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Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs

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Summary

This report discusses runaway and homeless youth, and the federal response to support this population. There is no single definition of the terms "runaway youth" or "homeless youth." However, both groups of youth share the risk of not having adequate shelter and other provisions, and may engage in harmful behaviors while away from a permanent home. These two groups also include "thrownaway" youth who are asked to leave their homes, and may include other vulnerable youth populations, such as current and former foster youth and youth with mental health or other issues. The term "unaccompanied youth" encompasses both runaways and homeless youth, and is used in national data counts of the population.

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. A youth's sexual orientation, sexual activity, pregnancy, school problems, and alcohol and drug use are strong predictors of family discord. The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility and overlap among the populations. Determining the number of these youth is further complicated by the lack of a standardized methodology for counting the population and inconsistent definitions of what it means to be homeless or a runaway. Estimates of the homeless youth exceed 1 million. Estimates of runaway youth—including "thrownaway" youth (youth asked or forced to leave their homes)—are between 1 million and 1.7 million in a given year.

From the early 20th century through the 1960s, the needs of runaway and homeless youth were handled locally through the child welfare agency, juvenile justice courts, or both. The 1970s marked a shift toward federal oversight of programs that help youth who had run afoul of the law, including those who committed status offenses (i.e., running away). Congress passed the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415) to assist runaways through services specifically for this population. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP) has since been expanded through reauthorization laws enacted approximately every five years since the 1970s, most recently by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378) in 2008. Funding authorization expired in FY2013, and Congress has continued to appropriate funding for the act: $119.1 million was appropriated for FY2016.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth program is made up of three components: the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP). The Basic Center Program provides temporary shelter, counseling, and after care services to runaway and homeless youth under age 18 and their families. The BCP has served approximately 31,000 to 36,000 annually in recent years. The Transitional Living Program is targeted to older youth ages 16 through 22 (and sometimes an older age), and has served approximately 3,000 to 3,500 youth annually in recent years. Youth who use the TLP receive longer-term housing with supportive services. The SOP provides education, treatment, counseling, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse, sex exploitation, and trafficking. Each year, the SOP makes hundreds of thousands of contacts with street youth (some of whom have multiple contacts). Related services authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act include a national communication system to facilitate communication between service providers, runaway youth, and their families; training and technical support for grantees; and evaluations of the programs, among other activities. The 2008 reauthorizing legislation expanded the program, requiring HHS to conduct an incidence and prevalence study of runaway and homeless youth. To date, this study has not been conducted; however, efforts are underway among multiple federal agencies to collect better information on these youth as part of a larger strategy to end youth homelessness by 2020.

In addition to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, other federal programs support runaway and homeless youth, such as the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program and the Chafee Foster Care Independent Living program for foster youth.

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Introduction

Running away from home is not a recent phenomenon. Folkloric heroes Huckleberry Finn and Davey Crockett fled their abusive fathers to find adventure and employment. Although some youth today also leave home due to abuse and neglect, they often endure far more negative outcomes than their romanticized counterparts from an earlier era. Without adequate and safe shelter, runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to engaging in high-risk behaviors and further victimization. Youth who live away from home for extended periods may become removed from school and systems of support that promote positive development. They might also resort to illicit activities, including selling drugs and prostitution, for survival.

Congress began to hear concerns about the vulnerabilities of the runaway population in the 1970s due to increased awareness about these youth and the establishment of runaway shelters to assist them in returning home. Congress went on to pass the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415) to assist runaways through services specifically for this population. Since that time, Congress has authorized services to provide support for runaway and homeless youth outside of the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare systems. The Runaway Youth Act—now known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act—authorizes federal funding for three programs to assist runaway and homeless youth—the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP)—through FY2013.[1] (Congress has continued to appropriate funding for the three programs in FY2014 through FY2016.) These programs make up the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP), administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

- ***Basic Center Program:*** To provide crisis intervention, temporary shelter, counseling, family unification, and after care services to runaway and homeless youth under age 18 and their families. In some cases, BCP-funded programs may serve older youth.
- ***Transitional Living Program:*** To support projects that provide homeless youth ages 16 through 22 with stable, safe longer-term residential services up to 18 months (or longer under certain circumstances), including counseling in basic life skills, building interpersonal skills, educational advancement, job attainment skills, and physical and mental health care.
- ***Street Outreach Program:***[2] To provide street-based outreach and education, including treatment, counseling, provision of information, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution, and trafficking.

[1] The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was most recently reauthorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Protection Act (P.L. 110-378). For additional information about the 2008 reauthorization law, see CRS Report RL34483, *Runaway and Homeless Youth: Reauthorization Legislation and Issues in the 110th Congress*, by (name red acted) . For information about more recent reauthorization efforts, see CRS Report R43766, *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: Current Issues for Reauthorization*, by (name redacted) . The law is authorized at 42 U.S.C. §4701 et seq.: Basic Center Program (42 U.S.C. §§5714-5741), Transitional Living Program (42 U.S.C. §§5114-1 – 5714-2), and Street Outreach Program (42 U.S.C. §5714-41). Accompanying regulations are at 45 C.F.R. §1351 et seq. Information about these program is drawn from statute, congressional budget justifications, reports to Congress, and funding announcements.

[2] In 42 U.S.C. §5714-41, this program is referred to as the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program.

This report begins with a brief discussion of the reauthorization of and appropriations for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, followed by an overview of the runaway and homeless youth population.[3] The report then describes the challenges in defining and counting the runaway and homeless youth population, as well as the factors that influence homelessness and leaving home. In particular, youth who experience foster care are vulnerable to running away or becoming homeless while in care or after having been emancipated from the system. The report also provides background on the evolution of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act from the 1970s until it was last amended in 2008. It then describes the administration and funding of the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach programs that were created from the act, as well as the functions of their ancillary components. Finally, the report discusses other federal programs that may be used to assist runaway and homeless youth.

Who Are Homeless and Runaway Youth?

Defining the Population

There is no single federal definition of the terms "homeless youth" or "runaway youth." However, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services relies on the definitions from the program's authorizing legislation and its accompanying regulations.[4] The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines homeless youth for purposes of the BCP as individuals under age 18 (or some older age if permitted by state or local law) for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and lack safe alternative living arrangements. For purposes of the TLP, homeless youth are individuals ages 16 through 22 for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and lack safe alternative living arrangements. Youth older than age 22 may participate if they entered the program before age 22 and meet other requirements.[5] The act describes runaway youth as individuals under age 18 who absent themselves from their home or legal residence at least overnight without the permission of their parents or legal guardians.

Some definitions of runaway and homeless youth may include a sub-population known as "thrownaway" youth (or "push outs") who have been abandoned by their parents or have been told to leave their households. These youth may be considered part of the homeless population if they lack alternative living arrangements. However, the most recent federal study of runaway youth—the National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children-2 (NISMART-2) conducted in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Justice—includes thrownaway youth in its estimates.[6] The study de-emphasizes distinctions between runaway and

[3] For information about reauthorization, see CRS Report R43766, *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: Current Issues for Reauthorization*, by (name redacted) .

[4] The U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) use definitions of homelessness that are different than those used by HHS. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) uses a different definition for runaway youth. For some of these definitions, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs and Recent Legislation*, coordinated by (name redacted)

[5] Prior to the enactment of the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378), the law did not authorize an older age for youth to stay at a BCP or TLP-funded site, except to specify that youth ages 16 through 21 were eligible for the TLP program.

[6] DOJ, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics," by Heather Hammer, David Finkelhor, and Andrea J. Sedlak, *OJJDP NISMART Bulletin*, October 2002, http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/documents/nismart2_runaway.pdf. (Hereinafter, DOJ, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children.") DOJ is in the process of conducting a more recent iteration of the study, known as NISMART-3.

thrownaway populations because many youth experience both circumstances, and the categorization of a runaway or thrownaway episode frequently depends on whether information was gathered from the youth (who tend to emphasize the thrownaway aspects of the episode) or their care takers (who tend to emphasize the runaway aspects). Some definitions of runaway and homeless youth, including those used by HHS, include "street youth" because they lack shelter and live on the street and in other areas that increase the risk of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, drug abuse, and prostitution.[7]

While the research literature has often categorized young people based on their status as *runaways*, *thrownaways, or street youth*, a 2011 study suggests that overlap exists between these categories. The authors of the study note that these "typologies," or classifications, are too narrowly defined by the youth's housing status and reasons for homelessness, among other factors. The authors explain that typologies based on mental health status or age cohort are promising, but they suggest further research in this area to ensure that the typologies are accurate.[8]

Demographics

The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility. These youth often eschew the shelter system for locations or areas that are not easily accessible to shelter workers and others who count the homeless and runaways.[9] Youth who come into contact with census takers may also be reluctant to report that they have left home or are homeless. Determining the number of homeless and runaway youth is further complicated by the lack of a standardized methodology for counting the population and inconsistent definitions of what it means to be homeless or a runaway.[10] Further, some studies examine homelessness based on the age of youth (i.e., under age 18 or 18 and older).

Differences in methodology for collecting data on homeless populations may also influence how the characteristics of the runaway and homeless youth population are reported. Some studies have relied on point prevalence estimates that report whether youth have experienced homelessness at a given point in time, such as on a particular day.[11] According to researchers that study the characteristics of runaway and homeless youth, these studies appear to be biased toward describing individuals who experience longer periods of homelessness.[12] The sample location may also misrepresent the characteristics of the population generally.[13] Surveying youth who live on the streets may lend to the perception that all runaway and homeless youth are especially deviant. Youth surveyed in locations with high rates of drug use and sex work, known as "cruise areas," tend to be older, to have been away from home longer, to have recently visited

[7] §42 U.S.C. §5732a.

[8] Paul A. Toro, Tegan M. Lesperance, and Jordan M. Braciszewski, *The Heterogeneity of Homeless Youth in America: Examining Typologies*, Homeless Research Institute, September 2011, pp. 1-12.

[9] Christopher L. Ringwalt et al., "The Prevalence of Homelessness Among Adolescents in the United States," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 88, no. 9 (September 1998), p. 1325. (Hereinafter, Christopher L. Ringwalt et al., "The Prevalence of Homelessness Among Adolescents.")

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Andrea L. Witkin et al., "Finding Homeless Youth: Patterns Based on Geographical Area and Number of Homeless Episodes," *Youth & Society*, vol. 37, no. 1 (September 2005), pp. 62-63.

community-based agencies, and to be less likely to attend school than youth in "non-cruise areas."[14]

Further, the research literature on the number and characteristics of runaway and homeless youth is fairly limited and dated. Some of the studies focus on the demographics of either—homeless youth; runaway youth; or unaccompanied youth, which encompasses both runaways and homeless youth. One commonly cited study states that more than a million youth ages 12 to 17 are homeless annually. Another study, based on data from 1999, found that 1.7 million youth under the age of 18 ran away that year. Finally, other research focuses on the general category of unaccompanied youth—who may be runaway and/or homeless—and estimates the number of these youth (ages 16 to 24) who are most at risk of facing negative outcomes.

As discussed later in the report, the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378), which renewed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program through FY2013, authorized funding for HHS to conduct periodic studies of the incidence and prevalence of youth who have run away or are homeless.

Homeless Youth

A 1998 study in the American Journal of Public Health used the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 1992 National Health Interview Survey of youth ages 12 to 17 to determine the number of those who were homeless.[15] In the survey, youth were asked whether, in the past 12 months, they had spent one or more nights in a specific type of shelter not intended to be a dwelling place (e.g., in an abandoned building, public place, outside, underground, or in a stranger's home) or a youth or adult shelter. Based on their responses, researchers calculated that 5% of the population ages 12 to 17—more than 1 million youth in a given year—experienced homelessness. The researchers concluded that the prevalence of staying at a particular dwelling place while homeless was constant across racial groups, socioeconomic status, youth who lived with both parents and those who did not, and youth who lived in cities of varying sizes. However, boys were more likely to experience homeless episodes, especially as these episodes related to sleeping in a shelter or outside.[16]

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities receiving funds through the Homeless Assistance Grants to conduct annual point-in-time (PIT) counts of people experiencing homelessness, including homeless youth. This count includes youth under age 25 who are (1) not part of a family ("unaccompanied youth") or (2) parents with their children and not accompanied by an adult over age 25 ("parenting youth"). The count includes youth who are sheltered (in shelters or transitional housing) or unsheltered (the streets and other places not meant for human habitation). The PIT count is a snapshot of people who are homeless on a given day, and is not meant to represent the total number of people who experience homelessness over a given year. In 2015, nearly 47,000 unaccompanied and parenting youth were identified in the PIT count.[17]

Measured characteristics of homeless youth vary depending on the source of the sample and methodology. Some evaluations of homeless youth indicate that representation of females and males varies across sample locations. Surveys from family shelters suggest either even numbers

[14] Ibid.

[15] Christopher L. Ringwalt et al., "The Prevalence of Homelessness Among Adolescents," pp. 1326-1327.

[16] Ibid., p 1327.

[17] HUD, *The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, November 2015.

of females and males, or more females (see a subsequent section for discussion of the youth using Basic Center Program shelters).[18] Although studies tend to document that homeless youth generally reflect the ethnic makeup of their local areas, some studies show overrepresentation of racial or ethnic minorities relative to the community (in general, black youth are overrepresented at the BCP shelters).[19] The history of homelessness among youth also varies by the sample location. Youth in shelters tend to have short periods of homelessness and have not experienced prior homeless episodes while youth living on the streets are more likely to demonstrate patterns of episodic (i.e., multiple episodes adding up to less than one year) or chronic homelessness (i.e., being homeless for one year or longer).[20]

Runaway and Thrownaway Youth

Three oft-cited studies provide annual and lifetime estimates of runaway and thrownaway youth. One study, conducted by HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), found that 1.6 million youth (7%) ages 12 to 17 had run away from home and slept on the street in a 12-month period (in 2002). These youth were more likely to be male (55%), and nearly half (46%) were ages 16 or 17.[21] The NISMART-2, a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), estimates that 1.7 million youth under age 18 left home or were asked to leave home in 1999.[22] About seven out of 10 (68%) were between the ages of 15 and 17. Males and females were equally represented in the population. White youth made up the largest share of runaways (57%), followed by black youth (17%) and Hispanic youth (15%). Nearly all (99%) runaway and thrownaway youth returned to their homes. Approximately 77% were gone for less than one week; 15% were gone for one week to less than one month; and 7% were gone from one month to less than six months.

A 2010 study of runaway youth's lifetime prevalence of running away used longitudinal survey data of young people who were 12 to 18 years old when they were first interviewed about whether they had run away—defined as staying away at least one night without their parents' prior knowledge or permission—along with other behaviors.[23] In subsequent years, youth who

[18] Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches," *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research* (2007), http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/toro/. (Hereinafter, Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches.") See also, Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy," *The 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*, (1998), pp. 1-2, http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-Youth.htm. (Hereinafter, Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy.")

[19] Ibid., p. 4.

[20] Ibid.

[21] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Office of Applied Statistics, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*, 2002, http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k4/runAways/runAways.htm. (Hereinafter, HHS, SAMHSA, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*.)

[22] DOJ, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 7. DOJ awarded funds for a follow-up study known as NISMART-3. As with NISMART-2, NISMART-3 will measure the number of stereotypical kidnappings by strangers and the prevalence of familial abductions; lost, injured, or otherwise missing children; runaway children; and thrownaway children. DOJ, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Grant Solicitation, *OJJDP FY 2010 National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children 3*, 2010, http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/grants/solicitations/FY2010/NISMART3.pdf.

[23] Michael R. Pergamit, *On the Lifetime Prevalence of Running Away From Home*, Urban Institute, April 2010, http://www.urban.org/publications/412087.html.

were under age 17 at their previous interview were asked if they had run away since their last interview. Youth who had ever run away were asked how many times they had run away and the age at which they first ran away. The study found that 19% of youth ran away before turning 18 years old; females were more likely than males to run away; and among white, black, and Hispanic youth, black youth have the highest rate of ever running away. Youth who ran away reported that they did so about three times on average; however, about half of runaways had only run away once. Approximately half of the youth had run away before age 14.

Unaccompanied Youth

As mentioned, some research has focused on unaccompanied youth more broadly to include both runaway and homeless youth. This term deemphasizes the housing status of the youth. A 2011 study of 250 youth in the Detroit area identified three categories of unaccompanied youth based on their risk-taking behaviors and other factors:

1. Transient but not connected: These youth had fewer mental health or substance use issues but were most unstable in terms of housing and school connections and showed the most extensive histories of homelessness.
2. High-Risk: These youth were more likely to report a history of sexual abuse, had more sexual partners, were more likely to have dropped out of school, and struggled the most with depression, conduct, and substance abuse problems.
3. Low-Risk: These youth showed the least extensive histories of homelessness and housing instability and had the fewest issues with behavior or substance use.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), a nonprofit organization that works to end homelessness, used these findings to estimate the number of youth under age 24 who are unaccompanied and most at risk for negative outcomes. In estimating the number of youth under age 18, NAEH focused on the nearly 380,000 from NISMART-2 who were gone for more than one week, including youth who did not return or for whom no further information was available. Based on the NISMART-2 data (and applying the proportions of youth in the Detroit study who were in each risk category), NAEH estimated that about 53,000 (14%) of these unaccompanied youth were in high-risk ("unstably connected") or transient but not connected ("chronically disconnected") categories. In estimating the number of unaccompanied youth ages 18 to 24, NAEH approximated the number of older youth reported in adult emergency shelter or transitional housing programs at some point during 2011 (thereby excluding youth on the streets or in unsafe housing arrangements). Of the estimated 150,000 young adults who were unaccompanied, 28,000 (18%) were in the high-risk or transient but not connected categories.[24]

Factors Influencing Homelessness and Leaving Home

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. A literature review of homeless youth found that a youth's relationship with a step-parent, sexual activity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, school problems, and alcohol and drug use were strong predictors of family discord.[25] Over one-third of callers who used the National

[24] National Alliance to End Homelessness, "An Emerging Framework for Ending Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness," March 6, 2012, http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/an-emerging-framework-for-ending-unaccompanied-youth-homelessness.

[25] Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches."

Runaway Safeline (a federally sponsored call center funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program for youth and their relatives involved in runaway incidents) in 2015 gave family dynamics (not defined) as the reason for their call.[26] Using data from a longitudinal survey of youth who were in middle school and high school, researchers examined the effects of family instability (i.e., child maltreatment, lack of parental warmth, and parent rejection) and other factors on the likelihood of running away from home approximately two to six years after youth were initially surveyed. Researchers found that youth with family instability were more likely to run away. Family instability also influenced problem behaviors, such as illicit drug use, which, in turn, were associated with running away. Running away also increased the chances of running again. Researchers further determined that environmental effects (i.e., school engagement, neighborhood cohesiveness, physical victimization, and friends' support) were not strong predicators of whether youth in the sample ran away.[27] Other research using the same longitudinal data examined peer networks and their influence on running away. Friends of runaway youth were more likely to be involved in minor deviant behaviors, such as skipping school, and had poorer school performance; however, runaways were just as well-liked and interacted as frequently with friends as did their non-runaway counterparts.[28]

Gay and lesbian youth appear to be overrepresented in the homeless population, due often to experiencing negative reactions from their parents when they come out about their sexuality. In five studies of unaccompanied youth in mid-size and large cities, between 20% and 40% of respondents identified as gay or lesbian.[29] In addition, a nationwide survey of 354 organizations serving homeless youth in 2011 and 2012 found that LGBT youth make up about 40% of their clients.[30]

Youth in Foster Care

Runaway and homeless youth have described abuse and neglect as common experiences. Over 20% of youth in the 1999 NISMART-2 study reported being physically or sexually abused at home in the prior year or feared abuse upon returning home.[31] Youth who run away often have a history of involvement in the foster care system. On the last day of FY2014, states reported 4,544 foster children (1% of all foster children) as "runaways."[32] A study of youth who ran away from

[26] National Runaway Safeline, "Crisis Hotline & Online Service Statistics," http://www.1800runaway.org/runaway-statistics/crisis-hotline-online-services-statistics/.

[27] Kimberly A. Tyler, Kellie J. Hagewen, and Lisa A. Melander, "Risk Factors for Running Away Among a Sample of Males and Females," *Youth & Society*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2011, pp. 583-608.

[28] Xiaojin Chen, Lisa Thrane, and Michele Adams, "Precursors of Running Away During Adolescence: Do Peers Matter?"*Journal of Research on Adolescence*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2012), pp. 487-497.

[29] Nicholas Ray, *Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, pp. 12-14, http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/HomelessYouth.pdf. See also, Andrew Cray, Katie Miller, and Laura E. Durso, *Seeking Shelter: The Experiences and Unmet Needs of LGBT Homeless Youth*, The Center for American Progress, September 2013, pp. 4-5.

[30] Laura E. Durso and Gary J. Gates, "Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless," The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund, 2012, http://fortytonone.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-Final-Report-7-11-12.pdf.

[31] U.S. DOJ, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 8.

[32] HHS, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF), Children's Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and *Reporting System Report #22 (Preliminary Estimates for FY2014)*, July 2015, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport21.pdf. (Hereinafter, HHS, *AFCARS Report #22*.)

foster care between 1993 and 2003 by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago found that the average likelihood of an individual running away from foster care placements increased over this time period.[33] Youth questioned about their runaway experiences cited three primary reasons why they ran from foster care. First, they wanted to reconnect or stay connected to their biological families even if they recognized that their families were neither healthy nor safe. Second, youth wanted to express their autonomy and find normalcy among sometimes chaotic events. Many youth explained that they already felt independent because they had taken on adult responsibilities beginning at a young age. Third, youth wanted to maintain surrogate family relationships with non-family members. Youth in the study were more likely than their foster care peers to abuse drugs and to have certain mental health disorders.

Youth who experience foster care are also vulnerable to homelessness after emancipating from the child welfare system. In FY2014, over 18,000 youth "aged out" of foster care.[34] Many of these youth lack the proper supports to successfully transition to adulthood. Only about two-fifths of eligible foster youth receive independent living services.[35] Of those youth who do receive services, few have adequate housing assistance. Research on youth who emancipate from foster care suggests a nexus between foster care involvement and later episodes of homelessness. In a study of 26-year-olds who had emancipated from foster care in three states, approximately 15% had experienced homelessness since their last interview at age 23; slightly over half stated that they had been homeless more than once, and almost one-quarter stated they had been homeless four or more times.[36] One-quarter of these youth had couch surfed, defined as "moving from one temporary housing arrangement provided by friends, family, or strangers, to another." Over 60% of the young adults who had couch surfed since their most recent interview at age 23 had done so more than once.[37]

Risks Associated with Running Away and Homelessness

Runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple problems while they are away from a permanent home, including untreated mental health disorders, drug use, and sexual exploitation.[38] In a 1996 evaluation of street youth (ages 13 to 17) in a Hollywood area with high rates of drug use and sex work, about one-quarter met clinical criteria for major depression compared to 10% or less of their peers in the general population.[39] However, youth who live on the streets in higher risk areas may experience greater challenges than other homeless and runaway youth who stay in other locations. Another study that compared rates for many mental disorders between homeless

[33] Mark E. Courtney et al., "Youth Who Run Away from Out-of-Home Care," *Chapin Hall Center for Children Issue Brief*, no. 103 (March 2005), p. 2, http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/youth-who-run-away-out-home-care.

[34] HHS, *AFCARS Report #22.*

[35] Mark E. Courtney and Darcy Hughes Heuring, "The Transition to Adulthood for Youth 'Aging Out' of the Foster Care System" in Wayne G. Osgood et al., eds., *On Your Own Without a Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 27-32.

[36] Mark E. Courtney et al., *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth*: *Outcomes at Age 26*, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, December 2011, p. 12, http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_12_30_11.pdf.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches."

[39] Robertson and Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy," p. 7. The clinical criteria are found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, a handbook used most often to diagnose mental disorders in the United States.

youth and the general youth population concluded that they were similar, although homeless youth had significantly higher rates of disruptive behavior disorders.[40]

Drug use also appears prevalent among the runaway and homeless youth population. The SAMHSA study found that nearly 30% had used marijuana and almost one-quarter used an illicit drug other than marijuana.[41] The NISMART-2 study reported that 17% of runaway youth surveyed in 1999 used hard drugs (not defined) and 18% were in the company of someone known to be abusing drugs when they were away from home.[42] Runaway and homeless youth are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, and are at high risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Some youth resort to illegal activity including stealing, being sold for sex, and selling drugs for survival. Runaway and homeless youth report other challenges including poor health and the lack of basic provisions.[43]

Evolution of Federal Policy

Prior to the passage of the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 (Title III, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, P.L. 93-415), federal policy was limited in the area of runaway and homeless youth. If they received any services, most such youth were served through the local child welfare agency, juvenile justice court system, or both. The 1970s marked a shift to a more rehabilitative model for assisting youth who had run afoul of the law, including those who committed status offenses such as running away. During this period, Congress focused increasing attention on runaways and other vulnerable youth due, in part, to emerging sociological models to explain why youth engaged in deviant behavior. The first runaway shelters were created in the late 1960s and 1970s to assist them in returning home. The landmark Runaway Youth Act of 1974 decriminalized runaway youth and authorized funding for programs to provide shelter, counseling, and other services. Since the law's enactment, Congress has expanded the services available to both runaway youth and homeless youth under what is now referred to as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. In more recent years, other federal entities have been involved in responding to the challenges facing runaway and homeless youth. **Figure 1**, at the end of this section, traces the evolution of federal policy in this area.

Early Years: 1930s-1960s

Federal Legislation on Homeless Youth

The federal government first addressed the problem of youth homelessness during the Great Depression when it established programs to provide relief services for children and youth, often accompanied by their families, who left home to find work and became homeless.[44]

In response to the influx of homeless adults and youth to the nation's cities, the Federal Transient Relief Act of 1933 established a Transient Division within the Federal Transient Relief Administration to provide relief services through state grants. Also in 1933, the Civilian

[40] Ibid.

[41] HHS, SAMHSA, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*.

[42] DOJ, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 8.

[43] Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches."

[44] Eric Beecroft and Seymour Janow, "Toward a National Policy for Migration," *Social Forces*, vol. 16, no. 4 (May 1938), p. 477.

Conservation Corps opened camps and shelters for more than 1 million low-income older youth. In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration by executive order to open employment bureaus and provide cash assistance to poor college and high school students. Together, these programs helped to reduce the number of homeless and transient youth. According to the July 1935 Federal Transient Relief Act's Monthly Report, 50,000 young people were homeless and/or transient at that time.[45] The Transient Division was disbanded shortly thereafter.

Federal Legislation on Runaway Youth

Homeless youth were generally considered a problem that had ended after the Great Depression, but youth running away from home was emerging as a more serious issue. At about the same time the federal government withdrew funding for homeless and transient youth services provided during the Great Depression, it enacted separate and unrelated legislation to assist vulnerable youth—including runaways—through state grants. As originally enacted, the Social Security Act of 1935 (P.L. 74-231) authorized indefinite annual funding of $1.5 million for states to establish, extend, and strengthen public child welfare services in "predominately rural" or "special needs" areas. For purposes of this program (now at Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act), these were described as services "for the protection and care of homeless, dependent, and neglected children, and children in danger of becoming delinquent."[46] In 1950 (P.L. 81-734), Title IV-B was amended to allow state grants to be used to pay the cost of returning a runaway child under the age of 16 to his or her home state from another state. In 1958, the program was again amended (P.L. 85-840) to increase the age of runaways who could receive this aid to 18 and to include 15 days of maintenance (i.e., room and board) for each child in cases where the costs could not be met by his or her parents or the agency institution legally responsible for the care of that child.

The passage of the 1961 Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act (P.L. 87-274) focused on the environmental and underlying sociological factors of deviant behavior among youth. Unaccompanied minors on the street fit the image of troubled, and potentially delinquent, youth. This image was further entrenched as some runaway youth joined the Counterculture Movement of the 1960s.[47] The first runaway centers (Huckleberry House in San Francisco, the Runaway House in Washington, DC, and branch offices of the Young Women's Christian Association and Traveler's Aid Society) opened during the late 1960s to provide shelter, counseling, and other services to youth and their families. The centers received little, if any, federal funds, and relied primarily on the donations of churches and other nonprofit entities.

[45] Ibid., 477.

[46] In 1962 (P.L. 87-543), child welfare services were formally defined under Title IV-B as "public social services which supplement, or substitute for parental care and supervision for the purpose of (1) remedying or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in, the neglect abuse, exploitation, or delinquency of children, (2) protecting and caring for homeless, dependent, or neglected children, (3) protecting and promoting the welfare of children, including the strengthening of their own homes where possible or, where needed, the provision of adequate care of children away from their homes in foster family homes or day-care or other child-care facilities." P.L. 109-288 (2006) removed reference to homeless youth.

[47] Karen M. Staller, "Constructing the Runaway and Homeless Youth Problem: Boy Adventurers to Girl Prostitutes, 1960-1978," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2003), p. 331.

The Runaway Youth Act of 1974

Concerned that an increasing number of runaway youth were entering the juvenile justice system, the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Judiciary Committee conducted hearings on runaway youth in 1972 to explore the problems facing this population.[48] Testimony from government officials, youth workers, and community leaders focused on the lifestyles of youth, as well as their interaction with police and increasing reliance on runaway centers. Runaway youth were concentrated in areas like the Haight District in San Francisco and New York City's Greenwich Village, often staying in filthy, overcrowded houses (known as "pads") with other youth and adults. Police officers routinely sent unaccompanied youth to juvenile detention centers. The few runaway centers operating in the early 1970s were underfunded, understaffed, and unable to help youth cope with the reasons they ran away. A fractured home life and problems with school were most often cited as motivation for leaving home. Youth who ran away because they were abused or neglected were not always placed under the protection of the state. These youth, like most runaways, had to secure permission from their parents to stay overnight at a runaway center.

The subcommittee also heard testimony regarding the need to establish and federally fund programs to assist runaway youth. At the time, states could only use Social Security Title IV-B funds for runaway youth to return them to their state of origin (not for intrastate transfer). Other federal funding streams that targeted runaway youth were also limited. The Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-445) authorized funding for approximately four runaway centers from 1968 to 1972. The primary purpose of the legislation was to provide assistance to courts, correctional systems, schools, and community agencies for research and training on juvenile justice issues.

Although the Senate passed legislation to assist runaway youth, the House did not act; however, two years later, in 1974, Congress passed the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA, P.L. 93-415). A total of $10 million for each fiscal year, FY1975 through FY1977, was authorized to provide temporary shelter, family counseling, and after-care services to runaway youth and their families through what is now referred to as the Basic Center Program. To receive funding under Title III, states had to decriminalize runaway youth and provide services outside of the juvenile justice system. The legislation also included a provision requiring a comprehensive survey of runaway youth.

Expanding the Scope of the Act

Through the Juvenile Justice Amendments to the JJDPA in 1977 (P.L. 95-115), Congress reauthorized the Runaway Youth Act for FY1978 and expanded its scope to include homeless youth. Such youth became eligible for services provided through the Basic Center Program. Two other programs were later added that targeted specific sub-populations of runaway and homeless youth. Congress established the Transitional Living Program through the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690) to meet the needs of older youth. The impetus for passing the legislation was the success of demonstration transitional living projects in the 1980s. The other major program, the Street Outreach Program, was created in 1994 by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322). The purpose of the program is to serve homeless youth living on the streets. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was most recently reauthorized by

[48] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Juvenile Delinquency*, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., January 13-14, 1972 (Washington: GPO, 1972).

the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-378), which extended the program's funding authorization through FY2013 and authorized funding for a prevalence and incidence study of the homeless and runaway youth population, among other activities. While authorization for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act expired at the end of FY2013, its programs continue to receive funding.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: *Opening Doors*

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is a major part of recent federal efforts to end youth homelessness through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The UISCH, established under the 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, is made up of several federal agencies, including HHS and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HEARTH Act, enacted in 2009 as part of the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (P.L. 111-22), charged USICH with developing a National Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.[49] In June 2010, USICH released this plan, entitled *Opening Doors*.[50] The plan sets out four goals: (1) ending chronic homelessness by 2015; (2) preventing and ending homelessness among veterans by 2015; (3) preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and (4) setting a path to ending all types of homelessness.

In 2012, USICH amended *Opening Doors* to specifically address strategies for improving the educational outcomes for children and youth and assisting unaccompanied homeless youth.[51] The strategies for preventing and ending youth homelessness include (1) obtaining more comprehensive information on the scope of youth homelessness; (2) building an evidence base of the most effective interventions for different subsets of youth; and (3) improving access to emergency assistance, housing, and supports for historically underserved groups of youth, including those with histories in the child welfare system, LGBTQ youth, pregnant or parenting youth, and youth with mental health needs.

In 2013, a USICH working group developed a guiding document for ending youth homelessness by 2020. Known as the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness*, the document outlines a data strategy to collect better data on the number and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness. This data strategy includes coordinating the data collection system for the Runaway and Homeless Youth program—known as RHYMIS—with HUD's Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). As of FY2015, RHYP grantees stopped reporting to RHYMIS and instead report to HMIS. HMIS is a locally administered data system used to record and analyze client, service, and housing data for individuals and families who are homeless or at

[49] The HEARTH Act specified that the plan should be made available for public comment and submitted to Congress and the President within one year of the law's enactment. USICH convened working groups made up of members of federal agencies to discuss ending homelessness among specific populations: families, youth, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and veterans. USICH, *Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Overview*. The council then held regional meetings to get feedback from various stakeholders, and it accepted public comments on its website during March 2010. For public comments, see http://fsp.uservoice.com/forums/41991-how-can-the-local-community-contribute-to-the-visi.

[50] U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, June 2010.

[51] USICH, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Amendment 2012*, September 2012, http://usich.gov/opening_doors/amendment_2012. (Hereinafter USICH, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Amendment 2012*.) See also, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Council Meeting, presentation by Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, June 12, 2012. Unaccompanied youth includes those on their own, youth who are parents and their children, adolescent siblings, and other groups composed of only youth.

risk of homelessness in a given community.[52] Grantees reported to RHYMIS on the basic demographics of the youth, the services they received, and the status of the youth (i.e., expected living situation, physical and mental health, and family dynamics, etc.) upon exiting the programs. RHY grantees are now required to report this same (and new information) to HMIS.

The data strategy outlined in the framework also involves, if funding is available, designing and implementing a national study to estimate the number, needs, and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness. This is consistent with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act's directive for HHS to conduct a study of youth homelessness.

Separately, the framework's capacity strategy seeks to strengthen and coordinate the capacity of federal, state, and local systems to work toward ending youth homelessness. The USICH has developed an intervention model that draws on evidence-based tools and practices for assisting homeless youth. The model reflects that providers should use valid and reliable screening and assessment tools to understand each homeless youth's strengths and needs. It also specifies that intervention strategies should be based on scientific evidence for improving outcomes, among other characteristics. The framework also discusses testing and scaling up interventions. Through the data collection strategy and capacity strategy, USICH ultimately intends to improve outcomes for youth in four areas: stable housing, permanent connections, education or employment options, and socio-emotional well-being.[53]

In 2015, the USICH released a document that provides guidance to communities on ending youth homelessness. It emphasizes that communities should aim to prevent youth from becoming homeless by working with at-risk families, identifying and engaging at-risk youth, developing coordinated entry across providers to determine which intervention is best for these youth, ensure access to safe shelter and emergency services, ensure that assessments of youth respond to their unique needs, and provide individualized services and housing options to youth.[54]

FY2016 Appropriations

The FY2016 appropriations law (P.L. 114-113) addresses the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness* via new appropriations for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and through support to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. The following funding is provided to HUD:

- P.L. 114-113 sets aside up to $33 million from the Homelessness Assistance Grants program[55] to implement projects that demonstrate how a "comprehensive approach" can "dramatically reduce" youth homelessness for youth through age 24. The law directs this funding to up to 10 communities, including at least four rural communities. HUD is in the process of soliciting input about how funds could be used under the project.[56] Up to $5 million of the Homeless Assistance

[52] HUD, *2014 HMIS Data Standards: HMIS Data Dictionary*, version 2.1, August 2014, and *2014 HMIS Data Standards Manual: A Guide for HMIS Users, CoCs and System Administrators*, version 2.1, August 2014, https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis/hmis-regulations-and-notices.

[53] USICH, *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*, February 2013.

[54] USICH, *Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness: A Coordinated Community Response*, 2015.

[55] The Homelessness Assistance Grants are administered by HUD, and provide funding via three programs to address homelessness. For further information, see CRS Report RL33764, *The HUD Homeless Assistance Grants: Programs Authorized by the HEARTH Act*, by (name redacted)

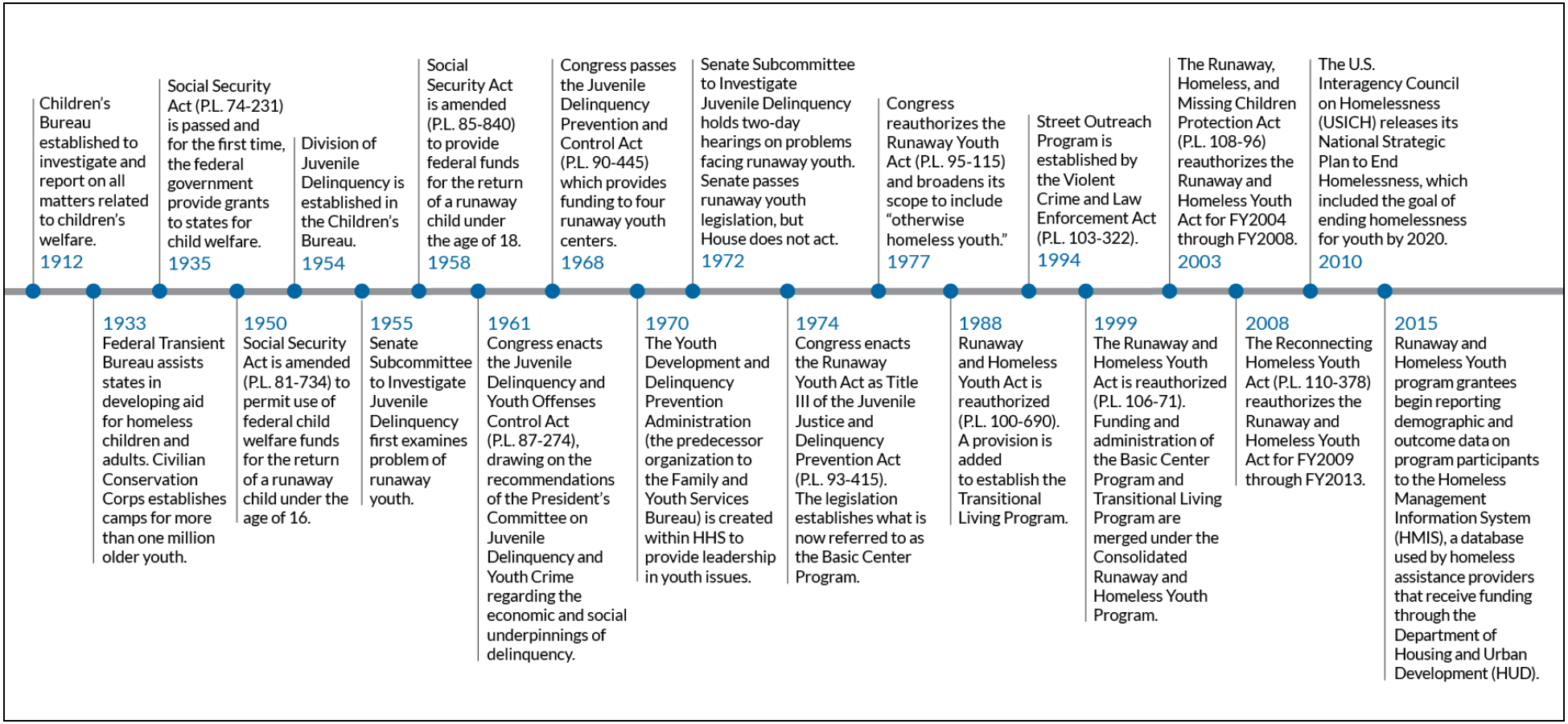
[56] HUD, "Upcoming: Join HUD in a Discussion of How to Shape $33 Million in Youth Demonstration Grants." March 9, 2016.

Grant program funds are to be available for related technical assistance and "collection, analysis, and reporting of data and performance measures."

- The House Rules Committee print (Rules Committee Print 114-39) to accompany P.L. 114-113 directs HUD to use $2.0 million to conduct "homeless youth research activities authorized under section 345 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act." Section 345 directs HHS to periodically conduct a national incidence and prevalence study of homeless youth ages 13 through 25.
- The House Rules Committee print provides $2.5 million for HUD, in conjunction with HHS, to evaluate youth homelessness programs.

Funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth program is discussed in the next section.

Figure 1. Evolution of Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Policy



Source: Congressional Research Service.

Funding and Description of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program

Federal Administration and Funding

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The funding streams for the Basic Center Program and Transitional Living Program were separate until Congress consolidated them as part of reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in 1999 (P.L. 106-71). Under current law, 90% of the federal funds appropriated under the consolidated program must be used for the BCP and TLP (together, the programs and their related activities are known as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth program). Of this amount, 45% is reserved for the BCP and no more than 55% is reserved for the TLP. The remaining share of federal funding is allocated for (1) a national communication system to facilitate communication between service providers, runaway youth, and their families; (2) training and technical support for grantees; (3) evaluations of the programs; (4) federal coordination efforts on matters relating to the health, education, employment, and housing of these youth; and (5) studies of runaway and homeless youth. Although the Street Outreach Program is a separately funded component, SOP services are coordinated with those provided under the BCP and TLP.

Table 1 shows funding levels for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program from FY2002 through FY2016.[57] Over this period, funding has notably increased for the program three times—from FY2001 to FY2002; FY2007 to FY2008; and FY2015 to FY2016. The first increase was due to the doubling of funding for the Transitional Living Program. Although the TLP authorized services for pregnant and parenting teens prior to FY2002, the Bush Administration sought funds specifically to serve this population and Congress provided the increased funds to enable these youth to access TLP services. In FY2003, amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 108-96) authorized TLP funds to be used for services targeted at pregnant and parenting teens at TLP centers known as Maternity Group Homes. The second funding increase was likely due in part to heightened attention to the RHYP, as Congress began to consider legislation in FY2008 to reauthorize the program. The third major increase in appropriations was from FY2015 ($114.1 million) to FY2016 ($119.1 million), when funding was increased for the BCP and TLP.

Recent funding has included the following:

- As enacted, annualized funding for FY2013 was $107.9 million.[58] This funding level includes amounts provided in the final FY2013 appropriations law (P.L. 113-6), an across-the-board rescission of 0.2% required by Section 3004 of the law, and reductions required by the sequestration order of March 1, 2013.[59]
- Funding for FY2014 was provided initially under two short-term continuing resolutions. The first was the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-46),

[57] The program did not receive funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 110-5), the omnibus stimulus law.

[58] HHS, ACF, *All-Purpose Table – FY2012-2013*, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/olab/resource/administration-for-children-and-families-all-purpose-table-fy-2012-2013.

[59] A prior six-month continuing resolution for FY2013 (P.L. 112-175) provided $116 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, but this was superseded by the full-year continuing resolution (P.L. 113-6).

which was signed into law on October 17, 2013, after a 16-day partial government shutdown. Under P.L. 113-46, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs were funded at their FY2013 post-sequester, post-rescission levels, with the Secretary retaining the authority to transfer or reprogram funds. P.L. 113-46 was set to expire on January 15, 2014, and was extended through January 18, 2014, by P.L. 113-73 to give Congress additional time to pass a final appropriations law. On January 17, 2014, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) was enacted, which provided $114.1 million in funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, an increase of $6.3 million over FY2013.[60]

- Congress appropriated $114.1 million in FY2015 under the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (H.R. 83, signed into law as P.L. 113-235), following three short-term continuing resolutions (P.L. 113-164; P.L. 113-202; and P.L. 113-203) that extended through December 17, 2015.[61]

Congress appropriated $119.1 million in FY2016 under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (H.R. 2029, signed into law as P.L. 115-113), following two short-term continuing resolutions (P.L. 114-53 and P.L. 114-96).

[60] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Rules, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., committee print 113-32 to the Senate Amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (H.R. 3547), which was enacted as P.L. 113-76.

[61] House of Representatives, "Explanatory Statement on Appropriations Regarding the House Amendment to the Senate Amendment on H.R. 83," *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 160, part II (December 11, 2014), p. H9875. Section 4 of H.R. 83 provides that the explanatory statement, when published in the *Congressional Record*, is to have the same effect as a conference agreement.

Table 1. Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Funding, FY2001-FY2016 (as enacted)

(Dollars in thousands)

	Fiscal Year															
Program	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007[a]**	**2008[b]**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011[c]**	**2012[d]**	**2013[e]**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
BCP	$48,338	$48,288	$49,473	$49,171	$48,786	$48,265	$48,298	$52,860	$53,469	$53,744	$53,637	$53,536	$50,097	$53,350	$53,350	$54,439
TLP[f]	20,740	39,736	40,505	40,260	39,938	39,511	39,539	43,268	43,765	43,990	43,902	43,819	41,004	43,650	43,650	47,541
SOP	14,999	14,999	15,399	15,302	15,178	15,017	15,027	17,221	17,721	17,971	17,935	17,901	16,751	17,141	17,141	17,141
Total	84,127	103,023	104,202	104,733	103,902	102,793	102,864	113,349	114,955	115,705	115,474	115,256	107,852	114,141	114,141	119,121

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2003, p. H-48; HHS, ACF *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2004, p. H-45; HHS, ACF *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2005, p. H-89; HHS, ACF *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2006, p. D-41; HHS, ACF *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2007, p. D-41; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2008, pp. 92, 98; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2009, p. D-42; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2010, pp. 85, 92; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2012, pp. 101, 109; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2013, pp. 106, 113; HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2014, pp. 105, 114; U.S. HHS, ACF, *All-Purpose Table—FY2012-2013;* HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2016; and HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2017.

Notes: BCP and TLP funds are appropriated together under what is known as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth program. SOP funds are appropriated separately. Appropriation law sometimes refers to the SOP as Prevention Grants to Reduce Abuse of Runaway Youth.

a. The fourth Continuing Resolution for the FY2007 budget (P.L. 110-5) generally funded programs at their FY2006 levels. However, the FY2006 funding total for the RHYP was slightly lower than the FY2007 total because of an additional transfer of funds from the RHYP accounts to an HHS sub-agency.

b. The FY2008 appropriations include a 1.7% across-the-board rescission on Labor-HHS-Education programs.

c. The FY2011 appropriations include a 0.2% across-the-board rescission.

d. The FY2012 appropriations include a 0.189% across-the-board rescission.

e. The FY2013 appropriations include amounts provided in the final FY2013 appropriations law (P.L. 113-6), an across-the-board rescission of 0.2% required by Section 3004 of the final FY2013 appropriations law (as interpreted by the Office of Management and Budget), reductions required by the sequestration order of March 1, 2013, and any potential transfers or reprogramming of funds pursuant to the authority of the Secretary.

f. Since FY2004, the TLP has included funding for the Maternity Group Home component.

Basic Center Program

Overview

The Basic Center Program is intended to provide short-term shelter and services for youth and their families through public and private community-based centers. Youth eligible to receive BCP services include those youth who are at risk of running away or becoming homeless (and may live at home with their parents), or have already left home, either voluntarily or involuntarily. To stay at the shelter, youth must be under age 18, or, as added by the 2008 reauthorization act (P.L. 110-378), an older age if the BCP center is located in a state or locality that permits this higher age. Some centers may serve homeless youth through street-based services, home-based services, and drug abuse education and prevention services.

As specified in the law, BCP centers are intended to provide these services as an alternative to involving runaway and homeless youth in the law enforcement, juvenile justice, child welfare, and mental health systems. In FY2015, the program supported 294 BCP shelters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, America Samoa, and Puerto Rico.[62] These centers, which can shelter as many as 20 youth, are generally supposed to be located in areas that are frequented or easily reached by runaway and homeless youth. The shelters seek to connect youth with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements. They also provide food, clothing, individual or group and family counseling, mentoring, and health care referrals. Youth may stay in a center continuously up to 21 days and may re-enter the program multiple times.[63]

BCP grantees—public and private nonprofit organizations—must make efforts to contact the parents and relatives of runaway and homeless youth. Grantees are also required to establish relationships with law enforcement, health and mental health care, social service, welfare, and school district systems to coordinate services. Centers maintain confidential statistical records of youth (including youth who are not referred to out-of-home shelter services) and the family members. The centers are required to submit an annual report to HHS detailing the program activities and the number of youth participating in such activities, as well as information about the operation of the centers.

In FY2008, HHS began funding a three-year Rural Host Homes Demonstration Project, which was initiated to expand BCP shelter and support services to runaway and homeless youth who live in rural areas not served by shelter facilities.[64] The project supported grantees that provided youth with shelter, via host home families who were recruited, screened, and trained, and preventive services including transportation, counseling, educational assistance, and aftercare planning, among others. Over the course of the three years, the project served 781 youth, 411 of whom received shelter and 370 of whom received preventive services without shelter. The average length of stay in a rural host home for youth who received shelter was 29 days.[65]

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[62] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2017, "Resource and Program Data: Basic Center Program."

[63] Prior to the enactment of the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378), youth could stay at a BCP center for up to 15 days, as authorized under rules promulgated by HHS. See 45 C.F.R. 1351.1(a).

[64] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, pp. 54-58. HHS is authorized to fund demonstration projects that address the special needs of runaway youth and homeless youth programs in rural areas and the special needs of programs that place runaway youth and homeless youth in host family homes, among other needs, under 42 U.S.C. §5714-23.

[65] Correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in February 2014.

Funding Allocation

BCP grants are allocated directly to nonprofit entities for three-year periods. Funding is distributed to entities based on a formula that accounts for the proportion of the nation's youth under age 18 in the jurisdiction (50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories) where the entities are located. The states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico[66] receive a minimum allotment of $200,000. Pursuant to the 2008 reauthorization act (P.L. 110-378), HHS is to re-allot any funds from one state to other states that will not be obligated before the end of a fiscal year. Separately, each of the territories (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, America Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands) receive a minimum of $70,000 of the total appropriations. Currently, only Puerto Rico receives such funding. See **Table A-1** for the amount of funding allocated for each state in FY2014 and FY2015. The costs of the Basic Center Program are shared by the federal government (90%) and grantees (10%). Community-based organizations apply directly to the federal government for the BCP grants. Grants may be awarded for up to three years.

Youth Served in the Program

BCP grantees serve only a fraction of the estimated more than 1 million youth under the age of 18 who run away or are homeless. As mentioned, RHY program providers began reporting data on youth in their programs to HUD and HHS via the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in FY2015. Through HMIS, local jurisdictions collect information about homeless individuals they serve through homelessness assistance programs (such as a runaway and homeless youth program), and this is aggregated in information systems at the community or state level. The data on runaway and homeless youth are not yet publicly available.[67]

The most recent data available on youth in the BCP program is from FY2014, when 31,755 youth[68] used BCP services. (The number of youth served in each year from FY2006 through FY2013 ranged from 34,550 to 52,243.)[69] Of these youth, 16,557 (52.1%) were female and 15,090 (47.5%) were male. (The remaining youth identified as transgendered or otherwise no information was available.) The greatest percentage of youth served were ages 15 and 16

[66] Puerto Rico is treated like a state and receives an annual allotment based on the populations of individuals under the age of 18 living in the territory. Correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in May 2016.

[67] According to HHS, nearly all grantees now use HMIS to collect and analyze community-wide data on all of the youth they serve. RHY grantees upload data on clients (that does not include personally identifying information) from HMIS to FYSB through a portal known as RHYPoint. Approximately 75% of grantees attempted to upload their FY2015 data to RHYPoint and 58% succeeded. HHS has explained that the department is working with its contractor and subcontractors for RHYPoint to increase the amount of successful uploads. Grantees uploaded data for FY2015 and the first half of FY2016 data in April and May 2016. HHS expects that publicly available data will be available "later in 2016." Correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in May 2016.

[68] It is unclear why the number of youth served in FY2014 was lower than the number of youth served in other recent years. FY2014 appropriations ($53.4 million) for the BCP were slightly higher or about the same level as appropriations for each of FY2009 through FY2014 except that appropriations were $50.1 million in FY2013.

[69] NEO-RHYMIS allowed users to retrieve reports on a variety of topics, including the number of youth at BCP or TLP shelters, demographic features of the youth, the type of services youth receive, and information about their living status at entrance and exit, among other types of reports. Some of the reports were newer (i.e., they were introduced in recent years) and had more comprehensive data than the older reports. For example, the older reports included only "female" and "male" gender records and not "transsexual (male to female and female to male)," "other," and "unknown." The older reports also did not handle invalid codes in the field and missing data in the same way. For these reasons, the total number of youth varies slightly across the reports for a given fiscal year, depending on whether the reports are newer or older. This discussion of youth in the BCP (and TLP, later in this report) primarily includes percentages, and not actual numbers, due to the differences in numbers across the reports.

(40.7%). In FY2014, the centers also served youth age 12 and younger (12.0%), youth ages 13-14 (27.8%), and youth ages 17-18 (19.5%).

Youth who visited the centers represented a variety of racial backgrounds, although 7.5% did not report their race. White youth made up the majority (50.9%) of those served, followed by black (32.1%), multiracial (5.0%), American Indian or Alaska Native (3.0%), Asian (0.9%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.7%) youth. Approximately 7.0% of youth identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning in FY2014. In addition, 9.8% of youth reported having spent some time in foster care and 6.4% of youth had been in the juvenile justice system at some point in their lives.

Also in FY2014, the greatest share of youth were referred by law enforcement or juvenile justice officials (24.5%), followed by referrals from their parents (23.0%), self-referrals (10.6%), schools (9.9%), other youth-serving agencies or programs (7.4%), and child welfare agencies (7.0%), among other sources. According to NEO-RHYMIS, at the time of their entrance to the BCP shelters in FY2014, 73.1% of youth had lived with their parents or legal guardians, 9.1% lived with other relatives or friends, and 5.8% lived on the streets, among other locations. Approximately 87.0% of the youth were in school at the time they entered the program; however, nearly one out of four (23.0%) of those youth in school attended irregularly (i.e., attended one to three days a week, on average). Nearly 5.0% of youth entering the program had dropped out of school and the remainder had graduated (less than 1%), had obtained a GED (less than 1%), were suspended or expelled (2.7%), or had a school status that was unknown (4.9%).

While at the BCP shelter, nearly all youth received counseling (90.7%) and basic support, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation (91.3%). Youth also participated in planning for after they leave the shelters (83.0%), life skills training (67.7%), recreational activities (58.8%), educational activities (31.3%), and substance abuse prevention services (28.9%), among other services at the shelters. Upon exiting, approximately seven out of 10 youth (69.2%) went to live with their parents. However, youth also exited to a relative or friend's home (7.9%) and to residential programs such as a TLP or independent living program (5.2%), among other locations. For the BCP program, an "unsafe exit" is one where a youth exits to the street or to an unknown location. In FY2014, 6.2% of youth experienced unsafe exits.

The major issues of concern for runaway and homeless youth upon exiting in FY2014—in order of frequency—were family dynamics, education, mental health, abuse/neglect, and housing. Finally, in FY2014, BCP shelters reported turning away 2,250 youth by phone and 175 youth in person due to a lack of bed space, for a total of 2,425 youth (compared to 2,113 in FY2011; 3,011in FY2012; and 2,204 in FY2013).

Transitional Living Program

Overview

Recognizing the difficulty that youth face in becoming self-sufficient adults, the Transitional Living Program provides longer-term shelter and assistance for youth ages 16 through 22 (or older if the youth entered the TLP prior to reaching age 22) who may leave their biological homes due to family conflict, or have left and are not expected to return home. Pregnant and/or parenting youth are eligible for TLP services. In FY2015, the TLP supported 204 organizations.[70]

[70] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2017, "Resource and Program Data: Transitional Living Program."

Each TLP grantee may shelter up to 20 youth at longer-term sites (e.g., host family homes, supervised apartments owned by a social service agency, or scattered-site apartments, and single-occupancy apartments rented directly with the assistance of the agency). Youth may remain at TLP projects for up to 540 days (18 months), or longer for youth under age 18. Youth ages 16 through 22 may remain in the program for a continuous period of 635 days (approximately 21 months) under "exceptional circumstances." This term means circumstances in which a youth would benefit to an unusual extent from additional time in the program. A youth in a TLP who has not reached age 18 on the last day of the 635-day period may, in exceptional circumstances and if otherwise qualified for the program, remain in the program until his or her 18th birthday.

Youth receive several types of services at TLP-funded programs:

- basic life-skills training, including consumer education and instruction in budgeting and the use of credit;
- parenting skills (as appropriate);
- building interpersonal skills;
- educational advancement, such as GED courses and post-secondary courses;
- assistance in job preparation and attainment; and
- mental and physical health care services.

TLP centers develop a written plan designed to help youth transition to living independently or another appropriate living arrangement, and they refer youth to other systems that can coordinate to meet their educational, health care, and social service needs. The grantees must also submit an annual report to HHS that includes information regarding the activities carried out with funds and the number and characteristics of the homeless youth.

In FY2009, HHS began the Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration Project.[71] Six states received grants to support TLPs in rural communities in serving young adults who have few or no connections to a supportive family structure or community resources. The five-year project sought to provide services across three main areas: survival support, which includes housing, health care (including mental health), and substance abuse treatment and prevention; community, which includes community service, youth and adult partnerships, mentoring, and peer support groups; and education and employment, which includes high school or GED completion, postsecondary education, and job training and employment.[72] According to HHS, all of the sites engaged youth in positive development activities that included safe places for youth to go. In addition, they raised awareness about homelessness in rural areas and addressed some of the unique needs around employment, housing, and transportation. However, the sites also confirmed that there is a general lack of available housing for homeless youth and that transportation was the most critical impediment to serving these youth.[73]

[71] HHS is authorized to fund demonstration projects that address the special needs of runaway and homeless youth programs in rural areas under 42 U.S.C. §5714-23.

[72] Annual grants of $200,000 were awarded to six states: Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Vermont. Funding for three of the grantees concluded at the end of FY2013 and the other grants concluded at the end of FY2014. Based on correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in February and November 2014.

[73] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, pp. 54-63.

Funding Allocation

TLP grants are distributed competitively by HHS to community-based public and private organizations for five-year periods. Grantees must provide at least 10% of the total cost of the program.

Youth in the Program

As noted, the most recent data on Runaway and Homeless Youth program participants were reported via NEO-RHYMIS is for 2014. That year, the Transitional Living Program served 2,927 youth in FY2014 (in each year from FY2006 through FY2013, the number of youth served annually in the TLP was 3,514 to 4,349).[74] Of these youth, 60.1% were female and 38.9% were male. (The remaining youth identified as transgendered or otherwise no information was available.) About 4.0% of youth were ages 15 to 16; 40.3% were ages 17 to 18; 45.4% were ages 19 to 20; and 10.0% were ages 21 to 22. Slightly less than half (45.1%) were white, 38.5% were black, and the remaining youth identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (4.1%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1.1%), Asian (0.8%), or multi-racial (5.4%). (Another 5.0% of youth did not identify their race.) Among youth who reported their ethnicity, 15.5% of youth were Hispanic, which is less than their share of the population ages 15 to 24 of just over 20%.

Approximately one out of 10 (10.8%) of youth at TLPs in FY2014 identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning. In addition, about 21.0% of youth spent time in foster care and 9.0% had been in the care of the juvenile justice system at some time in their lives. In FY2014, slightly more than one-quarter of youth in TLP were pregnant or parenting.

In FY2014, youth most often self-referred or were referred to the TLP by other youth-serving agencies or programs (other than child welfare agencies), or by a relative or friend. Prior to living at the TLP, youth lived in a variety of locations: the homes of their friends and relatives (27.6%) or parents (14.0%), in shelters (23.1%), or on the street as runaway or homeless youth (11.8%), among other locations. Also in FY2014, 40.2% of the youth entering TLPs were in school, of whom almost one out of four (23.9%) attended irregularly; 19.4% had dropped out; 38.0% had graduated from high school or had obtained a GED. The remaining 3% or so of youth were suspended or expelled, or the youth's school status was not known. While at the TLP, the majority of youth received basic support such as shelter and transportation (95.7%). Youth also participated in planning for services after care (90.8%) and received life skills training (88.3%); counseling (82.3%); employment services (77.8%), and educational services (62.2%), among other services.

Approximately one-third (35.3%) of youth completed the program. The remaining youth did not complete the program: 26.6% did not complete the program because of other opportunities, 15.3% did not complete the program and had no other plans, and 22.9% of youth were expelled or involuntarily discharged from the program. Youth who completed the program were in the program on average for 293 days, compared to 129 to 159 days for youth who did not complete the program (depending on their reasons for leaving).

Issues of concern at exit included—in order of frequency—housing for the youth, their family dynamics, the youth's unemployment, educational issues, and mental health status of the youth. Youth reported that at exit, 32.4% would live in a relative or friend's home, 23.0% would live on

[74] It is unclear why the number of youth served in FY2014 was lower than the number of youth served in other recent years. FY2014 appropriations ($43.7 million) for the TLP were slightly higher or about the same level as appropriations for each of FY2009 through FY2014.

their own; 14.7% would live with a parent or legal guardian; 6.9% would live in a residential program; and less than 1% would join the military. Some youth reported that they would exit to an "unsafe exit," which RHYMIS classifies as on the street (2.0%), to a shelter (4.9%) or to an unknown location (5.1%). Less than 1% would exit to a mental hospital; 3.8% would exit to another setting. Further, as they left the program, 40.0% of the youth were in school, with approximately one-third of in-school youth (30.4%) attending irregularly (this is compared to 23.9% of in-school youth attending irregularly upon entry). Upon leaving, youth reported their physical, mental, and dental health status, with 47.1% to 65% of youth reporting having good health and 2.3% to 11.5% reporting having health that was "not good"; 13.0% to 50.5% of youth reported that their health status was unknown.

In FY2014, 3,481 youth were turned away by phone; 560 youth were turned away in person; and 801 were placed on a waiting list, for a total of 4,842 youth turned away. The total number of turnaways varied in previous years (6,647 youth in FY2011; 5,100 in FY2012; and 5,179 in FY2013).

Outcomes of Youth in the TLP

Efforts are underway at HHS to learn more about the long-term outcomes of 1,250 youth who are served by the Transitional Living Program. The study seeks to describe the outcomes of youth who participate in the program and to isolate and describe promising practices and other factors that may contribute to their successes or challenges. Of particular interest to the study will be service delivery approaches, youth demographics, socio-emotional wellness, and life experiences. The study will involve both a process evaluation and impact evaluation, with youth randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., participation in the TLP) and control groups. The study will address the following questions: (1) How do TLP programs operate, what types of program models are used to deliver services, and what services are delivered to homeless youth? (2) What are the long-term housing outcomes and protective factors for youth who participate in the TLP program immediately, six months, 12 months, and 18 months after exiting the program? (3) What interventions can be attributed to any positive outcomes experienced by youth who participate in the TLP? A preliminary set of sites (14 primary and 14 alternative) has been identified, and an internal assessment will be conducted before a final set of grantees is recruited to participate in the evaluation. The evaluation is expected to conclude in FY2018.[75]

Maternity Group Homes

For FY2002, the Administration proposed a $33 million initiative to fund Maternity Group Homes—or centers that provide shelter to pregnant and parenting teens who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect—as a component of the TLP. Congress did not fund the initiative as part of its FY2002 appropriation. However, that year Congress provided additional funding to the TLP to ensure that pregnant and parenting teens could access services (H.Rept. 107-376). A total of $39.7 million was appropriated for the TLP, which included an additional $19.2 million over the FY2001 TLP appropriation to ensure that funds would be available to assist pregnant and parenting teens.

The 2003 amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 108-96) provided statutory authority to use TLP funds for Maternity Group Homes. Since FY2004, funding for adult-

[75] Correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in January 2010 and February 2014. See also, HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, p. 59; and HHS, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, *FY2017*.

supervised transitional living arrangements that serve pregnant or parenting women ages 16 to 21 and their children has been awarded to organizations that receive TLP grants. These organizations provide youth with parenting skills, including child development education, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote their well-being and the well-being of their children.

Street Outreach Program

Overview

Runaway and homeless youth living on the streets or in areas that increase their risk of using drugs or being subjected to sexual abuse, prostitution, sexual exploitation, and trafficking[76] are eligible to receive services through the Street Outreach Program. The program's goal is to assist youth in transitioning to safe and appropriate living arrangements. SOP services include the following:

- treatment and counseling;
- crisis intervention;
- drug abuse and exploitation prevention and education activities;
- survival aid;
- street-based education and outreach;
- information and referrals; and
- follow-up support.

Funding

The SOP is funded separately from the BCP and TLP and is authorized to receive such sums as may be necessary. Since FY1996, when funding for the Street Outreach Program was first provided, community-based public and private organizations have been eligible to apply for SOP grants. Grants are awarded for a three-year period, and grantees must provide 10% of the funds to cover the cost of the program. Applicants may apply for a grant each year of the three-year period, with the minimum grant amount in a given year being $100,000 and the maximum $200,000. In FY2015, 107 grantees were funded.[77]

[76] Trafficking could refer to labor or sex trafficking of children under age 18 and any youth served in the SOP. The law refers to the definition of "severe forms of trafficking in persons," as defined at 22 U.S.C. §7102(9) and "sex trafficking," as defined at 22 U.S.C. §7102(10). "Severe forms of trafficking in persons" refers to (1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. "Sex trafficking" means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. Trafficking could refer to labor or sex trafficking of children under age 18 and any youth served in the SOP.

[77] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2017, "Resource and Program Data: Street Outreach Program."

Youth in the Program

According to FY2014 NEO-RHYMIS data, street workers with the grantee organizations made 461,524 contacts[78] with street youth (the SOP made between 668,165 and 854,087 contacts in each year from FY2006 through FY2013). Of those youth, most received health and hygiene products, food and drink items, and written materials.

Data Collection Project

The Family and Youth Services Bureau created the Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project in 2012 to learn more about the lives and needs of homeless and runaway youth served by SOP grantees. The purpose of the project was to design services that will better meet the needs of these youth. Information was collected through focus groups and computer-assisted personal interviews with 656 youth (ages 14 to 21 years) being served by SOP grantees in 11 cities. The project found that participants were homeless for nearly two years; 61.8% reported high levels of depressive symptoms; 46.8% had a high school diploma or equivalent; and 54.2% were victims of some kind of assault, battery, or theft while homeless. In addition, about one-third of the sample identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or "something else" (34.0%). Slightly more than half (50.6%) reported having been in foster care or a group home. Youth most commonly reported that they became homeless for the first time after being asked to leave by a parent or caregiver (51.2%), being unable to find a job (24.7%), being physically abused or beaten (23.8%), or because of problems in the home due to a caretaker's drug or alcohol abuse (22.6%). Youth most identified that they were in need of job training or help finding a job, transportation assistance, and clothing. The top barriers to obtaining shelter were shelters being full, not knowing where to go for shelter, and lacking transportation to get to a shelter. The researchers that conducted the study assert that given these findings, more emergency shelters could help prevent youth from sleeping on the street. Further, they note that youth on the streets need more intensive case management (e.g., careful assessment and treatment planning, linkages to community resources, etc.) and more intensive interventions because of their challenges with substance abuse, mental health problems, and exposure to trauma.[79]

Incidence and Prevalence Studies

The 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378) requires HHS to estimate at five year intervals—beginning within two years of the enactment of the law (October 8, 2010)—the incidence and prevalence of the runaway and homeless youth population ages 13 to 26. The law also directs HHS to assess the characteristics of these youth. HHS is required to conduct a survey of and direct interviews with a representative sample of the youth to determine past and current socioeconomic characteristics, barriers to obtaining housing and other services, and other information HHS determines useful, in consultation with states and other entities concerned with youth homelessness. HHS is to consult with the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness regarding the study overall. The study must be submitted to the House Education and the Workforce Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee and made available to the public.

[78] It is unclear why the number of contacts was lower in FY2014 than the number of contacts served in other recent years. FY2014 appropriations ($17.1 million) for the SOP were slightly higher or about the same level as appropriations for each of FY2009 through FY2014, except that FY2013 appropriations were $16.8 million.

[79] Melissa Welch et al., *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Overall Report 2013*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln for HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, October 2014; and Les Whitbeck et al., *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report*, April 2016.

The law does not specify the methodology for carrying out the studies, except to say that HHS should make the estimate on the basis of the best quantitative and qualitative social science research methods available. Further, if HHS enters into an agreement with a non-federal entity to carry out the assessment, the entity is to be a non-governmental organization or individual determined by HHS to have expertise in this type of research.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, as amended, authorizes Congress to appropriate such sums as may be necessary to fund the studies. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this purpose. As mentioned, the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness* outlines a data strategy to collect better data on the number and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness through a national incidence and prevalence study. In addition, the FY2016 appropriations report language includes $2.0 million for HUD to conduct the study.

Training and Technical Assistance

Training and technical assistance provided under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act includes the national training and technical assistance center, discussed subsequently; a national communications system, discussed subsequently; assistance around program data collection; and the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, which provides information on runaway and homeless youth issues, among other related topics.

HHS provides training and technical assistance to RHYP grantees through its Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Program. Until FY2007, HHS awarded funds to multiple non-profit organizations to provide this assistance in each of the Administration for Children and Families' regions.[80] In FY2007, HHS reorganized the technical assistance providers, and created two national centers—the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training Center and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Technical Assistance Centers. These centers were collectively known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC), and were operated by the University of Oklahoma's National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) through FY2012.

HHS has since awarded a five-year grant, from FY2013 through FY2017, to National Safe Place to operate RHYTTAC. National Safe Place is a national youth outreach program that aims to educate young people about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations on their own. RHYTTAC is designed to provide training and conference services to RHYP grantees that enhance and promote continuous quality improvement of services provided by RHYP grantees. Further, RHYTTAC offers resources and information through its website, tip sheets, a quarterly newsletter, toolkits, sample policies and procedures, and other resources. RHYTTAC also provides intensive assistance to individual grantees in response to their questions or concerns, as well as concerns raised by HHS as part of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System (see subsequent section).[81]

[80] Technical support providers offered assistance through the Regional Training and Technical Assistance Provider System. The providers worked closely with ACF regional office staff to identify grantee needs and review the results of evaluations conducted by HHS staff. Based on these analyses, the provider needs assessments, and grantee requests, the providers offered several types of services, including regional and state-level conferences that address topics of interest to grantees, on-site and telephone consultations, workshops and training on issues of concern, and resource materials.

[81] For further information, see Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center, "About Us," http://www.rhyttac.net/about/what-rhyttac.

National Communication System[82]

A portion of the funds for the BCP, TLP, and related activities—known collectively as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Program—are allocated for a national communications system (that is, the National Runaway Safeline) to help homeless and runaway youth (or youth who are contemplating running away) through counseling and referrals and communicating with their families. Beginning with FY1974 and every year after, the National Runaway Safeline, which until 2013 was called the National Runaway Switchboard, has been funded through the Basic Center Program grant or the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant. The Safeline is located in Chicago and operates each day to provide services to youth and their families in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Services include (1) a channel through which runaway and homeless youth or their parents may leave messages; (2) 24-hour referrals to community resources, including shelter, community food banks, legal assistance, and social services agencies; and (3) crisis intervention counseling to youth. In calendar year 2015, the Safeline handled over 19,000 calls and over 3,000 crisis chats via computer, of which nearly three-quarters were from youth and 12% were from parents; the remaining callers were relatives, friends, and others.[83]

Other services are also provided through the Safeline. Since 1995, the "Home Free" family reunification program has provided bus tickets for youth ages 12 to 21 to return home or to an alternative placement near their home (such as an independent living program) through Home Free.[84]

Oversight

Oversight of Grantees

ACF evaluates each Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant recipient through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Monitoring System. Staff from regional ACF offices and other grant recipients (known as peer reviewers) inspect the program site, conduct interviews, review case files and other agency documents, and conduct entry and exit conferences. The monitoring team then prepares a written report that identifies the strengths of the program and areas that require corrective action.[85]

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[82] HHS provides information to the public about runaway and homeless youth through the National Communications System (i.e., the National Runaway Safeline). Further, the National Clearinghouse on Youth and Families, a FYSB-funded resource center, produces publications for the public about the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Finally, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act grantees conduct local advocacy and outreach efforts, and public service announcements to attract youth eligible for services. As described in grant announcements for the BCP, TLP, and SOP, grant applicants are evaluated, in part, on the basis of their efforts to establish outreach efforts to youth, including minority sub-groups of youth, where applicable. For further information, see HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, pp. 26-40, 44-48.

[83] The Safeline also has a special phone line for hearing-impaired callers, access to a language translation service, and a computer chat line. Its website provides information to those seeking non-crisis-related information. National statistics on use of the National Runaway Safeline are available at http://www.1800runaway.org/runaway-statistics/crisis-hotline-online-services-statistics/.

[84] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, p. 33.

[85] See HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Onsite Review Protocol: Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, February 2009, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/onsite-review-protocol.pdf; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, "Basic Center Performance Standards," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/bcp-(continued...)

Congressional Oversight

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce have exercised jurisdiction over the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. HHS must submit reports biennially to the committees on the status, activities, and accomplishments of program grant recipients and evaluations of the programs performed by HHS.[86]

The 2003 reauthorization law (P.L. 108-96) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act required that HHS, in consultation with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, submit a report to Congress on the promising strategies to end youth homelessness within two years of the reauthorization, in October 2005. The report was submitted to Congress in June 2007.[87]

As mentioned above, the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378) required HHS, as of FY2010, to periodically submit to Congress an incidence and prevalence study of runaway and homeless youth ages 13 to 26, as well as the characteristics of a representative sample of these youth. As discussed above, Congress has not appropriated funds for this purpose.

The 2008 law also directed the Government Accountability Office to evaluate the process by which organizations apply for BCP, TLP, and SOP, including HHS's response to these applicants. GAO submitted a report to Congress in May 2010 on its findings.[88] GAO found weaknesses in several of the procedures for reviewing grants, such as that peer reviewers for the grant did not always have expertise in runaway and homeless youth issues and feedback on grants was not provided in a permanent record. In addition, GAO found that HHS delayed telling successful grantees that the grant had been awarded to them. Grantees reported that this affected decisions about hiring staff and other decisions. GAO noted that HHS policy does not prohibit HHS from telling grantees immediately. Finally, GAO found that information about why applicants were unsuccessful often included information that was not always clear or specific. GAO made recommendations to address these issues, and HHS has implemented all but one of them.[89] This recommendation directed HHS to clearly identify in grant announcements all the criteria that peer reviewers will use to evaluate and score applications, and ensure that peer reviewers use only those criteria during the peer review process.

The Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 requires that within one year of its enactment (October 8, 2009), HHS was to issue rules that specified performance standards for public and nonprofit entities that receive BCP, TLP, and SOP grants. In developing the regulations, HHS was to consult with stakeholders in the runaway and homeless youth policy community. The law further required that HHS integrate the performance standards into the grantmaking, monitoring, and evaluations processes for the BCP, TLP, and SOP. On April 14, 2014, HHS issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that seeks to implement new performance standards and other requirements for Runaway and Homeless Youth program grantees. For example, BCP and TLP grantees would

(...continued)

performance.

[86] The most recent report is for FY2008 and FY2009, as referenced above.

[87] HHS, *Promising Strategies to End Youth Homelessness, Report to Congress*, 2007, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/end-youth-homelessness. This report was required under P.L. 108-96. See 42 U.S.C. §5701.

[88] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Runaway and Homeless Youth Grants: Improvements Needed in the Grant Award Process*, GAO-10-335, May 2010, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10335.pdf.

[89] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Runaway and Homeless Youth Grants: Improvements Needed in the Grant Award Process*, GAO-10-335, "Recommendations for Executive Action," http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-335.

be required to maintain at 90% or higher the proportion of youth who exit to safe and appropriate settings.[90]

Additional Federal Support for Runaway and Homeless Youth

Since the creation of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, other federal initiatives have also established services for such youth. Four of these initiatives—Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Shared Vision for Youth initiative, and Discretionary Grants for Family Violence Prevention Program—are discussed in this section.

Educational Assistance

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77), as amended, established the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in the U.S. Department of Education.[91] This program assists state education agencies (SEAs) to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal access to the same, appropriate education, including public preschool education, that is provided to other children and youth. Grants made by SEAs to local education agencies (LEAs) under this program must be used to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth. Program funds may be appropriated for activities such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, and referral services for homeless children and youth, as well as providing them with medical, dental, mental, and other health services. Liaison staff for homeless children and youth in each LEA are responsible for coordinating activities for these youth with other entities and agencies, including local Basic Center and Transitional Living Program grantees.

To receive funding, each state must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education that indicates how the state will identify and assess the needs of eligible children and youth; ensure that they have access to the federal, state, and local food programs and the same educational programs available to other youth; and resolve problems concerning delays in and barriers to enrollment and transportation. Education for Homeless Children and Youth grants are allotted to SEAs in proportion to grants made under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which allocates funds to all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico based on the percentage of low-income children enrolled in a school or living in the nearby residential area. However, no state can receive less than the greater of $150,000, 0.25% of the total annual appropriation, or the amount it received in FY2001 under this program. The Department of Education must reserve 0.1% of the total appropriation for grants to the Virgin Islands, Guam, America Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The agency must also transfer 1.0% of the total appropriation to the Department of the Interior for services to homeless children and youth provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Amendments to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 authorized funding for the program through FY2007. Congress has continued to appropriate funding for the program.

[90] HHS, ACF, "Runaway and Homeless Youth; Proposed Rule," 79 *Federal Register* 71, April 14, 2014.

[91] Other programs assist homeless youth and their families through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, although none are targeted exclusively to runaway and homeless youth. For additional information about these programs, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs and Recent Legislation*, coordinated by (name redacted)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) reauthorized and amended the program explicitly to prohibit states that receive McKinney-Vento funds from segregating homeless students from non-homeless students, except for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, supplemental services. Prior to the reauthorization, homeless children in some districts attended class in separate buildings or schools. Advocates raised concerns that these children, including those enrolled in classes that were equal in quality to the classes attended by their non-homeless peers, were receiving an inferior education because they were physically separated. The act exempted four counties (San Joaquin, Orange, and San Diego counties in California and Maricopa County in Arizona) from these requirements because they operated separate school districts for homeless students in FY2000, as long as (1) those separate schools offer services that are comparable to local schools; and (2) homeless children are not required to attend them. The Department of Education must certify annually that the school districts meet these requirements.[92]

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program[93]

Recently emancipated foster youth are vulnerable to becoming homeless. In FY2014, over 18,000 youth "aged out" of foster care.[94] The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), created under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169), provides states with funding to support youth who are expected to emancipate from foster care and former foster youth ages 18 to 21.[95] States are authorized to receive funds based on their share of the total number of children in foster care nationwide. However, the law's "hold harmless" clause precludes any state from receiving less than the amount of funds it received in FY1998 or $500,000, whichever is greater.[96] The program specifies funding for transitional living services, and as much as 30% of the funds may be dedicated to room and board. The program is mandatory, and as such Congress appropriates $140 million for the program each year. Child welfare advocates have argued that the housing needs of youth "aging out" of foster care have not been met despite the additional funds for independent living that are provided through the CFCIP.[97]

Discretionary Grants for Family Violence Prevention

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), Title III of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-457), authorized funds for Family Violence Prevention and Service grants that work to prevent family violence, improve service delivery to address family violence, and increase knowledge and understanding of family violence. From FY2007 to FY2009, one of these projects focused on runaway and homeless youth in dating violence situations, through

[92] The Individual with Disabilities Education Act, last amended in 2004 (P.L. 108-446), includes provisions aimed at ensuring special education and related services for children with disabilities who are homeless or otherwise members of highly mobile populations. For additional information, see CRS Report R41833, *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B: Key Statutory and Regulatory Provisions*, by (name redacted) .

[93] For additional information about the program, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*, by (name redacted) .

[94] HHS, ACF, ACYF, Children's Bureau, *AFCARS Report #22*.

[95] For additional information on the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*, by (name redacted) .

[96] Prior to the passage of P.L. 106-169, states were awarded a share of independent living funds—$70 million—based on the number of children receiving federal foster care payments in FY1984 under the Independent Living Program.

[97] Mark Courtney and Darcy Hughes Heuring, "Youth 'Aging Out' of the Foster Care System," p. 54.

HHS's Domestic Violence/Runaway and Homeless Youth Collaboration on the Prevention of Adolescent Dating Violence initiative. The initiative was created because many runaway and homeless youth come from homes where domestic violence occurs and may be at risk of abusing their partners or becoming victims of abuse.[98] The initiative funded projects carried out by faith-based and charitable organizations that advocated or provided direct services to runaway and homeless youth or victims of domestic violence. The grants funded training for staff at these organizations to enable them to assist youth in preventing dating violence. The initiative resulted in the development of an online toolkit for advocates in the runaway and homeless youth and domestic and sexual assault fields to help programs better address relationship violence with runaway and homeless youth.[99] HHS no longer funds the initiative.[100]

[98] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Discretionary Programs*, October 2010, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/familyviolence/discretionary.htm.

[99] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Runaway & Homeless Youth and Relationship Violence Toolkit*, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/rhy-dv-toolkit.

[100] Based on correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in February 2011.

Appendix.

Table A-1. Estimated Basic Center Funding by State and Territory, FY2015 and FY2016

(Dollars in thousands)

State/Territory	FY2015	FY2016
Alabama	$587,980	$704,924
Alaska	299,588	200,000
Arizona	986,894	1,030,757
Arkansas	421,554	444,393
California	5,892,413	5,780,907
Colorado	665,579	789,387
Connecticut	801,235	519,495
Delaware	67,185	200,000
District of Columbia	399,966	200,000
Florida	2,792,691	2,578,277
Georgia	1,544,682	1,583,731
Hawaii	200,000	200,000
Idaho	254,057	270,878
Illinois	2,464,540	1,907,669
Indiana	967,397	1,010,148
Iowa	451,060	466,065
Kansas	292,225	453,276
Kentucky	594,176	637,737
Louisiana	640,048	691,640
Maine	372,606	200,000
Maryland	557,227	854,498
Massachusetts	920,517	924,295
Michigan	2,334,098	1,445,644
Minnesota	778,374	807,731
Mississippi	310,725	466,473
Missouri	1,086,690	883,194
Montana	131,938	200,000
Nebraska	326,500	292,431
Nevada	276,280	414,576
New Hampshire	206,361	200,000
New Jersey	1,239,753	1,276,874
New Mexico	437,952	315,529

State/Territory	FY2015	FY2016
New York	2,693,216	2,684,024
North Carolina	1,396,131	1,463,121
North Dakota	200,000	200,000
Ohio	1,607,264	1,693,548
Oklahoma	576,716	592,754
Oregon	1,433,405	544,510
Pennsylvania	1,597,506	1,758,578
Rhode Island	185,199	200,000
South Carolina	399,996	693,026
South Dakota	321,429	200,000
Tennessee	1,094,965	945,114
Texas	3,924,740	4,432,453
Utah	511,446	553,651
Vermont	199,176	200,000
Virginia	799,176	1,185,007
Washington	1,074,500	996,583
West Virginia	185,222	242,683
Wisconsin	969,582	837,935
Wyoming	99,588	200,000
Subtotal	*$48,571,548*	*$47,573,516*
American Samoa	70,000	70,000
Guam	0	70,000
Northern Mariana Islands	0	70,000
Puerto Rico	399,176	516,084
Virgin Islands	0	70,000
Subtotal	*$469,176*	*$796,084*
Total[a]	**$49,040,724**	**$48,369,600**

Source: HHS, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, *FY2017*; and correspondence with HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB in May 2016.

a. The total does not include funding for technical assistance, research evaluation, demonstration projects, and program support.

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