



Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Working to ensure everyone has a safe, decent, affordable place to call home.

“We know you can't arrest homelessness away.” Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak

Policy Brief: Police / Provider Homeless Outreach Project Expansion

Minnesota has received national-recognition for an innovative approach to ending homelessness.

People living on the streets are also frequently high-end users of local jails, detox, and expensive crisis services. Local police become de facto street outreach workers, acting as social service go-betweens, wasting millions of public safety dollars in the process.

Beginning in 2005 with a small investment from the State, three communities – Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis Counties – brought together homeless outreach workers and local police officers to chart a different course. Their goals:

- Reduce long-term homelessness
- Reduce the use of public safety and correctional resources in response to the community of homeless.
- Promote stronger communities through street and shelter outreach.
- Connect people experiencing homelessness with housing and services.

Today, in these communities, outreach workers respond to police calls regarding “nuisance crimes” such as loitering, public drunkenness, and urination. Participants were placed in transitional and permanent housing facilities where physical, mental, and chemical treatment services were readily available to them. Other assistance came from aid in filling out applications for benefits and housing, working toward personal development, and creating networking opportunities to intensify community support systems. The change from a law enforcement response to human services is more appropriate, less expensive, and leading to stronger relationships between local police, service providers, and people struggling in homelessness.

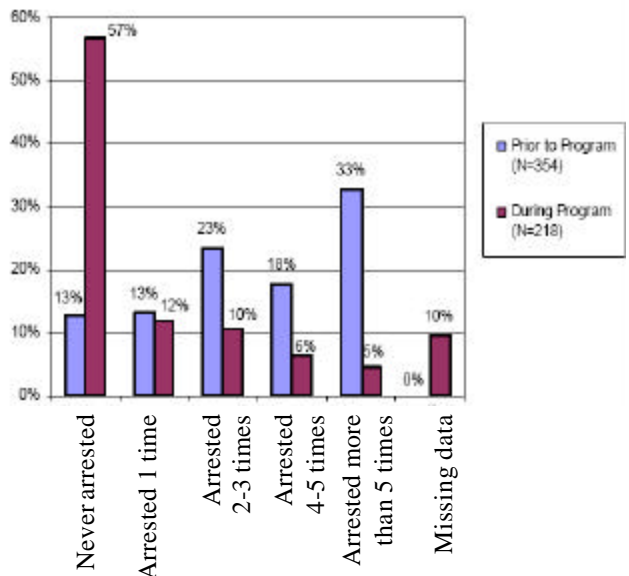
Program Success:

- 54% decrease in arrests during the program
- 25% drop in detoxification center admissions was reported amongst participants
- 65% of participants had obtained stable housing at the end of the pilot program

“At least 10 of the over 60 chronic offenders we deal with [in the program] have stopped offending, being incarcerated, processed in court, etc. This is clearly a cost savings and the energy of police officers and prosecutors are being used more efficiently on other problems.”

– St. Paul Police Chief

The cities of Mankato, Rochester, St. Cloud, and Moorhead have expressed an interest in creating similar programs in their communities.



E F F E C T I V E P O L I C Y C A R I N G C O M M U N I T Y E M P O W E R E D I N D I V I D U A L S

Homelessness:
It's a situation
Not a person.

Effective public policy and caring communities will create an environment where homelessness is rare and dealt with quickly when it occurs.

Public policy should promote wide-ranging prevention strategies while ensuring a seamless continuum of housing and service options.

We advocate for comprehensive, flexible, and appropriate community responses that are congruous with the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

We can end homelessness.