

Hotels to Housing Initiative : Res 11 FAQ

How does the funding respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?

For over a year, Dane County has funded non-congregate hotel shelter to protect some of the most vulnerable households experiencing homelessness from the spread of or exposure to COVID-19. As the pandemic persists, assisting households with obtaining permanent housing will help provide more long-term protection for this population, as well as housing stability.

How much is available?

The commitment for the initiative is \$13 million.

- Resolution 11 authorizes \$2,659,760 in 2021 for rent/utilities, housing search assistance, and case management in 2021.
- \$6.3 million will be proposed in the County Executive's 2022 budget.
- The balance of the two-year commitment will be included in the County Executive's 2023 budget.

How is this being funded?

The initiative is funded by the local aid dollars provided to Dane County through the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan.

How many people can be served?

Estimates for the initiative are based on 297 program slots for 297 households with up to two years of rental assistance and case management. This includes an estimate of 230 adults and 67 families, the average number of people in hotel shelter at a given time. The total number of households served could vary based on how much assistance the household needs before exiting the program. Some programs report that most households their rapid re-housing programs do not need a full two years of assistance.

Who is eligible for the program?

1. Households without children (single adults, couples): Those who are currently in the vulnerable population hotel shelter program who were considered at high risk for severe illness if contracting COVID-19 informed by the CDC. If resources are available, people who meet prioritization for hotel shelter on the wait list may be served. The current eligibility for referral to the hotel shelter program is as follows:
 - Older adults (65+)
 - Adults with certain underlying health conditions or compromised health condition:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathis
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
 - Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m² or higher but < 40 kg/m²)
 - Severe Obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²)
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease

- Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- 2. Households with children (families): Households currently in hotel shelter supported by Dane County funding. Hotel shelter providers are primarily prioritizing families experiencing homelessness with infants and families that are unsheltered. If resources are available, families who meet prioritization for hotel shelter on the wait list may be served.

What are the outcomes for this kind of program?

The program is modeled after rapid re-housing, a program that provides move-in costs and up to two years of case management. Standards and goals adopted locally for that program include:

1. To work with guests to obtain permanent housing and maintain housing stability after exiting the program.
2. 85% of program participants should exit to permanent housing within two years. In FY 2020 in Dane County:
 - a. 72% of households without children (couples, singles) exited to permanent housing.
 - b. 83% of households with children (families) exited to permanent housing.
3. No more than 5% of households will return to homelessness within the first year of program exit. In FY 2020 in Dane County:
 - a. 7% of households without children (couples, singles) returned to homelessness within 1 year of program exit.
 - b. 5% of households with children (families) returned to homelessness within 1 year of program exit.

Staff would also track/monitor:

1. Total number of households served.
2. Demographics of program participants.
3. The number of individuals who obtained employment and/or increased income during their time in the program.
4. The number of individuals who established connection to non-emergency medical care or behavioral health supports.
5. Total rent/utilities/move-in costs allocated for the program, and the average cost per household.
6. Timeliness of rental payments.
7. Average length of time in the program for households.

Program partners will be required to use HMIS (Homeless Management Information System), the shared database homeless and housing service providers use to track performance measures and program data.

Program partners will also be required to collaborate with other housing programs and the Homeless Services Consortium (HSC) coordinated entry system to prevent program duplication.

What costs are covered by the program?

Rent, utilities, security deposit, application fees, move-in cost allowance per household for basic needs.

How does a guest get connected to the program?

Guests who are currently staying in hotel shelter will be contacted by their case manager to assess their interest in the program. If interested, the client will be enrolled in the program and housing search and placement will begin.

Which agencies will provide case management?

To begin housing placement immediately, service agencies that are operating hotel shelter programs and have the closest connection to clients, such as Focus Counseling, Sankofa ELU, and The Salvation Army will be asked to partner. Partners for 2022 and beyond will be identified via competitive RFP process in the summer of 2021.

Which agencies will provide housing search/navigation services?

Catholic Charities will continue to provide housing navigation services. Hotel shelter case managers will also assist with housing search.

How will guests be prioritized for housing placement?

Enough funding is available to serve the current number of county-funded hotel guests and prioritization is not needed for enrollment into the initiative. Guests who are working with case managers will be moved into housing as soon as they secure a unit.

How will rent and utilities be paid?

The County will contract with Fiscal Assistance to pay rent and utilities on behalf of the tenant.

What if there aren't enough housing units?/Are there enough housing units?

We will do all that we can to find as many units as we can to reduce the number of people exiting from hotels back to shelter at the end of August. Dane County has a historically difficult housing market, but these dollars are more flexible than other sources of housing program funding, which may allow for more opportunities.

Will a participant be required to contribute towards rent?

Income is not required to receive assistance through the initiative. Existing rapid re-housing programs expect a tenant to contribute towards rent if they have income. Many hotel guests have limited income, or are working to obtain employment or increase their income through additional employment and training. Case managers will work with tenants on fiscal management and other goals to help the tenant maintain housing.

How does this program connect to existing programs? Does it duplicate funding from other sources?

Funds in this initiative will not concurrently provide assistance with programs that are similarly structured.

This initiative will augment our community's existing resources for people experiencing homelessness, and significantly expand the number of households who can access a program of this type. Currently the need is overwhelming and funds are limited.

Case management partners regularly participate in the Homeless Services Consortium, the local advocacy and governing body of Dane County's homeless and housing services providers. Agencies have worked collaboratively for many years to implement best practices, learn from one another, reduce duplication of services, and maximize the reach of available resources to serve more of our neighbors in need.