

Metro Transit Police Department's Homeless Action Team

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The Metro Transit Police Department first launched its Homeless Action Team (HAT) in 2018. The department recognized the need to connect community members experiencing homelessness with a number of services. In its short existence, the team has been recognized locally and nationally for its work and been hailed as a model for law enforcement agencies hoping to find a better way to help this underserved community.

HAT officers have worked with the Metropolitan Council's Housing and Redevelopment Authority to place more than 300 people in more permanent housing thanks to the HRA's federally funded rental assistance program. Vouchers were directed to adults ages 18 to 61 who have a disability and have previously engaged with Metro Transit police or other service providers.

In September 2020, the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and seven chamber partners recognized the shared effort to move people into safe housing with a Local Government Award.

The team spends nights on rail vehicles building trust by providing food, clothing and other assistance. The team also has special vans to transport people to temporary shelters and do initial health screenings.

HAT also works with city and county attorneys to address issues in someone's criminal history that might preclude them from public housing. Finally, the team helps the individuals with whom they are working to get identification cards. While not yet a legal form of identification, it helps establish that each person has an identity.

Currently, there are six officers assigned to the team.

Among the agencies with whom MTPD's HAT partners and some services they provide:

- **American Indian Community Development Corporation:** Housing and services for American Indians
- **Radias Health:** Wholistic care to patients, including physical and mental care, pharmacy services
- **Women of Nations:** Safety and shelter for women experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Catholic Charities:** Assistance to people suffering from abuse, illness, homelessness, and hunger.
- **Avivo:** Services including chemical and mental health, employment, career education lifting people from poverty.
- **Healthcare of Homeless:** Reduces barriers to health care by bringing care to homeless shelters and other areas where unsheltered persons may be found.
- **Breaking Free:** Helps women escape sex trafficking and prostitution, connecting survivors with safe housing
- **Street Works Collaborative:** Focuses on ending youth homelessness by connecting unsheltered youth with services

CSOs will work to connect anyone experiencing homelessness and in need of services to the MTPD's Homeless Action Team.

