New Perspectives Committee
Lived Experience Feedback Summary
October 2025 – October 2026

Background

The New Perspectives Committee is the NE MN Continuum of Care's (NE CoC) lived experience advisory group made up of people who have experienced homelessness or housing instability. Members meet bimonthly at Grace House to share their experiences, identify barriers, review system data, and offer guidance on how programs and systems can improve. Members receive a stipend of $25/hour to participate in meetings.

A summary of their input on the homeless response system is below.

Summary of System & Program Input

1. Provider Collaboration & Coordination

People consistently described how gaps between agencies affect their ability to get housed. Collaboration between providers is a core part of how people experience the system.

People are passed between agencies without clear next steps, leaving them unsure who is responsible for what.

- Different providers give different explanations of Coordinated Entry, eligibility, timelines, and next steps.
- Staff turnover leads to people "starting over" because information isn't shared and warm handoffs don't happen.
- People often have to call multiple agencies themselves to track down updates because providers aren't communicating with each other.
- Mixed messages from shelters, CE assessors, navigators, counties, and housing programs create confusion and delays.
- People want providers to coordinate transitions, share information, and align on messaging so they aren't repeating their story or re-doing assessments.
- Collaboration with landlords and property managers is inconsistent, leaving people to navigate screening barriers and unclear expectations alone.
- People said that when providers communicate with each other, the system feels connected; when they don't, people feel responsible for managing the entire process themselves.

Overall theme: Collaboration across providers (shelters, CE assessors, navigators, counties, housing programs, and property managers) is critical. When agencies communicate and coordinate, people feel supported. When they don't, people feel lost, overwhelmed, and responsible for navigating the system alone.

2. System Navigation & Communication

Across all meetings, people described the system as hard to understand and even harder to move through.

- Difficulty getting ahold of providers; calls not returned.
- Confusion about Coordinated Entry — what it is, who does it, and what happens after the assessment.
- People are passed between agencies without clear next steps.
- Navigators and assessors sometimes don't follow up.
- Weekly updates from assessors and navigators would reduce stress and help people feel connected.
- Clear, honest communication about timelines matters ("things probably won't happen for at least 6 months").

Overall theme: People need clarity, consistency, and follow-through when they're in the process of finding and moving into housing.

3. Housing Market Barriers

People face significant structural barriers that make finding housing extremely difficult.

- Not enough units, especially income-based housing.
- Long waits for Section 8, Bridges, group homes, and subsidized units.
- Application fees ($30 per adult, non-refundable) drain limited income, especially when households have to provide multiple application fees at a time.
- Background checks and credit checks block access even years after an eviction or criminal convictions.
- Income requirements (3x rent) exclude people even with vouchers and who work full-time jobs.
- Utility costs make otherwise affordable units impossible to maintain.
- Property management communication is inconsistent; some landlords promise units and never follow through.

Overall theme: The housing market is tight, expensive, and full of screening barriers people cannot overcome alone.

4. Disability, SSI, and Benefits Barriers

People shared major challenges accessing disability benefits and navigating related systems.

- SSI processes are long, confusing, and require appointments people can't afford.
- Loss of KOOTASCA's SOAR support created a major gap for accessing SSI.

- People need hands-on help with forms, technology, and follow-through.
- Some have been trying to get SSI for over a decade.
- Without SSI, people cannot afford rent or meet basic needs.
- People on SSI still can't afford housing without a subsidy.

Overall theme: Benefits navigation is overwhelming and directly tied to housing stability.

Transportation & Rural Geography

Living in a rural area affects every part of the housing process.

- Limited job access due to distance.
- No transportation means people can't complete CE, attend appointments, or view units.
- Rural isolation increases stress and reduces options.
- There is some housing available in more rural areas, but people can't relocate outside of city limits due to lack of transportation and access to jobs and basic needs.

Overall theme: Geography shapes opportunity — distance is a barrier in itself.

5. Discrimination & Screening

People described experiences of discrimination and screening practices that shut them out of housing.

- Racism in housing access.
- Screening barriers for people with disabilities.
- No transparency about waitlist position.
- Application fees taken without clear explanation. Landlords will take an application fee even when they know the household won't pass a background check or there won't be a unit available.
- Previous landlords "slamming" tenants and preventing future housing opportunities.

Overall theme: People feel judged, screened out, and shut out of housing opportunities.

6. Youth & Family Experiences

Youth and families shared experiences of instability that carry long-term impacts.

- Homelessness during high school — living in campers, trailers, or couch-hopping.
- Schools often didn't understand or support students experiencing homelessness.

- Bullying and stigma from experiencing homelessness in school carry into adulthood.
- Intergenerational trauma shapes long-term mental health and stability.
- Parents worry about losing shelter because children are loud or need supervision.

Overall theme: Youth and families experience unique instability that systems often overlook.

7. Treatment, Support, and Community

People talked about what helps them feel stable beyond housing.

- Voluntary treatment works; forced treatment does not.
- Life skills groups (budgeting, education, reading) are helpful.
- Peer groups help people learn from each other.
- Human connection reduces isolation and supports sobriety and stability.
- People want to feel understood, not judged.

Overall theme: Supportive relationships and community matter as much as services.

8. Shelter-Related Themes

Shelter experiences shape how people view the system.

- 30-day limits on shelter stays create pressure and fear.
- People want prioritization for seniors, disabled individuals, unsheltered people, and those about to be exited from shelter.

Overall theme: Shelter is stabilizing when it is respectful, predictable, and safe — but time limits create stress.