



DAKOTA WOODLANDS

STRENGTHENING FAMILY
SHELTER & HOUSING STABILITY
IN DAKOTA COUNTY

WHO WE ARE

Dakota Woodlands

- The only family shelter in Dakota County
- Serving families experiencing homelessness with children since 1995 in Dakota County.
- In business since 1981, serving mothers and children.
- Providing safe shelter, trauma-informed care, and supportive services
- Focused on helping families move from crisis to long-term stability



WHO WE SERVE

Families: Biological and legally adopted

- 69% of individuals identified as BIPOC
- 62% children and teens
- 51% of adults reported a history of domestic violence
- 55% of adults reported annual incomes of \$12,000 or less
- 33% of adults reported a mental or physical disability



OUR ROLE IN THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

A Critical Part of the System

Dakota Woodlands serves as two essential components:

- Emergency Family Shelter
- Supportive Services & Stabilization

We:

- Stabilize families in crisis
- Prepare families for permanent housing
- Support long-term success and independence



PROGRESS IN 2025

Strengthening Operations & Infrastructure

In 2025, we have:

- Rebranded and created a new work culture
- Stabilized operations during staffing and funding challenges
- Implemented stronger internal systems and accountability
- Expanded programming and partnerships
- Completed major capital repairs thanks to DC CDA

With Dakota County's support, we were able to keep all shelter beds open and move 36 families into permanent housing.



COUNTY INVESTMENT IN ACTION

\$300,000 yearly until 2027

\$560,000 towards capital

With this investment, we:

- Completed three critical facility repairs
- Maintained consistent services and safety for families
- Avoided reductions in capacity
- Continued serving families without interruption

Thank You!



2025 IMPACT METRICS

What We Delivered

- 225 individuals served (140 children)
- 71 families supported
- 36 families exited to permanent housing
- 100% connected to critical resources
- 20,718 nights of shelter provided
- 2,015 case management sessions
- 87,000+ meals provided
- 4,029 essential items given
- 300+ childcare and program sessions

Success stories: <https://youtu.be/jEuJazdoCNc>



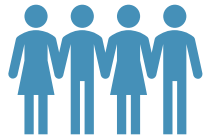
HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP

Doing More with Limited Resources

- Partnered with a local college to deliver childcare services
 - After eliminating internal positions due to funding constraints



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT GROWTH



Partnered with 250+
volunteers



Engaged 100 new donors
in 2025



Focused on grassroots,
small-dollar giving



Strengthened community
connection and
awareness

WHAT WE SEE

TWO OF THE CHALLENGES WE ARE SEEING
ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Hotel Placements Not a Long-Term Solution

- Estimated cost: \$2,000–\$4,000 per month per family
- Annual cost per family: up to \$48,000
- No on-site case management or supportive services
- Limited access to food preparation, childcare, or programming
- Frequent moves and instability for children

Increase in mental health and substance use

- Affecting family stability and children
- Can increase CPS calls, recidivism, and generational repetition

WHAT WE RESEARCHED

People Serving People

Hopes Portage

In looking at other counties, we've seen models that include:

- Facility-based family shelter, one-stop shop
- Updated shelter units
- On-site mental health services and programming
- Coordinated systems with nonprofit providers

Outcomes:

- Shelter is intentional and service-connected
- Families are supported from day one
- Focus is on shorter stays and faster exits to housing
- Children benefit from routine and programming
- Services are immediate and consistent

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The image shows a grid of streets with houses, green lawns, and trees. Some houses have swimming pools in their backyards. The overall scene is a typical residential area with a mix of house styles and landscaping.

THE VISION FOR DAKOTA COUNTY

A Stronger Family Shelter Model

Dakota Woodlands envisions:

- Expanding into a larger, purpose-built facility
- Providing private/semi-private family units
- Offering in-room restrooms and small kitchenettes
- Delivering family shelter services in one stable location
- Increased emergency mental health and family stabilization support on-site

LET US CONTINUE TO PARTNER

What does it look like?

Dakota County:

- Invests in shelter operations & facility + system coordination

Dakota Woodlands:

- Operates shelter
- Provides services
- Leverages community funding

A SHARED OPPORTUNITY

What Can Be the Outcome?

- Strengthen the front-end of the housing system
- Reduce hotel costs and damage costs
- Allows a nonprofit to manage the shelter, reduce county involvement outside of SHU services
- Improve outcomes for families and provides more stabilization
- Use resources more effectively
- Reduces facility challenges on nonprofit

LOOKING AHEAD

Dakota Woodlands is excited to continue to partner with Dakota County to build a model that:

- Supports families more effectively
- Reduces long-term system costs
- Creates lasting impact in our community
- Provides shared goals and alignment

What does that look like to you?

Let us continue to collaborate on what can be reality.

We're not here with a specific ask today, but we're excited about what continued collaboration could look like together.

Thank you for continuing to invest and support us as your family operating shelter!