Report to Congress
on the
Runaway and Homeless Youth Program
for
Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015

Submitted by
Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
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FYSB Family & Youth Services Bureau

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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ..... **ii**

Introduction **1**

Legislative History 2
Commitment To Ending Youth Homelessness 2
Underserved and Underrepresented Populations 5
Improving Data Collection in Runaway and Homeless Youth Services 7

Basic Center Grant Program **8**

Purpose of the Basic Center Program 8
Who are the Youth Served by the Basic Center Program? 8
What Problems Do Youth Who Come to Basic Centers Face? 10
How Do Basic Centers Help Youth? 11
What Are the Outcomes of Basic Center Services? 14

The Transitional Living Program and Maternity Group Homes for Older Homeless Youth **15**

Purpose of the Transitional Living Program 15
Who Are the Youth Served by Transitional Living Programs? 16
What Problems Do Youth in Transitional Living Programs Face? 17
How Do Transitional Living Programs Help Youth? 18
What are the Outcomes of Transitional Living Programs? 21

The Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program (Street Outreach Program) **22**

Purpose of the Street Outreach Program 22
Who Are the Youth Served by Street Outreach Programs? 23
What Problems Do Youth on the Street Face? 23
How Do Street Outreach Programs Help Youth? 24
What Are the Outcomes of Street Outreach Programs? 26

National Communication System **26**

1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929) and 1800RUNAWAY.ORG 27
WWW.1800RUNAWAY.ORG 30

Coordinating, Training, Research, and Other Activities **37**

Targeted, Intensive Technical Assistance 46
Conducting Research on Runaway and Homeless Youth Services 46

Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System **48**

Monitoring Teams 49
The Visit 49

Looking Ahead: Ending Youth Homelessness and Human Trafficking **51**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 40 years ago, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act created the first line of defense for young people who had run away from home, become homeless, or been asked to leave home by their families. Congress recognized the precarious circumstances of young people who could not return home, but did not yet have the financial, social, or emotional resources to live successfully on their own.

Runaway and homeless youth have often been traumatized by violence and abuse at home or in their communities. They may lack supportive adults who could provide guidance and model healthy decision making. And these young people often fail to develop the educational and job-readiness skills that are so crucial to financial and housing stability in adulthood.

Young people who live on the streets are at high risk of developing serious health, behavioral, and emotional problems. They suffer from high rates of depression, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder. They are often survivors of physical and sexual abuse. The longer they live on the streets, the more likely they are to fall victim to sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

For all these reasons, programs that keep young people from being homeless are necessary to ensure these youth make a safe and successful transition to adulthood. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (the Act), passed in 1974, authorizes support services to these young people, including preventive services; rapid, effective family reunification (if appropriate); or housing with case management once youth are on the streets. The Act was most recently reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008. The Act is administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Runaway and homeless youth programs received appropriations of $114 million in fiscal year (FY) 2014 and $114 million in FY 2015. These programs provided services to more than 30,000 youth in funded emergency shelters in FY 2014, served another 3,000 youth in longer term shelters, and made possible more than 450,000 contacts with youth on the street. (In mid-FY 2015, as part of a larger initiative to coordinate and improve the accuracy of federal counts of homelessness across the country, FYSB began integration of its data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), operated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). As a result, data collected for FY 2015 fell below acceptable levels of completeness and accuracy and, therefore, are not included in this report.)

The Act authorizes the three runaway and homeless youth grant programs that enable community-based organizations and shelters to serve and protect runaway, homeless, missing, and sexually exploited youth. These programs are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. The three programs are as follows:

- The Basic Center Program, authorized under Part A, provides emergency shelter.

- The Transitional Living Program and Maternity Group Home Program, authorized under Part B, offers longer term care that helps prepare older youth for self-sufficiency and adulthood.
- The Street Outreach Program, authorized under Part E, makes contact with youth on the streets, with the goal of connecting them to shelter and services.

Grants under these programs were made as shown in the following table.

Grant Program	Funding*	Number of Grantees**	
		FY 2014	FY 2015
Basic Center Program	$53 million	299	296
Transitional Living Program	$44 million	200	200
Street Outreach Program	$17 million	109	101
****Funding remained constant for FY 2014 and 2015. *Grantees are nonprofit or public service providers.**			

Bolstering these frontline services is a network of support, including:

- A national communication system, which serves as a national hotline connecting young people to programs, services, and transportation back home, authorized under Part C. The National Runaway Safeline's frontline crisis team handled nearly 170,000 calls in FY 2014 and 2015.
- FYSB's coordinating, training, research, and other activities, which provide the means through which the federal government can continually refine and improve its response to youth homelessness as well as the ability of the youth services field to assist young people in need, authorized under Part D.

FYSB's programs make important contributions to the strategy to end youth homelessness. As part of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), FYSB has worked closely with other federal agencies to enable communities across the country to take a "systems" approach that brings together the range of services young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness need.

This report documents FYSB's contributions to the strategy in FY 2014 and FY 2015.

Additionally, as required by Section 382 of the Act, this report outlines "the status, activities, and accomplishments of entities" that received grants under Parts A, B, C, D, and E of the Act in FY 2014 and FY 2015 and includes information about the monitoring of grantees. The report also discusses the national prevalence and incidence study of youth homelessness that was legislated by the Act in 2008.

INTRODUCTION

Young people who live on the streets are at high risk of developing serious health, behavioral, and emotional problems. Compared with youth who have never run away, they suffer from higher rates of depression,[1] attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.[2] They tend to abuse drugs and alcohol[3] and are often survivors of physical and sexual abuse.[4] The longer they are exposed to the streets, the more likely they are to fall victim to commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.[5] Moreover, while on the streets, they fail to develop many of the educational and job-readiness skills that are so crucial to financial and housing stability in adulthood.[6]

For all these reasons, programs that keep young people from being homeless—whether by providing preventive services or transitional living programs with housing and case management once youth are on the streets—are key to ensuring these youth successfully transition to adulthood.

Today, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (the Act), last reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, supports three runaway and homeless youth grant programs and a greater network of support services. These programs are administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Runaway and homeless youth programs received appropriations of $114 million in fiscal year (FY) 2014 and $114 million in fiscal year (FY) 2015.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, as reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, provides for:

A. The **Basic Center Program** short-term shelter.
B. The **Transitional Living Program** for older homeless youth.
C. The **national communication system.**
D. **Coordinating, training, research, and other activities.**
E. The Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program, known as the **Street Outreach Program**.

[1] Tucker, J. S., Edelen, M. O., Ellickson, P. L., & Klein, D. J. (2011). Running away from home: A longitudinal study of adolescent risk factors and young adult outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40*(5), 507–518.

[2] Schneir, A., Stefanidis, N., Mounier, C., Ballin, D., Gailey, D., Carmichael, H., & Battle, T. (2007). *Trauma among homeless youth* (Culture and Trauma Brief, Vol. 2, No. 1). Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/culture_and_trauma_brief_v2n1_HomelessYouth.pdf

[3] Thompson, S., Barczyk, A., Gomez, R., Dreyer, L., & Popham, A. (2010). Homeless, street-involved emerging adults: Attitudes toward substance use. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 15*(2), 231–257.

[4] Coates, J., & McKenzie-Mohr, S. (2010). Out of the frying pan and into the fire: Trauma in the lives of homeless youth prior to and during homelessness. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 37*(4), 65–96.

[5] Greene, J., S. Ennett, and C. Ringwalt. 1999. Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*(9): 1406–1409; Unger, J., T. Simon, T. Newman, S. Montgomery, M. Kipke, and M. Albornoz. 1998. Early Adolescent Street Youth: An Overlooked Population with Unique Problems and Service Needs. *Journal of Early Adolescents, 18,* no. 4: 325–348.

[6] Ferguson, K. M., Bender, K., Thompson, S. J., Maccio, E. M., & Pollio, D. (2012). Employment status and income generation among homeless young adults: Results from a five-city, mixed-methods study. *Youth and Society*, *44*(3), 385–407.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was originally enacted as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-415), and created the first line of defense for young people who had run away from home, become homeless, or been asked to leave home by their families. Through this Act, Congress provided for the creation of community shelters called basic centers that would provide emergency care to runaway young people who weren't already receiving services from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems – now referred to as the Basic Center Program.

In 1988, Congress created the Transitional Living Program (via the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1998, Pub. L. 100-690) for older homeless youth who could not safely return home. In 1994, Congress added the Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program (referred to as the Street Outreach Program), in an effort to prevent sexual abuse or exploitation (via Sec. 40155 of the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Pub. L. 103-322). Most recently, in 2015, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (Pub. L. 114-22) expanded the scope of the Street Outreach Program to address sex and labor trafficking among youth.

Authorized under Parts A, B, and E of the Act, the **Basic Center, Transitional Living**, and **Street Outreach Programs** enable organizations and shelters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories to serve and protect runaway, homeless, missing, and sexually exploited youth. Basic centers provide emergency shelter. Transitional living program agencies offer longer term care that helps prepare youth for independence and adulthood. Street outreach program drop-in centers and staff make contact with youth on the streets, with the goal of connecting them to services.

The **national communication system**, the National Runaway Safeline, authorized under Part C of the Act supports these frontline services and serves as a hotline connecting young people to programs, services, and transportation back home. FYSB's **coordinating, training, research, and other activities**, authorized under Part D of the Act, provide the means through which the federal government can continually refine and improve its response to youth homelessness, as well as the ability of the youth services field to assist young people in need.

Funding Impact

Each Street Outreach Program grantee got an average of **202 youth** off the streets and into shelter for at least one night in FY 2014.

Each Basic Center Program grantee provided emergency care and counseling to an average of **94 youth** in FY 2014.

Each Transitional Living Program grantee provided intensive, long-term support to an average of **15 transition-aged young people** in FY 2014**.**

The National Runaway Safeline handled an average of **235 calls a day** from youth, parents, and allies in FY 2014 and FY 2015.

COMMITMENT TO ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

In 2009, through the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, Pub. L. 111-22, Congress mandated that the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) develop a "national strategic plan" to end homelessness. Presented to

the Office of the President and Congress in 2010, the initial plan laid out a comprehensive federal strategy for achieving this goal.

This plan serves as a roadmap for joint action by the 19 USICH member agencies, including HHS, along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors to address homelessness, including among unaccompanied youth.

1. Collecting Better Data Toward Ending Youth Homelessness

FYSB was integrally involved in the USICH and federal efforts to collect better data on runaway and homeless youth. Activities in FY 2014 and FY 2015 included:

Youth Count!—Youth Count! was a federal interagency initiative that aims to improve counts of unaccompanied homeless youth when the annual point-in-time count of homeless individuals is conducted. The January 2015 point-in-time count included estimates of children and youth experiencing homelessness.[7] Although 75 percent of those young people were living with their families, 46,808 were unaccompanied youth under age 25. The majority of those young people were over 18.

The Youth Count! initiative included a webinar series that FYSB supported by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC), provided to support better collaborative local point-in-time counts of youth homelessness across the country.

Federal Data Integration—The Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), operated by HUD-funded local Continuums of Care (CoCs), were expanded to incorporate all runaway and homeless youth measures previously collected by FYSB through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS). All FYSB-funded programs serving runaway and homeless youth were required to use the new RHY-HMIS as of April 2015. Certain targeted homeless assistance programs funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) also participated in the integration and have transitioned data collection to RHY-HMIS.

Preparation for National Study of the Prevalence, Needs, and Characteristics of Homeless Youth in America—This national study was included in the 2008 reauthorization of the Act. FYSB began planning efforts with HUD in FY 2014 and FY 2015. FYSB continues to explore current literature and examine the needs of homeless youth to improve program administration.

Research and Demonstration—FYSB engaged in four efforts in FY 2014 and FY 2015 to develop a better understanding of the needs of runaway and homeless youth: (1) a study to improve services and supports for youth who live in rural communities and have little connection to stable housing and family; (2) a study of the Transitional Living Program to examine youths' experience of service receipt and the TLP models; (3) a study of youth served by the Street

[7] United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). *HUD 2015 Continuum of Care homeless assistance programs homeless populations and subpopulations*. Accessed on December 21, 2015, at https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_NatlTerrDC_2015.pdf

Outreach Program; and (4) a capacity-building project focused on the needs of special populations of homeless youth. Each project is further described in Section D of this report.

2. Building the Capacity of Systems

FYSB was integrally involved in federal efforts to update performance standards and support runaway and homeless youth programs in adhering to evidence-based and evidence-informed frameworks and practices. Activities in FY 2014 and FY 2015 included the following:

Update of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Regulations—As required by the Act, FYSB drafted a performance standards rule for the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach Programs. The proposed rule set standards for the minimum requirements that FYSB-funded runaway and homeless youth projects must meet. The rule was published for public comment in April 2014. A webinar and town hall meeting were held to assist all stakeholders in understanding the standards proposed, and public comments were accepted until June 13, 2014. FYSB published the final set of regulations on December 20, 2016.

Intervention Model for Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness—As part of the USICH effort to end youth homelessness, FYSB and its partners in the USICH youth workgroup developed the Intervention Model for Unaccompanied Youth (illustrated in Figure 1), which was published in 2014. The research-informed service delivery model was also disseminated to the field through webinars and presentations. To support national dialogue and document best practices, USICH partners, including FYSB, engaged in convenings of runaway and homeless youth providers and advocates (including the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Raikes Foundation, and the National Network for Youth) to better understand the challenges and successes in implementing the model.

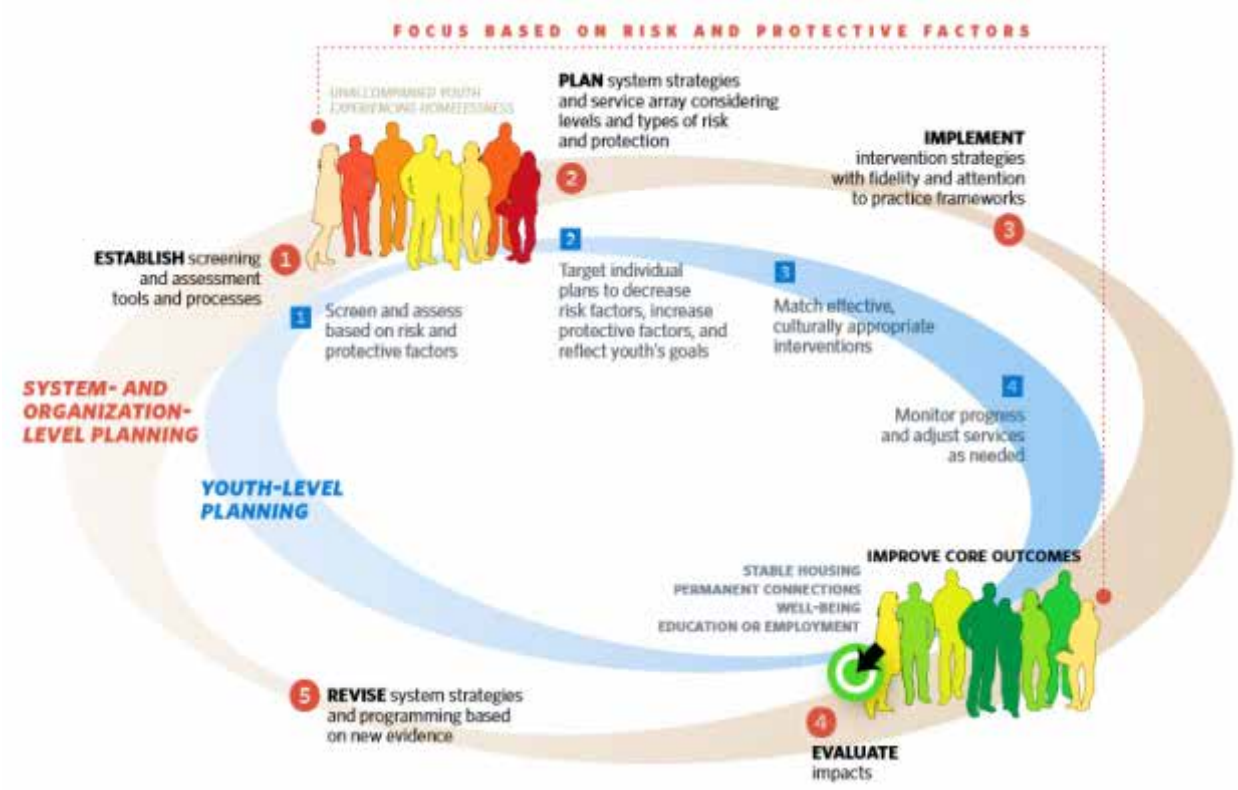

Figure 1: Intervention Model for Unaccompanied Youth

Screening and Assessment Tools—The Intervention Model for Unaccompanied Youth recommends that runaway and homeless youth programs use reliable and valid screening and assessment tools when youth enter a program to identify their strengths and needs. The model also recommends that programs use the information from the screenings and assessments to choose evidence-based interventions that can give young people stable housing, permanent connections, improved well-being, and opportunities for education and employment. In FY 2015, FYSB began compiling a detailed list of 54 evidence-based and evidence-informed screening and assessment tools, in consultation with USICH partners. The list, which is helping grantees put the model into practice, was published on March 31, 2016.

UNDERSERVED AND UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, FYSB served a number of underserved and underrepresented populations, including those detailed below.

- **Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation—**Homelessness is the largest risk factor for domestic labor trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking of minors and young adults.[8] Accordingly, FYSB has been working to better understand and support the needs of victims of human trafficking. FYSB collaborated on an interagency process, co-chaired by HHS and the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, to develop the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services

[8] Institute of Medicine, &National Research Council. (2013). *Confronting commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States.* Accessed on December 6, 2016, at https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/243838.pdf

for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States. The five-year plan was released on January 14, 2014. As part of the Justice for Victims of Human Trafficking Act of 2015, FYSB awarded funds to three organizations to implement the Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking Program demonstration initiative to expand organizational and community capacity to deliver trauma-informed, culturally relevant services for domestic victims of human trafficking. In FY 2015, RHYTTAC conducted a survey of current Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees to learn to what extent they were serving human trafficking survivors and how they thought their programs might better serve this population. They learned that organizations needed training and technical assistance on ways of identifying and intervening to assist victims. Finally, in FY 2015, questions were added to RHY-HMIS to find out if youth receiving RHY services were victims of sex trafficking or labor trafficking.

- **LGBTQ Youth—**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth[9] are overrepresented among the homeless youth population compared with the general population of youth, and each group has unique needs. In FY 2014, FYSB initiated a three-year capacity-building project to collect and assess emerging practices that have shown promise in meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. More information on the capacity-building demonstration project is available in Section D of this report. FYSB and its partners in the USICH youth workgroup developed the LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative. This project, led by HUD and the True Colors Fund, aimed to identify successful strategies to ensure that no young person is left without a home because of sexual orientation or gender identity. The initiative was piloted in two communities, one in Ohio and one in Texas, to learn how to integrate diverse federal and local resources into a community-wide plan to implement the Intervention Model for Unaccompanied Youth and prevent the homelessness of LGBTQ youth. FYSB provided support to those two communities through RHYTTAC.

- **Tribal Youth—**Native American young people are also overrepresented among the homeless youth population compared with the general population of youth.[10] FYSB supports Native American youth through competitive discretionary grant funding, strategic outreach, and training and technical assistance resources. FYSB grantees are expected to provide culturally relevant services to Native youth and cultivate strong relationships with tribes and Native American communities within their service areas. Grantees, particularly those in regions with higher tribal populations, also engage in direct outreach to tribes and Native communities. In FY 2015, FYSB supported three Native organizations and two Native grantees by providing the requisite services under their specific RHY program. Native youth also received runaway and homeless youth

[9] Family and Youth Services Bureau. (2016). *Street Outreach Program: Data Collection Study Final Report*. Washington, DC: Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Administration on Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/street-outreach-program-data-collection-study.

[10] National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth. (2010). *Serving overrepresented groups of homeless youth.* Accessed on December 6, 2016, at http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/features/serving-youth-economic-downturn/serving-overrepresented-groups-homeless-youth

services through non-tribal grantees. According to FY 2014 RHYMIS data, three percent of youth served in basic centers and six percent served in transitional living programs self-identified as Native youth. These are disproportionately high representations, as according to the 2014 U.S. Census, American Indian and Alaska Native individuals, regardless of age, made up two percent of the population.[11] Native youth suffer from higher rates of poverty, disease, suicide, family violence, and substance use disorder than non-Native youth,[12] making them especially vulnerable to homelessness and human trafficking. FYSB participates actively in ongoing working groups, partnerships, and training initiatives at the federal level to support and improve services to Native youth.

Improving Data Collection in Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

In mid-FY 2015, FYSB began its federal data integration efforts to incorporate RHYMIS data into the HMIS system operated by HUD. The effort to combine RHYMIS program-specific data elements with HUD's universal data elements was part of a larger initiative to coordinate and improve the accuracy of federal counts of homelessness across the country. This integration preserved FYSB's ability to collect client-level data about the youth served through the Basic Center and Transitional Living Programs, and also extended this capability to the Street Outreach Program youth for the first time. The availability of this new data will strengthen the information gathered about homeless youth encountered on the street with regard to demographics, their specific experiences, and needs. For example, the length of time youth were homeless; whether they came out of the child welfare or juvenile justice systems; and their expected housing outcomes. The integration also included new data measures to capture information about youth experiencing sex trafficking, labor trafficking or both.

Although the biennial Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Report to Congress usually includes program service data from FYSB grantees for each of the two fiscal years it discusses, this report is a little different. Like other major system changes, the RHYMIS to HMIS transition was not seamless. Challenges at the grantee and federal levels resulted in the data that was below acceptable levels of completeness and accuracy for FY 2015. For that reason, this report only includes FY 2014 data on the services provided and youth served by Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees.

The difficulties presented by the reporting system transition have been resolved, and the Report to Congress for FY 2016 and FY 2017 will once again include comprehensive data for both years. FYSB will continue its work with grantees to ensure that they are collecting and reporting vital and high-quality data that will ultimately benefit all stakeholders working to end youth homelessness.

[11] United States Census Bureau (2015). *Facts for features: American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: November 2015.* Accessed on December 6, 2016, at http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2015/cb15-ff22.html

[12] Executive Office of the President. (2014). *2014 Native youth report.* Accessed December 21, 2015, at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/20141129nativeyouthreport_final.pdf

BASIC CENTER GRANT PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF THE BASIC CENTER PROGRAM

A young teenager has a fight with her stepfather and runs away from home. A teen boy is asked to leave by his family because they suspect he is using drugs. A 16-year-old has been living in her car for two weeks because her family has been evicted and there is no room for her at the relative's place where they are staying.

Whatever the reasons young people run away or become homeless, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act seeks to ensure that they receive two basic things through the Basic Center Program: (1) safe shelter and basic necessities for up to 21 days and (2) individual and family counseling, with the ultimate goal of returning them to their families, if doing so is the right choice for them.

Table 1: Basic Center Program Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding
2014	299	$53 million
2015	296	$53 million

* Basic Center Program grantees are nonprofit or public service providers.

The Basic Center Program is the federal government's network of emergency shelters for youth up to age 18, housed mainly at nonprofit organizations and a few public health departments (see Table 1). These shelters provide a safe place to sleep to young people long enough for caseworkers to work with them and their families. The Basic Center Program is able to meet the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth and their families and to connect them with services that can help them in the longer term. The preferred outcome for these youth is to safely return them home or find a stable place where they can stay—for instance, with a caring relative or at a transitional living program.

The Basic Center Program was devised as an alternative to involving runaway and homeless youth in the law enforcement, child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. As one FYSB grantee in Seattle, Washington, says, "The Basic Center Program is the first line of prevention to keep youth from getting involved with the negative effects of the street."

WHO ARE THE YOUTH SERVED BY THE BASIC CENTER PROGRAM?

Basic centers may serve youth under 18 years old. Most youth are between the ages of 15 and 17, although programs have worked with youth as young as 10. In FY 2014, 32,000 youth received services from a Basic Center Program, including shelter or preventive services such as mediation and family and individual counseling.

Boys and girls were served almost equally with 52 percent being girls and 48 percent being boys in basic centers in FY 2014 (see Table 2). The programs serve young people identifying with all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. (Some youth combined race and ethnicity, and Table 2 reflects that identification.) While 51 percent of the youth served in FY 2014 were white, African American youth were overrepresented at 32 percent compared with their representation in the general population. Native American youth also were overrepresented.

Table 2: Youth Served by Basic Center Program in FY 2014, Excluding Brief Contacts

Gender	Percent
Female	52
Male	48
Other (including transgender)	<1

Age	Percent
10 or under	3
11–14	37
15–17	60

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
White	51
Black or African American	32
American Indian or Alaska Native	3
Asian	<1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1
More Than One	5
Ethnicity Not Provided	6
Hispanic or Latino (all races)	20

In FY 2014, 7 percent of all youth served in Basic Center Programs and 11 percent of all youth served in Transitional Living Programs identified as LGBTQ.[13] Because these are self-reported data by youth, many grantees believe that these percentages might be an undercount, and that a larger percentage of all youth served by both Basic Center Programs and Transitional Living Programs are in fact LGBTQ.

Most young people served by basic centers have only recently run away or become homeless. In FY 2014, 86 percent came to basic centers from a private residence, which may include the home of a parent, guardian, relative, or friend. Youth living on the street accounted for six percent of the youth served.

In addition to young people who received preventive or shelter services, basic centers served another 72,000 youth through "brief contacts" by phone (including hotlines, where available), in drop-in centers, or at other venues, such as schools. These contacts last less than six consecutive hours and may include providing food or clothing; referrals for counseling, health care, or other services; outreach to youth who may need assistance; and outreach to public and private agencies that work with youth and families. Brief contacts may have been with youth, parents, social workers, teachers, friends, or other concerned parties. Demographic information is not collected for brief contacts.

Though Basic Center Program grantees have served an impressive number of youth, the demand for their services has been so great that they have also had to turn many away because of a lack

[13] Source: HHS/ACF/ACYF/FYSB, National Extranet Optimized Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (NEO-RHYMIS), FY 2014.

of beds. In FY 2014, basic centers turned away 2,425 youth who contacted them for services: 2,250 who contacted them by phone, and 175 who came to them in person.

What Problems Do Youth Who Come to Basic Centers Face?

Youth who come to basic centers face myriad problems. According to RHYMIS data, 90 percent of youth served by basic centers in FY 2014 said they faced difficult family dynamics at home, such as constant fighting and screaming. Twenty-five percent of them suffered abuse and neglect, and 10 percent had witnessed a family member being abused or neglected.

In FY 2014, 33 percent of youth in basic centers had mental health problems, 25 percent reported problems with drinking and drugs, 12 percent had family members who had experienced addiction and 10 percent had family members who experienced mental illness.

Many youth are coping with trauma. In particular, young people who have been exposed to violence may have symptoms such as hyperarousal (a nervous system in a chronic state of alertness), difficulty relating to other people, and problems regulating their own behavior.

Regular school attendance is also a major challenge for these young people. Among youth entering Basic Center Programs in 2014, 50 percent cited education or school as an issue they faced. Homelessness can disrupt young people's education, causing them to miss school or perform poorly. Youth who repeatedly have conflict at home tend to perform substantially worse in school than do their peers. Poor academic performance is a common consequence of family conflict and also becomes a contributing factor to more conflict. In FY 2014, 67 percent of basic center youth were regularly attending school when they began receiving services. Meanwhile, 20 percent were attending irregularly and 5 percent had dropped out (see Table 3).

Table 3: Living Situation at Entry and School Status at Entry for Youth Served by Basic Center Program in FY 2014

Living Situation at Entry	Percent
Private residence	86
Street	6
Shelter	2
Residential program	2
Detention center	1
Other	2
Don't know	1

School Status at Entry	Percent
Attending regularly	67
Attending irregularly	20
Dropped out	5
Don't know	5
Graduated high school or obtained GED	1
Suspended or expelled	3

In FY 2014, 27 percent of basic center youth cited housing as an issue they faced. Youth in basic centers generally have a home they can safely return to after family counseling or other reunification services. The minority of basic center youth who cannot return home and are old enough to seek housing on their own cite issues around emancipation, affordable housing, rental agreements, and securing resources for security deposits.

Spotlight on Janus Youth Services: Sarah's* Story

Sarah began to drink heavily at age 16, using alcohol to escape from family tensions. Her descent into homelessness escalated when she was hit by a car and prescribed Vicodin, despite her mother's protests. In a matter of weeks, she was combining alcohol and opioids and drifting further from her family's support system. She dropped out of school and left home after her physical rehabilitation, precipitating 3 years of homelessness and substance abuse, and a long series of unstable couch surfing arrangements.

At first Sarah worked as a cashier, but as her drinking and prescription pill dependency increased, she was unable to perform her job duties. Her shifts were reduced until she was essentially unemployed, and the friend she lived with asked her to leave. Drinking and drug-using friends supplied her with pills as she cycled through various drug dealers' apartments, garages, and other living arrangements, even sleeping several nights behind a coffee shop dumpster.

Eventually she found herself stranded at an airport after visiting a friend with only one-way airfare. Ashamed to admit she was out of savings, she lived at the airport for a full week before security guards discovered her. Then she returned to Portland, Oregon, on a bus arranged by a service provider and began to stay at the Janus Youth shelters. Central City Concern placed her on a housing wait list while she engaged with Outside In for help with her alcohol and pill dependency.

Sarah attended a 12-step program and was shocked to find some of her friends there. A Homeless Youth Continuum employee became her sponsor, encouraged her toward sobriety, and told her that at some point she would be clean and sober and would make a terrific peer mentor. Now, 3 years sober, Sarah conducts street outreach every Thursday evening with Janus Youth's street outreach program. This work has put her in touch with Portland police foot patrols, which are getting to know the community's most vulnerable citizens.

**Youth's names in this story and those that follow have been changed.*

How Do Basic Centers Help Youth?

To promote young people's social and emotional well-being and facilitate healing and recovery, basic center staff are encouraged to use a trauma-informed approach, which involves understanding and responding to the symptoms of chronic interpersonal trauma, as well as the mental health and behavioral effects of trauma. A trauma-informed approach takes into consideration the difficult circumstances young people have faced and tries to protect them from being re-traumatized.

Stabilizing Young People

Basic centers stabilize young people by addressing their immediate needs for shelter, food, and clothing; and by coordinating access to health care and mental health services.

Young people's need for shelter may be addressed through either a centralized emergency shelter facility or a host home in the community. In the host home model, youth live with families who have volunteered to house them, make sure their basic needs are met, and provide

Measuring Outcomes: Boys Town, Nebraska

Boys Town, a grantee in Grand Island, Nebraska, conducted a survey with youth 90 days after their discharge from its basic center. The survey found that of the 105 youth exiting in FY 2014 who responded:

- 94 percent were either attending school or had graduated.
- 100 percent were free from physical or sexual abuse, and 99 percent were free from neglect or abandonment.
- 89 percent knew an adult they could count on for support.
- 95 percent reported that services had a positive impact on their lives.

support and supervision, with assistance from program staff. This model is only used by a small number of Basic Center Programs.

In some cases, basic centers are able to keep young people from leaving home at all. Sixteen percent of youth served by basic centers receive runaway prevention services such as mediation, family, and/or individual counseling. Most of these young people who receive the prevention services do not go into shelters. Basic centers may work with families to help them manage conflict and establish healthy patterns of family interaction. This may take as few as two or three days, or as long as several months.

Case Management and Counseling

Young people need assistance with the underlying issues that can cause or contribute to homelessness and running away. Case managers offer numerous services to assist youth in a trauma-informed approach. Services include screening and assessment, finding placement, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and family-related counseling and conflict resolution.

Case managers work with the young people to set goals for their stay. For example, one basic center serving youth in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia sets three personalized goals—such as "see a mental health counselor" or "re-enroll in school"—for each youth. Basic centers may use screening tools like the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), a one-page paper-and-pencil test that identifies people who are dependent on drugs, or Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), a suicide screening and prevention method.

Basic centers devote hours of case management to finding safe and stable places for young people to live. Doing so involves intensive work to resolve family conflicts, so that young people can go home if possible. When going home to their families is not possible or preferable for youth, case managers work to find relatives or friends who will house them or to find a longer term youth program, such as a transitional living program.

Basic centers may have mental health and substance use counselors on site, or they may refer youth to outside services. The counselors may also use evidence-based interventions rooted in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in prevention, shelter, and aftercare settings with youth. Studies have shown CBT to be effective at helping

Measuring Outcomes: Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs

The Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs tracks the progress of young people participating in services by measuring indicators relating to safety, well-being, self-sufficiency, and permanent connections. Youth complete a survey at intake, at exit, and after every 6 months of services. In FY 2015:

- 90 percent of youth exiting programs went to a safe place, and 87 percent reported feelings of safety in their community and interpersonal relationships.
- 96 percent of youth had medical insurance, 89 percent were connected to a primary care physician, 72 percent were connected to dental care, and 85 percent were engaged in healthy activities on a regular basis.
- 75 percent had the assets and skills needed to live independently, support and take care of themselves, get and stay employed, access community resources, manage their finances, and plan for the future.
- 80 percent possessed healthy relationships with adults and peers they could rely on for support.

people make emotional and behavioral changes, such as overcoming depression and addiction or dependency.

Basic centers also help youth to meet their physical and dental health care needs. Some programs collaborate with community health centers, assist youth and families in applying for Medicaid when eligible, and connect youth to professional volunteers and interns. Some agencies have medical staff on site. However, the majority of programs rely on extensive collaboration by signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and letters of agreement with local organizations and developing strong working relationships with social service providers and public benefit departments. Some programs, especially those in rural areas, have difficulty connecting youth to health care because services are scarce in their regions. Basic centers also strive to improve the environment at home. In working with families in conflict, basic centers employ evidenced-based methods such as Alternative for Families–Cognitive Behavioral Therapy,[14] Brief Strategic Family Therapy®,[15] Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention,[16] Functional Family Therapy,[17] and Aggression Replacement Training®.[18]

FYSB requires Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees to develop strong working relationships with the school district liaisons responsible for advocating on behalf of homeless youth according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. (This Act mandates immediate access to public schools for homeless youth.) These relationships with McKinney-Vento liaisons are extremely important in keeping youth connected to and attending their schools of origin. Basic center staffs also take an active role in youth's education. For example, staff may become members of a student's Individualized Education Program team if the young person has a disability. Staff may provide or arrange for tutoring or meet with teachers, and sometimes teachers and parents together, to develop support strategies for the youth. Some programs also provide work-readiness training and job-search assistance, as well as life-skills training, particularly for older youth.

Discharge Planning, Follow-Up, and Aftercare

From the moment youth enter a basic center, case managers involve them and their families in discharge planning so that young people feel safe and secure and are able to take control of their own futures.

Case managers meet with youth and, if appropriate, family members or mentors to create an exit plan. The exit plans include: where youth will live, and alternates if that option is unavailable; how youth will stay connected and engaged in school; where youth can go for longer term counseling; and where youth can get other services. Case managers also help youth explore and apply for government assistance for which they are eligible, such as HUD housing assistance,

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[14] Department of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. (n.d.). *About AF–CBT*. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.afcbt.org/node/95#whatis

[15] University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine. *BSFT® program effectiveness*. (n.d.). Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.bsft.org/evidence-for-the-bsft-program/program-effectiveness

[16] Berkowitz, S. J., Stover, C. S., & Marans, S. R. (2011). The child and family traumatic stress intervention: Secondary prevention for youth at risk of developing PTSD. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 52*(6), 676–685.

[17] Functional Family Therapy LLC. (n.d.). *Functional family therapy*. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.fftinc.com/

[18] Goldstein, A. P., & Glick, B. (1994). Aggression replacement training: Curriculum and evaluation. *Simulation and Gaming, 25*(1), 9–26. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.behavioralinstitute.org/uploads/ART_research.pdf

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and supplemental food vouchers for parenting teens.

FYSB standards require each grantee to have an aftercare plan for youth once they leave the program. Aftercare may consist of providing counseling before youth exit the temporary shelter program, helping young people develop their own long-term plans, directing them to other community-based or government assistance services, and/or continuing individual and family counseling. FYSB requires programs to check in with youth for three months after they "graduate," and many check in regularly after that to see how youth are doing and provide them with any services they may need. Programs also refer families to additional services if needed for longer-term family dynamics, and the centers remain available to youth and families if new conflicts arise.

What Are the Outcomes of Basic Center Services?

As part of the data integration with HMIS, FYSB is collecting data related to four outcome categories: safety, permanent connections, well-being, and self-sufficiency. These will support a more in-depth discussion of outcomes in future Reports to Congress.

In the meantime, we qualitatively know from grantees that a young person's stay at a basic center can sometimes serve as a wake-up call to both the family and the youth, pushing them to resolve their problems. In fact, 70 percent of youth who stay in a basic center shelter return to the home of a parent or guardian.

Ninety-four percent of youth leaving basic centers have "safe exits." That means they return to their families or another stable living situation, such as a friend's or relative's house or a residential program.

Measuring Outcomes: Ozone House

According to a survey of youth participants from Family Reunification Services at Ozone House, a shelter in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the youth had achieved the following within 12 months of graduating from the program:

- 96 percent of youth have safe and stable housing.
- 100 percent of youth have at least one supportive person in their lives.
- 94 percent of youth communicate better with their families.
- 88 percent of youth are attending school regularly.

When one young woman was asked at the end of the follow-up survey whether she had any additional comments, she wrote, "My stay at Ozone House honestly saved my life."

In many cases, however, youth are fleeing intense conflict that cannot be resolved in just three weeks. For example, a basic center in Seattle, Washington found that youth who have experienced violent abuse at home were less likely than those who have not experienced abuse to be reunited with family. When youth cannot be returned safely home, the program attempts to place them with friends or relatives or in a residential program. The Seattle program also found that youth who abuse drugs were more difficult to help in the three-week period and more likely to drop out of their Basic Center Program than young people without substance abuse issues.

THE TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM AND MATERNITY GROUP HOMES FOR OLDER HOMELESS YOUTH

PURPOSE OF THE TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM

Thousands of young people run away or are forced to leave their homes each year. Many of these youth are victims of abuse, abandonment, or severe family conflict. They cannot return to their families but are not yet equipped to live on their own.

The Transitional Living Program, which includes the Maternity Group Homes Programs for pregnant and parenting youth, has two major goals: (1) to promote the social and emotional well-being of young people living away from home, and (2) to prepare youth to become independent— and able to support themselves and their children.

Spotlight on Sasha Bruce Youthwork:
Darryl's* Story

When Darryl walked the streets of Washington, D.C., with his father late one night, he thought they would be sleeping at the place where his father lived, but instead they entered a local shelter. Right away, it seemed that the adult shelter was not the place for Darryl. "You're too young to be here," a security guard told him, and she handed him a flyer for Sasha Bruce Youthwork.

Darryl found the Sasha Bruce House in June 2010, and left 3 months later. Then he moved between North Carolina and the District, continuing his search for stable housing while staying with various family members, but his connection to Sasha Bruce didn't end.

While Darryl resided at Sasha Bruce House, Charles Dark, a Transitional Living Program (TLP) staff member, invested time with him. After Darryl moved around for a while, he returned to the District in search of help. He says, "Mr. Dark got me right over and made sure I was connected to TLP." From February 2012 until April 2013, Darryl found not only a stable living situation but also a support system, along with resources.

After leaving the TLP, Darryl continued to use the support available to him and enrolled in Sasha Bruce's YouthBuild (SBY) program for youth ages 18 to 24. He sought to learn workforce and life skills in an attempt to find consistent work. With the help of an SBY career counselor, he found a job at Harris Teeter. Darryl is still employed there, while also competing as an amateur boxer in hopes of becoming a professional athlete one day.

Of Sasha Bruce, Darryl says, "They gave me this opportunity. Not too many people have the opportunity to compete at this level. They believe in me."

**Youth's names in this story have been changed.*

To meet these aims, the Transitional Living Program supports 200 agencies (see Table 4) that provide longer term residential services to homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 22. Services are provided for up to 540 days, or in exceptional circumstances, up to 635 days. Youth younger than 18 who pass the 635-day mark may stay in the program until their 18th birthday.

Table 4: Transitional Living Program Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding
2014	200	$44 million
2015	200	$44 million

*Transitional Living Program grantees are nonprofit or public service providers.

Individual transitional living programs offer services and referrals designed to help young people who are homeless make a successful transition to self-sufficient living. These services include

life-skills training, financial literacy instruction, medical and mental health care, and education and employment services.

For some youth, becoming self-sufficient means not only supporting themselves but also supporting a child. Indeed, running away more than doubles a teenage girl's chances of pregnancy in her first year away from home.[19]

The 2003 reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, the Runaway, Homeless and Missing Children Protection Act (Pub. L. 108-96), explicitly included maternity group homes within the Transitional Living Program to meet the needs of such pregnant and parenting youth. In maternity group homes, young people learn parenting skills, child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote their long-term economic independence and ensure the well-being of their children.

WHO ARE THE YOUTH SERVED BY TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS?

In FY 2014, 3,000 youth entered into a transitional living program to receive shelter and support services.

In FY 2014, 52 percent of the young people entering a transitional living program had recently run away from or been asked to leave a private residence. During that period, 30 percent had come from a shelter or another residential program, and 12 percent were living on the street. The remaining six percent of youth came from an undefined living situation, a correctional facility or detention center, a mental hospital, or the military.

Based on transitional living programs intakes, 11 percent of young people served in FY 2014 were LGBTQ youth, as reported in RHYMIS, and 30 transgender youth were served by these programs.

The demand for services appears higher than the number of youth served. In FY 2014, transitional living programs reported turning away 4,842 youth, including 3,481 who contacted them by phone and 560 who came to them in person, and they placed an additional 801 on waiting lists.

Table 5: Youth Served by the Transitional Living Program in FY 2014

Gender	Percent
Female	60
Male	39
Other (including transgender)	1

Race/Ethnicity*	Percent
White	45
Black or African American	39
American Indian or Alaska Native	4
Asian	1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1
More Than One	5
Ethnicity Not Provided	4
Hispanic or Latino (all races)	16

* Some youth combined race and ethnicity, and Table 5 reflects that identification

Age	Percent
16	4
17–18	40
19–20	46
21	10

[19] Thrane, L. E., & Chen, X. (2012). Impact of running away on girls' pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*(2), 443–449.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOUTH IN TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS FACE?

Youth who participate in transitional living programs have a multitude of challenges to include housing status, school status, employment status, or, sometimes, being a parent.

First and foremost, many youth come to transitional living programs because they or their families face housing difficulties.

Transitional living program residents are generally young adults who are expected to live on their own, but who have little ability to find, pay for, or sustain housing (see Table 6). Eighty percent of youth served in FY 2014 cited housing as an issue they faced, and one-third identified insufficient income.

Seventy percent of youth served in FY 2014 said they faced difficult family dynamics, such as constant fighting and screaming, at home. Twenty-nine percent of youth had suffered abuse and neglect or had witnessed a family member being abused or neglected. These figures are consistent with research on risk factors, which shows that youth most commonly become homeless because of disruptive or unstable family environments.[20]

Table 6: Situation at Entry for Youth Served by the Transitional Living Program in FY 2014

Living Situation at Entry	Percent
Private residence	52
Shelter	23
Street	12
Residential program	7
Another situation	6
Don't know	<1

School Status at Entry	Percent
Attending regularly	31
Graduated high school	30
Obtained GED	8
Dropped out	19
Attending irregularly	10
Don't know	2
Suspended or expelled	1

Young people who have been exposed to violence may have symptoms like hyperarousal, which can cause irritability, anger, and difficulty concentrating. Young people who have experienced trauma may also have trouble relating to other people and problems regulating their own behavior.

Ten percent of youth served by transitional living programs in FY 2014 reported struggling with mental health problems, and 32 percent of youth said they or members of their family had issues with drinking and drugs. Twenty percent reported health-related concerns.

Additionally, many homeless youth find it difficult to concentrate on their education because they often move around and devote much of their time and attention to daily survival. Fifty-three percent of youth in transitional living programs in FY 2014 cited education or school as a challenge. Thirty-one percent of youth entering transitional living programs attended school regularly, and another 38 percent graduated or obtained their Certificate of High School Equivalency through General Education Development (GED) testing (see Table 6 on the

[20] Shelton, K. H., Taylor, P. J., Bonner, A., & Van den Bree, M. (2009). Risk factors for homelessness: Evidence from a population-based study. *Psychiatric Services, 60*(4), 465–472.

previous page). Some homeless young people whom these programs serve continue their education in college.

How Do Transitional Living Programs Help Youth?

Transitional Living Program grantees are required to provide youth with safe, stable places to live and services that help them develop the skills necessary to live independently. FYSB encourages programs to use a trauma-informed approach, which allows young people the greatest possible control over their own case plans, in order to avoid being re-traumatized and facilitate healing and recovery.

A Place to Call Home

Living accommodations include group homes, supervised apartments, and host family homes. Many programs combine the three models, using a phased system that moves youth from more supervised to less supervised surroundings as they learn to live on their own. Regardless of the model used, programs may house up to 20 youth at one time.

Group homes are the mostly commonly used model. They give youth the opportunity to move toward independence in a structured environment while living with other young people. The number of youth in a group home varies by program, up to 20 youth. While policies for what is expected of youth vary by program, youth are prepared for independent living by being given responsibilities such as planning menus, preparing food, housekeeping tasks, and resolving issues that naturally arise in a shared-housing arrangement. Staff continually supervise youth in the home and regularly support the progress of each young person in the program.

Programs also house young people in supervised apartments, which may be owned by the grantee or rented in the community. In apartment buildings owned by the grantee, youth are housed in individual units. In such programs, either a staff person lives on the premises to assist youth as needed or the program facility is staffed 24/7.

Apartments rented in the community are referred to as scattered-site apartments, which are single-occupancy apartments rented directly by youth sponsored by the grantee. Grantees operationalize scattered-site apartment programs in different ways. Some programs have relationships with certain landlords, and youth only rent units run by those landlords. In others, youth rent apartments in whatever locations they choose. Some organizations provide youth with a rent subsidy, while others ask youth to pay all of their rent.

In scattered-site apartment programs, staff visit young people periodically, generally more often (daily or several times a week) when they first move in and less often (weekly or monthly) as they progress toward independence. Some programs allow youth to keep the apartments upon completing the program.

In the host home approach, youth live with vetted families in the community. The families house the youth, make sure that their basic needs are met, and provide support and supervision with assistance from program staff. How families are recruited, vetted, and managed varies depending on the program and on the ways each state regulates host homes. At a minimum,

families receive background checks and training. Some programs pay families while others seek volunteers.

Building Skills for Life

Transitional living programs provide support and structure to help youth get on their feet. Generally, youth must go to school or work while they are in the programs. In addition, staff work with each young person to develop an individual transitional living plan.

Many programs use screening and assessment tools to determine how best to support young people and their ability to live on their own after they leave the program. These assessments are conducted when youth enter the program and at regular intervals during their stay. One such tool, the Casey Life Skills Assessment, asks youth and staff members to rate the young person's knowledge of critical life skill topics, such as self-care, social development, work and study skills, and money management. Based on the rating in each area, staff members help youth decide what steps to take to improve their knowledge of these life skills.[21]

Youth begin acquiring these skills informally through hands-on experiences. Grantees also offer programs and workshops, directly or by referral, providing more formal, structured opportunities for learning, as well as services that meet the basic needs of young people, including pregnant and parenting homeless youth. Examples of topics that transitional living programs address, both formally and informally, include:

Spotlight on Promise House: Nancy's* Story

Nancy became homeless when her aunt kicked her out on the street after an argument. She tried staying with friends, but their hospitality only lasted so long.

When Nancy found the transitional living program at Promise House, in Dallas, Texas, she finally had a safe place to stay. During her time in the program, she was able to focus on completing her education. She graduated from the Dallas Can! Academy and plans to transfer to a 4-year college where she can study photography.

Nancy said, "I don't know where I would be without Promise. Promise House has done so much for me."

**Youth's names in this story have been changed.*

- **Basic life-skills building.** Staff advise youth on budgeting, using credit, housekeeping, menu planning, cooking, and becoming an educated consumer.
- **Interpersonal skill building.** Staff help young people enhance their abilities to establish positive relationships with peers and adults, make decisions, and manage stress.
- **Educational opportunities.** Grantees help youth graduate from high school or attain a GED credential, postsecondary training, or vocational education. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act also requires transitional living programs to coordinate with McKinney-Vento school district liaisons.
- **Assistance in job preparation and attainment.** Programs work to increase young people's employability, offering them opportunities to build workplace skills as well as providing career counseling, guidance on dress and grooming, and information about workplace etiquette. Programs aim to match youth with jobs that fit their skills, financial needs, and career aspirations.

[21] More about Casey Life Skills can be found online at http://caseylifeskills.force.com/clsa_learn_provider.

- **Behavioral health care.** Programs offer individual and group counseling, either on-site or by referral. This can include substance abuse education, prevention, and treatment services.
- **Physical health care.** Programs collaborate with community health centers and help young people get Medicaid if they are eligible. Youth are able to receive routine physicals, health assessments, and emergency treatment. Pregnant youth receive prenatal care. Some transitional living programs have adopted one-stop-shop models where mental health, substance use services, and physical health care are provided in one building.

Measuring Outcomes: The Harbour

The Harbour, located in Park Ridge, Illinois, operates both a transitional living program and a maternity group home. Of the 32 youth who completed the transitional living program in FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- 100 percent were determined to have basic living skills, as assessed by the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment.
- 92 percent attended school regularly, graduated from school, obtained a GED, or passed three out of five sections of the GED.

The same agency's maternity group home served 34 young women in the last 2 years. All were connected with supplemental food vouchers, TANF funds, parenting education programs, and other community resources for which they were eligible immediately upon entering the program. Youth were enrolled in the agency's early literacy Read2Me program, which promotes parent/child bonding and literacy activities. All youth who completed the program maintained custody of their children.

In addition, maternity group homes offer services specifically for pregnant and parenting youth:

- **Education:** Education on parenting, child development, discipline, and safety is offered.
- **Physical and mental health care:** In addition to prenatal care for pregnant youth, reproductive health care, individual and family counseling for the parent and child, and pediatric medical services are provided, if necessary.
- **Parent support:** Parent involvement in local schools and other child education programs can be facilitated.
- **Child care:** Assistance accessing reliable and affordable child care and early childhood education services is available.

The services that transitional living programs provide for young men and young women are virtually the same, except that young women who are pregnant or have a child are more likely to receive benefits from Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), housing assistance from HUD, SNAP benefits, child care assistance, and other forms of public aid.

Many programs report using evidence-based practices like motivational interviewing—a goal-directed, client-centered counseling style—to elicit behavioral changes.[22] Motivational

[22] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration–Health Resources and Services Administration Center for Integrated Health Solutions. (n.d.). *Motivational interviewing*. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/motivational-interviewing

interviewing helps young people explore their own motivations for change and understand the gap between their current behavior and desired life goals. Programs that address problem behaviors related to alcohol and drugs often use motivational interviewing to gain a better sense of young people's attitudes toward substance use.[23]

Aftercare

Even after leaving a transitional living program, many youth will struggle with finding appropriate housing, paying rent, affording college or technical education, holding a job, maintaining their mental health, managing conflicts with family and friends, or staying clean of drugs and alcohol. FYSB requires each grantee to provide aftercare to youth exiting the program, with follow-up required at least three months after they leave the program, or after three months if any services are still being provided.

Measuring Outcomes: Walker's Point Youth & Family Center

Walker's Point Youth & Family Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, gathered data for the 2 years ending June 30, 2015, about how well young people were meeting their goals. Of the 31 youth who exited the transitional living program:

- 90 percent of residents made progress on their counseling goals (assessed by staff at time of discharge).
- 84 percent had made progress on their educational goals by the time they left the program.
- 87 percent of youth ages 18 to21 had made progress on their work goals and were receiving a paycheck at time of discharge.

Aftercare services include 1) assisting youth in overcoming barriers that may interfere with the achievement of their goals; 2) providing proactive and reactive strategies to encourage retention in education, employment and housing; and 3) providing supportive services and solutions to assist in advancement of better postsecondary education opportunities, jobs, and training. However, aftercare services focus primarily on housing. According to many FYSB grantees, the single most important factor that influences how youth fare when they leave a transitional living program is having safe, appropriate, and affordable housing available after they exit the program. Without suitable housing, youth may end up back on the street. Placing youth in stable housing also helps staff stay in touch with them after they leave the program.

Aftercare may also involve providing counseling before youth exit the program, helping young people develop their own long-term plans, continuing individual and family counseling after they exit, and directing youth to other community-based agencies or government assistance services. Most programs maintain contact with youth long after they have "graduated," checking in regularly to see how they are doing and providing them with any services or support they may need.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS?

RHYMIS began collecting comprehensive outcomes data for the Transitional Living Program with the HMIS integration efforts. This will provide much more robust data for subsequent

[23] Thompson, S., Barczyk, A., Gomez, R., Dreyer, L., & Popham, A. (2010). Homeless, street-involved emerging adults: Attitudes toward substance use. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 25*(2), 231–257.

Reports to Congress, and increase FYSB's understanding of the impact this program has on youth.

Based on FY 2014 RHYMIS reporting, 88 percent of youth who leave transitional living programs make safe exits and move onto stable housing, rather than going back to the instability of the street or a homeless shelter or to an unknown location. This includes youth who have completed the program, as well as those who have not. The stable housing may be either a private residence or a residential program.

Thirty-eight percent of youth who exited from a transitional living program in FY 2014 had graduated from high school or obtained a GED credential, or attended school regularly. Additionally, 27 percent of young people leaving transitional living programs were employed, while 46 percent were looking for work.

FYSB provides its grantees training and technical assistance on exit planning and ways to collaborate with community partners on housing and employment for young people, in order to increase the number of youth who complete the programs, thus increasing the young people's chances of maintaining stable housing. Many FYSB grantees are also working with their local HUD-funded CoCs (which coordinate local housing and services funding for homeless individuals and families) and community coalitions to address broader issues such as tight rental and job markets that may stand in the way of stable housing for young people.

THE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION SERVICES TO REDUCE SEXUAL ABUSE OF RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND STREET YOUTH PROGRAM (STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM)

PURPOSE OF THE STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM

In communities across the country, young people are living on the streets or in unstable living situations, such as friends' homes or overcrowded apartments.

Without the adult protection of parents, guardians, or relatives, youth risk being sexually exploited or trafficked. Studies reveal wide variations in the proportions of homeless youth affected by sexual exploitation and abuse, from 2 percent to 46 percent, with a cluster of research finding 15 to 30 percent of homeless youth falling victim.[24] As many as 100,000 children may be victims of commercial sexual exploitation every year, and that number may be on the rise.[25]

FYSB's Street Outreach Program—formally known as the Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program—aims to defend youth

[24] Greene, J., S. Ennett, and C. Ringwalt. 1999. Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*(9): 1406–1409; Unger, J., T. Simon, T. Newman, S. Montgomery, M. Kipke, and M. Albornoz. 1998. Early Adolescent Street Youth: An Overlooked Population with Unique Problems and Service Needs. *Journal of Early Adolescents, 18,* no. 4: 325–348.

[25] National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2011). *Issue brief: Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and youth homelessness*. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/commercial-sexual-exploitation-of-children-cesc-and-youth-homelessness

against such harm by building relationships between street youth and program outreach staff. In The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 expanded the scope of this effort, so that grantee programs provide street-based services to runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to, or are at risk of being subjected to, sexual abuse, prostitution, sexual exploitation, and severe forms of trafficking in persons. Each program's staff members provide youth on the street with basic supplies, support, advice, and referrals to emergency shelter programs, health care, and other services. The goals are to promote young people's social and emotional well-being, keep youth safe, and help them leave the streets.

WHO ARE THE YOUTH SERVED BY STREET OUTREACH PROGRAMS?

FYSB-funded street outreach workers made contact with young people on the streets 461,524 times in FY 2014. However, outreach workers do not press youth to disclose personal information. Therefore, FYSB data may have duplicated counts, and do not include young people's ages, race, ethnicity, or gender. Through literature reviews, and qualitative reporting from grantees, we are aware that many youth on the street have fled intolerable situations at home, most often due to abuse, domestic violence, parental mental illness, or substance use.[26,27] Some have been kicked out or abandoned by their parents or guardians. Some youth come from families too disorganized or too impoverished to care for them any longer. As illustrated by Basic Center and Transitional Living Program data earlier in this report, many homeless youth struggle with mental health and substance abuse problems. A substantial proportion of homeless youth (30 percent self-reported in the SOP Data Collection Study) are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and 7 percent identified in the study as transgender.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOUTH ON THE STREET FACE?

Once on the street, youth face further abuse and victimization.[28] Compared with their housed peers, homeless youth are at greater risk of becoming victims of crime, physical assault, and sexual abuse and exploitation. Homeless youth are also more likely to have mental health and substance abuse issues. According to some studies, homeless young people use and abuse drugs and alcohol at alarming rates, perhaps as high as 50 to 84 percent.[29,30,31] However,

Street Outreach Program Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding
2014	109	$17 million
2015	101	$17 million

* Street Outreach Program grantees are nonprofit or public service providers.

[26] Tyler, K. A., Hagewan, K. J., & Melander, L. A. (2011). Risk factors for running away among a general population sample of males and females. *Youth and Society, 43*(2), 583–608.

[27] Pergamit, M., Ernst, M., Benoit-Bryan, J., Kessel, J., & National Runaway Switchboard. (2010). *Why they run: An in-depth look at America's runaway youth*. Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.1800runaway.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Why-They-Run-Report.pdf

[28] Coates, J., & McKenzie-Mohr, S. (2010). Out of the frying pan, into the fire: Trauma in the lives of homeless youth prior to and during homelessness. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 37*(4), 65–96. Accessed December 21, 2015, at https://www.wmich.edu/hhs/newsletters_journals/jssw_institutional/individual_subscribers/37.4.Coates.pdf

[29] Xiang, X. (2013). A review of interventions for substance use among homeless youth. *Research on Social Work Practice, 23*(1), 34–45.

[30] Bender, K., Thompson, S. J., Ferguson, K., Komlo, C., Taylor, C., & Yoder, J. (2012). Substance use and victimization: Street-involved youths' perspectives and service implications. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(12), 2392–2399.

[31] Collins, J., & Slesnick, N. (2011). Factors associated with motivation to change HIV risk and substance use behaviors among homeless youth. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 11*(2), 163–180.

they are less likely than housed youth to be connected to traditional service systems. Homeless youth, therefore, often find themselves in dangerous environments with limited access to resources.

While youth end up on the street for a variety of reasons, many of these youth are coping with trauma. A study of 146 homeless youth from Los Angeles, California, St. Louis, Missouri, and Denver, Colorado, found that 57 percent had experienced trauma and 24 percent met the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.[32] Research suggests that most homeless youth have experienced multiple traumatic events both before becoming homeless and once on the street. Young people who have been exposed to trauma may have symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, anger, trouble controlling emotions, and difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly. Young people who have experienced trauma may also feel disconnected from the world and have trouble relating to other people.

Spotlight on Somerset Home: Mary's* Story

At 14 years old, Mary found herself alone and couch-surfing. She was selling herself for food and shelter, thinking this was the only way she could be safe and have her basic needs met.

After a physical altercation with her father, Mary found Somerset Home's number in a local laundromat and called. When an outreach staffer answered, Mary said she didn't know what she was calling for but was hoping for help.

The outreach staffer asked for some information on Mary and asked her what she needed. At this point, Mary was 18 and needing safe shelter. She also needed food, clothing, and hygiene products. Somerset Home supplied all of these items to her and got her into a motel for the night. In talking with Mary, the outreach team learned of her past survival sex. Somerset Home's street outreach team was able to provide Mary with information on a counselor who could help her. The team also provided her with substance abuse treatment centers that would accept Mary to help her work on her substance use disorder.

The outreach team still keeps in touch with Mary. She was not ready to accept all of the help at once because she wasn't used to people being willing to assist her. However, Mary checks in on a regular basis and continually expresses her gratitude to the Somerset street outreach team for being the first people she found willing to help her, no matter what.

**Youth's names in this story have been changed.*

How Do Street Outreach Programs Help Youth?

Street outreach programs operate across the country in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Programs may send workers to find youth by foot, van, or both during the hours that young people tend to be out, including late afternoons, evenings, nights, and weekends. Workers often find youth in social spaces, such as coffee shops or 24-hour restaurants, in the parts of town where services for homeless people cluster, at places that serve free meals, or in public parks and basketball courts. Some programs collaborate with local school districts, which allow outreach workers to stand or park outside schools at the end of the day and tell young people about their services.

Outreach workers build relationships with youth gradually and respectfully. Typically, they introduce themselves, provide details about their agencies, and help the youth with any emergency needs. They provide food, blankets, backpacks, and socks, among myriad other

[32] Bender, K., Ferguson, K., Thompson, S., Komlo, C., & Pollio, D. (2010). Factors associated with trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder among homeless youth in three U.S. cities: The importance of transience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 23*(1), 161–168.

items—anything that could build rapport and improve the situation of a young person who may be hungry, cold, lonely, afraid, abused, or sick. Outreach workers also provide crisis intervention and referrals to counseling and treatment, as appropriate.

In FY 2014, outreach workers distributed 418,760 health and hygiene products, 752,394 food and drink packages, and 548,665 printed resources to provide youth with important information and help connect them with essential community resources. Outreach workers immediately referred young people to shelter who were willing to go. Each street outreach program is required to have 24-hour access to a local emergency shelter that is appropriate for youth. Once an outreach worker has placed a youth there, the worker must have around-the-clock access to the facility in order to provide consistent support to the young person.

Outreach workers have several tools at their disposal to help young people receive appropriate services. They may use screening and assessment tools, such as the empirically-based Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention method. QPR helps outreach workers recognize the warning signs of suicide and persuade young people to get help.[33] They may also use other evidence-based methods, such as motivational interviewing.

However, youth living on the streets may not be willing to go into a shelter—at least, not at first. They don't always trust adults, may object to the rules enforced in a shelter environment, and do not always believe that they need help. Many have substance abuse issues which they may not ready to address. In these instances, street outreach workers can spend considerable time building trust and helping young people make incrementally better decisions until they are ready to seek shelter or other services.

To help outreach workers build trust with street youth, programs typically employ staff whose gender, race and ethnicity, and life experiences are similar to those of the young people being served. Many programs use paid or volunteer peer outreach workers who team up with adults on their shifts. Some agencies favor peer workers who have been homeless or on the brink of homelessness. Programs find that peers sometimes have an easier time than adults forming connections with street youth and giving them advice and hope. Research supports the influence positive peer support can have, as evidenced by a study of homeless youth engaged in HIV prevention both in-person and online.[34]

By hiring young people, agencies can overcome one of the biggest obstacles to reaching homeless adolescents: the difficulty of forming trusting relationships with youth who, time and again, have been hurt and victimized by adults in their lives.

For both youth and adult outreach workers, the pressures of the job can become intense. Given the intensity of street work, FYSB requires grantees to train staff on issues relevant to street life, such as on-the-job safety and health problems prevalent among homeless youth.

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[33] QPR Institute. (n.d.). *What is QPR?* Accessed December 21, 2015, at http://www.qprinstitute.com/about-qpr

[34] Rice, E., Tulbert, E., Cederbaum, J., Barman, A. A., & Milburn, N. G. (2012). Mobilizing homeless youth for HIV prevention: A social network analysis of the acceptability of a face-to-face and online social networking intervention. *Health Education Research, 27*(2), 226–236.

Training prepares staff to effectively work with youth of diverse cultural backgrounds, show gender and cultural sensitivity, and use appropriate language. Programs must also supervise staff on the street, which may include guiding staff as they navigate the boundaries of their job responsibilities, and supplying them with practical strategies for helping youth who are survivors of sexual abuse. Programs must also provide backup personnel for on-street staff.

Measuring Outcomes: Wichita Children's Home

The street outreach program of the Wichita Children's Home in Wichita, Kansas, referred 80 percent of the youth admitted to the organization's transitional living program in 2014 (35 of 44 youth). Additional 2014 data on the outcomes of Wichita Children's Home efforts to reach out to and support homeless youth show that:

- 95 percent of youth in crisis or rescue situations (189 of 199 youth) ended up in a safe place.
- 84 percent of youth who attended a danger and violence prevention presentation (1,583 of 1,863 youth) were able to identify their current safety risks, identify two or more ways to reduce their risk, and identify at least one way to reach the Street Outreach/Safe Place program.

Finally, grantees must develop a plan for coordinating services funded under the program with their state or local sexual assault coalitions or other agencies providing services to youth who have been, or are at risk of being, sexually abused or exploited.

What Are the Outcomes of Street Outreach Programs?

Street outreach workers made 461,524 contacts with young people on the street in FY 2014. Of the young people reached via those contacts, 21,378 youth moved from the street to a shelter for at least one night according to RHYMIS. Shelter, in this instance, could be provided by any community service providers, not just FYSB-funded basic centers. As mentioned earlier, RHYMIS focused primarily on collecting aggregate data on what street outreach programs do. The data integration with HMIS will allow FYSB to collect client level data for youth served by the Street Outreach Program youth for the first time.

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In 1974, Congress authorized funding to establish a "national communication system to assist runaway and homeless youth in making contact with their families and service providers."

This communication system is funded as a competitive grant, and currently operated by the National Runaway Safeline (NRS). The NRS is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep America's runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. NRS works closely with FYSB staff and grantees to ensure that young people in crisis have a central place to turn to, 24 hours a day, for assistance and information on where to get help. NRS links runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth and their families to crisis counseling, programs, and resources—and to each other, when appropriate. The NRS employs a multi-pronged approach for the communication system with: a 24-hour hotline; interactive online services that include chat, text, and crisis emails; a comprehensive website; a national resource database; community awareness activities; and collaborative relationships with local and national partners to support these efforts.

1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929) AND 1800RUNAWAY.ORG

The central elements of the communications system are NRS's toll-free hotline (1-800-RUNAWAY), which operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and the online chat, text, and forums utilizing digital platforms. During FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS employed a frontline team of staff and 246 volunteers to answer the hotline calls. Volunteers provided 11,058 hours of service in FY 2014 and 10,585 hours in FY 2015. In addition to answering hotline calls, volunteers also provided data entry and answered requests for information.

All frontline staff and volunteers completed NRS's 40-hour trauma-sensitive, solution-focused crisis intervention training. The training is divided into six classroom sessions on the following topics: adolescence and crisis intervention; parents/guardians as callers; legal issues and conflict mediation; child abuse and child protective services; NRS's free bus-ticket-home service; trauma-informed care; harm reduction; serving LGBTQ callers; and depression and suicide resources. The sessions include lectures, discussions, small-group activities, videos, audio clips, and facilitated role playing. Trainees also spend at least four hours listening to live crisis calls and at least six hours conducting crisis calls with one-on-one staff supervision and support before they can take calls independently.

Table 7: NRS Crisis Caller Demographics, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015 (percentage)

Gender	2014	2015
Female	70%	72%
Male	30%	27%
Other (including transgender)	<1%	1%

Age	2014	2015
18–21	35%	26%
12–17	65%	74%

Status of Youth Crisis Callers*	2014	2015
Runaway	27%	23%
Youth in crisis	32%	29%
Contemplating running away	22%	34%
Homeless	13%	10%
Throwaway	5%	4%
Suspected missing	1%	1%
Ward of state/court	2%	1%
Former ward of state	2%	1%

* Youth may have been reported in more than one category.

Time on Street Before Calling	2014	2015
1–3 days	47%	46%
4–7 days	8%	7%
1–3 weeks	19%	19%
1–2 months	11%	12%
3–6 months	8%	8%
over 6 months	7%	8%

NRS's frontline crisis team handled 97,895 calls in FY 2014 and 72,000 calls in FY 2015. The daily average was 270 calls in FY 2014 and 199 calls in FY 2015. Call volume typically peaks on Monday and decreases slowly throughout the week.

In FY 2014, 45 percent of the youth-related crisis callers identified the youth's situation as runaway, homeless, or throwaway[35] as compared with 37 percent in FY 2015 (see Table 7). In FY 2014, the remaining 55 percent of crisis callers were youth in crisis (32 percent), youth contemplating running away (22 percent), or youth suspected missing by parents but not reported

[35] According to the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children, conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, a throwaway youth is one who is (1) asked or told to leave home by a parent or other household adult, where no adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult and the child is out of the house overnight; or (2) away from home and prevented from returning by a parent or other household adult, where no adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult and the child is out of the house overnight.

as a runaway (1 percent). In FY 2015, the remaining 63 percent of crisis callers were composed of youth in crisis (29 percent), youth contemplating running away (34 percent), and youth suspected missing by parents but not reported as a runaway (1 percent).

NRS utilizes the Federal Communications Commission's 711 dialing code to communicate with hearing-impaired youth and families through the Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). Those with hearing impairments are also able to access services electronically with email, live chats, or posts to the online forum. To assist callers whose first language is not English, NRS has bilingual staff and volunteers, as well as fee-based translation services for 144 different languages.

Table 8: NRS Callers' Race and Ethnicity, FY 2014 (percentage)

Race/Ethnicity	2014
White/Caucasian	43%
Black or African American	25%
Hispanic or Latino	17%
Multiracial	6%
Not Provided	4%
American Indian or Alaskan	1%
Asian	3%
Native Hawaiian or Other	1%

Youth call the hotline for many reasons; however the most frequently reported issues stayed consistent in FY 2014 and FY 2015. The top 10 issues identified were family dynamics, peer and social issues, mental health, economics, school/education, physical abuse, youth and family services, transportation, emotional or verbal abuse, and alcohol and drugs. These data may underrepresent the incidence of highly sensitive issues, such as whether youth identify as LGBTQ or whether they have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as youth may be reluctant to share such information.

Trauma-Sensitive, Solution-Focused Crisis Intervention

Hotline staff and volunteers use a five-step, solution-focused crisis intervention model that centers on finding appropriate solutions. They connect callers to services through three-way calls and warm transfers with partner agencies, or by referring the youth to appropriate community, faith-based, or public agency programs.

To make referrals, NRS maintains a comprehensive, up-to-date database with detailed service information on 9,280 national and community-based social service providers nationwide, as well as FYSB's Basic Center and Transitional Living Program grantees. Staff and volunteers also have access to 40,000 organizations, listed in hardcopy and publicly available online in resource directories such as www.211.org.

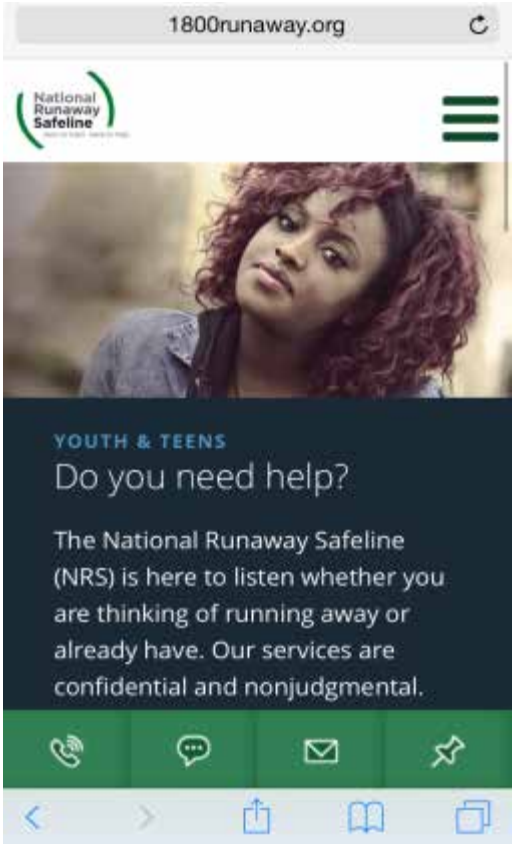
Service providers are invited to enter an MOU with NRS. These agreements outline the relationship and referral process between the organizations. MOUs are valid for a three-year period, and the current cycle ends in 2017. In FY 2014, NRS executed MOUs with 758 agencies. As agency profiles are updated, or new resources researched for inclusion, each agency is invited to either renew its current agreement or sign a first agreement.

Through these relationships, NRS provided 15,090 referrals in FY 2014 and 15,746 referrals in FY 2015.

The hotline also mediates conference calls between young people and community agencies to connect homeless youth who are no longer in their home communities to appropriate housing and other community-based services at their new locations. NRS mediated 628 such calls in FY 2014 and 361 calls in FY 2015.

These mediated conference calls empower youth to create their own action plans, with the support of caring adults and service providers. For example, NRS can conduct conference calls between runaway youth on the street and local Basic Center Programs to enable youth to discuss their personal concerns and to clarify the program's rules and expectations. Common concerns raised by youth include how programs and staff handle diversity in culture, race, and sexual orientation. Hotline staff and volunteers also mediate conference calls between runaway youth and their parents to facilitate positive communication and initiate family reunification.

Figure 2: NRS's Website Launched on June 3, 2015



Message Relay Between Youth and Families

NRS offers a message relay service for runaway youth and their families. Youth who are on the run often use the message relay service as an initial means of reaching out to family. Youth leave messages for family when they are unsure or scared of how they will be received. The message relay allows youth to communicate safely with the help of NRS staff and volunteers.

The following is a real message left by a youth: *"I just want everyone to know that I'm safe and they don't need to worry. I'm in a safe place."*

Parents can leave messages for their children, as well. NRS generally advises parents of a child on the run to let their child's friends know that there is a message waiting at NRS. The following is a real message left by a parent: *"I am really worried, along with the rest of us. Your sisters and brothers are all really scared. They are on their way to Arizona. I'm still here waiting for you to come home. Please come home. I love you."*

NRS provided the message relay service 316 times in FY 2014 and 261 times in FY 2015. There were 177 messages from runaway youth taken in FY 2014 and 116 messages in FY 2015.

Crisis Line Quality Assurance

NRS conducts an annual hotline survey, which was developed in collaboration with the Center for Community and Organizational Development at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. The survey is offered to crisis line callers for a seven-day period each year (see Table 9).

Table 9: Results From Quality Assurance Survey, FY 2014 and FY 2015

Annual Hotline Survey	2014	2015
Agreed to participate in the survey	191	291
First-time caller to the hotline	94%	88%
Agreed to the statement "Overall, NRS was effective in helping me today."	98%	94%
Responded "Yes" to "Would you contact NRS again if you needed help?"	100%	99%
Responded "Yes" to "Would you refer others to the hotline?"	99%	98%

WWW.1800RUNAWAY.ORG

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS continued to focus on building a greater online presence through www.1800RUNAWAY.org and its social media platforms (see Figure 2). The major initiative in FY 2015 was producing a new, youth-friendly website that launched on June 3, 2015.

Spotlight on NRS: The Story of A.J.*

When A.J. called NRS, she had just turned 18 and had been living in her car for 5 months. A.J. told NRS that she identified as transgender. When she was in high school, her mother made her go to a therapist who had been recommended by the preacher at the family's church. After a few months of going to the therapist, who was meant to "cure" her of being transgender, A.J. attempted suicide and spent a few weeks in a psychiatric hospital. Her mom picked her up from the hospital but kicked her out of the house after a week at home.

A.J. had a job at a fast food restaurant and slept in her car. She kept the fact that she was homeless a secret from everyone until she turned 18. When A.J. called NRS, she hadn't eaten in 2 days and was again thinking about killing herself. The only shelter in town was a women's shelter that would not let A.J. stay there because they did not consider her to be a woman.

The hotline volunteer called an LGBTQ youth shelter in a big city not far from where A.J. lived. Shelter staff said that they had a space for her if she could be there within 3 hours. A.J. said she was ready to go. She seemed relieved to have a plan. NRS made sure that A.J. left the call with a couple of options for places to stay, the number for the LGBTQ Youth suicide hotline, and other resources for LGBTQ teens.

**Youth's names in this story have been changed.*

The updated site connects visitors to services prominently featured on the top of the home page. Visitors can call, chat, email, or visit the forum (formerly known as the bulletin board) by clicking on an icon. The home page also has a targeted focus on youth and parents. A clear and succinct navigation allows youth and parents to get information about services quickly.

On the website, youth and adults can anonymously seek information about a range of issues, including family conflict, peer relationships, problems with school, personal and family mental health, and abuse and neglect. An integral feature of the new website is an improved blog platform. NRS is generating three to four new posts a week to make original content available and optimize the website for search engines. The blog posts cover a variety of subjects relevant to youth, parents, and the general public about runaway and homeless youth issues and services.

The media resource center serves as a user-friendly source of information to educate the general public about runaway issues. Educators can find and download from the website the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* in English and Spanish.

In FY 2014, the website had 350,429 visits. In FY 2015, traffic increased to 488,900 visits.

The NRS provides a comprehensive live chat service for youth who want access services online. Youth can access the live chat from any page of the NRS website daily from 4:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. Live chat allows an immediate response and uninterrupted dialogue with frontline team members. While chatting with youth, team members can direct them to web resources, providing links to community-based services or informational websites directly to the youth. These resources include Basic Center and Transitional Living Programs. Direct access to web resources during a live chat has been found to empower youth to follow through and seek help. In FY 2014, NRS received 5,078 chat requests resulting in 2,534 substantive chat conversations. The remaining 2,544 chat requests either terminated abruptly or otherwise did not provide enough information for documentation. In FY 2015, NRS received 7,595 chat requests resulting in 2,862 substantive chat exchanges.

NRS staff members also respond to online forum postings. Postings on the forum range on a variety of discussions topics, including challenges with: family, legal concerns, parenting, peer pressure, and relationships. NRS responded to 1,937 bulletin postings in FY 2014 and 2,802 in FY 2015 (a 45 percent increase).

Youth also contact NRS via email. Crisis emails increased significantly in FY 2014 and FY 2015. By comparison with FY 2013, when NRS responded to 1,605 crisis emails, in FY 2014 NRS responded to 2,808 crisis emails, a 75 percent increase. In FY 2015, the trend continued as NRS responded to 3,850 crisis emails—a 37 percent increase over FY 2014.

From the National Runaway Safeline's Online Forum

So here's my story: I'm in the 8th grade, and I am a male. Life has not been looking well for me recently, for two things. At school, I feel left out, with no friends. Sometimes people make fun of me, which makes me feel worse. Most of the time, I have no motive to go to school because I make bad grades and have no friends. At home it's not so bad, but the problem is that my mom treats me like I'm stupid because three years ago I was diagnosed with Asperger's. Also, my dad is always gone on trips for business. I hate my town, I feel like I don't fit in. I want to run away but have nowhere to go.

NRS staff respond to information requests on the forum or through email within two hours, day or night.

Family Reunification Through Home Free

Since 1995, NRS has worked in partnership with Greyhound Lines to administer the Home Free program, which reunites runaway and homeless youth ages 12 through 20 with their families by giving them free bus tickets home. When returning home to family members is not an option, runaway and homeless youth ages 18 through 20 may receive free tickets to alternative living arrangements, such as the homes of extended family members or transitional living programs near their homes. While this partnership is not funded by FYSB, basic centers often use Home Free to reunite out-of-state runaways with their families. The program has provided 15,000 rides home since its inception.

NRS discussed Home Free services with 1,478 youth in FY 2014. Of those young people, 400 completed the steps of the Home Free process, which includes a conference call between youth and a parent or guardian, and received free bus tickets to return home or go to an alternative living arrangement. In FY 2015, NRS discussed Home Free services with 1,097 young people and issued a free bus ticket to 342 of them.

Evaluation: In 2012, NRS conducted an evaluation of the Home Free program, focusing on 432 youth and families who received bus tickets in 2011. The resulting project manuscript, "A Family-Based Intervention for Runaway Youth and Their Parents/Guardians: The Home Free Program," was published in Child and Youth Services, Volume 36, Issue 2, 2015. Some quantitative data highlights are that:

- 99 percent of youth returned home as expected after using Home Free.
- 77 percent of youth did not leave home again after Home Free. Of youth who did leave home again, 65 percent had a history of leaving home prior to receiving services.
- 85 percent of parents reported that the issues that led to youth running away were either somewhat, mostly, or completely resolved 1 month after Home Free; 90 percent reported the same level of resolution at the time of the evaluation interview, which occurred up to 18 months after receiving Home Free services.
- 68 percent of parents reported that their youth reduced their alcohol or other substance use after Home Free.

Getting the Word Out About Runaway Prevention and Services

NRS uses a variety of mechanisms to educate and raise public awareness of runaway and homeless youth issues and available services. The services provided by NRS for public awareness and education are FYSB guidelines for operating the National Communication System.

National Runaway Prevention Month: For 13 years, NRS has sponsored NRPM each November to raise awareness of the runaway and homeless youth crisis and the issues that these young people face, and to educate the public about solutions and the role they can play in ending youth homelessness.

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS continued NRPM Social Media Action Day to help social service organizations inexpensively promote NRPM. By using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media vehicles, NRS seeks to connect youth with services via the Internet.

Street Team: In May 2008, NRS, with the support of FYSB, launched the Street Team initiative. This community outreach program aims to increase awareness of the issues runaway and homeless youth face and the programs and services FYSB offers. At the end of FY 2015, there were 515 Street Team members in 45 states.

Community members can join the Street Team through a web-based process. Individuals distribute materials in their communities, and may also partake in a number of suggested activities. These activities include creating a YouTube video to raise awareness, getting 1-800-RUNAWAY printed on the back of school IDs, presenting the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, or wearing a 1-800-RUNAWAY T-shirt. On the website, Street Team members record the activities they complete, earning points that they can redeem for rewards such as mouse pads, mugs, hats, T-shirts, and sweatshirts.

Reports from Street Team members

"I was enormously busy yesterday. I do have many churches holding our material. They were actually very eager to hold it. I have still been putting up the posters as the gangs take them down. And so far, things are going well. I am handing out business cards when able, and am actually thinking about going through the parking lots and handing them out to people, just to spread awareness.

I also talked to the detective in charge of all the runaway cases in our area. She said that she fully supports our cause and would love to have our material on hand to distribute to troubled youth and frustrated parents. So I told her that I would give her information to you and then you could mail her material. She said that the local problem with youth runaways is very high, so your program is exactly what we need around here."

~ Travis in Wisconsin

"Being a Street Team member has given me another purpose in life and one that I really believe in. My sister was a runaway, she ran away from home several times. I like to think that if this service was available to her or known to her when she was going through so much that she wouldn't have been as harmed and pushed into a life of drugs and alcohol that lasted for many years. I could use more materials. I'd like to hit downtown Lincoln in the next couple of months and when school starts again I'm going to start sending out materials to more of the middle and high schools. I especially use the posters for now."

~ Teresa in Nebraska

Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum: With a grant from the Elizabeth Morse Genius Trust Foundation, and in collaboration with DePaul University's Center for Community Organization and Development, NRS developed a first-of-its-kind resource, the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum (RPC)*. This interactive, 14-module curriculum is designed to address interpersonal and coping skills, increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention, educate teens about alternatives to running away, and encourage youth to seek and access help from trusted community members. The curriculum has been presented in FYSB runaway and homeless youth programs, public and alternative schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, juvenile justice programs, and other community-based social service providers. In FY 2014, 7,603 youth (with some duplication) participated in the curriculum in an individual activity, in one or more modules, or in all 14 modules, as evidenced by the demographic forms received. In FY 2015, 3,320 youth participated. The NRS updated the curriculum in FY 2015. That revised version was published on the NRS website for free and public access. DePaul University evaluated the

curriculum's effectiveness in 2015. The evaluation showed an increase in knowledge ranging from 10 percent to 31 percent among youth who participated in the curriculum.[36]

Research: NRS continues to release its annual crisis caller statistics, highlighting trends over a 10-year period.[37] In addition, NRS annually updates its online media source book, featuring statistics from peer-reviewed journals and federal studies.[38]

Promotional Materials: In addition to offering free information and materials on the web, NRS publicizes all its services by sending educational and promotional materials to individuals and organizations across the United States. In FY 2014, NRS distributed 181,687 brochures and prevention materials by mail and at conferences. In FY 2015, 109,357 hardcopy materials were distributed. These materials can be printed directly from the NRS website, 1800RUNAWAY.org/free-promotional-materials.

Media: In FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS also spread its message by collaborating with media outlets. NRS uses a multifaceted approach in building visibility, including public service announcements, media pitching and placement, and the NRPM campaign (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: National Runaway Prevention Month, 2014

NRPM generates a lot of media attention for NRS and its services each year. In November 2013 (FY 2014), 87 task force members participated in the Social Media Day of Action, resulting in 74,707 impressions of #NRPM2013 and 718,011 impressions of @1800RUNAWAY on Twitter.

[36] An evaluation of the curriculum's effectiveness can be accessed, as of December 21, 2015, at http://1800runaway.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/RPC_Evidence_Based_Determination.pdf

[37] The report on annual crisis caller statistics can be accessed as of December 21, 2015, at http://www.1800runaway.org/homeless-teen-research

[38] The media source book can be accessed, as of December 21, 2015, at http://www.1800runaway.org/about-us/media-resource-center

In addition, NRS added an NRPM 30-Day Activity Calendar to its online toolkit to assist organizations in promoting NRPM. In 2014, 140 participating organizations participated in the Social Media Day of Action, resulting in 1.88 million impressions. In addition, 300,000 individuals participated in NRS's Thunderclap featuring #NRPM2014. NRS promoted a national weekly activity. Two of these weekly activities were online: Throwback Thursday, which encouraged adults to post their high school pictures, and the Thunderclap. Two were community activities, namely a candlelight vigil and a day encouraging participants to wear green socks in solidarity with homeless youth. In addition, NRS created and distributed the infographic shown in Figure 3.

Greyhound Lines also hosted NRPM activities. In 2014, Greyhound Lines became "Greenhound" Lines, with employees across the country wearing green socks in support of NRPM.

Partnerships and Collaborations

NRS supports FYSB efforts to serve runaway and homeless youth and help them to get off the streets through strategic partnerships with national, international, and community-based organizations. The following partnerships were active in FY 2014 and FY 2015:

Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA): NRS collaborated with BGCA sites to implement NRS's *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*. Its "Runaway Reality" module is featured in the BGCA *Kids in Control* curriculum, which is used by club leaders. In FY 2014, five BGCA sites participated in the full 14-module implementation research project.

California Coalition for Youth: NRS handled overflow youth crisis calls for the Coalition's statewide California Youth Crisis Line.

Center for Missing and Abducted Children Organizations (CMACO): NRS collaborated with CMACO to provide crisis services and education and prevention materials to families of runaway and missing youth nationwide. NRS has also integrated CMACO's member organizations into its nationwide referral resource database.

CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers: NRS and CenterLink collaborate to inform the LGBTQ community of NRS programs and services. NRS has integrated CenterLink service providers into its nationwide referral resource database.

Child Helpline International (CHI): NRS is a member of this international organization, which is developing youth hotlines in all countries worldwide. NRS provided technical assistance on crisis intervention training, volunteer recruitment and management, and program evaluation.

Children of the Night "With Out Wall" (WOW): NRS collaborated with Children of the Night to provide resources to American teens living on the streets. NRS provided materials, such as wallet cards and the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, to Children of the Night and its WOW program partners nationwide.

Crisis Text Line (CTL): NRS served on the national advisory board to support the development of CTL, a text based crisis support tool, by providing expertise in online crisis intervention

delivery. CTL is an independent subsidiary of DoSomething.org and works in partnership with existing hotlines, organizations, and experts.

Interstate Commission for Juveniles (ICJ): ICJ is a contract between the states that regulates the interstate movement of children who are under state supervision or have run away from home and left their state of residence. NRS served as an ex officio member of ICJ's board to ensure that ICJ is aware of NRS services.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC): NCMEC redirects runaway-related calls to NRS for assistance. NRS refers guardians of runaway youth to NCMEC for additional services, such as the AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert program.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: A reciprocal "Crisis Line Continuity Service Plan" is in place to ensure continued crisis-line service in the event that either organization's crisis call center is not operational. The plan is live-tested once a year.

National Hotline Networking Group: Organized by the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Center for Victims of Crime, this group focuses on ensuring high-quality services, maintaining quality referral resources, client confidentiality, privileged communications, evolving communication technology, and securing the necessary level of funding to support these services.

National Safe Place: NRS and National Safe Place have a long history of collaboration to help get youth to safety. In FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS and National Safe Place continued to collaborate on the TXT 4 HELP project. TXT 4 HELP uses text messaging to quickly inform homeless and runaway youth about the closest location where they can find immediate help and safety. When there are no National Safe Place shelters within 30 miles, a youth is provided the 1-800-RUNAWAY number for additional services. TXT 4 HELP provided 26 referrals to NRS in FY 2014 and 28 referrals in FY 2015. An additional component of the partnership is the promotion of runaway prevention and increased community awareness of runaway youth issues. In FY 2014 and FY 2015, NRS and National Safe Place implemented the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* "Runaway Reality" module in five community venues nationwide.

True Colors Fund: The Forty to None program provided training for NRS's Youth and Resiliency Professional Development training series on *Creating Inclusive and Affirming Environments for Transgender and Gender Diverse Clients and Staff*, and the True Colors Fund and NRS support each other in connecting with LGBTQ youth nationwide.

NRPM 2013 [Here to listen. Here to help.] (FY 2014): For National Runaway Prevention Month in November 2013, 792,718 people were reached through national, community, and online outreach. NRS combined forces with 19 national partners: American Association of School Administrators, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, CenterLink LGBT Community Centers, Girls Inc., National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Association of Police Organizations, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Center for Homeless Education, National

Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Network for Youth, National Resource Center for Youth Services, National Safe Place, National Women's Coalition Against Violence & Exploitation, School Social Workers Association of America, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, Prevent Child Abuse America, and True Colors Fund. These partners and 87 task force members initiated NRPM activities in 25 states. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont) introduced a Senate resolution in support of NRPM that passed on November 20, 2013.

NRPM 2014 [Piecing It All Together] (FY 2015): For National Runaway Prevention Month 2014, 1.88 million people were reached through national, community, and online outreach. NRS combined forces with 25 national partners: American Association of School Administrators; Boys and Girls Clubs of America; Girls Inc.; CenterLink LGBT Community Centers; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth; National Association of Police Organizations; National Association of School Nurses; National Association of School Resource Officers; National Center for Homeless Education; National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth; National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty; National Network for Youth; National Resource Center for Youth Services; National Safe Place; School Social Workers Association of America; National Resource Center on Domestic Violence; PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center; Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network; Prevent Child Abuse America; True Colors Fund; Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network; Futures Without Violence; National Child Resource Center; Coalition for Juvenile Justice; and Spare Some Change Movement. These partners and 140 task force members initiated NRPM activities in 45 states.

COORDINATING, TRAINING, RESEARCH, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Since the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act first passed, FYSB has worked to increase knowledge among service providers and the general public about two things: (1) the needs of runaway, homeless, and street youth and (2) the evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices that address those needs.

FYSB also works to ensure that all federal youth serving programs recognize the needs of runaway and homeless youth by collaborating with major federal agencies that provide support or services to youth at risk. These collaborations are highlighted below.

FYSB funds demonstration projects and data collection efforts provide new information, and the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (NCFY) and RHYTTAC disseminate that information to the field. These services are discussed later in this section.

Coordinating to Improve Services for Runaway and Homeless Youth

To better coordinate services for runaway and homeless youth across the federal government, FYSB participated in four major interdepartmental efforts:

- The **Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs** was formed by executive order in 2008 and includes the 12 federal agencies that support programs and services targeting

youth. FYSB actively contributed to FindYouthInfo.gov (now Youth.gov), the working group's website, which consolidates all federal resources about youth and youth programs in one place.

- **USICH** is working to end homelessness in the United States. Nineteen federal agency members, including HHS, worked closely with state and local partners, to continue to implement USICH's strategy for striving to end youth homelessness (see Introduction).
- The **Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention** coordinates all federal programs related to: juvenile delinquency prevention, unaccompanied juveniles, and missing and exploited children. It examines how programs can be coordinated among federal, state, and local governments to better serve at-risk youth and makes annual recommendations to Congress. FYSB met with the council quarterly.
- The **Federal Agency Task Force on Missing and Exploited Children** includes HHS, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Department of Justice. Together, task force members worked closely to build a system of support for victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

FYSB also worked individually with federal agencies that provide services to runaway and homeless youth. Activities include:

- **Providing Shelter:** Homeless young people who graduate from Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs or live in areas not served by FYSB programs often need subsidized housing until they can make a full transition to self-sufficiency. FYSB partnered with HUD to ensure that homeless young people have access to the federal housing programs that can help complete that transition.

  In October 2015, FYSB also partnered with HUD to review guidance for intake workers on determining and documenting homeless status for youth using the definition found in HUD's CoC and Emergency Solutions Grants programs. Agencies used that session, facilitated by USICH, to explain their respective definitions of homelessness, and to outline common scenarios experienced by young people and their families.
- **Promoting Mental Health Stability:** Substance abuse and mental health issues are challenges for many young people on the streets as well as for their families. FYSB and SAMHSA's Homelessness Resource Center shared knowledge and resources about evidence-based strategies to prevent and treat substance use and mental disorders among runaway and homeless youth.
- **Making Education a Priority:** Homeless young people often get disconnected from their schools, which could offer them safety, structure, and opportunity. FYSB worked with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, which guarantees homeless children and youth an uninterrupted education, are fully enacted. FYSB also coordinated with the department's TRIO program to ensure that homeless and disconnected youth have access to programs that encourage and support postsecondary education for at-risk youth, such as Upward Bound and GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs).

- **Creating Opportunities To Succeed:** To fully transition to economic independence, homeless young people need opportunities to learn job skills and money management strategies. FYSB collaborated with the U.S. Department of Labor's YouthBuild program and the ACF Office of Community Services' Assets for Independence program to help provide those life skills.
- **Supporting All Transitioning Youth:** Homeless youth and foster youth share many of the same challenges as they move toward self-sufficiency: housing, education, employment, financial management, and emotional support. FYSB and the Children's Bureau collaborated closely to make sure that the Transitional Living Program and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program shared effective practices.
- **Providing Training and Technical Assistance:** FYSB funded two organizations (described below) to advance knowledge in the field and support grantee efforts to improve their own effectiveness.

National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth

FYSB established the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (NCFY) in 1992. NCFY collects research, evidence-based practices, and promising practices in runaway and homeless youth management and services. NCFY disseminates this information to grantees and the youth work field through its website.

NCFY maintains a library and literature database of 20,000 resources, journal articles, and books related to the issues facing runaway, homeless, and other at-risk youth. Each year, 1,000 new resources are abstracted and added to the online literature database.

NCFY posts 250 short articles annually to its website (ncfy.acf.hhs.gov), as well as frequent alerts on funding opportunities, quarterly podcasts, a quarterly e-magazine, and a growing number of informational and instructional videos and online learning resources (see Figure 4). To meet the needs of highly mobile youth works, all content is accessible via Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds that can be set to download to handheld devices. The website is also fully mobile-responsive, meaning that the interface changes to fit any screen size—desktop, tablet, or phone.

NCFY posts a series of recurring columns that address grantee needs, as determined by HHS, FYSB, training and technical assistance providers, and the grantees themselves:

- **Research:** A weekly research-to-practice digest of the newest research on runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth.
- **NCFY Recommends:** A weekly column of relevant Internet resources for youth workers.
- **Program Strategies:** A regular column highlighting one grantee's innovative practice along with steps to replicate the practice.
- **Fundraising:** A regular column on topics related to building a sustainable organization.
- **Ask NCFY:** A periodic advice column where experts address questions NCFY has received from the general public or grantees.

- **Federal News:** Periodic posts of official news and publications from FYSB and its agency partners.

The quarterly *NCFY Reports* e-magazine (ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/features) takes an in-depth look at FYSB's priority topics. Topics covered in FY 2014 and FY 2015 included domestic human trafficking, fatherhood, and the 40th anniversary of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, among others.

NCFY developed a podcast series in which youth, youth workers, and researchers talk about such issues as empowering youth, building a trauma-informed organization, addressing secondary trauma, and training staff to use evidence-based practices.

NCFY produces videos, multimedia content, and slideshows and offers five online trainings on various topics. The online training in positive youth development continues to be NCFY's most accessed course, with 2,921 people completing it during FY 2014 and FY 2015. Of the 474 people who completed the course satisfaction survey over that two--year period, 93 percent agreed that they could use what they learned in their day-to-day work, and 93 percent said they would recommend the course to others.

The NCFY website had an average of 6,100 unique user visits monthly. NCFY also sends out a twice-monthly e-newsletter, *NCFY News* which was disseminated to around 6,000 subscribers. A sample of the newsletter is available at: http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/newsletter/2014/02/27.

Figure 4: NCFY Home Page

NCFY also maintains a small inventory of print publications and brochures for FYSB grantee conferences, including a brochure on sex trafficking, a manual on positive youth development, and a manual on developing a disaster plan for runaway and homeless youth programs. NCFY disseminates digital files of these publications to the general public electronically through its website and distributes hardcopy materials at national conferences. NCFY staff shared these resources at the following conferences in FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conferences (November 2013 and November 2014)
- National Pathways to Adulthood Conference (August 2014)
- Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Grantee Conference (June 2014)

Federal contracting print restrictions limit the amount of publications that can be disseminated at conferences. NCFY staff members have begun to facilitate workshops in addition to exhibiting. Workshop topics in FY 2014 and FY 2015 included secondary trauma and self-care; the intersection between foster care and youth homelessness; and using social media and multimedia.

NCFY also maintains a call center, answering 600 calls and emails from FYSB grantees and the public each year. Requests can be as simple as a question about grant eligibility or complex enough to require an in-depth research project. All calls and emails receive a response within 1 business day, and most are answered within four business hours. Ninety-five percent of respondents to a brief satisfaction survey provided positive feedback on the NCFY support they received.

In order to publicize its products and services, NCFY has developed relationships with a host of national organizations, including FindYouthInfo.gov, National Network for Youth, National Safe Place, NRS, USICH, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Center for Homeless Education, and SparkAction. These organizations promote NCFY products in their e-newsletters, on their Facebook pages and Twitter feeds, and in their communities of practice.

NCFY has an active Facebook and Twitter presence (see Figure 5). NCFY posts an average of two Facebook messages a day and had received 949 “likes” by the end of FY 2015. The Twitter feed had 1,562 followers by the end of FY 2015. NCFY also conducted eight Twitter chats around topics including the intersection of homelessness and trafficking and serving homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ.

In addition, in FY 2015, NCFY started a FYSB Twitter account to share more federal news related to program areas. By the end of FY 2015, the FYSB Twitter feed had 198 followers.

Figure 5: NCFY Twitter Page

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center

FYSB funds the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC) to enhance and promote continuous quality improvement in grantee services. RHYTTAC's activities are based on three principles: providing grantees quality, cost-effective services; promoting data-supported, evidence-based strategies; and ensuring services relevant to the local grantee.

Principle 1: Cost-Effective Services—RHYTTAC has focused on building more distance-learning opportunities to reduce training and travel costs for grantees while still maintaining quality in the content presented.

Principle 2: Evidence-Based Strategies—RHYTTAC educates local organizations on the use and efficacy of research demonstrating improved outcomes. For example, trauma-informed care and positive youth development both have ample empirical support. RHYTTAC teaches these approaches and provides staff support as grantees implement them. Additionally, RHYTTAC helps to promote the NCFY site, which houses a comprehensive research library (with 900 new items added each year).

Principle 3: Locally Relevant Services—RHYTTAC makes it a priority to gather information directly from grantees so that it can quickly identify and address local challenges. This approach also helps RHYTTAC stay abreast of emerging national trends in service and practice.

A 30-member advisory board supplements the direction RHYTTAC gets from FYSB in its efforts to meet local organizations' needs and ensure that grantees meet federal expectations. Advisory board members include representatives from grantees, federal staff, young people, academics, and representatives of national organizations that serve specific youth populations, some of which are part of the network of support for federally funded runaway and homeless youth services.

National partners include NRS, NCFY, The Trevor Project, and the National Congress of American Indians. The University of Tennessee Children's Mental Health Services Research Center is RHYTTAC's primary academic partner. It is one of seven National Institutes of Health-funded research centers focused on child and youth well-being.

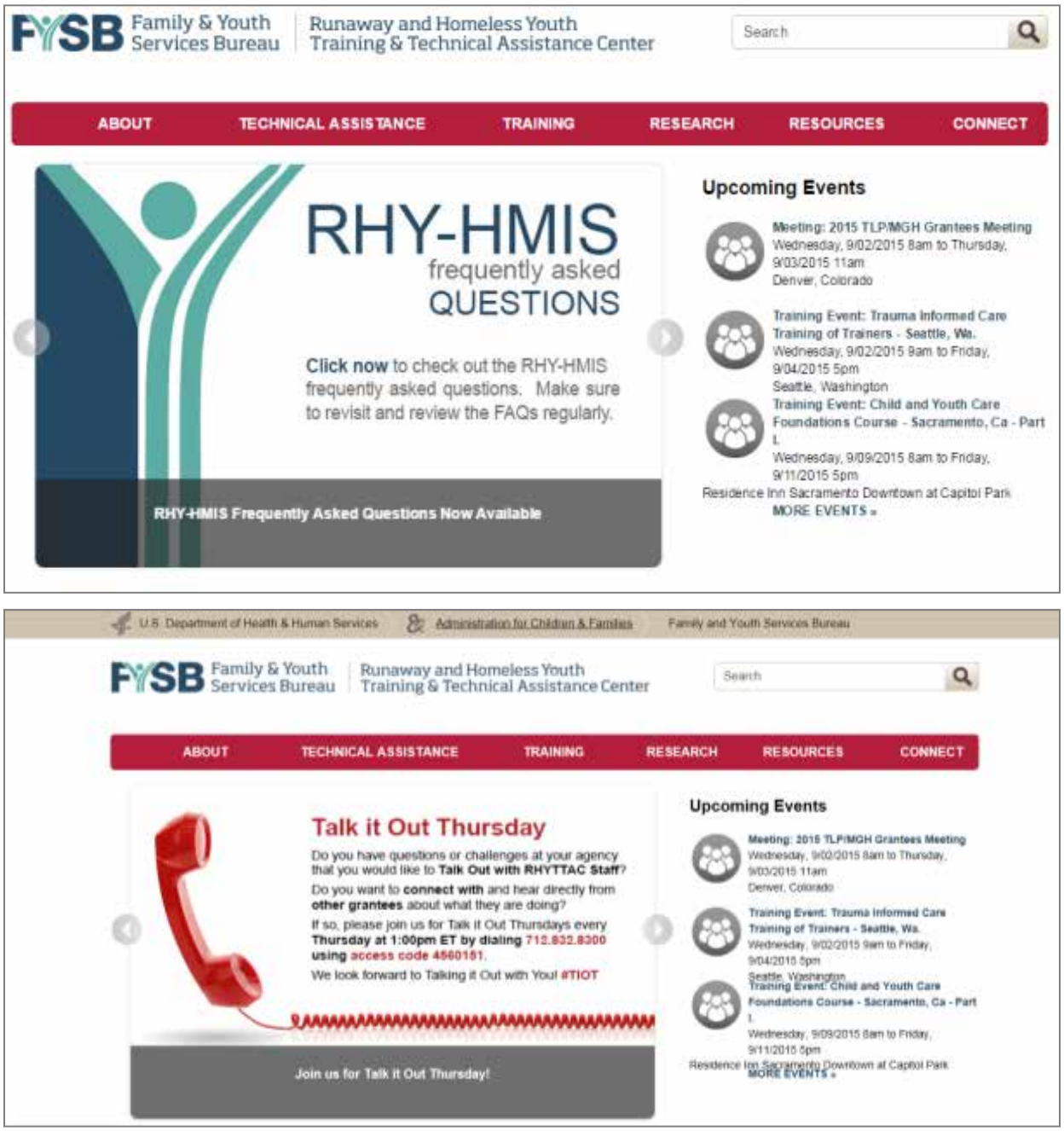
Information Services: In FY 2014 and FY 2015 there were 55,697 visits to the RHYTTAC website and 27,069 unique visitors (see Figure 6 on the next page). RHYTTAC manages an online network called the Community of Practice to encourage conversations and collaboration across the grantee community. By the end of FY 2015, there were 809 Community of Practice members spread across all of the grantees.

Training and Technical Assistance: RHYTTAC's training and technical assistance delivery system is designed to address the needs of grantees as determined by federal project officers, grantee requests, and RHYTTAC staff (see Table 10). In FY 2014 and FY 2015, training topics included "Human Trafficking: Recognize, Respect and Respond (HTR3)," "Trauma-Informed Care Training of Trainers," "Trauma-Informed Care Application to Practice," "Aggression Replacement; Crisis De-escalation," "Motivational Interviewing," and "Child and Youth Care Foundations." "Child and Youth Care Foundations," for instance, is a 40-hour course with two online modules and six days of in-person training. Upon completion, participants can take an exam to be certified as a child and youth care worker at the nationally recognized entry or associate level or the internationally recognized professional level.

Table 10: Training and Technical Assistance Events and Numbers of Participants, FY 2014 and FY 2015

Training and Technical Assistance Events	FY 2014	FY 2015
Skill-Based Training (site-based and facilitated webinars)	568	1,236
Technical Assistance Clinics/Pick Ups	77	114
Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting	131	149
Street Outreach Program Grantees Meeting	104	94
National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference	657	690

Figure 6: RHYTTAC Website



Technical Assistance Clinics and Institutes

In FY 2014, RHYTTAC created a "pick up" model to arrange grantee training that specifically addresses local challenges. Grantees "pick up the phone" and explain their needs, and RHYTTAC staff respond with information or a local training. This model allows grantees to identify the training topics most critical to their operation and to pick the dates and locations of technical assistance clinics. The pick-up model increased participation and ensured that clinics focused on grantees' most pressing needs. Once topics, dates, and locations are identified, RHYTTAC develops materials and identifies subject matter experts to facilitate the clinics. The

pick-up model increased participation and ensured that clinics focused on grantees' most pressing needs. In FY 2015, RHYTTAC conducted pick-up events in multiple locations, including Michigan, Vermont, Wisconsin, Missouri, Georgia, and California.

In addition, RHYTTAC continues to deliver several technical assistance institutes targeted to new grantees. Institutes offer key foundational information on legislative requirements, policy and procedures, reporting, staffing, evidence-based service provision, and sample forms and tools. Institute topics include human trafficking, trauma-informed care, new grantee orientation, and administrative concerns. RHYTTAC also conducts institutes addressing compliance issues arising from monitoring visits.

Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting

RHYTTAC planned and coordinated the Transitional Living Program Grantees Meetings in FY 2014 and FY 2015. The FY 2014 meeting was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 6, 2014, and had 131 participants from 91 grantee agencies. The FY 2015 meeting was held in Denver, Colorado on September 2-3, 2015, and had 149 participants representing 95 grantee agencies.

Street Outreach Program Grantees Meeting

RHYTTAC also planned and coordinated the Street Outreach Grantees Meetings in FY 2014 and FY 2015. Both meetings were held in Dulles, Virginia. The FY 2014 meeting on August 6, 2014, had 104 participants representing 101 grantee agencies. The FY 2015 meeting on April 23-24, 2015, had 94 participants from 64 grantee agencies.

National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference

RHYTTAC convened the FY 2014 and FY 2015 conferences for all Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees. The FY 2014 event was held in November 2013 in Atlanta, Georgia. This conference attracted 657 participants from 48 states plus Guam and Washington, D.C. It featured 62 learning sessions, and all grantees heard directly from federal staff regarding program requirements and priorities for organizations receiving federal funding.

The FY 2015 all grantee conference was held in November 2014 in Phoenix, Arizona. It attracted 690 participants representing 49 states plus Guam, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. The conference provided 54 learning sessions, and federal staff spoke to all grantees about program requirements and priorities for organizations receiving federal funding.

Web-Based (Self-Directed) Learning

RHYTTAC offers e-learning courses (see Table 11) designed by professionals in the field on each of the required staff training topics. Such requirements include basic counseling skills, understanding poverty, sexual exploitation of youth, substance abuse issues, cultural competency, emergency preparedness, and trauma-informed care.

Table 11: Web-Based Learning Use, FY 2014 and FY 2015

Web-Based Learning Use	FY 2014	FY 2015
Number of Courses Offered	189	277
Number of Subscribers	1,196	1,663
Number of Educational Sessions	8,984	8,889

Grantee-Initiated Technical Assistance

RHYTTAC conducts technical assistance to address deficiencies identified by FYSB monitoring activities, as well as based on grantee requests. FYSB wants grantees to understand the value of using available resources and staff support at the onset of a challenge, not solely in response to a federal finding. RHYTTAC encourages such interactions via weekly conference calls in which all grantees are invited to participate. These calls are designed to create a conversation about identified challenges among all grantee staff members, and support peer-learning to help grantees understand the common challenges inherent in their work. Further, these conversations encourage the development of solutions and the utilization of resources. Grantees can communicate directly with RHYTTAC via email or a toll-free number. In FY 2014 and FY 2015, RHYTTAC received and addressed 3,300 contacts from grantees.

TARGETED, INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Grantees found to be noncompliant are provided technical assistance through RHYTTAC based on the findings from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System. RHYTTAC works with grantees to address the areas of noncompliance identified by the onsite visit. RHYTTAC provided FYSB-required onsite technical assistance to two grantees in FY 2014, and one grantee in FY 2015. Each organization received multiple types of support based on its individual needs, as determined by FYSB and the grantee.

RHYTTAC provided noncompliant grantees with support including written materials (sample policies and procedures), conference calls, and online meetings. Comprehensive assessment, including thorough design and delivery and regular, targeted follow-up, ensures that individual grantee agencies experience continuous service improvement and opportunities for capacity-building. Monitoring reports, RHY-HMIS data, corrective action reports, and other program-specific materials are used to design the targeted technical assistance response for each grantee.

Beyond the FYSB-required site visits responding to grantee needs identified during monitoring visits, RHYTTAC completed 10 technical assistance visits at the request of grantees.

RHYTTAC also makes peer-to-peer links between experienced and less experienced grantees, enabling grantees to share their expertise and learn from successful programs. Through the peer links, grantees have provided other programs with support, guidance, and materials such as policy and procedure manuals, resident handbooks, case file packets, and outreach materials.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, FYSB conducted four research and demonstration projects to enhance knowledge about how best to provide services for runaway and homeless youth:

- Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration Project Final Report
- Evaluation of Long-term Outcomes of Youth in Transitional Living Programs
- Street Outreach Data Collection Study
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Capacity Building for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Questioning Youth Populations

1. Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration: Addressing the Challenges of Rural Homelessness

In FY 2008 and FY 2009, FYSB funded a total of six grantees in six states, three per year, under the Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth demonstration project. The 5-year demonstration projects piloted programs to improve service delivery and support youth in rural communities who have little or no connection to stable housing and family. The target population included runaway and homeless youth, as well as youth transitioning out of foster care. The goal of the demonstration was to help targeted rural youth make successful transitions to adulthood by improving their personal connections to survival support services, to education/employment, and to community. This project ended in September 2014.

2. Evaluation of Long-term Outcomes of Youth in Transitional Living Programs

In 2012, FYSB contracted Abt Associates, Inc. to conduct a mixed method research study of long-term outcomes for youth participating in the Transitional Living Program. This study fulfills the requirements of section 119 of the 2003 reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Pub. L. 108-96). The study's implementation component is comprised of a qualitative analysis of transitional living program providers and their organizational structure, service delivery models, goals, and frameworks regarding positive youth development strategies. Planning is underway for a pilot phase to assess the feasibility of a randomized control trial design that would collect direct youth feedback at baseline, 3 months, and 12 months. The research goal is to assess housing, employment, and social-emotional wellness outcomes for treatment and control groups.

A final report is expected by the end of FY 2018.

3. Street Outreach Data Collection

To better understand the service utilization and needs of homeless youth served by the Street Outreach Program, FYSB awarded a contract to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and funded 11 grantees at the end of FY 2010 to participate in a data collection effort. In FY 2013, grantees conducted personal interviews and focus groups with 636 homeless street youth, employing respondent-driven sampling and convenience sampling methods. An executive summary of the study's report, was released in October 2014. The summary provides a detailed portrait of this subset of homeless street youth served by the Street Outreach Program grantees.[39] A full report was released in April 2016. The following statistics characterize the youth interviewed:

- Thirty percent of youth interviewed self-identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and 7 percent identified as transgender.
- Fifty percent of the youth reported a prior stay in a foster home or group home.
- Fourteen percent were caring for children, and 9 percent were currently pregnant.
- Thirty percent reported they had the option of returning home.

[39] The October 2014 executive summary of this FYSB project may be accessed, as of December 21, 2015, at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/fysb_sop_summary_final.pdf

- Twenty-five percent had exchanged sex for money, 25 percent had exchanged sex for a place to sleep.
- Sixty-seven percent had been victimized by sexual assault or rape, beating, threat or assault with a weapon, and/or robbery.
- Fifty percent had struggled with depression, and 75 percent reported having experienced major trauma.
- Eighty-three percent also reported having significant strengths, such as healthy self-esteem and others in their lives they could turn to for support, and 50 percent reported they had a romantic partner.

The study offered a number of recommendations based on its findings, including:

- Establishing more emergency shelter programs to meet existing need.
- Providing intensive case management to assess risk and protective factors and link youth with the full range of services to meet their needs.
- Offering targeted interventions to assist youth who have experienced trauma.
- Focusing on developing protective factors in addition to decreasing risk factors.

4. Runaway and Homeless Youth Capacity Building for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Questioning Youth Populations

In FY 2013, FYSB initiated the three-year "3/40 BLUEPRINT" project to collect and assess emerging practices that have shown promise in meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. (The name refers to reducing the number of homeless youth who are LGBTQ, estimated to be as high as 40 percent, within three years.) The project seeks to identify culturally responsive screening and assessment tools, training models for providers of runaway and homeless youth services, and examples of policies and programs that facilitate LGBTQ homeless youth feeling safe, respected, and affirmed. The effort is a collaboration between the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, supported by a group of leading experts in the runaway and homeless youth. The project was supported by the LGBTQ field in coordination with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs support network, including RHYTTAC, NCFY, and NRS.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAM MONITORING SYSTEM

To ensure that FYSB-funded local programs effectively meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth, FYSB assesses each program's services and offers program administrators the opportunity to improve, if necessary. The assessment is carried out by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program monitoring system. Every Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach Program grantee is required to have an onsite review at least once in three years.

Onsite reviews ensure:

- **Compliance with grant requirements—**determining whether federal grants are being used for the purposes for which they are made.
- **Program assessment—**collecting additional information on the status, activities, and accomplishments of grantees for the biennial Runaway and Homeless Youth Report to Congress.
- **Assistance to grantees—**providing information and assistance to grantees to enable them to improve facilities, services, and activities.

FYSB conducted onsite monitoring of 54 grantees in FY 2014 and 36 grantees in FY 2015. FYSB program specialists also conducted desk monitoring of all grants over the telephone and through reviews of RHYMIS data, semi-annual program progress reports, and federal financial reports.

MONITORING TEAMS

Monitoring teams are made up of FYSB staff and trained peer monitors. They assess grantees by visiting programs, reviewing documents, and meeting with administrators, direct service staff, staff from coordinating agencies, and sometimes youth and parents.

Peer monitors play an important role in the monitoring system and bring an expert perspective to the process. Peer monitors are selected based on their experience and knowledge as managers of well-functioning FYSB-funded programs. This background enables them to evaluate project performance against their own programmatic and administrative experiences and to share successful approaches to working with runaway and homeless youth with grantees.

New peer monitors attend a two-day National Peer Monitor Training. They learn what their roles and responsibilities are as peer monitors, as well as how to collect findings and document them in the monitoring instrument. To practice monitoring skills before going into the field, each trainee completes a monitoring visit at a local FYSB grantee organization.

During monitoring visits, federal staff on the review team address financial and compliance issues. Peer monitors address program issues, provide technical assistance, and share best practices. These monitors might suggest ways to increase the number of youth a program serves. They might also share tips on keeping thorough client records or explain how to involve youth in updating rules and policies.

THE VISIT

Monitoring visits typically include the following activities:

- **Entrance conference:** Reviewers meet with project staff to introduce themselves, explain the monitoring process, and identify programmatic areas that staff want to strengthen.
- **Interviews:** Reviewers meet with the executive director, supervisors, administrators, frontline staff, and clients to discuss each FYSB program's direct services, project development, resource coordination, and administrative issues.

- **Observation:** Reviewers inspect facilities to determine safety. They also observe interactions among youth and staff and determine how well staff plan and supervise activities for young people.
- **Document review:** Monitors examine documents including policy and procedures manuals, financial reports, data on the demographic makeup of the client population and on the services they receive, annual reports, staffing charts, job descriptions, board notes, client files, and case notes.
- **Exit conference:** The monitoring team meets with project staff to give feedback and discuss project strengths and areas that would benefit from improvement or that are out of compliance. Grantee staff can, if they wish, comment on the monitoring process and clarify issues that have arisen during the visit.

Compliance

Based on the onsite review, FYSB determines whether the grantee is in substantial compliance with legislation, program standards, and the approved grant. To be in substantial compliance, a grantee must be delivering the services in their approved grant. For minor shortcomings, the monitoring team may make suggestions to promote more effective or efficient operations and to enhance the future development of the grantee's program. Training and technical assistance is offered based on these suggestions. However, the recommendations for technical assistance are not binding on the grantee and do not trigger a follow-up review. Compliance checks are also performed during desk monitoring activities.

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, nonbinding suggestions included the following:

- Keep a log of outreach efforts to track effectiveness and improve contacts, including notation of when youth are engaged in outreach and community awareness efforts.
- Create an internal resource list so supervisors and case managers know which employees can provide language services when needed and how to contact them.
- Move the first aid kit that is currently locked up when the game room is locked to another area on the first floor that is accessible 24/7.

Noncompliance

A grantee is not compliant if the project is not providing key services as described in the grant or is not reaching significant numbers or categories of at-risk youth. Organizations can also be considered noncompliant if they are using structures or operational plans that are not following program guidance and would lend itself that consideration must be given to not renewing grant funding unless the situation is corrected.

In those cases of noncompliance, the monitoring team prepares a written report that identifies strengths and areas that require corrective action. The assigned project officer and RHYTTAC also provide necessary technical assistance. Within 30 days of receiving notification of deficiencies, grantees must submit a corrective action plan that describes the steps they will take to correct the noncompliance issues. Within 60 days, grantees must submit a progress report on

that corrective action plan, and at 90 days, they must submit a final report that explains how the deficiencies were resolved.

The grantee may be subject to an onsite follow-up review within a year of the first site visit. If a grantee is still not in substantial compliance at the conclusion of the follow-up review, the situation will be remanded to FYSB for appropriate action. A noncompliant grantee may be placed on financial restrictions, be denied continuation funding, or have its grant revoked. In FY 2014 and FY 2015, most grantees were able to resolve their compliance issues through targeted, intensive technical assistance.

LOOKING AHEAD: ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

FYSB is committed to providing leadership on two key federal initiatives in the years ahead: the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness and the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking.

Since the launch of the first federal strategic plan to end homelessness, FYSB and its federal partners have made significant progress, including developing a framework, national research agenda, and shared purpose for ending youth homelessness. Moving forward, FYSB will continue to keep these shared goals and frameworks in mind while working to keep young people from being homeless, and ensuring youth experiencing homelessness make a safe and successful transition to adulthood. For example, at a meeting of the RHYTTAC advisory board, grantees highlighted the continued need to build young people's independent living skills and find them stable housing. In the coming years, FYSB will work closely with HUD and other federal entities to ensure that best practices in homelessness prevention and intervention can be adapted to meet the needs of developing youth.

FYSB also plans to continue its work with federal partners in supporting the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program has been serving young people coerced into sex trafficking for years and will play a key role in the plan's four goals, which are:

- Increasing coordination and collaboration by increasing guidance, collaboration, and civic engagement at the national, state, tribal, and local levels.
- Increasing awareness by increasing the understanding of human trafficking among key governmental and community leaders and the general public.
- Expanding access to services by increasing victim identification and expanding the availability of services for victims throughout the United States.
- Improving outcomes by promoting effective, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services that improve the short- and long-term health, safety, and well-being outcomes of victims.

FYSB, working in partnership with the ACF Office on Trafficking in Persons, is providing leadership to prevent and end trafficking of runaway and homeless youth. Specifically, FYSB is

bringing its grantees the HTR3 training program, created by National Safe Place Network and provided by RHYTTAC. HTR3 teaches grantees how to recognize, respect, and respond (R3) effectively to survivors of human trafficking. The project focuses on providing strengths-based responses to these survivors, understanding the impact on service organizations, and increasing community awareness and understanding. FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees can build their capacity to address youth trafficking effectively by taking RHYTTAC's HTR3 training through e-learning, a web-based application incorporating training documents, PowerPoint presentations, and recorded webinars. RHYTTAC also offers regional training and facilitated webinars on human trafficking throughout the year.

FYSB looks forward to working closely with its partners to implement these federal initiatives, which show great promise to support youth development and strengthen families.