

Youth Behavioral Health and Well-Being Pilot Program



THE BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Total Cost for 3 pilots:
\$5.3 million

This Pilot:
\$1,651,000 over 5 years

Budget Includes:

- Program Innovation Expenses
- Operating Expenses
- Evaluation and Scaling Expenses

*This pilot — **Behavioral Health and Well-Being** — is part of a broader effort to support youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Alongside the **Youth Employment & Financial Stability and Mentorship** pilots, it explores innovative strategies to enhance stability and opportunity for young people facing housing insecurity.*

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota is launching a pilot initiative in Mankato and Rochester to increase access to effective, sustainable behavioral health supports. Developed through the LSS Design Lab, this model reflects an approach shaped by youth with lived experience of homelessness and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It is part of Empower What's Possible, a five-year campaign to expand and reimagine services across Minnesota.

This pilot addresses the urgent and growing need to support youth navigating the interconnected challenges of adverse experiences, homelessness and emotional well-being. Traditional behavioral health systems are often complex and require referrals beyond the trusted people and programs already serving these youth. By reimagining how youth access care and introducing alternative therapeutic options, this initiative opens new pathways to healing, builds deeper resilience and fosters more hopeful futures.

Youth voices informed every aspect of the design. The result is a responsive, replicable model that meets youth where they are and helps them move toward long-term growth and healing. We will use what we learn to improve systems of care across Minnesota – promoting more efficient and effective approaches industry-wide to better support youth experiencing homelessness.

Together, we will:

Expand access to behavioral health services by embedding licensed therapists at locations where youth already engage with LSS programs.

Integrate creative and body-centered therapeutic approaches – such as art therapy, mindfulness and movement – into our current youth services.

Build a culture of experiential learning across two service lines, enabling staff to share expertise and strengthen their ability to meet youth needs.



YOUTH VOICES



What we heard from youth:

"I was really depressed. I didn't tell anybody because I didn't think people cared."

"I couldn't understand why I was so suicidal."

"I want to be hands-on and try different types of therapies."

This pilot design began with deep listening — creating space for youth to share their challenges and define what healing means to them. Many struggle to navigate the traditional behavioral health system, especially without consistent, trusting relationships. Existing supports often fall short in both availability and approach.

This program responds to youth voices with care that is experiential and easily accessed. By uniting behavioral health and youth services staff, we offer a healing path youth feel ready to walk.



Scan the QR code to learn more about our pilot programs and how they will Empower What's Possible for youth!

Key Priorities

- **Increase access** to behavioral health support by embedding it into existing youth services
- Integrate **non-traditional** or **alternative** therapeutic approaches that resonate with youth
- Facilitate **cross-disciplinary learning** between youth services and behavioral health staff
- Offer **safe environments** that respect each youth's identity, background and experiences as they heal and grow
- **Track outcomes** such as decreased feelings of isolation and increased ability to navigate crisis
- **Evaluate data** and **refine** the pilot in real time to guide future replication across LSS service areas

Why Partner With LSS?

- 1 Decades of experience supporting youth through life transitions
- 2 A cross-disciplinary team spanning housing, financial and employment services
- 3 Statewide reach to scale and sustain successful service models
- 4 Expertise in individualized support practices
- 5 A commitment to co-creating solutions with the communities we serve

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