

Suburban Homework Starts with Home Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), executed this day, the 19th of November, 2021, is between Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (“LSS”), Solid Ground, Ramsey County, Merrick Community Services (“Merrick”), Saint Andrews Community Resource Center (“CRC”), Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (“CLUES”) and the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative (“SRFC”).

Purpose and Objective

This MOU is to establish the scope of work, program policies, roles and responsibilities of the above-named partners in implementing the Suburban Homework Starts with Home (“HSWH”) Partnership (“Partnership”) to house families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in stable, affordable housing in the communities served by Minnesota Independent School Districts 621 (Moundsvew), 622 (Oakdale/N St Paul/Maplewood), 623 (Roseville), and 624 (White Bear Lake).

The purpose of the HSWH Partnership is to prevent homelessness for families with children in grades Pre-K-12, and to move homeless families quickly out of shelter or other housing instability into stable housing within the above-named school district communities in suburban Ramsey and Washington Counties.

Agency Contacts

Unless otherwise notified, the following individuals will serve as the project contacts for the HSWH Partners:

- Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Lead Applicant and Housing Trust Fund Grantee:
Jaime Stampely, Director of Housing Services
- Ramsey County, Family Homelessness Prevention & Assistance Program (FHPAP) Grantee:
Loni Aadalen, Planning Specialist II/FHPAP & CoC Coordinator
- Solid Ground, FHPAP subgrantee and lead service provider:
Trisha Kauffman, Executive Director
- Merrick Community Services, HSWH housing and prevention partner:
Daniel Rodriguez, Executive Director
- St. Andrews Community Resource Center, HSWH prevention partner:
Carlos Gantchoff, Executive Director
- Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio, HSWH prevention partner:
Ruby Azurdia-Lee, President

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- Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative, HSWH partner:
Mary Sue Hansen, Executive Director

Roles and Responsibilities

It is understood that LSS, Solid Ground, Ramsey County, Merrick, CRC, CLUES and SRFC staff work together as a team and in partnership with students, their families and collaborative partners, to effectively meet the needs of families in the HSWH partnership. This level of collaboration will require exceptional, thorough and timely communication between all parties. Therefore, all parties agree to collectively communicate any cause of concern pertaining to any and all items that affect the overall success of HSWH in a timely manner. In addition, to ensure smooth processes and communication, all parties will meet regularly, as detailed elsewhere in this MOU, to review roles and the project as a whole.

The parties to this MOU also understand the importance of their separate and distinct responsibilities, as detailed below.

All partners agree to advise one another about pertinent matters or concerns related to HSWH barriers to success throughout the grant period. This includes initial and ongoing eligibility and all issues that might impact continuance of a rental subsidy where student academic success, family stability and property owners/managers are concerned.

Each party is bound by confidentiality standards regarding the exchange of applicant information. Informed consent will be provided to families and appropriate releases will be secured when confidential participant information is shared.

Role of the Lead Applicant and HTF Administrator

LSS will provide the following administrative services:

- Assume all duties expected of the Lead Applicant as required by Minnesota Housing,
- Keep all documentation and third-party information obtained to execute rental assistance per Minnesota Housing Trust Fund Rental Assistance requirements.
- Collaborate with Solid Ground to collect required file documentation for implementation of the HTF program including verification to determine eligibility and compliance with program standards for all participating households.
- Request rental assistance payments from Minnesota Housing.
- Submit invoices for rental subsidy reimbursement to MN Housing by the 15th of each month.
- Retain all required paperwork for landlords and tenants as required by MN Housing.

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- Make timely rental assistance payments to contracted landlords.
- Cooperate in monitoring and/or participate in audits or other reporting requirements to project funders.
- Collect administrative fees for administering the MHFA Rental Assistance contract.
- Oversee HMIS data entry and reporting by Solid Ground and execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data as needed.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings.

Role of the Participating Government Entity and FHPAP Grantee:

Ramsey County will:

- Receive and distribute Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) funding to the subgrantee(s) in support of the grant activities as outlined in the project workplan.
- Monitor FHPAP expenditures and submit quarterly output and expenditure reports in compliance with Minnesota Housing guidelines and reporting priorities.
- Conduct a site visit and monitoring of the FHPAP subgrantee(s) at least annually.
- Execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data as needed.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings as needed.

Role of the FHPAP Subgrantee and Lead Service Provider

Solid Ground will:

- Support LSS in fulfilling all responsibilities of the Lead Applicant, such as data and narrative reporting and monitoring the grant budget and program outcomes.
- Hire and supervise the Housing Navigator, Family Advocate and Children's Services Specialist and assume all other responsibilities as an employer of these staff.
- Provide the above-named staff with office space and associated amenities/supplies, including computer, Internet access and mobile phone.
- Work with Coordinated Entry (CE) and school-linked Community Social Workers (CSW) and Community Resource Navigators (CRN) to receive referrals, conduct and document participant intake and housing stability planning.
- Obtain necessary client Consent Forms and Releases of Information to allow information sharing between the referring agency and landlord(s) and between the referring agency and other agencies as needed.
- Contract with qualified Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspectors and coordinate housing inspections as part of the HTF eligibility process.
- Collect income verification and other documents needed to determine eligibility for HTF rental assistance.

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- Coordinate activities with the HTF Administrator to help ensure prompt and accurate payment of rental assistance.
- Provide or connect participants to training on issues related to landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, fair housing laws, budgeting, and/or other training necessary to assist participants to maintain permanent housing. The training will include the consequences of not abiding by the lease agreement and housing goal plan.
- Refer or otherwise connect participants to other community service providers that may be able to help participants overcome barriers to obtaining or maintaining housing.
- Respond to problems that arise concerning the participant's tenancy during the application process and through their participation in the Collaborative.
- Perform data entry and reporting using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data with other HSWH partners as needed.
- Help organize and support the work of the Parent/Student Advisory Team.
- Lead and participate in regularly scheduled HSWH partnership meetings.

Role of Other MOU Partners:

Merrick Community Services will:

- Hire and supervise a Housing Navigator and assume all other responsibilities as an employer of these staff.
- Provide the Housing Navigator with office space and associated amenities/supplies, including computer, Internet access and mobile phone.
- Work with Coordinated Entry (CE) and school-linked Community Social Workers (CSW) and Community Resource Navigators (CRN) to receive referrals, conduct and document participant intake and housing stability planning.
- Obtain necessary client Consent Forms and Releases of Information to allow information sharing between the referring agency and landlord(s) and between the referring agency and other agencies as needed.
- Coordinate with Solid Ground to ensure that Housing Quality Standards inspections are completed as part of the HTF requirement Collect income verification and other documents needed to determine eligibility for HTF rental assistance.
- Coordinate activities with the Solid Ground team and LSS to help ensure prompt and accurate payment of rental assistance.
- Provide or connect participants to training on issues related to landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, fair housing laws, budgeting, and/or other training necessary to assist participants to maintain permanent housing. The training will include the consequences of not abiding by the lease agreement and housing goal plan.

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- Refer or otherwise connect participants to other community service providers that may be able to help participants overcome barriers to obtaining or maintaining housing.
- Respond to problems that arise concerning the participant's tenancy during the application process and through their participation in the Collaborative.
- Provide information needed for data entry and reporting using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data with other HSWH partners as needed.
- Provide financial assistance, using non-HSWH resources, to families referred for prevention assistance in order to bridge the gap until household eligibility for HTF temporary rental assistance is verified.
- Provide supportive services to families receiving prevention rental assistance, in conjunction with school-linked Community Social Workers/Resource Navigators.
- Help organize and support the work of the Parent/Student Advisory Team.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings.

St. Andrew's Community Resource Center will:

- Provide referrals for families needing prevention assistance who do not qualify for other rent assistance resources.
- Provide financial assistance, using non-HSWH resources, to families referred for prevention assistance in order to bridge the gap until household eligibility for HTF temporary rental assistance is verified.
- Provide supportive services to families receiving prevention rental assistance, in conjunction with school-linked Community Social Workers/Community Resource Navigators.
- Provide completed HMIS entry, update and exit forms (for Solid Ground to enter into the system) and execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data as needed.
- Help support the work of the Parent/Student Advisory Team.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings.

CLUES will:

- Provide referrals for families needing prevention assistance who do not qualify for other rent assistance resources.
- Provide supportive services to families receiving prevention rental assistance, through school-linked Community Social Workers/Community Resource Navigators.
- Provide completed HMIS entry, update and exit forms (for Solid Ground to enter into the system) and execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement in order to share client data as needed.
- Help support the work of the Parent/Student Advisory Team.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings.

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Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative will:

- Assist with project evaluation and progress reporting.
- Support community conversations and Community Resource Fairs to expand access to resources that support health and well-being, basic needs resource access and financial health and wealth creation. This community engagement work also builds social capital and shared leadership across race, age, class, culture and other means of social identity.
- Facilitate regular school-linked Combined Team Meetings with Community Social Workers/Community Resource Navigators, HSWH staff, Safe Families and the Cultural Brokers.
- Inform partners about low cost or free trainings and professional development opportunities that are trauma-informed/race-informed as well as trainings related to the HWSH Preliminary Practice Model.
- Help support the work of the Parent/Student Advisory Team.
- Participate in regularly scheduled HSWH Partnership meetings

Communication and Partner Meetings

The Homework Starts with Home (HSH) Leadership Team will meet monthly, led by the lead service provider, Solid Ground, and includes representatives from Merrick, St. Andrews, CLUES, Lutheran Social Service, SRFC, Ramsey County and a representative of the school districts. Their purpose will be to discuss how grant activities are taking shape, monitor the budget, address successes and challenges and respond to emerging needs.

The HSWH Parent/Student Advisory Team will meet at least every other month, convened by Solid Ground HSWH staff, and includes students and families who are, or have been, supported by the HSWH staff or a CSW/Solid Ground team. Parents and students will discuss how they want meetings to progress (i.e. whether they want to elect a facilitator(s) or rotate facilitation or do a circle process, etc.) We have money budgeted for stipends in this grant for parents and students who agree to offer their time and leadership on the advisory team.

SRFC School-Linked CSW/CRN's and Housing Navigators will meet together regularly. Using Community Self-Healing tools, families working with the HSWH staff and CSW/CRN's will gather together to share resources and wisdom that helped them overcome barriers while networking and offering peer support to other families going through similar situations. Students and families who have 'graduated' from the program will be celebrated at each event and asked to share a few words of encouragement to all those still working towards their housing stability goals, if they so choose. CSW/CRN's and the HSWH staff will convene and facilitate these gatherings.

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Decision-making Process

Whenever possible, policy decisions will be made by consensus among the Collaborative partners. As the lead service provider and employer of the HSWH staff, Solid Ground reserves the right to set policies, procedures and employment practices and to accept or deny participant referrals in accordance with its responsibilities and obligations under any HSWH contracts and awards, and in conjunction with LSS as the lead applicant and HTF grantee and Ramsey County as the FHPAP grantee. Merrick Community Services reserves the same rights as the employer of its HSWH-dedicated Housing Navigator.

Shared Eligibility Criteria and Participant Referral Process

The HSWH Collaborative is designed to serve families with children in grades preK-12 who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness in ISD 621, 622, 623 and 624, and who are referred by the schools' Homeless Liaisons and/or school-linked Community Social Workers. Services and rental assistance will be targeted to families who are homeless and meet the following criteria:

- People of underserved and under-supported populations in the schools, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI).
- Students and families on the school-linked CSW/CRN waiting lists in each of the districts.
- Families residing in shelter with the CRC who require housing assistance to successfully transition out of shelter and maintain housing stability.

The Housing Navigators and CSW/CRN's will work in conjunction with the local Coordinated Entry systems to make and accept referrals for Temporary Rental Assistance and Rapid Rehousing.

Referrals for preventative Rapid Rehousing will also follow the above-mentioned criteria, with the exception of Coordinated Entry as it does not currently exist for prevention efforts.

Eligible households must meet income requirements and all other criteria as set forth in the HTF and FHPAP grantee contracts.

Referrals for Temporary Rental Assistance and Rapid Rehousing will be accepted by the Housing Navigators on a monthly basis until an agreed upon maximum number of households are enrolled in the program (both those in housing search and housed).

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Performance Measures

Outputs: The Collaborative is projected to serve 31 new households experiencing homelessness with Rapid Rehousing Rental Assistance and another 21 new households with Temporary Rental Assistance to prevent homelessness, in addition to 10 existing households carried forward from the partnership's expiring HSWH 2021-2022 grant(s).

Outcomes: The success of the project will be measured against the following outcome measures:

1. Reduce the number of people who become homeless for the first time (*prevent*):
80% of 23 families receiving prevention assistance will avoid homelessness.
2. Reduce the total number of people experiencing homelessness (*rare*):
90% of 39 families experiencing homelessness and referred to HSWH are housed
3. Reduce the amount of time people experience homelessness (*brief*):
75% of 39 families experiencing homelessness are placed in housing within 3 months of program enrollment.
4. Reduce the number of people who return to homelessness (*one-time*):
90% of 39 families receiving RRH rental assistance will maintain housing stability at program exit.
5. Increase equitable outcomes for households who are disparately impacted by homelessness (*equity*):
100% of BIPOC and LGBTQI families served will have as good or better housing outcomes than their white counterparts in HSWH.
6. Improve school attendance and academic achievement among students who have experienced or who are at risk of homeless:
80% of 123 students served will experience improvement in school attendance and achievement, as reported by their parent(s) and MDE/MARSS.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Solid Ground will perform HMIS data entry and reporting as required by HSWH grant funding. All grantees (Solid Ground, LSS and Ramsey County) as well as Merrick, CLUES and CRC will execute an HMIS Coordinated Service Agreement and participants will be asked to sign Releases of Information, in order to share data in HMIS.

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Reporting

As Lead Applicant, LSS is responsible for reporting expenditures, households served and other HSWH related information, including an annual narrative report to MN Housing. As the lead service provider, Solid Ground is responsible for compiling the data needed for these submissions, including preparation of the annual report to MN Housing.

The Suburban HSWH partnership will also participate in the design and implementation of any qualitative and quantitative evaluations by MN Housing and the University of Minnesota.

Term of the Agreement

This MOU shall be in effect beginning January 1, 2022, or the date of execution, whichever is later; and will end September 30, 2024.

This MOU may be revised or amended solely by the written consent of all parties. Any changes in the MOU must be communicated to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency within 30 days, in accordance with HSWH grantee contracts.

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Signatures:

Jaime Stampley

Jaime Stampley
Director of Housing Services
Lutheran Social Service of MN

11/22/2021

Date

Keith A. Lattimore

Keith Lattimore
Director, Housing Stability Department
Ramsey County

11/22/2021

Date

Loni Aadalen

Loni Aadalen
Planning Specialist II/FHPAP & CoC Coordinator
Ramsey County

11/22/2021

Date

Trisha C Kauffman

Trisha Cummins Kauffman
Executive Director
Solid Ground

11/23/21

Date

Daniel A. Rodriguez

Daniel Rodriguez
Executive Director
Merrick Community Services

November 23, 2021

Date

Carlos Gantchoff

Carlos Gantchoff
Executive Director
St. Andrew's Community Resource Center

11/23/2021

Date

Ruby Lee

Ruby Azurdia-Lee
President
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio

11/24/2021

Date

Mary Sue Hansen

Mary Sue Hansen
Executive Director
Suburban Ramsey County Family Collaborative

Mary Sue Hansen

Date

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Final Audit Report

2021-11-25

Created:	2021-11-19
By:	Ong Yang (hwsh@solidgroundmn.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAttseJ_1W4HeVrRP5pjnP3EDxHt3cLab

"Homework Starts with Home MOU" History

-  Document created by Ong Yang (hwsh@solidgroundmn.org)
2021-11-19 - 6:24:24 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Jaime Stampley (jaime.stampley@lssmn.org) for signature
2021-11-19 - 6:29:09 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Jaime Stampley (jaime.stampley@lssmn.org)
2021-11-22 - 5:46:17 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Jaime Stampley (jaime.stampley@lssmn.org)
Signature Date: 2021-11-22 - 5:46:53 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to Keith Lattimore (keith.lattimore@co.ramsey.mn.us) for signature
2021-11-22 - 5:46:57 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Keith Lattimore (keith.lattimore@co.ramsey.mn.us)
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-  Document e-signed by Keith Lattimore (keith.lattimore@co.ramsey.mn.us)
Signature Date: 2021-11-22 - 10:25:18 PM GMT - Time Source: server
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2021-11-22 - 10:25:46 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Loni Aadalen (loni.aadalen@co.ramsey.mn.us)
Signature Date: 2021-11-22 - 10:30:45 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to Daniel A. Rodriguez (drodriguez@merrickcs.org) for signature
2021-11-22 - 10:30:47 PM GMT

-  Email viewed by Daniel A. Rodriguez (drodriguez@merrickcs.org)
2021-11-23 - 4:13:04 AM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Daniel A. Rodriguez (drodriguez@merrickcs.org)
Signature Date: 2021-11-23 - 11:33:18 AM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to Carlos Gantchoff (cgantchoff@saintandrews.org) for signature
2021-11-23 - 11:33:22 AM GMT
-  Email viewed by Carlos Gantchoff (cgantchoff@saintandrews.org)
2021-11-23 - 12:57:15 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Carlos Gantchoff (cgantchoff@saintandrews.org)
Signature Date: 2021-11-23 - 1:01:57 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to Ruby Lee (rlee@clues.org) for signature
2021-11-23 - 1:01:59 PM GMT
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2021-11-23 - 3:05:49 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Ruby Lee (rlee@clues.org)
Signature Date: 2021-11-24 - 5:06:13 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to Mary Sue Hansen (marysue.hansen@isd623.org) for signature
2021-11-24 - 5:06:17 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Mary Sue Hansen (marysue.hansen@isd623.org)
2021-11-24 - 10:32:30 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Mary Sue Hansen (marysue.hansen@isd623.org)
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-  Document emailed to Trisha Kauffman (tckauffman@solidgroundmn.org) for signature
2021-11-24 - 10:34:09 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Trisha Kauffman (tckauffman@solidgroundmn.org)
2021-11-25 - 3:09:27 AM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Trisha Kauffman (tckauffman@solidgroundmn.org)
Signature Date: 2021-11-25 - 3:11:06 AM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2021-11-25 - 3:11:06 AM GMT