 article in the *Twin Cities Daily Planet* featured a guest from the 2007 Project Homeless Connect event in St. Paul who has found success through the YWCA’s transitional housing program. She said she had called the agency before the event, “but seeing them in person made all the difference.”

Innovations

The St. Paul Police Department took a lead role in organizing the event.
 Local school buses were enlisted for help with free transportation to and from the event.

*“The more
 information,
 the better
 the survival”*

¹ For this event a follow-up survey was conducted with seven participating agencies who reported a total of 114 contacts at Project Homeless Connect. A separate report about this survey is available.

Fargo/Moorhead

1st event held on August 1, 2007

Location: Fargo Convention Center

Guests

108 Minnesotans; 311 persons total (including North Dakotan residents)

- 63 households
- 63% singles or couples without children
- 37% families with children
- 5% were unaccompanied youth

Average age of the heads of households was 39.

Race/Ethnicity

- 46% White
- 30% American Indian or Alaskan Native

11% were military veterans

Over half (56%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 65% were currently homeless
- 19% met the state's definition of long-term homeless
- 33% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family

Income¹

- 63% reported receiving public benefits
- 16% reported having no income
- 33% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 59% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 50% reported receiving food stamps
- 18% reported receiving Medicare

3% reported having previously been to a Project Homeless Connect

15% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

Services

44 agencies participated (98% reported that they would return to participate in another event)

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental Care

Most common services provided

- Rental assistance for eviction prevention

¹ Data on income, benefits, and HMIS participation include results from all Greater Minnesota events (Moorhead, Central, and Faribault).

- IDs
- Housing applications

Top Donations Distributed

*“Very helpful,
friendly people”*

Exit packs with hygiene products
Food and water (including food provided by service agencies at booths)
Haircuts

Volunteers

74 community volunteers participated

Successes

Providers commented on exit surveys that they appreciated the event for its ability to allow them to better reach the homeless and to build partnerships with other providers.

Innovations

This event was conducted in conjunction with a Veteran’s Stand Down. A strong emphasis was placed on prevention.

Project Youth Connect¹

1st event held on August 13, 2007

Location: St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, Minneapolis

Guests

144 youth served

Age range: 14-23

Guests primarily found out about the event through a street outreach worker or case manager.

Services provided

50 agencies participated

Available services

- Haircuts
- Free meals
- Child Care
- Entertainment

Innovations

This was the first event in Minnesota to focus on reaching out to unaccompanied youth.

Popular components of this event included a free store which allowed guests to "purchase" items with tickets and free entertainment provided by Division Of Indian Works-Healing Spirit Drumming Group and the Bridge's Hip Hop Group.

¹ Project Youth Connect used a shorter specialized intake form. This data was not entered into HMIS.

Minneapolis/Hennepin County

3rd event held on October 1, 2007

Location: Minneapolis Convention Center

Guests

1,780 people served (46% increase over the previous event)

- 1,476 households
- 74% singles or couples without children
- 26% families with children
- 1% unaccompanied youth

Average age of the heads of households was 41

Race/Ethnicity

- 49% African American
- 23% White
- 15% American Indian or Alaskan Native

10% were military veterans

Over one-third (37%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 61% were currently homeless
- 21% met the state's definition of long-term homeless
- 30% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family
- 99 people reported having spent the last night in a place not meant for habitation

Income

- 57% reported receiving public benefits
- 48% reported having no income
- 15% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 48% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 39% reported receiving food stamps
- 10% reported receiving Medicare

17% reported having previously been to a Project Homeless Connect

99% of guests felt it was worth their time to participate

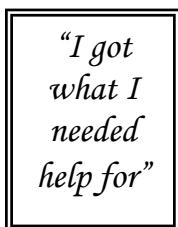
33% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

Services

Around 100 agencies participated.

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental Care



Most common services provided

- Health care (1,041 services)
- Housing (801)
- Community Resources (790)

Volunteers

800 volunteers from Target and the community

Successes

Kelber Catering provided free hot meals for guests, volunteers, and service providers.

The popularity and success of this event has prompted Hennepin County to include the development of a year-round “Opportunity Center” based on Project Homeless Connect concepts in their ten-year plan to end homelessness, “Heading Home Hennepin.”

Innovations

Minneapolis held the first Project Homeless Connect in Minnesota in 2005.

Street outreach workers, including specialized youth outreach workers, were available as greeters to help welcome guests and connect them with a volunteer.

Dedicated housing “triage” workers were used to assess a household’s needs and make referrals to appropriate housing agencies.

This event focused on increasing employer participation and getting guests connected to employment. For instance, four people who applied for a position at the Mall of America were successfully hired.

Duluth/St. Louis County

2nd event held on October 24, 2007

*“Project Homeless
Connect relieved
stress.”*

Location: Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC)

Guests

445 people served (78% increase over the previous event)

- 344 households
- 82% singles or couples without children
- 18% families with children
- 2% unaccompanied youth

Average age of the heads of households was 43

Race/Ethnicity

- 41% White
- 36% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 13% African American

14% were military veterans

Over half (54%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 43% were currently homeless
- 19% met the state’s definition of long-term homeless
- 37% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family
- 14 people reported having spent the last night in a place not meant for habitation

Income

- 72% reported receiving public benefits
- 15% reported having no income
- 10% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 59% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 45% reported receiving food stamps
- 19% reported receiving Medicare

16% reported having previously been to a Project Homeless Connect

42% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

Services

40 agencies participated

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Health/Medical
- Employment

Most common services provided

- Blood pressure check (31)

- Housing applications (28)
 - Employment information and referral (25)
- What guests felt were the most important services they received
- Housing information
 - General information
 - Food

Volunteers

Volunteers came from Target, Sam's Club, and local colleges

Innovations

Organized event in conjunction with annual Sleep-Out fundraiser

Central Minnesota

2nd event held on October 25, 2007

Location: First Lutheran Church, Aitkin, Aitkin County (held October 11)
Cambridge United Methodist Church, Cambridge, Isanti County
St. Mary's Catholic Church, Mora, Kanabec County
Trinity Lutheran Church, Milaca, Mille Lacs County
Hinckley Community Center, Hinckley, Pine County
Lakes Free Church, Lindstrom, Chisago County (held October 30)

Guests

743 people served

- 426 households
- 41% singles or couples without children
- 52% families with children
- 6% were unaccompanied youth¹

Average age of the heads of households was 37

Race/Ethnicity

- 87% White

9% were military veterans

Over one-third (37%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 7% were currently homeless
- 2% met the state's definition of long-term homeless
- 86% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family

Income²

- 63% reported receiving public benefits
- 16% reported having no income
- 33% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 59% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 50% reported receiving food stamps
- 18% reported receiving Medicare

"Project Homeless Connect was good and people were very helpful!"

11% of guests reported having previously been to an event like Project Homeless Connect

93% of guests felt it was worth their time to participate

15% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

¹ Includes results from Faribault.

² Data on income, benefits, and HMIS participation include results from all Greater Minnesota events (Moorhead, Central, and Faribault).

Services

150 agencies participated

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental Care

Services provided

- 426 meals were served.
- Mille Lacs County
 - The Lakes and Pines Community action agency took 7 intakes for services.
 - Provided free haircuts
- Pine County
 - The Salvation Army gave out 8 rental vouchers.
 - Grand Casino processed 9 job applications.
- On-site applications for benefits

What guests felt were the most important services they received¹

- Food
- Housing
- Employment

Top Donations Distributed

Food from Ruby's Pantry

Homemade quilts

Coats

Gas cards

Phone cards

Light bulbs

Thrift store coupons

Sleeping bags

Volunteers

118 community volunteers participated

In Pine County, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes assisted with set-up and tear-down.

In Aitkin County, they had over 20 volunteers from the community and the Aitkin County Homeless Coalition.

Successes

Despite common perception that "there are no homeless people in our county," the events found exceptional community support from church groups and community volunteers.

¹ Data gathered from Milaca, Mille Lacs County and Hinckley, Pine County.

Chisago, Kanabec and Mille Lacs counties provided free on-site flu shots. In Isanti County a homeless mother was connected with resources to help her get her GED.

In Mille Lacs County a woman got her first “real” haircut in six years. In Pine County a woman recovering from a brain injury was provided with blankets for her kids and grandchildren living without heat.

Innovations

The first Central Minnesota event was held in conjunction with the statewide Wilder survey on homelessness; 2007 events were held in conjunction with local events such as food shelf and kids coats giveaways.

Advertised as “Operation Community Connect” to draw in those at-risk of homelessness

*“I feel closer to
others in the same
situations”*

Faribault/Rice County

1st event held on November 14, 2007

Location: Faribault VFW

Guests

79 people served

- 33 households
- 66% singles or couples without children
- 33% families with children

Average age of the heads of households was 36.

Race/Ethnicity

- 63% White

5% were military veterans

Around one-fifth (22%) of the guests reported a disability of long duration

Housing Status

- 24% were currently homeless
- 5% met the state's definition of long-term homeless
- 50% were not currently homeless or living with friends/family

Income¹

- 63% reported receiving public benefits
- 16% reported having no income
- 33% reported income from employment

Benefits

- 59% reported receiving Medical Assistance
- 50% reported receiving food stamps
- 18% reported receiving Medicare

2% reported having previously been to a Project Homeless Connect

15% of guests were identified as having received some type of services prior to the event from a service provider participating in HMIS

Services

Top services sought by guests

- Housing
- Employment
- Dental Care

Services provided

- Blood pressure check and flu shot
- Hair cuts

Top Donations Distributed

¹ Data on income, benefits, and HMIS participation include results from all Greater Minnesota events (Moorhead, Central, and Faribault).

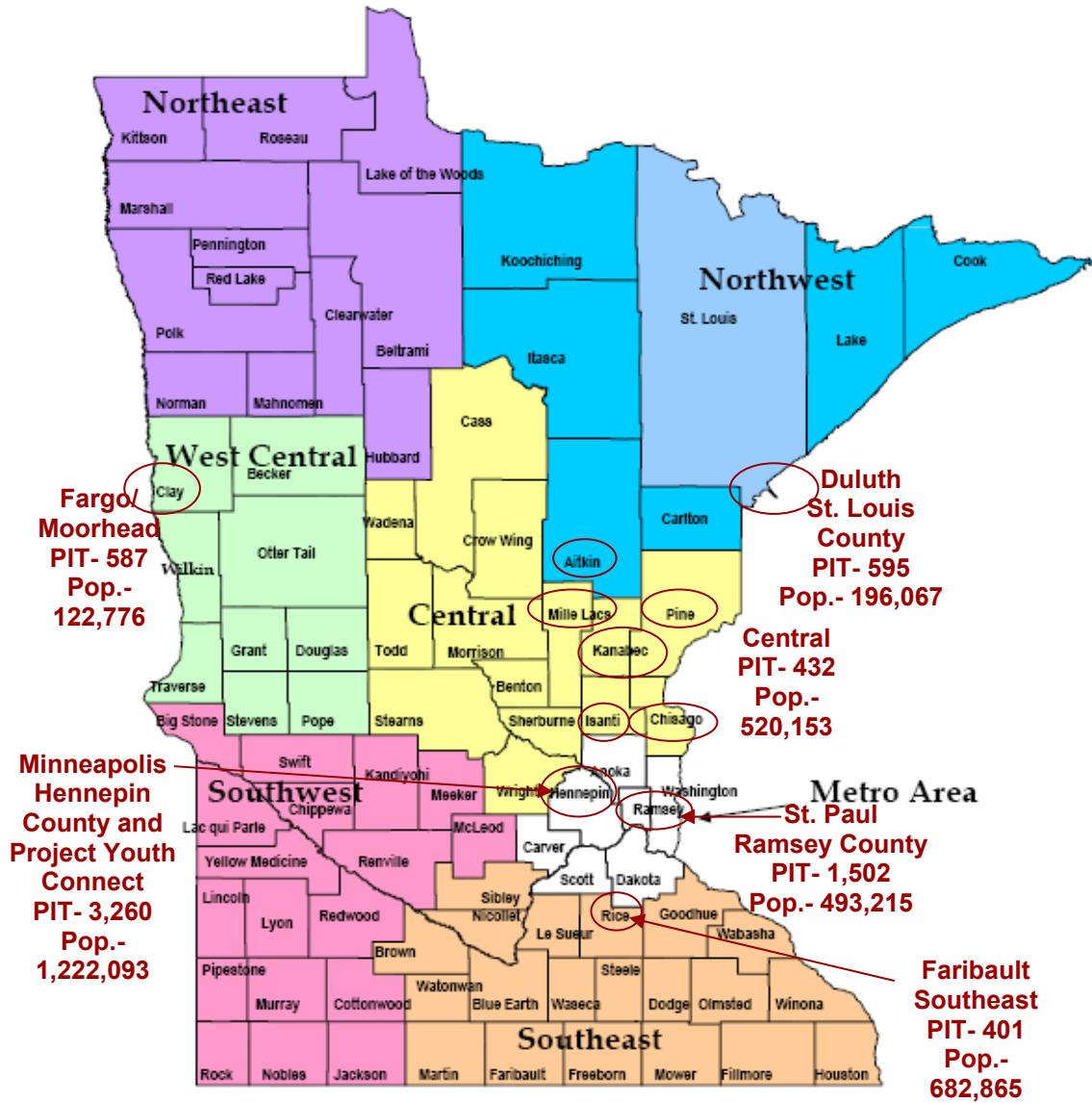
Winter coats
Hygiene products

Volunteers

- Volunteers from St. Olaf College in Northfield helped with this event.

Appendix A

Map of Project Homeless Connect Events in Minnesota



“PIT” refers to the point-in-time count from the Wilder Research survey of homeless persons that took place on October 2006.

Population data are from the US Census in 2000.

Appendix B

Data Collection Methods

The data reported about the guests were collected on paper by volunteer intake workers on the day of the event. The data were later entered into Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by a team of trained data entry volunteers. Minnesota's HMIS is a statewide database that includes client-level data from many agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.¹

Project Homeless Connect guests received consent forms and were recorded as "anonymous" if they preferred to not have personally identifiable information entered into the HMIS. The clients who agreed to be entered with identifiable information were entered as "unnamed clients." That is, their names were only held temporarily by the database. Upon entering the client name in the initial data entry screen, the database automatically generated a unique identifier comprised of parts of the name, date of birth, and gender. The database then discarded the name. The creation of the unique identifier, however, enabled Wilder Research to match Project Homeless Connect guests with those served by other programs participating in Minnesota's HMIS.

To track the quantity of the different types of services that were provided at the St. Paul/Ramsey County and Minneapolis/Hennepin County Project Homeless Connect, each provider was given a form and asked to provide a tally for each person they helped and the type of service they provided. These counts are likely *under representative* of the true number of people who received services, as not every provider completed and turned in their service tracking form.

Feedback from guests was collected through a guest survey at select events. Guests were provided with an incentive, such as a bus card, for completing this survey.

¹ For more information, see www.hmismn.org.

Appendix C

Services Provided by Minnesota's Project Homeless Connect Events

Housing

- ✓ Housing inventory/search
- ✓ Housing applications, intakes, and appointment
- ✓ Small grant program applications

Employment

- ✓ Job search assessments
- ✓ Access to job banks
- ✓ Job training information and enrollment
- ✓ Employers who can do interviews including temp agencies and day labor.
- ✓ Career counseling—help with resumes and interviewing

Health

- ✓ Complex assessments with follow-up appointments
- ✓ Illness care
- ✓ Foot care
- ✓ Wound care
- ✓ Blood pressure/blood sugar
- ✓ HIV Testing/Safer sex supplies
- ✓ Addiction screening and treatment info and registration
- ✓ Mental health screening and follow-up appointments
- ✓ Nutrition counseling
- ✓ Brain injury assessment
- ✓ Syringe/needle exchange
- ✓ Dental services
- ✓ Hearing/vision screening
- ✓ Massage/Acupuncture/Spa
- ✓ Podiatrist

Access to services/benefits

- ✓ Handbook of the streets; info packets for help accessing local services
- ✓ State ID's
- ✓ Public benefits

- ✓ Library card
- ✓ Veterans benefits
- ✓ SSI advocacy
- ✓ Domestic violence counseling
- ✓ Voicemail

Legal

- ✓ Legal advice (UD expungement, adult protection, lost identification)
- ✓ Signing judge (court clerk/notary public)

Children

- ✓ On-site childcare
- ✓ Head Start enrollment
- ✓ Childcare help or referral
- ✓ Clothing and diapers
- ✓ Books and toys

Computers

- ✓ Internet access on-site
- ✓ Set up email accounts
- ✓ Basic computer training

Donations

- ✓ Phone calls and mailings to reconnect with family or phone cards
- ✓ Groceries; coupons for groceries, coffee, restaurants
- ✓ Hygiene items: shampoo, soap, lotion, toothpaste/tooth brushes, ethnic hair care, deodorant, shaving products
- ✓ Emergency fund money
- ✓ Blankets, sleeping bags, backpacks
- ✓ Transportation vouchers
- ✓ Clothing, including outerwear, socks and underwear, shoes
- ✓ Target gift cards
- ✓ Haircuts
- ✓ Eye glasses