

Needs of Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Minnesota

Summary of Legislative Report, March 2026

This summary provides results from the study of the prevalence and needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness (Laws of Minnesota, 2024, chapter 115, article 14, section 2).

“It’s challenging to focus on paperwork when you don’t have a safe place to stay, haven’t eaten (and your children haven’t eaten), and are dealing with trauma. This feels particularly true for youth and young parents who are just transitioning to adulthood under such challenging circumstances. What happens to them now, and whether or not they can access resources, can shape the course of their lives and their children’s lives.” – 2025 Pregnant and Parenting Youth Online Provider Survey respondent

Overall counts and characteristics (parenting youth ages 24 and younger)

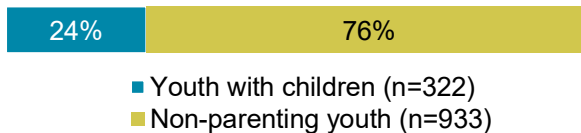
Average age of first homelessness



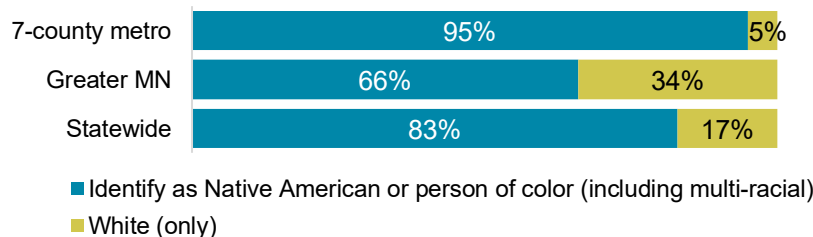
Proportion of pregnant and parenting youth in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area vs. Greater MN



Percentage of parents vs. non-parents in the homeless youth population (age 24 and under)



Race of pregnant or parenting youth in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area vs. Greater MN vs. statewide



Percentage of pregnant or parenting youth who were in foster care or other placement as a child: 55%

Number of young families served in MN (FY 2024) by the homelessness response system

1,930

Number of people in these families

5,000 including 2,900 young children

Dedicated to parenting youth:

Number of emergency shelter units

18

Number of transitional, rapid rehousing, or permanent supportive housing units

143

Source: HMIS and HIC analysis (FY2024).

Key Recommendations

Increase the number of shelters and housing options that are designed specifically for young families.

Most youth parents stay in the adult system.

- Funding and eligibility requirements for these programs must be flexible enough to support the realities of parenting.
- Programs should allow additional time beyond youth age cutoffs and not require that youth prove they are eligible.
- Programs and services should be inclusive and welcoming of all youth, including youth fathers.

Address complex rules and requirements that make things more difficult for young families.

- Solutions need to focus on issues related to complex definitions and requirements that limit how and when youth qualify for assistance and constrain providers' abilities to meet immediate needs of youth.
- Solutions need to be developmentally appropriate and grounded in how young parents define family.
- Key barriers include long waiting lists, definitions that limit how and when young families qualify for assistance, and rights of parenting minors.

“You need a home for feeling safe.” -Youth with lived experience

“We need to change the definitions of homelessness to include doubling up/couch hopping and other temp options to be eligible for Coordinated Entry and other services.” -Provider

“Reduce barriers (paperwork, income rules) that block families from qualifying.”
-Youth with lived experience

“We simply don't have enough shelter and services for any youth (families and single youth) experiencing homelessness and it becomes increasingly difficult when youth/young families need specialized supports.”
-Provider

“Housing programs expect a lot out of us when we're already going through so much.” -Youth with lived experience

“Youth or families that are young don't know how to ask for help or even fill out necessary forms to receive help or benefits. I see a lot of young people who don't know how to navigate through the system to ensure if they meet the eligibility requirements for assistance.” -Provider

Additional information

For more information on homelessness in Minnesota, please visit mnhomeless.org.

Data Sources for the Legislative Report

- Data from HMIS and HIC
- 2023 Minnesota Homeless Study
- Online survey of young parents with lived experiences of homelessness (N=45)
- Online survey of homeless service providers (N=42)
- Focus groups with young fathers (N=18)
- YSN-Parenting Youth Advisory Group members
- YSN leadership

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Decker Gerrard at michelle.gerrard@wilder.org or Christin Lindberg at christin.lindberg@wilder.org

We especially thank the young people with lived experience who contributed to the study.