



History: In 2020, The Bridge for Youth is celebrating 50 years of innovative programming that prevents youth homelessness, reunites families, and empowers youth to become healthy productive adults. Founded in 1970 by local activist Sister Rita Steinhagen as one of the nation’s first youth shelters, today The Bridge has grown to be the largest emergency shelter for minor aged runaway and homeless youth in the Twin Cities and has impacted thousands of youth and families across multiple generations.

Mission: The mission of The Bridge for Youth is to provide runaway and homeless youth safe shelter, assist in the prevention and resolution of family conflicts and reunify families whenever possible.

Vision: The Bridge for Youth is a premier resource for diverse populations of youth and families needing help by offering:

- Support that empowers
- Safe shelter
- Sustainable tools for success and restoration of relationships
- When possible family reunification

Need: Over 6,000 unaccompanied youth experience homelessness in Minnesota each night, and there are fewer than 110 emergency shelter beds available for them. The disparity between the available resources and the number of youth needing assistance is stunning. The latest Wilder Research survey showed a 10% increase in homelessness since 2015 and the highest number of homeless in the 30-year history of the study. Youth make up nearly half (46%) of the homeless population in Minnesota. These youth experience significant disparities in securing their basic needs and the effects of trauma are widespread. 35% of homeless youth in Minnesota, (over 2,000) are pregnant or parenting, and there are less than 11 site-based units designated as age-appropriate and safe, specifically for homeless teen parents and their children.

Outcomes: Annually The Bridge...

- Serves over 80% youth of color, and 23% LGBTQ+
- Provides emergency shelter to over 500 youth, 74% exit to safe and stable housing
- Provides transitional housing and case management for 18 families, 78% exit to safe and stable housing
- Provides affordable housing for 18 youth, 100% exit to safe and stable housing
- Responds to 7,000+ crisis calls/text

Program Overview

Program Approach: Strength-based, trauma informed that meets youth and families where they are at and moves youth from crisis, to stability and independence.

Housing

- **Resilience House** (Emergency Shelter): Focused on family reunification whenever safe and possible; provides temporary shelter, meals, access to healthcare, case management and support for youth ages 10-17.
- **Marlene's Place**: The first and only site-based transitional housing and case management program in Hennepin County specifically for homeless, pregnant/parenting youth (ages 16-20) and their children (ages 0-3).
- **Rita's House**: An intentional living community, providing affordable rental housing and teaching independent living skills to twelve youth ages 18-21.
- **Gloria's Place**: Opening summer 2020, the only emergency shelter in Minnesota for unaccompanied homeless pregnant/parenting youth and their children.

Outreach and Support

- **Street and Site-Based Outreach**: Connects with youth in need on the streets or in the community.
- **Youth Response Center**: Available 24/7/365, provides immediate support and resources for youth and families. We also host YSNMN, a mobile app connecting youth with available shelter and resources in real time.
- **Weekly Support Groups**: Weekly support groups that support youth in building community and staying on track with their goals. Groups include crime victims, LGBTQ+ and more.
- **Juvenile Diversion**: Shelter and long-term housing options for first-time offenders and corrections involved youth.

Elevator Speech

- 6,000 youth in Minnesota are homeless each night. These youth are not homeless by choice, have no one to turn to and nowhere to go.
- Homeless youth are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. Without support, more than 5,000 homeless youth die on the streets each year. The average time it takes for youth to be approached by a pimp is less than 72 hours on the streets.
- *Can you imagine what that must be like for them?*
- That's where The Bridge for Youth comes in – we provide a safe place for youth to go when there is no one or nowhere else for them to turn.
- Once at The Bridge, we work together with youth (and their families whenever possible) to address immediate needs, and create a plan for what's next.
- Annually, The Bridge supports over 1,000 homeless youth in times of crisis by providing emergency, transitional and affordable housing; comprehensive case management, independent living skills, and individual/family/group counseling and a range of support services.
- The Bridge relies on the support of the community, I'm asking you today to please make a gift – large or small, it will make a difference.