



# North Dakota Legislative Council

Prepared for the Human Services Committee  
LC# 27.9027.01000  
September 2025

## HOMELESSNESS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Section 30 of Senate Bill No. 2014 (2025) ([appendix](#)) provides for a study of homelessness in the state. The study must include a review of data and funding available to address homelessness, an analysis of the use of available funds to identify gaps and potential solutions to address homelessness, and input from homeless program service providers.

### DEFINITIONS

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homeless in four categories:

1. "Literally homeless" is defined as an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
2. "Imminent risk of homelessness" is defined as an individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:
  - a. Residence will be lost within 14 days;
  - b. No subsequent residence has been identified; and
  - c. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
3. Homeless under other federal statutes includes unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless, but who:
  - a. Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;
  - b. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; and
  - c. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.
4. An individual who is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

### NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS IN NORTH DAKOTA

The January 2023 North Dakota Point-in-Time count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night was 784, with 23 percent unsheltered and 77 percent sheltered. The Point-in-Time count is prepared by the North Dakota Continuum of Care organization. Identifying the number of homeless individuals is difficult due to multiple definitions of homelessness, the mobility of the population, rural isolation, and the cyclical nature of homelessness for many individuals and families. In addition, homeless individuals are often reluctant to identify themselves as homeless, and many remain unknown to social workers. There is no uniform method for counting the homeless, instead indirect estimation, single-contact census, and capture-recapture studies are used to quantify this population. As of August 2025, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation reported 863 homeless individuals on community supervision.

## **NORTH DAKOTA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY**

The North Dakota Housing Finance Agency (NDHFA) oversees programs to provide financial assistance to facilities and programs within North Dakota to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals, as well as those at risk of homelessness, and provide services necessary to help those individuals quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness.

### **North Dakota Interagency Council on Homelessness**

The North Dakota Interagency Council on Homelessness is a collaboration among city and state government officials and a representative of the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People. The council was established in 2004 by Governor John Hoeven by Executive Order 2004-09 in which it recognized there is a need to improve access to mainstream resources critical to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the council, as outlined by the executive order, is to:

- Coordinate state policy and working relationships among state agencies to identify and define issues of homelessness in North Dakota.
- Determine comprehensive and effective collaborative strategies and best practices for preventing and ending homelessness in North Dakota.
- Review and analyze the need for and the availability of resources to address the needs of North Dakotans who are homeless.
- Recommend changes necessary to alleviate or prevent the situation of homelessness, including recommendations to the appropriate state agencies and organizations regarding the effective distribution of resources and access to available services and programs.
- Educate other state agencies, legislators, and the public about the causes of homelessness.
- Solicit input from the faith and advocacy communities, the business community, and consumers regarding policy and program development to identify and define issues of homelessness to develop effective collaborative strategies for preventing and ending homelessness in North Dakota.

The council is made up of the following individuals or their designees:

- A designee from the Governor's office.
- Representatives of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Department of Commerce, Department of Public Instruction, the NDHFA, Indian Affairs Commission, Job Service North Dakota, and other departments or agencies as the Governor deems appropriate.
- The mayors of Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks.
- The president of the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People.

### **Housing Incentive Fund**

Senate Bill No. 2210 (2011), enacted as North Dakota Century Code Section 54-17-40, established the housing incentive fund as a special revolving fund at the Bank of North Dakota. The NDHFA may direct disbursements from the fund pursuant to a continuing appropriation from the fund. The NDHFA is to create an annual allocation plan for the distribution of the fund which must give priority to provide housing for individuals and families of low or moderate income. For purposes of this priority, eligible income limits are determined as a percentage of median family income as published in the most recent Federal Register notice. Under this priority, the annual allocation plan must give preference to projects that benefit households with the lowest income and to projects that have rent restrictions at or below fair market rents as determined by HUD. At least 10 percent of the fund must be used to assist developing communities to address an unmet housing need or alleviate a housing shortage. Assistance from the fund may be used for:

- New construction, rehabilitation, preservation, or acquisition of a multifamily housing project;

- New construction, rehabilitation, preservation, or acquisition of a single-family housing project in a developing community or a community land trust project;
- Gap assistance, matching funds, and accessibility improvements;
- Assistance that does not exceed the amount necessary to qualify for a loan using underwriting standards acceptable for secondary market financing or to make the project feasible; and
- Rental assistance, emergency assistance, barrier mitigation, or services designated to prevent or end homelessness.

The balance in the housing fund was \$7.1 million on June 30, 2025, of which \$5.4 million is committed to housing projects. The 2025 Legislative Assembly provided for a transfer of \$9.85 million from the general fund to the housing incentive fund for homeless programs during the 2025-27 biennium, a decrease of \$3.9 million from the \$13.75 million transferred from the general fund to the housing incentive fund during the 2023-25 biennium. An additional \$25 million is being transferred from the strategic investment and improvements fund to the housing incentive fund for housing projects and programs during the 2025-27 biennium.

### **Emergency Solutions Grant**

The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) is a federal program administered by the NDHFA designed to provide financial assistance to facilities and programs within the state to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness, and provide the services necessary to help those persons quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness. Grant funds are awarded directly to emergency and homeless shelters and agencies throughout the state to provide for activities such as operational expenses and essential services, homelessness prevention, and rapid rehousing. Approximately \$486,494 of federal funding was available for the grant program for fiscal year 2025. The NDHFA will use North Dakota Homeless Grant funding to provide a 100 percent match, less \$100,000, for the state ESG match funding or \$386,494. Up to 60 percent of the federal allocation, or \$291,896, may be used for street outreach and shelter operation activities. The state matching funds may be used for any eligible ESG component.

### **North Dakota Homeless Grant**

The North Dakota Homeless Grant is a state program administered by the NDHFA designed to provide financial assistance to facilities and programs within North Dakota; to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness; and to provide the services necessary to help those persons quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness. The program primarily follows the ESG program definitions and guidelines. Grant funds are awarded directly to emergency and homeless shelters and agencies throughout the state to provide funds for activities such as operational expenses and essential services, homelessness prevention, and rapid rehousing. State funding totaling \$964,667 was available for fiscal year 2025.

### **Continuum of Care**

The North Dakota Continuum of Care (CoC) is an unincorporated organization created to fulfill the responsibilities of the federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The CoC is composed of representatives of public and private organizations that plan for and provide a homelessness response system that is dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in the state. The CoC's organizational structure is multitiered to ensure broad input from across the state and among stakeholders, while designating staff and leadership to carry out the specific goals and responsibilities of the CoC.

The NDHFA acts as the collaborative applicant for the North Dakota CoC. The CoC geographic area encompasses all 53 counties, cities, towns, and unincorporated areas, as well as the five federally recognized Indian tribes. The membership of the North Dakota CoC includes those persons and organizations participating in its work through committee or workgroup service, planning, other relevant stakeholders, or those experiencing homelessness (24 CFR subpart B 578.5) who sign an annual membership agreement committing to regular participation and representation at all North Dakota CoC

meetings. The CoC membership is to solicit and vote on the board members. The board members are to include: one representative from each of the eight planning regions within the state, one person with lived experience, one black, indigenous, and people of color member, one LGBTQIA+ member, and two youth action board members.

In 2023, CoC partners served 6,208 homeless individuals in the state, which is a 35 percent increase from 4,606 people in 2020.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

### **North Dakota Rent Help**

Due to the expiration of federal funding for pandemic-era rental assistance programs, DHHS has begun decreasing the North Dakota housing stabilization program rehousing services for households that are experiencing homelessness. The housing stabilization program is reducing homelessness services due to the anticipated September 2025 expiration of federal funding for pandemic-era rental assistance programs.

## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **Consolidated Plan**

The Department of Commerce Division of Community Services and the NDHFA are designated the lead agencies in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the achievements of the Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan is a 5-year outlook of the state's housing and community development needs and resources. It establishes strategies and prioritizes the use of housing and community development dollars statewide and by planning region. The Division of Community Services prepares the plan using a participatory process at all levels. The Annual Action Plan within the Consolidated Plan serves as the state's annual application for federal funds distributed as formula grants from HUD. This plan includes a homelessness strategy. The full North Dakota 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan draft is on the Department of Commerce website.

### **Community Development Block Grant Programs**

The primary purpose of the Community Development Block Grant Program, as declared by Congress in Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, is "the development of viable communities, by providing decent housing and suitable living environments and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income." The eligible housing activities include any activity carried out with Community Development Block Grant funds that involves the acquisition or rehabilitation of property to provide housing considered to benefit persons of low and moderate income to the extent such housing will, upon completion, be occupied by individuals at affordable rents. In addition, a "majority" of the units in a multidwelling building must be occupied by low- and moderate-income individuals at affordable rents.

The chart below is the Division of Community Services estimated allocation of these funds the state for fiscal year 2025.

Fiscal year 2025 allocation	\$3,551,615
Add program income	145,371
Total funding	\$3,696,986
Less state administration and technical assistance	210,909
Total allocation available for projects	\$3,486,076
Less 10 percent unallocated funds	369,699
Total allocation available	\$3,116,377
Prior years unobligated funds and state funds	\$2,594,989

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

The McKinney-Vento Assistance Act is the primary federal law addressing the education of children and youth in homeless situations. The Act protects the right of homeless children and youth to get to, stay in, and be successful in school while they or their families are homeless.

The law focuses on maintaining school stability, school access, and providing support for academic success for homeless children. The law also requires schools and states to use child-centered, best interest decisionmaking when working with homeless children and their families to choose a homeless child's school, services, and other needed resources.

The *2024 North Dakota Statewide Housing Needs Assessment* report published by the NDHFA indicates that during the 2023-24 school year, 2,802 school-aged children were identified as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This represents an increase of 57 percent from the 1,788 children lacking a residence in the 2020-21 school year. Children in foster care who reach a maximum age for services and age out of the program face particularly challenging obstacles. A recent study found that at least one-third of young adults experience homelessness within 2 years of aging out of foster care.

There are 175 homeless liaison positions located in school districts across the state to assist students.

## **OTHER PROGRAMS**

### **Housing Choice Vouchers**

Housing choice vouchers, formerly known as Section 8, provide assistance payments that are paid directly to a private landlord. The program assists very low-income families, elderly, and individuals with disabilities to afford housing in the public housing market. The housing choice voucher program is federally funded by HUD and administered by local public housing agencies. In order to participate in the program, applicants must meet eligibility requirements primarily based on family size and annual income. Those with incomes below 50 percent of the median-income level qualify for the voucher program if they meet other program requirements. However, 75 percent of the vouchers are to be given to individuals and families below 30 percent of the median-income level to ensure the program helps the most vulnerable first and then expands its assistance to others. Residents generally contribute 30 percent of their income as their portion of rent to the landlord.

### **Mainstream Housing Vouchers**

Mainstream vouchers, also administered by local public housing agencies, can be used in the same way as housing choice vouchers, and the wait is significantly shorter; however, mainstream vouchers can only assist nonelderly persons with disabilities who are:

- Transitioning out of an institutional or other segregated setting;
- At serious risk of institutionalization; and
- Homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

## **PRIOR LEGISLATIVE STUDIES**

The 2023-24 interim Government Services Committee conducted a study of homelessness and barriers to housing. The committee received testimony and information from representatives of several state agencies, the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, religious organizations, local housing authorities, law enforcement, and other interested groups regarding homelessness and barriers to housing in the state. Testimony included details regarding federal programs to address homelessness, including rental assistance, housing preservation grants, and home loan guarantees offered by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. The committee recommended Senate Bill No. 2030 (2025):

- Appropriate \$10 million of ongoing funding from the general fund to the NDHFA for the North Dakota Homeless Grant program to provide a total of \$12.5 million for the program for the 2025-27 biennium to support homeless shelters and other programs.
- Appropriate \$50,000 of one-time funding from the general fund to the NDHFA to contract with a consultant to assist with a 2025-26 interim committee study of homelessness in the state.

- Appropriate \$1 million of ongoing funding from the general fund to the Department of Public Instruction to provide grants for homelessness liaison services to the 10 school districts with the greatest student enrollment to better connect homeless youth with services.
- Transfer \$200 million from the general fund to the housing incentive fund to be used over the 2025-27 and 2027-29 bienniums to increase affordable housing in the state.
- Provide for a Legislative Management study of homelessness in the state during the 2025-26 interim.

The bill was defeated; however, a number of the recommendations were included, to some extent, in other bills as discussed earlier in this memorandum.

The 1995-96 interim Budget Committee on Government Services studied the feasibility of a long-term funding initiative to make available housing for families who are low-income, homeless, disabled, or who require transitional housing to assist them toward independent living. The committee received testimony from the NDHFA regarding an assessment conducted in 1992 on North Dakota housing needs. The assessment addressed current and projected market demand and supply for housing in North Dakota, structural conditions of housing, financing and affordability, and the effectiveness of existing federal, state, and local programs. The report identified a number of areas of needed improvement in North Dakota housing, including increasing the quality and condition of housing in selected areas of the state and "jump starting" housing in economically developing communities.

The committee received testimony from the Office of Intergovernmental Assistance on a comprehensive housing affordability strategy update for North Dakota for fiscal years 1994 through 1998 as required by the federal National Affordable Housing Act of 1990. The report included regional needs identified at meetings held across North Dakota and established priorities to meet housing and supportive service needs in North Dakota for fiscal years 1994 through 1998. The committee also received reports on housing-related programs offered by the Office of Intergovernmental Assistance and the NDHFA.

The Budget Committee on Government Services recommended Senate Bill No. 2026 (1997), which was not approved by the Legislative Assembly, which would have provided that a city, township, or county may not prohibit the use of land for a proposed residential structure solely because the proposed structure is a manufactured home.

The 1997-98 interim Commerce and Agriculture Committee studied the availability of affordable housing for middle-income households, for the elderly, and in rural areas of North Dakota. By directive of the Legislative Management, the study was expanded to include the availability of housing for all income levels. The committee received testimony from the Office of Intergovernmental Assistance on the updated state consolidated housing plan for 1995 through 1999 as required by the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990. The plan established the following goals:

1. Provide decent housing.
2. Establish and maintain a suitable living environment.
3. Expand economic opportunities for each citizen of North Dakota.

The Commerce and Agriculture Committee also reviewed the 1992 Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the NDHFA and various housing finance programs available from the Office of Intergovernmental Assistance and the NDHFA. The Commerce and Agriculture Committee made no recommendations regarding its study of affordable housing.

### **PROPOSED STUDY PLAN**

1. Receive information from the NDHFA regarding programs to assist individuals experiencing homelessness or needing housing stability.

2. Receive information from DHHS regarding homelessness in the state and programs to assist individuals experiencing homelessness, including collaborations with the NDHFA.
3. Receive information from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation regarding individuals on supervision who have been identified as experiencing homelessness.
4. Receive information from nongovernmental organizations regarding homelessness and services provided by the organizations.
5. Receive information from the Department of Commerce Division of Community Services regarding grants to assist with low-income housing and other assistance to prevent homelessness.
6. Receive information from the Department of Public Instruction regarding the effects of homelessness on students and school districts and services to provided to assist homeless students.
7. Receive comments from interested persons regarding the study of homelessness in North Dakota.
8. Develop recommendations and any bill drafts necessary to implement the recommendations.
9. Prepare a final report for submission to the Legislative Management.

ATTACH:1