

**Report to Congress on the  
Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs  
Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Family and Youth Services Bureau**

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## Executive Summary

Thirty-seven years ago, the groundbreaking Runaway and Homeless Youth Act created the first line of defense for young people who had run away from home, become homeless, or who had 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 have never had, or have lost contact with, supportive adults who could provide guidance and model healthy decision-making. And they 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, life-long 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.

For all these reasons, programs that keep young people from being homeless – whether by providing preventive services or rapid, effective family reunification (if appropriate) and case management once youth are on the streets – are key components of the social safety net for our Nation’s most vulnerable youth.

Today, that safety net is woven by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, most recently reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, and administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration for Children and Families of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorizes the three Runaway and Homeless Youth Grant Programs that enable community-based 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 Center programs provide emergency shelter, authorized under Part A;
- Transitional Living programs offer longer-term care that helps prepare older youth for self-sufficiency and adulthood, authorized under Part B; and
- Street Outreach programs make contact with youth on the streets, with the goal of connecting them to services, authorized under Part E of the Act.

Bolstering these frontline services is a network of support, including

- A National Communications System, which serves as a national hotline connecting young people to programs, services, and transportation back home, authorized under Part C; and
- 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 of the Act.

To ensure that the local programs it funds effectively meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth, FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System assesses each program's services regularly.

This report documents that FYSB's longtime commitment to combating youth homelessness worked to create a range of services available to young people across the Nation, so that they had somewhere to turn in fiscal years (FYs) 2010 and 2011.

In fact, as a result of more than 35 years of following emerging research and working with runaway and homeless youth programs at the local level, FYSB has developed an understanding of the social and emotional needs of youth on the streets and the supports and services that can best help them recover and succeed. In FY10 and FY11, the Bureau began work to translate that experience and expertise into a framework that will enable the federal government to more precisely measure the effectiveness of projects funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. This report describes that framework.

Additionally, as required by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, this report outlines "the status, activities, and accomplishments of entities that receive grants under parts A, B, C, D, and E," in FY10 and FY11. The report also includes information about the monitoring of grantees, as required by Section 386 of the Act.

## Introduction

Thirty-seven years ago, the groundbreaking Runaway and Homeless Youth Act created the first line of defense for young people who had run away from home, become homeless, or who had been asked to leave home by their families.

The Act sought to ensure that runaway and homeless youth could find emergency shelter in every state. Congress believed that temporary shelter, along with rapid intervention by case workers and other social service providers, would enable youth to be quickly reunited with their families, if such a reunion was deemed appropriate. Youth who couldn't go safely home could be helped to find other arrangements outside the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

Runaway and homeless youth frequently don't have the financial, social, or emotional resources to get off the streets successfully on their own. They have often been traumatized by violence and abuse at home or in their communities. They have never had, or have lost contact with, supportive adult family members, educators, and faith leaders who could provide guidance and model healthy decision-making. And, they 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, life-long health, behavioral, and emotional problems. Compared to other youth who have never run away, they suffer from high rates of depression, ADHD, and post-traumatic stress disorder. They tend to abuse drugs and alcohol and are often survivors of physical and sexual abuse. The longer they live on the streets, the more likely they are to fall victim to commercial sexual exploitation.

For all these reasons, programs that keep young people from being homeless – whether by providing preventive services or rapid, effective re-housing and case management once youth are on the streets – are key components of our social safety net for vulnerable youth.

Today, that safety net is comprised of the three Runaway and Homeless Youth Grant Programs and a greater network of support under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, recently reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, and administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration for Children and Families of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Authorized under Parts A, B, and E of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act,

### 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**;
- B. The **Transitional Living Program** for Older Homeless Youth;
- C. **The National Communications System**;
- D. **Coordinating, Training, Research, and Other Activities**; and
- E. The Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of the Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program, known as the **Street Outreach Program**.

the **Basic Center**, **Transitional Living**, and **Street Outreach** Programs enable grassroots 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 programs offer longer-term care that helps prepare youth for independence and adulthood. Street Outreach programs make contact with youth on the streets, with the goal of connecting them to services.

Bolstering these frontline services is the **National Communications System**, which is authorized under Part C of the Act 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, 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.

### Measuring Effectiveness

As a result of more than 35 years of following emerging research and working with runaway and homeless youth programs at the local level, FYSB has developed an understanding of the social and emotional needs of youth on the streets and the supports and services that can best help them recover and succeed. In fiscal years (FYs) 2010 and 2011, the Bureau began work to translate that experience and expertise into a framework that will enable the federal government to more precisely measure the effectiveness of projects funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. The framework, developed in consultation with the field, includes four outcomes: safety, permanent connections, well-being, and self-sufficiency.

#### **Safety**

*Youth are able to live free from violence, abuse, neglect, harassment, stalking, exploitation, and fear. This sense of safety is physical, emotional, and mental. Youth feel supported and protected from harm in relationships and in social settings.*

#### **Permanent Connections**

*Youth have a stable living situation that they do not fear losing or having to leave. They have solid, healthy relationships and connections with family (whether biological or not), friends, mentors, and other significant people to whom they can turn in good times and bad.*

#### **Well-being**

*Youth enjoy general good health and have access to treatment and care when they need it. Beyond physical health, they have satisfactory life circumstances such as stable living arrangements, enriching educational experiences, job satisfaction, mental health stability, and social connectedness.*

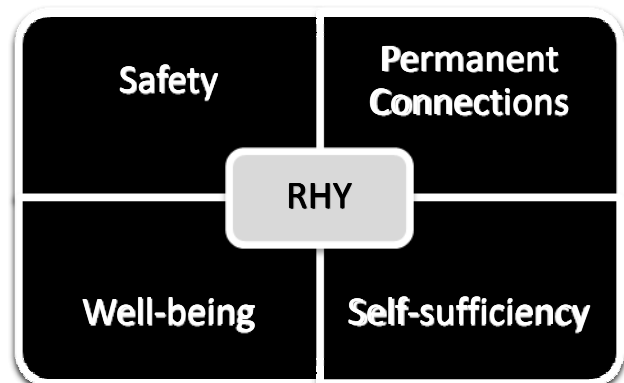


Figure 1: RHY Outcome Framework

### ***Self-sufficiency***

*Youth have the skills, or are learning the skills, to live independently, support and take care of themselves, get and stay employed, manage their finances, further their education, support and take care of a family (now or in the future), contribute to their communities, and plan for the future.*

Throughout FY11, FYSB provided resources, training, and technical assistance on the outcomes and what they mean in practice. This ensured that grantees and non-grantees were informed of the framework before being required to respond to it in their applications for FY11 funding.

At the same time, FYSB advanced several other components of the initiative, including:

**Performance standards:** As required by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, FYSB is in the process of updating and expanding the performance standards for the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach Programs. The new standards, which were developed in consultation with the field, will set the minimum requirements that FYSB-funded runaway and homeless youth projects must meet. The standards will be issued in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for public comments.

**Program indicators:** To determine how well grantees are achieving the four outcomes described above and set forth in the performance standards, FYSB began to develop a set of indicators for each of the three Runaway and Homeless Youth programs. The Bureau's initial step in this rigorous process was to conduct a comprehensive literature review on how to measure the outcomes. Then, the Bureau queried grantees about the outcome measures they might already have in place. Finally, FYSB brought together 49 grantees from across the country for a series of working groups in which they discussed key themes and feasible methods for collecting data. A process of peer review, departmental review, and pilot testing will be undertaken before the indicators are finalized.

**Evidence-based practices:** To ensure progress in the four outcome areas, FYSB encourages grantees to use practices and interventions that have evidence of effectiveness. To begin to help grantees assess which of these evidence-based practices may be appropriate for them, FYSB reviewed the hundreds of programs or practices in the major evidence-based clearinghouses for their relevance to runaway and homeless youth programming. FYSB is developing a comprehensive matrix of 40 programs or practices culled from the clearinghouses that may be replicable in a runaway and homeless youth program setting.

**Data collection:** To collect indicator data related to the four abovementioned outcomes, FYSB must redesign its multiple data collection mechanisms. In FY11, the Bureau began to assess its data gathering methods and develop a comprehensive strategy for collecting information while not burdening grantees.

As policies, procedures and processes get put into place for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Outcomes Initiative, FYSB will have overlaid a comprehensive framework onto the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program that will both guide and measure grantee effectiveness. While data from this initiative may not be available for several years, FYSB will ultimately be able to say, with much more precision, what grantees are doing to solve the problem of youth homelessness.



## Ending Youth Homelessness

FYSB is a committed partner in Opening Doors, the federal government's strategic plan to end homelessness. FYSB believes that by measuring and documenting what works, encouraging and supporting systemic change, and encouraging close collaboration among agencies at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels, the federal government can make strides towards its goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness by 2020.

This report documents that the program's longtime commitment to combating youth homelessness worked to create a range of services available to young people across the Nation, so that they had somewhere to turn in FY10 and FY11, even as many states were forced to cut funding for urgently needed social services.

As required by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, the report outlines "the status, activities, and accomplishments of entities that receive grants under parts A, B, C, D, and E," in FY10 and FY11. The report also includes information about the monitoring of grantees, as required by Section 386 of the Act, and the qualifications and training of monitors.

### Opening Doors: How FYSB Grantees are Helping to End Youth Homelessness

According to Opening Doors, the Federal strategic plan to end homelessness, there are six areas that must be addressed in order to prevent and end youth homelessness. All of these services are provided through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program:

- Individualized goal-based service planning
- Ongoing support services connected to mainstream resources
- Independent living skills training
- Connections to supportive and trustworthy adults and support networks
- Employment and education
- Housing

## Section A: 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: BCP Grant Funding**

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding	Number of Exiting Youth
2010	360	\$48.6 million	45,429
2011	340	\$48.2 million	38,758

\*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. These shelters provide young people a safe bed to sleep in for long enough for case workers to work with them and their families. The purpose: 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 best-case outcome: Youth return safely home or find a stable place 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 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?***

In FY10 and FY11 a total of 84,187 youth received services from a basic center program, including shelter or preventive services, such as mediation and family and individual counseling. Basic centers may serve youth under 18 years old. Most youth are between the ages of 15 and 17, though programs work with youth as young as 11 and 12 years old.

Boys and girls are served almost equally; slightly more than half of young people entering basic centers are girls. While the programs serve young people of all races and ethnicities, and the majority of youth served are white (just over half of all youth), African American youth are overrepresented (about one-third of youth) compared to their representation in the general population. Native American youth are also overrepresented.

In FY10 and FY11, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth made up about 6 or 7 percent of basic center youth whose sexual orientation was reported in FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System, or RHYMIS. Transgender youth accounted for about 0.05 percent of basic center youth both years, based on what was reported in RHYMIS. Grantees indicate that RHYMIS data may not be conclusive, however. Because youth often have difficulty trusting shelter staff at first, many youth workers do not press youth to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, and youth may be reluctant to say they are gay or transgender. Some research on homeless youth<sup>1</sup> demographics suggests that a staggering 20 to 40 percent homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ).

Most young people served by basic centers have only recently run away or become homeless. Most – about 85 percent – come to basic centers from the home of a parent, guardian, relative, or friend. Fewer than 1 in 10 have been living on the street.

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<sup>1</sup> Ray, N. (2006). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

In addition to young people who received preventive or shelter services, basic centers served another 220,815 youth through “brief contacts” by phone (including hotlines, where they are available), in drop-in centers, or at other venues, such as schools. These contacts last less than 6 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.

**Table 2: Snapshot of Youth Served by BCP in FY 2010 and FY 2011, Excluding Brief Contacts (numbers are rounded)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Female	52%	53%	White	53%	53%
Male	48%	47%	Black or African American	31%	31%
Other	<1%	<1%	American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	3%
<b>Age</b>			Asian	1%	1%
11-14	33%	34%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	1%
15-17	59%	59%	More Than One	3%	4%
Other	8%	7%	Not Provided	9%	8%
<b>Living situation at entry</b>			Hispanic or Latino (all races)	18%	18%
Private residence	85%	86%	<b>School status at entry</b>		
Street	7%	6%	Attending regularly	64%	65%
Shelter	2%	2%	Attending irregularly	19%	19%
Residential Program	2%	2%	Dropped out	6%	6%
Detention Center	1%	1%	Don't know	6%	5%
Don't Know	1%	1%	Graduated high school or obtained GED	2%	2%
Other	2%	2%	Suspended or expelled	3%	3%

### ***What Problems Do Youth Who Come to Basic Centers Face?***

Youth who come to basic centers have myriad problems. Nine out of 10 youth served by basic centers say they face difficult family dynamics at home, such as constant fighting and screaming. About one quarter of youth suffer abuse and neglect. Close to 1 in 10 has witnessed a family member being abused or neglected. Girls may be more likely than boys to seek services for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect. In about 30 percent of service episodes for female clients, abuse and neglect is an issue, compared to 20 percent for boys.

According to youth workers' observations and young people's self-reports, more than a third of youth who enter BCPs have mental health problems; one quarter of youth have problems with drinking and drugs. A smaller number (about 10 percent of all youth who enter a BCP) have family members who also experience mental illness, abuse, or addiction.

All of this means that 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.

Another major issue for young people is school. Close to two-thirds of basic center youth are regularly attending school when they begin receiving services, and only about six percent have dropped out. But nearly 20 percent are attending irregularly, and more than half cite education or school as an issue. Homelessness can disrupt young people's education, causing them to miss school or perform poorly, and youth who have repetitive conflict at home also 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.

About a quarter of basic center youth cite housing as an issue they face. Most often, youth in basic centers, who average 15 years of age, have a home they can return to after family counseling or other reunification services. The minority of BCP youth who can't return home and are old enough to seek housing on their own cite issues around emancipation, low-cost housing, rental agreements, and resources for security deposits, among others.

### ***What Do Basic Centers Do to Help Youth?***

When it created the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Congress was aware that simply sheltering runaway and homeless youth and providing them with basics like food and clothing – while vital – was not enough. Young people need assistance with the underlying issues that can cause or contribute to running away.

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 behavioral and mental health 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.”

### **Alternative House: Jessica's Story**

*As a child, Jessica was abused by a family member. Seeking escape and attention, she struggled with drugs and frequently ran away from home for a day at a time. Finally, she found help at the Alternative House, a FYSB-funded youth shelter in Northern Virginia. But the change in direction came only after a frightening four days away from home.*

**Jessica:** I'm never gone this long. And I feel like crap, you know. And I don't know what my parents are doing. I felt like I was going to go to jail or something. I went and I stole a bottle of Robitussin. And I stole a bunch of Coricidin pills, a whole pack of them. And I took fourteen pills and a whole bottle of Robitussin. And my stomach was tripping and I couldn't stand up. I've never taken so much at once. And I got on the bus and I was really sick. And I didn't know what to do or where to go. So I just went down in these woods, kind of far down. And I was laying there and I was crying. It was raining. I only had shorts on and a t-shirt. There were worms everywhere, all over the ground. And I didn't care. Because I knew -- I had a feeling I was going to die. And I was there for like 15 minutes and I wasn't dying. So I started praying. I said, you know, maybe there's -- maybe I have a purpose in life. And I was like, okay. Well, I'm just going to go and try to contact somebody.

*The next morning, Jessica entered the youth shelter. She stayed for two weeks, and then received aftercare services including counseling and a referral to a drug rehabilitation program. Her father, Johnny, said the support was exactly what she needed.*

**Johnny:** Slowly but surely, I started seeing her progressing. We had a couple of [counseling] sessions that we had to have together, in terms of trying to understand her behavior and then making sure that I give her maximum support in treatment. We struggled there for a little while. Because initially when she came back, she was talking about she just wanted to get her GED. She just didn't want to go through, you know, finish any type of formal education. But we worked through that. And eventually, she changed her mind on that. And she'll be graduating next month. She'll be walking.

**Jessica:** I've been out for almost a year. And I still am sober. Because I actually dealt with what was the reason that I was doing everything. I have a career in mind for a little bit. I want to be a youth correction officer. Going through a long-term abuse, I wanted to help others to get through it. That is my calling. I know that much. I know I didn't go through a childhood of abuse for nothing.

## **Stabilizing Young People**

Basic centers “stabilize” young people by addressing their immediate need for shelter, food, clothing, health care, and mental health services and by working with educators to keep young people in school during their stay at the basic center.

Youths’ need for shelter may be addressed either through a centralized emergency shelter facility or a “host home” in the community. Youth live with families who have volunteered to house them, make sure their basic needs are met, and provide support and supervision with assistance from program staff. The host home model is used by about 25 percent of basic center grantees (86 programs in both FY10 and FY11).

It is important to add that basic centers are, in some cases, able to keep young people from leaving home at all. About 17 percent of youth served by the centers receive preventive services such as mediation and family and individual counseling. Most of those young people do not go into shelters. Basic centers may work with families for as little as a few days or as long as several months to help manage family conflict and establish healthy patterns of family interaction.

Young people who do enter shelters -- or are placed with a “host-home” family that will take care of them until longer-term housing can be found – are assigned a case manager. Case managers assess youth’s needs and deal with the most urgent things first.

## **Case Management and Counseling**

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

Basic centers devote many hours of case management to finding a safe and stable place for young people to live. Doing so involves intense work to resolve family conflicts, if possible, so that young people can go home. When going home to their families is not possible—or preferable—for youth, case managers work to find a relative or friend who will take them in, or a longer-term youth program, such as a transitional living program.

Basic centers may have mental

### **Measuring Outcomes: Boys Town, NE**

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

- 90 percent were either attending school or had graduated;
- 92 percent were living in a home-like setting;
- 93 percent of youth ages 13 and older had not been arrested since leaving the program;
- 64 percent got along well with their families; and
- 94 percent reported that services had had a positive impact on them.

health and substance abuse counselors on site, or they may refer youth to outside services. They may also use evidence-based programs in prevention, shelter, and aftercare settings rooted in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of talk therapy. Studies have shown CBT to be effective at helping 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. 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 larger agencies have medical staff on site. However, the majority of programs rely on extensive collaboration, signing Memoranda of Understanding 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 work 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<sup>2</sup>, Brief Strategic Family Therapy<sup>3</sup>, Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention<sup>4</sup>, Functional Family Therapy<sup>5</sup>, and Aggression Replacement Training.<sup>6</sup>

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. (The 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 staff also take an active role in youth's education. For example, staff may become members of a youth's Individualized Education Program team if the young person has a disability. Staff may also 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 to older youth.

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<sup>2</sup> Alternatives for Families: A Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.afcbt.org/node/1>

<sup>3</sup> University of Miami Health System. BSFT Program Effectiveness. Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from [http://bsft.org/BSFT\\_Effectiveness](http://bsft.org/BSFT_Effectiveness)

<sup>4</sup> [Berkowitz SJ, Stover CS, Marans SR. The Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention: Secondary prevention for youth at risk of developing PTSD. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2011 Jun; 52\(6\):676-85.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Functional Family Therapy. Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.fftinc.com/>

<sup>6</sup> National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention: Evidence-Based Program Fact Sheets. Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.promoteprevent.org/publications/ebi-factsheets/aggression-replacement-training%C2%AE-art%C2%AE>

## Discharge Planning, Followup, and Aftercare

From the moment youth enter a basic center, case managers involve youth 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” that includes where the youth will live (and where they might go if that falls through), how they will stay connected and engaged in school, where they can go

for longer-term counseling, and where they can get other services. Case managers also help youth explore and apply for government assistance, such as Housing and Urban Development housing assistance, food stamps, and supplemental food vouchers for parenting teens.

After young people leave basic centers, staff follow up<sup>7</sup> to ensure that they remain in stable housing and in school and are receiving help they need in other areas, such as counseling and substance abuse programs. Because repairing family relationships can take much longer than three weeks, programs also refer families to any additional services that they might need. Programs also work with youth and families if new conflicts arise.

### ***What Are the Outcomes of Basic Center Services?***

Data collected in RHYMIS does not currently give a complete picture of the outcomes of the Basic Center Program. FYSB believes that its efforts to define and measure the four Runaway and Homeless Youth Program outcomes, as described in the Introduction to this Report, will allow a much more in-depth discussion of outcomes in the years ahead.

In the meantime, what we do know is that grantees report that a young person’s stay at a basic center can sometimes serve as a wake-up call both to families and to youth, pushing them to resolve their

#### **Measuring Outcomes: Vermont Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition**

A coalition of runaway and homeless youth programs in Vermont uses the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets, a set of factors believed to help youth succeed and prepare for the future, to examine young people’s strengths when they enter and exit basic centers. Assets fall into categories of individual well-being, interpersonal connections, and community connections.

The coalition found that over the past two years, 96 percent of youth increased their score in at least one asset category. The average composite score rose from 84.20 at entrance to 98.81 at exit (out of a possible total of 160).

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<sup>7</sup> FYSB standards require each grantee to have an aftercare plan for youth after 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 continuing individual and family counseling. Most programs maintain contact with youth after they “graduate,” checking in regularly to see how youth are doing and providing them with any services they may need.



problems. In fact, over two-thirds of youth who stay in a basic center shelter return to the home of a parent or guardian.

More than 90 percent of youth leaving basic centers have what are called “safe exits.” That means they return to their families or another stable living situation, such as a friend or relative’s house or a residential program.

In many cases, however, youth are fleeing intense conflict that cannot be resolved in just a few weeks. For example, one basic center in Seattle has found that youth who have experienced violent abuse at home are less likely than those who haven’t experienced abuse to be reunited with family. In those cases, the program attempts to place them with friends or relatives or in a residential program. The Seattle program has also found that youth who abuse drugs are more difficult to help in a short period of time and more likely to drop out of the basic center program than young people without substance abuse issues. Despite many challenges, more than 90 percent of young people accept counseling or therapy while in the care of a basic center.

## Section B: The Transitional Living Program 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.

Through the Transitional Living Program, these youth find safe, stable places to live and support to guide them on their paths to self-sufficiency. The program supports agencies that provide longer-term residential services to older, homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 22 for up to 21 months. (Youth younger than 18 who have passed the 21-month mark may stay in the program until their 18th birthday).

Transitional living programs offer services and referrals—including life skills training, financial literacy instruction, medical and mental health care, and education and employment services—designed to help

young people who are homeless make a successful transition to self-sufficient living.

For some youth, becoming self-sufficient means not only supporting themselves but also supporting a child. For this reason, the most recent reauthorization of the Transitional Living Program explicitly included maternity group homes.

Maternity group homes offer an

intensive array of services to meet the short- and longer-term needs of pregnant and parenting youth.

**Table 3: TLP Grant Funding**

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding	Number of Entering Youth
2010	208	\$39.5 million	4,111
2011	207	\$39.3 million	4,104

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

In maternity group homes, young people learn parenting skills as well as 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.

The Transitional Living Program has two major goals: (1) to promote the social and emotional well-being of young people; and (2) to prepare youth to become independent and support themselves and their children.

### ***Who Are the Youth Served by Transitional Living Programs?***

In FY10 and FY11, a total of 8,215 youth received shelter and support services from a transitional living program. More than half (about 55 percent) of clients were 18 or 19 years old when they began the program. About 60 percent were female. Almost 30 percent of all clients, male and female, were pregnant or parenting when they came to the program.

More than half of young people entering a transitional living program (about 55 percent) had recently run away from or been asked to leave a private residence. About one-quarter had come from a shelter or another residential program, and more than one-tenth were living on the street. The remaining youth came from an undefined living situation, a correctional facility or detention center, a mental hospital, or the military.

While the programs serve young people of all races and ethnicities, the largest group of youth served was white (about 45 percent of all youth). African Americans were overrepresented (more than one-third of youth) compared to their representation in the general population (13 percent).<sup>8</sup> Native Americans also were overrepresented, making up 5 percent of youth served by transitional living programs, compared to .9 percent of the U.S. population.<sup>9</sup> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders made up 1 percent of youth served, compared to 0.2 percent of the general population.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 4: Snapshot of Youth Served by TLP in 2010-2011 (numbers are rounded)**

Gender			Race/Ethnicity	2010	2011
Female	61%	59%	White	46%	46%
Male	39%	40%	Black or African American	37%	35%
Other	<1%	<1%	American Indian or Alaska Native	5%	5%

<sup>8</sup> QuickFacts. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html> on March 28, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Age				
16-17	21%	20%	Asian	1% 1%
18-19	55%	54%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1% 1%
20-21	24%	26%	More Than One	4% 4%
Living situation at entry			Not Provided	6% 8%
Private residence	57%	56%	Hispanic or Latino (all races)	14% 13%
Shelter	17%	18%	School Status at Entrance	
Street	12%	13%	Attending regularly	32% 33%
Residential Program	7%	6%	Graduated high school or obtained GED	32% 33%
Detention Center	1%	1%	Dropped out	22% 18%
Don't Know	<1%	1%	Attending irregularly	10% 9%
Other	5%	6%	Don't know	3% 7%
			Suspended or expelled	<1% <1%

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth made up about 9 or 10 percent of young people served by transitional living programs in FY10 and FY11 as reported in RHYMIS. Transgender youth accounted for less than 1 percent of young people each year, according to RHYMIS data. Because youth often have difficulty trusting program staff at first, many youth workers do not press youth to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity, and youth may be reluctant to do so. But research on homeless youth demographics suggests that 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.<sup>11</sup> Grantees suggest that RHYMIS data may not be conclusive and LGBTQ youth may make up a similarly large proportion of youth in transitional living programs.

### ***What Problems Do Youth In Transitional Living Programs Face?***

Youth who come to transitional living programs have a multitude of challenges.

About 75 percent of youth served by transitional living programs say they face difficult family dynamics at home, such as constant fighting and screaming. Almost one-third of youth have suffered abuse and neglect or have witnessed a family member being abused or neglected.

<sup>11</sup> Ray, N. (2006). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Over 40 percent of youth report struggling with mental health problems, and over 35 percent of youth say they have issues with drinking and drugs. Boys may be more likely than girls to seek services for alcohol or drug abuse. In about 38 percent of service episodes for male clients, alcohol or drug abuse is an issue, compared to 25 percent for girls.

About 18 percent report health-related concerns. Ten percent report struggles with sexual orientation or gender identity.

Homelessness is a major disruption to education. Homeless youth move around a lot and devote much of their time and attention to daily survival. About 60 percent of youth in TLPs cite education or school as a challenge. However, about 30 percent of those who enter transitional living programs have either graduated high school or obtained a GED and about a third attend school regularly. Only about 20 percent have dropped out; about 10 percent attend irregularly; and less than 1 percent have been suspended or expelled. In the case of about 5 percent of youth, grantee staff did not report whether or not they were in school.

Unsurprisingly, many youth come to transitional living programs because they or their families face housing difficulties. TLP residents are, on average, 18- or 19-year-old adults who are expected to live on their own, but have little ability to find, pay for, or sustain housing. Indeed, over 80 percent of youth cite housing as an issue they face, and 35 percent identify insufficient income.

While youth who come to transitional living programs experience different hardships, research suggests that most homeless youth experience multiple traumatic events both before and after becoming homeless.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned above, young people who have been exposed to violence may have symptoms such as 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.

### ***What Do Transitional Living Programs Do to 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 plan, in order to avoid re-traumatization and facilitate healing and recovery.

### **A Place to Call Home**

Living accommodations may include group homes, host-family homes, or supervised apartments owned by the program or rented in the community. In all three models, programs may house up to 20 youth at one time.

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<sup>12</sup> Schneir, A. Stefanidis, N. Mounier, C. Ballin, D. Gailey, D. Carmichael, H. and Battle, T. (2007). Trauma Among Homeless Youth. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Retrieved March 29, 2012, from [http://www.nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/culture\\_and\\_trauma\\_brief\\_v2n1\\_HomelessYouth.pdf](http://www.nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/culture_and_trauma_brief_v2n1_HomelessYouth.pdf)

1. **Group homes** 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. Policies for what is expected of youth also vary by program, but in general youth are prepared for independent living by taking on responsibilities such as planning menus, preparing food, doing housekeeping tasks, and resolving issues that naturally arise in a shared-housing arrangement. Staff continuously supervise youth in the home and regularly check up on each young person's progress in the program. Most transitional living program grantees use this approach, moving youth on to their own apartments when they are ready. Programs also house young people in **supervised apartments**. Some grantees own apartment buildings and house youth in individual units. In such programs, either a staff person lives on the premises to assist youth as needed, or the program is staffed 24/7. Other programs use "scattered-site" apartments: single-occupancy apartments rented directly by young people, with the sponsorship of a transitional living program. Some programs have relationships with landlords, and youth only rent units run by those landlords. In other programs, youth rent apartments in whatever locations they choose. In some programs, the organization provides youth with a rent subsidy, while in others youth pay all of their rent.

In scattered-site apartment programs, staff visit young people periodically, generally more often when they first move in (daily or several times a week) and less often (weekly or monthly) as they progress toward independence. Some programs allow youth to keep the apartments upon completing program services. About 15 transitional living programs used this approach in FY10 and FY11.

2. In the **host-home approach**, youth live in the community with families who have volunteered to house them, 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 how each state regulates host homes. In general, families receive background checks and training. Some programs pay families; in other programs, host home families are volunteers. One transitional living program grantee used the host-home approach in FY11.

Many programs combine models, using a phased system that moves youth from more supervised to less supervised surroundings as they learn to live on their own. For example, youth might move from a group home to a program-owned apartment building in which a staff member lives down the hall to a scattered-site apartment where they are on their own most of the time, with weekly visits to the program for training and counseling and regular calls with their case managers.

### **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 and decide what services the young person needs.

To figure out how they can best support young people, and to determine youth's ability to live on their own after they leave the program, many programs use screening and assessment tools such as the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment when youth enter the program and at regular intervals during their stay. This online tool asks youth and staff members to rate the young person's knowledge of critical 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. (More information about Casey Life Skills is available at <http://caseylifeskills.force.com>.)

**Covenant House Florida: Melissa's story**

Melissa had a baby at 14. After struggling for three years, Melissa finally entered a maternity group home at Covenant House Florida at age 17. Here, Melissa speaks candidly about the challenges of teen parenthood and homelessness and how she has worked to overcome them.

**Melissa:** There's a lot of changes. You have to put a lot aside, your friends, going outside, having fun. Because you have to take care of your child. You have to find daycare. There's school that's involved. It's pretty much a lot. Money. You have to buy diapers, like clothes, all of that. Before I got pregnant, I really didn't care what was going on, what I was doing. Now I have to think about somebody else and not just all me. There's another person that I brought into the world.

The support here at the Covenant House is real big. It's like, anything you need, they'll get or they'll try to get. Or they'll find other resources to help you out if you don't have the answer that you need. They try to prepare you to be open to what you're about to go into and the outside world. Instead of depending on other people, they mostly teach you to depend on yourself. And if you really need help, then you'll go to somebody to help you or find the resources.

I graduated on Friday. So now everything is completed. I'm just waiting for the future, what's going to happen next. Right now I have a job. I start orientation on Friday. And in August, I go to college for criminal justice forensics. Your education, that's something that's important. Because when you get your diploma, you're going to feel good and tell your kids what you've done, what you've learned. And your child is going to look up to you like, "Oh, mommy did it. So can I."

Every day, staff help young people develop the skills they need to move to full independence. In their daily lives, youth learn by doing. To complement the hands-on experiences, grantees also offer, directly or by referral, programs and workshops 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:

- **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 to graduate from high school or attain a GED credential, postsecondary training, or vocational education. In addition, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act 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. One transitional living program in Omaha has developed a relationship with a Subway franchise that provides job training and then employment to youth in the program. And a transitional living program for LGBTQ youth in New York maintains a farm that teaches young people about animal husbandry. Programs aim to match youth with jobs that fit their skills, financial needs, and career aspirations.
- **Mental health care.** Programs offer, either on site or by referral, individual and group counseling. 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, behavioral, and physical health care are provided in one building.

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

- **Education.** Programs offer education on parenting, child development, discipline, and safety.
- **Physical and mental health care.** In addition to prenatal care for pregnant youth, programs offer reproductive health care, individual and family counseling for the parent and child, and pediatric medical services, if necessary.
- **Parent support.** Programs facilitate parent involvement in local schools and other child education programs.
- **Child care.** Programs help young parents to access reliable and affordable child care and early childhood education services.

The services that transitional living programs provide for young men and young women are virtually the same, except that young women are more likely to get help getting Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, HUD housing assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, childcare 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 behavior changes.<sup>13</sup> The technique helps young people explore their own motivations for change and understand the gap between their current behavior and

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<sup>13</sup> Motivational Interviewing entry in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. Retrieved March 29, 2012, from <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=130>.

desired life goals. It has been used successfully in programs that focus on range of problem behaviors related to alcohol and substance use.<sup>14</sup>

Some programs also report using evidence-based interventions rooted in cognitive behavioral therapy, another type of goal-driven counseling that may help young people exposed to violence and abuse. For example, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is designed to treat posttraumatic stress and related emotional and behavioral problems in children and adolescents. Developed for victims of child sexual abuse, the model has been adapted for use with children who have a wide array of traumatic experiences, including domestic violence and traumatic loss.<sup>15</sup>

All of the services provided by transitional living programs strive to prepare youth to live on their own and support themselves and their children.

### **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.

Aftercare can take many forms. The single most important factor that influences how youth do when they leave a transitional living program, FYSB grantees say, is having safe, appropriate, and affordable housing for them 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 youth 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 youth 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 youth are doing and provide them with any services or support they may need.

### ***What Are the Outcomes of Transitional Living Programs?***

As mentioned above, RHYMIS does not currently collect comprehensive outcomes data, which limits FYSB's understanding of the impact of the Transitional Living Program. The Bureau believes that its efforts to define and measure the four Runaway and Homeless Youth Program outcomes, as described in the Introduction, will provide much more robust data for subsequent Reports to Congress.

What FYSB can say is that about 87 percent of youth who leave transitional living programs, whether they complete them or not, make what are called "safe exits," moving on to either a private residence or

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<sup>14</sup> [Carroll, K. M., Ball, S. A., Nich, C., Martino, S., Frankforter, T. L., Farentinos, C., et al. \(2006\). Motivational interviewing to improve treatment engagement and outcome in individuals seeking treatment for substance abuse: A multisite effectiveness study. \*Drug and Alcohol Dependence\*, 81\(3\), 301-312.](#)

<sup>15</sup> Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy entry in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. Retrieved March 29, 2012, <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=135>.



a residential program, rather than onto the street or to a homeless shelter or unknown location. By providing training and technical assistance, FYSB is working with its Transitional Living Program grantees to raise that percentage even further and to increase the number of youth who complete the programs.

Upon their exit from a transitional living program, more than 60 percent of youth have graduated high school or obtained a GED, or they are attending school regularly. Additionally, in FY10 and FY11, over one-third of young people leaving transitional living programs were employed, while a similar number were looking for work. Program staff report that the economic crisis of the past several years, which escalated at the start of FY09, has made it more difficult for

young people to find employment. As a point of comparison, in FY06-08 about 45 percent of young people leaving transitional living programs were employed. However, based on life skills assessments conducted by many of the programs, young people demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve and maintain employment in a competitive marketplace.

#### **Measuring Outcomes: The Harbour**

The Harbor, in Park Ridge, IL, runs both a transitional living program and a maternity group home. Of the 32 youth in the transitional living program:

- 90 percent who completed the program attended school regularly, graduated from school, or obtained a GED.
- 100 percent who completed the program were determined to have basic living skills, as assessed by the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment.

The same agency's maternity group home served 36 young women in the last two years. All were connected with supplemental food vouchers, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, parenting education programs, and other community resources immediately upon entering the program. All youth who completed the program maintained custody of their children.

### **Section C: National Communications 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." The system was originally authorized in Part C, Section 331 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and was reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-378).

The National Runway Switchboard (NRS), a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep America's runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth safe and off the streets, has been awarded the national communication system grant through successive competitive review processes since 1974. NRS works closely with FYSB staff and grantees to ensure that young people in crisis have a central place to turn 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. It uses a multi-pronged approach that combines a 24-hour hotline, interactive online

services, a comprehensive website, a national resource database, public service announcements, outreach activities, and collaborative relationships with local and national partners.

### **1-800-RUNAWAY**

The central element of the communications system, NRS' toll-free hotline (1-800-RUNAWAY), operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A frontline team of staff and more than 300 highly committed volunteers answer the calls. These hotline volunteers, along with other volunteers in data entry and information fulfillment roles, provided 14,878 hours of service in FY10 and 15,927 hours in FY11, a seven percent increase.

All front line staff and volunteers complete NRS' 40-hour solution-focused crisis intervention training. The training is divided into five classroom sessions that focus on the following areas: adolescence and

**Table 5: Callers' Race/Ethnicity FY10/11**

<b>Race</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
White/Caucasian	41%	41%
Black or African American	30%	31%
Hispanic or Latino	18%	17%
Multi-Racial	5%	6%
Not Provided	3%	2%
American Indian or Alaskan	1%	1%
Asian	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or other	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%

crisis intervention, parents/guardians as callers, legal issues and conflict mediation, child abuse and Child Protective Services, NRS' free bus ticket home service, NRS' Live Chat service, and depression/suicide. The sessions include lecture, discussion, small group activities, videos, audio clips, and facilitated role playing. Trainees also spend at least four hours listening in 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.

NRS' frontline crisis team handled 110,150 calls in FY10 and 110,062 calls in FY11. The daily average was 301 calls in both years. Call volume typically peaked on Monday and decreased slowly throughout the week.

In both FY10 and FY11, almost 57 percent of the youth-related crisis callers identified the youth's situation as runaway, homeless, or throwaway<sup>16</sup>. The other 43

percent of youth-related callers were youth in crisis (30%), youth contemplating running away (11%), or youth suspected missing by parents but not reported as a runaway (1%).

In June of FY10, NRS began collecting data on crisis callers' race. These new data inform strategies on conducting targeted outreach and marketing to populations who more closely reflect the demographics of callers.

<sup>16</sup> According to the NISMART II study, 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, 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, no adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult, and the child is out of the house overnight.

NRS has a dedicated phone line for hearing-impaired youth. Those with hearing impairments are also able to access services electronically, with e-mail, live chats, or posts to online bulletin boards. To assist callers whose first language is not English, NRS utilizes Spanish-speaking staff and volunteers, as well as fee-based translation services for 144 different languages.

**Table 6: NRS Caller Demographics**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Status of youth crisis callers</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Female	71%	71%	Runaway	39%	39%
Male	29%	29%	Youth in crisis	33%	31%
			Contemplating running away	10%	11%
<b>Age</b>			Homeless	11%	12%
18-21	45%	46%	Throwaway	5%	6%
12-17	55%	54%	Suspected missing	1%	1%
			Ward of State/court	2%	2%
<b>Caller relationship</b>			Former ward of State	2%	3%
Youth	50%	53%	<b>Time youth on the street before calling NRS</b>		
Parent	29%	27%	1-3 days	45%	45%
Adult	7%	7%	4-7 days	9%	9%
Relative	7%	7%	1-3 weeks	21%	20%
Youth's friend	4%	4%	1-2 months	11%	11%
Police	1%	1%	3-6 months	7%	8%
Agency	2%	1%	over 6 months	7%	7%

Youth call the hotline for many reasons. The most frequently reported issues stayed consistent in FY10 and FY11. The top 10 issues identified were: family dynamics; peer and social issues; school-related issues; mental health issues; transportation issues; economics; alcohol and drug issues; physical abuse; judicial system issues; and youth services issues.

These data may under-report the incidence of highly sensitive issues such as whether youth identify as LGBTQ or whether they have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Youth may be reluctant to share such information.

## Solution-Focused Crisis Intervention

Listening is an important part of what hotline staff and volunteers do, but they do more. Using a five-step, solution-focused crisis-intervention model that centers on finding appropriate solutions, they connect callers to services, referring them to community- and faith-based programs and public agencies.

To make referrals, NRS maintains a comprehensive up-to-date database with detailed service information on 12,552 national and community-based social service providers nationwide.

The resource database is updated yearly with contact information and service profiles of FYSB's basic center and transitional living programs. Staff and volunteers also have access to more than 100,000 organizations listed in hard copy, and publically available online in resource directories such as [www.211.org](http://www.211.org). NRS provided 17,695 referrals in FY 2010 and 15,310 referrals in FY11. Because the crisis line is anonymous and caller identification is not used, data cannot be collected on whether referrals are utilized, however.

To connect homeless youth who are no longer in their home community to appropriate housing and other community-based services at their new location, hotline staff mediate conference calls between young people and community agencies

that can assist them. NRS mediated 1,295 such calls in FY10 and 1,397 calls in FY11. 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 also mediate conference calls between runaway youth and their parents to facilitate positive communication and initiate family reunification. For a real example of a family mediation call, please see Jeanine's Story in the box above.

### National Runaway Switchboard: Jeanine's Story

Jeanine, a 16-year-old runaway, called the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) from a police station. She explained that her mom was emotionally and verbally abusive and that she had been kicked out of her home after a particularly bad fight. She stayed on different friends' couches for a week until she wore out her welcome. Jeanine was picked up by police loitering outside of a convenience store late at night. She refused to go back to her mother's home but wanted to try to live with her dad full time. NRS conducted conference calls with both parents and the youth together to figure out options. Jeanine's mom admitted that she needed time to cool off and agreed it was better for Jeanine to stay with her dad until their relationship could improve. Dad said he was willing to take Jeanine, but also felt that counseling would be a good idea.

NRS searched the referral agency database to find a local counseling center for Jeanine. In addition, NRS booked a Home Free ticket through its partnership with Greyhound and shared the transportation itinerary with Jeanine and her father. Jeanine was also encouraged to call NRS during her trip home, if she had any additional questions or concerns. NRS made a followup call to Jeanine and her father to verify her arrival, remind them of the agreed-upon referral for counseling, and conduct a brief followup survey. NRS told Jeanine and her dad to call back any time.

### **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 will leave messages to family when they are unsure or scared of how they will be received. A 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: “Mom, I am safe and have a place to stay tonight. I will call NRS tomorrow when I get access to a phone to see if you got my message, and if you say you are ready to talk, I will call you through them.”

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 for him or her at NRS. The following is a real message left by a parent: “You can come home or go to Grandma’s, but you need to do one or the other because we want you to be safe and we love you.” NRS offered the message relay service 1,045 times in FY10 and 873 times in FY11. There were 384 messages from runaway youth taken in FY10 and 342 messages in FY11. The NRS’ three part research project facilitated by the National Opinion Research Center conducted in 2010 found that more than half (58.5%) of runaway and homeless youth reported having access to a cell phone at least some of the time while away from home<sup>17</sup>, allowing them to contact family when they are ready.

### ***www.1800RUNAWAY.org***

In FY10 and FY11, NRS continued to focus on upgrading its website, [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org). In June 2011, NRS launched a new, user-friendly, youth-centered design with search engine optimization to enable youth searching the internet to more easily find NRS.

On the newly-designed site, 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. The media section serves as a user-friendly source of information for reporters to access in order to educate the general public about runaway issues. NRS also provides caller statistics from 1-800-RUNAWAY, NRS trends analysis, NRS research projects and third-party research. Educators can find and download the *Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* on the website in English and Spanish.

In FY10, the website had 101,311 visits. There were 60,135 visits between October 1, 2010 and June 22, 2011. From June 23, 2011 to September 30, 2011, the updated site has had 20,929 unique visitors, 26,162 total visits, and 81,115 page views.

In FY10 and FY11, NRS also continued to enhance its youth-centered initiatives, including the electronic magazine, *Switched-On*, and a blog created and managed by NRS’ Youth Task Force. The electronic magazine featured topics such as bullying and drugs. Each bi-monthly issue had a main article, relevant letters from readers with responses, and resource links. In addition, youth would provide three interactive blog posts about the subject. *Switched-On* had 12,084 visitors in FY10 and 6,299 visitors in

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<sup>17</sup> Pergamit, M. R., and Ernst, Michelle. (2010) Runaway Youth’s Knowledge and Access of Services. National Runaway Switchboard.

FY11. In the coming years, NRS is planning to revamp its youth-centered web content in order to take advantage of technological advancements.

Over the past two years, NRS has increasingly used social media vehicles to connect with youth and the adults who are concerned about them. The Switchboard focused on using Twitter and Facebook to drive traffic to its website and connect new people to NRS services. During FY10 and FY11, NRS got 1,595 Facebook fans and 1,645 Twitter followers.

In March 2011, the National Runaway Switchboard launched a comprehensive live chat service for youth who want access to NRS services online. Youth can access Live Chat from any page of the NRS website 4:30-11:30 pm Central Time daily. 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, “pushing” links to community-based services or informational websites through the chat screen directly to the youth. These resources include the basic center and transitional living programs.

NRS has found that having direct access to Web resources during a live chat empowers youth to follow through and seek help.

From March 24, 2011, when NRS launched its live chat service, to the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2011, NRS received 607 chat requests resulting in 246 substantive chat conversations. The remaining 361 chat requests either terminated abruptly or otherwise did not provide enough information for documentation.

NRS staff members also respond to on-line bulletin board postings and crisis e-mail messages. Postings on the bulletin board range from discussions of family issues, legal

issues, parenting, peer pressure, and relationships. NRS responded to 316 bulletin postings in FY10 and 318 in FY11.

Youth also contact NRS via e-mail. Crisis e-mails increased significantly in FY11. In FY10, NRS responded to 191 crisis e-mails. In FY11, NRS responded to 506 crisis e-mails, a 160 percent increase.

Staff members respond to information requests, whether a bulletin board posting or e-mail, within two hours 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The custom software that supports the e-mail and bulletin board service was completely upgraded in FY11.

### ***Family Reunification Through Home Free***

Since 1995, NRS has worked in partnership with Greyhound Lines to administer the Home Free program. The program reunites runaway youth ages 12 to 20 with their families by giving them free bus tickets home. When returning home to family members is not an option, runaway youth ages 18 to 20

#### **From the National Runaway Switchboard’s Online Message Board**

*I feel like running away from home because my parents and I get into really bad arguments and I start to cry and I just can’t take it anymore. We also just found out recently that my brother has ADHD, and my parents are treating him different just because of his condition, and if he does something he’s not supposed to he won’t get in trouble but if I do it I will. By the way I am 12 years old and I don’t know what to do. I can’t talk to my parents I don’t feel comfortable enough.*

may receive free tickets to alternative placements, such as transitional living programs near their homes. FYSB basic centers often utilize the Home Free program to unify out-of-state runaways with their families. Home Free has provided more than 14,000 rides home since its inception.

Prior to August 2011, youth ages 12-17 could only use Home Free to be reunified with parents/guardians. Recognizing that runaway and homeless youth can find healthy home environments within their extended family networks, NRS expanded the Home Free family reunification program in August 2011. Home Free now enables youth to be united with non-custodial parents, siblings age 21 or older, and extended family members such as aunts and uncles. The change empowers youth, guardians, and other family members to arrange for and create the best possible living situation for the runaway or homeless youth.

NRS discussed Home Free services with 2,276 youth in FY10. Of those young people, 388 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 program. In FY11, NRS discussed Home Free services with 1,969 young people and issued a free bus ticket to 428 of them.

### ***Getting the Word Out About Runaway Prevention and Services***

The National Runaway Switchboard uses a variety of mechanisms to raise awareness of runaway and homeless youth issues and the Switchboard's services.

**National Runaway Prevention Month:** For nine years, NRS has sponsored National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) each November to publicize the problems runaways face and ways to prevent them from running away. National and local organizations help by promoting NRPM events and activities across the country. Organizations report hosting a jeans day fundraiser, candlelight vigils, press conferences, family-focused events, and green light bulb distributing parties.

First used by a local runaway and homeless youth program, green light bulbs have come to symbolize NRPM. A New York nonprofit lit the Hudson Bay Bridge green for three days in November 2009. On November 3, 2010, the Empire State Building glowed green for NRPM.

In FY10, NRS started "NRPM in a Box," providing 150-plus organizations with starter kits (posters, green light bulbs, green light lapel pins, and other materials) to build their local initiatives. In FY11, NRS created 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 create a ripple effect, connecting youth with services via the internet. NRS will start tracking its social marketing outcomes in FY12.

**Street Team:** In May of 2008, NRS launched the Street Team initiative to give people all over the country a way to help runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth and their families. This grassroots community outreach program aims to increase awareness of the issues runaway and homeless youth face and the programs and services NRS offers. At the end of FY11, there were 295 Street Team members in 40 states.

Joining the Street Team Program is entirely web-based. Individuals interested in becoming Street Team members submit an electronic application. Once approved, new Street Team members receive a starter

kit of information, including materials to be distributed in his or her community. After distributing the materials, the Street Team member can request more and continue to spread the word. Street Team members also receive a login and password that allow them access to the Street Team website, where they can find a list of suggested activities. These activities include creating a YouTube video to promote 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, sweatshirts, and more.

One Street Team member brought NRS promotional materials to seven Chicago Public libraries, became a fan of NRS on Facebook, blogged about NRS and the work he is doing spreading the word of 1-800-RUNAWAY, and created a YouTube video. His video can be found at:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcvXo69gmuo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcvXo69gmuo).

**Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum:** 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*. This interactive, 14-module curriculum is designed to address interpersonal and coping skills, increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention, educate about alternatives to running away, and encourage youth to seek and access help from trusted community members. In FY10, over 20,500 youth participated in the curriculum, and in FY11, over 21,500 youth participated in the curriculum. Venues included FYSB funded runaway and homeless youth programs, public and alternative schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, juvenile justice programs, and other community-based social service providers.

A DePaul University evaluation shows an average increase in knowledge ranging from 10 percent to 31 percent among youth who participate in the curriculum. An evaluation of the curriculum's effectiveness can be found at

[http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/RPC\\_Evidence\\_Based\\_Determination.pdf](http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/RPC_Evidence_Based_Determination.pdf)

**Research:** NRS has determined that research data describing the plight of the runaway is an effective means of building visibility around runaway youth with the media, funders, and the general public. NRS continues to release its annual crisis caller statistics, highlighting trends over a more than 10-year time period. That report can be found at [http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/Trend\\_report\\_2011.pdf](http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/Trend_report_2011.pdf). In addition, NRS annually updates its online Media Source Book at <http://www.1800runaway.org/media/sourcebook/>. The Media Source Book features statistics from peer-reviewed journals and federal studies. In addition, NRS contracted the following research projects:

***Runaway Youth's Knowledge and Access of Services:*** NRS contracted with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) to study youth's knowledge of help resources (like NRS) and youth's propensity to seek service. Interviews took place in Chicago and Los Angeles. The project was divided into three groups: youth on the streets and in shelters (released in May 2010 as part of a larger report, *Why They Run*), youth in schools (October 2010), and youth in foster care (March 2011). The reports are available at <http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research>.



Some of the key findings include:

- Sample youth found ways of staying connected. A majority have access to a cell phone, either their own or through friends. Three quarters of sample youth have a MySpace account and half of them access it at least once per week.
- Only 13 percent of sampled youth stated that nobody knows their whereabouts. One quarter said their parents know where they are. One quarter stay in touch with siblings.
- Over one third of sample youth had previously used a shelter. Other services with the highest usage include drop-in centers (58%), free meals (54%), street outreach (41%), and counseling (40%). Youth who had not used a service typically did not know where to find it. Half of the sample youth said that concerns about being turned over to the authorities sometimes kept them from seeking help.
- Youth stressed the need for increased awareness of services. They felt that lack of knowledge about what services exist, what those services can do for them, how to find services, and where to find them are the biggest barriers to youth getting help.
- Using the term “runaway” in advertising would work with some youth, but not others. Youth stressed that making it clear what the service has to offer is more important than the labels used.
- Youth felt that school is a good focal point for getting information to youth, particularly before they run away. Youth also felt that the internet provides a good focal point for information, though they noted it must be easy to find.

*Long-Term Effects of Running Away:* In September of FY11, NRS released results from a longitudinal study on the long term effects of running away. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the study focused on the correlation between youth that have had a runaway episode and risky adult behavior (drug use, suicidal thoughts, incarceration). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health used a nationally representative sample of over 15,000 adolescents who were followed into adulthood with four longitudinal interview points. The study used a clustered school sampling design of adolescents in grades 7-12 during the 1994-1995 school year. The most recent set of interviews occurred in 2008-2009, when the sample was ages 24-32. This data set provides the unique ability to track individuals across 15 years and to examine how behaviors and characteristics of adolescence are connected to the outcomes of health, education, and economics for the same individuals in adulthood. In particular, this analysis uses waves three and four of the dataset, conducted when the respondents were adults, to examine the outcomes associated with runaway behavior at earlier waves of the study when respondents were adolescents. The full report is available at <http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/>.

Key findings include:

- Adults who ran away from home as adolescents are 51 percent more likely to have suicidal thoughts, compared to people who did not run away as teens. An even stronger relationship is found between suicide attempts and previous runaway experience, with runaways being more than three times more likely to attempt suicide as adults.

- Someone who ran away from home as an adolescent has odds 44 percent higher of having health issues that prevent them from doing moderate activities than someone who never ran away from home. They also rate their general health lower than non-runaways.
- The likelihood of an individual being a smoker as an adult are over twice as high (2.4 times) for former runaways than for individuals who never ran away from home. Former runaways are 67 percent more likely to use marijuana as an adult than non-runaways. Alcohol use as an adult is not associated with former runaway status.
- Former runaways are 53 percent more likely to report having a sexually transmitted disease as an adult than non-runaways.

**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 FY10, NRS distributed 173,776 brochures and prevention materials by mail and at conferences. In FY11, the number of hardcopy materials distributed more than doubled, to 323,713.

In FY10 and FY11, NRS conducted a nationwide school outreach project to promote awareness of NRS' services and the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*. Materials were sent to over 15,000 public middle schools (September 2010) and 15,000 public high schools (March 2011). The mailing included NRS' general brochure, the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* flyer, a 1-800-RUNAWAY poster, Street Team flyers, and a materials catalog with order form.

**Entertainment and Media:** In FY10 and FY11, NRS also spread its message by collaborating with media outlets and entertainment professionals.

In 2010, NRS produced and distributed a television public service announcement (PSA) promoting the Street Team initiative. Between May 2010 and May 2011, the Street Team PSA had 27,894 airings on 419 stations in 181 markets.

In 2010, NRS also began a partnership with performer and LGBTQ civil rights activist Cyndi Lauper. Lauper was involved in turning the Empire State Building green to promote National Runaway Prevention Month. In addition, Lauper produced an impromptu and unscripted PSA that was featured on social media channels and is housed in the media section of the NRS website. Lauper's passionate and spontaneous declaration of youth support sparked a viral response on the internet.

Continuing its partnership with award-winning hip-hop entertainer Ludacris, NRS created a PSA to promote the new live chat service. Since its May 2011 launch, the announcement has had 15,083 airings at 228 stations in 95 markets. In addition, the PSA was featured in Times Square Plaza on the CBS Super Screen. The spot ran once every hour, eighteen hours a day from July 1 through September 30, 2011, with the potential of reaching an estimated 1,500,000 people daily, according to the vendor.

NRS uses a communication consultant to cultivate media relationships, generate press releases, and build exposure. NRS was featured in many major media outlets in FY10 and FY11, including *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Herald*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *The Houston Chronicle*. National, regional, and local media outreach efforts had the potential

to reach more than 231 million readers, viewers, and listeners in FY10 and 235.5 million in FY11 based on subscriber, viewership, listenership, and audience numbers provided by the individual media outlets. Those estimates are not unduplicated.

During FY10 and FY11, NRS also conducted four national radio campaigns to promote runaway prevention. During each campaign, NRS representatives conducted 20 or more back-to-back phone interviews for airing on local radio stations and nationally-syndicated radio programming. The multiple interviews allow stations to personalize the interview process while still promoting the NRS unified message.

- In May 2010, NRS publicized the results from the “Why They Run” report generating 20 interviews with the potential to reach 3,742,500 listeners.
- In November 2010, NRS promoted National Runaway Prevention Month, generating 34 interviews with the potential to reach 5,089,000 listeners.
- In May 2011, NRS promoted the new live chat service and the release of the new television PSA featuring Ludacris, generating 26 interviews with the potential to reach 24,285,000 listeners.
- In September 2011, NRS released the results from the longitudinal study, generating 23 interviews with the potential to reach 8,127,000 listeners.

### ***Partnerships and Collaborations Across the Country***

FYSB and NRS share an important mission: serving runaway and homeless youth and helping them to get off the streets. NRS advances that mission through strategic partnerships with national, international, and community-based organizations. The following partnerships were active in FY10 and FY11:

**National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM):** As mentioned above, NRPM was created over ten years ago to provide a month-long initiative to build visibility and awareness about runaway issues and unite communities across the country to show support of youth. November is NRPM. During that month, local, state, and national proclamations are sought to build political awareness. In addition, press conferences and community activities during November canvass efforts at the local level. NRS broadens its outreach by cultivating national partners in the NRPM campaign. In FY10, NRS recruited 12 partners for NRPM 2009 to distribute a physical and electronic mailing with prevention materials. Co-sponsors included: National Network for Youth, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, American School Health Association, National Safe Place, National Association of School Nurses, National Center for Homeless Education, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Girls Inc., National Resource Center for Youth Services, Circle of Parents, National Association of School-based Health Care, and National Association of School Psychologists. In FY11, NRS recruited 13 partners for NRPM 2010 that resulted in distributing an electronic and physical mailing with prevention materials to 52,619 youth-based organizations. Co-sponsors were: National Network for Youth, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, American School Health Association, National Safe Place, National Association of School Nurses, National Center for Homeless Education, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Girls Inc., National Resource Center for Youth Services, Circle of Parents, National

Association of School-based Health Care, National Organization of Concerned Black Men, and National Association of School Resource Officers. Partners agree to inform their constituent base about NRPM events and activities.

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC):** NCMEC redirects runaway-related calls to NRS. NRS refers guardians of runaway youth to NCMEC for additional services, such as the AMBER Alert Program.

**Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA):** The NRS “Runaway Reality” curriculum module is featured in the BGCA “Kids in Control” curriculum, which is promoted to club leaders. BGCA hosted an NRS webinar for its clubs in FY10, and NRS was one of 10 organizations to participate in its 2010 Family Strengthening Virtual Symposium. BGCA is an NRPM Task Force member and includes information about NRPM on its nationwide intranet.

**Covenant House Nineline Crisis Line:** This former 24/7 nationwide crisis line for youth now operates from 4:00-8:00 pm Eastern Time daily, and while offline, employs an auto attendant feature that redirects runaway and homeless youth callers to 1-800-RUNAWAY for assistance.

**California Coalition for Youth:** NRS handles overflow youth crisis calls for the coalition’s California Youth Crisis Line. The coalition also actively promotes NRS services on its website.

**National Safe Place:** National Safe Place is a national youth outreach program that educates thousands of young people every year about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations on their own. The program creates a network of Safe Place locations — schools, fire stations, libraries, grocery and convenience stores, public transit, YMCAs and other appropriate public buildings — that display the yellow and black diamond-shaped Safe Place sign. Youth can easily access immediate help wherever they are. NRS and National Safe Place have a long history of collaboration to help get youth to safety. In FY11, NRS and National Safe Place collaborated to conduct the TXT 4 HELP project. TXT 4 HELP uses text messaging technology to quickly inform homeless and runaway youth about the closest location where they can find immediate help and safety. When there are no youth shelters within 30 miles, the youth is provided the 1-800-RUNAWAY number to contact immediately for additional services. TXT 4 HELP provided over 1,050 referrals to NRS in FY11. An additional component of the partnership is the promotion of runaway prevention and increased community awareness of the runaway youth issue. In FY10, NRS and National Safe Place identified six Safe Place sites to teach “Module 6: Runaway Reality,” part of the NRS runaway prevention curriculum, in community venues. In FY11, NRS and National Safe Place expanded the collaboration to 10 sites across the country.

## **Section D: 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:

- The needs of runaway, homeless and street youth; and
- The evidence-based programs and practices that address those needs.

The Bureau's demonstration projects and data collection efforts provide new information, and its National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth and Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers disseminate that information to the field. These are discussed later in this section.

FYSB also works to ensure that all federal youth programs recognize the service needs of this group of vulnerable young people. The Bureau does so by collaborating with major federal agencies that provides support or services to youth at risk, including those mentioned below.

### ***Coordinating to Improve Services for Runaway and Homeless Youth***

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

- FYSB sits on the **Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP)**, which was formed by Executive Order in 2008 and includes the 12 federal agencies that support programs and services that target youth. IWGYP is developing a strategic plan for federal youth policy. FYSB also actively contributes to FindYouthInfo.gov, the IWGYP's website, which consolidates all federal resources about youth and youth programs in one place.
- FYSB worked closely with the **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness** and its 19 member agencies and state and local partners to develop Opening Doors, the federal government's strategic plan to end homelessness. The Bureau is now working to raise awareness of the strategy to end youth homelessness by 2020.
- FYSB meets quarterly with the **Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**, an independent organization in the executive branch that coordinates all federal juvenile delinquency prevention programs, all federal programs and activities that detain or care for unaccompanied juveniles, and all federal programs relating to missing and exploited children. The Council 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 also sits on the **Federal Agency Task Force on Missing and Exploited Children**, along with the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Justice, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Department of Health and Human Services. Together, task force members are working closely to build a system of support for victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Additionally, as noted below, FYSB works individually with the other federal agencies that provide services to runaway and homeless youth. Activities include the following:

***Providing Shelter:*** Homeless young people who graduate from or live in areas not served by FYSB programs often need subsidized housing until they can make a full transition to self-sufficiency. FYSB partners with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to ensure that homeless young people have access to the federal housing programs that can help complete that transition.

**Promoting Mental Health Stability:** Substance abuse and mental health issues are challenges for many young people on the streets as well as the families they come from. FYSB and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Homelessness Resource Center share knowledge and resources about evidence-based strategies to prevent and treat substance abuse and mental health issues in the runaway and homeless youth population.

**Making Education a Priority:** Homeless young people often get disconnected from the one place that can provide them with safety, structure, and opportunity: school. FYSB works with the Department of Education to make sure that the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act -- which guarantees homeless children and youth an uninterrupted education -- are fully enacted across the country. The Bureau also coordinates with the Department of Education's TRIO program to ensure that homeless and disconnected youth have access to Upward Bound, GEAR UP, and other programs that encourage and support post-secondary education for at-risk youth.

**Creating Opportunities to Succeed:** To fully transition to economic independence, homeless young people need opportunities to learn job skills and money management strategies. FYSB collaborates with the 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 collaborate closely to make sure that the Transitional Living Program and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program share effective practices.

### ***Providing Training and Technical Assistance***

FYSB funds two organizations that advance knowledge in the field and support grantee efforts to improve their effectiveness: the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers.

#### **National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth**

Established by FYSB in 1993, the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth collects research and evidence-based and promising practices in runaway and homeless youth management and services and disseminates them to grantees and the youth-work field.

NCFY maintains a library and literature database of more than 18,000 resources, journal articles, and books related to the issues facing runaway, homeless and other at-risk youth. Each year, more than 1,000 new resources are abstracted and added to the online literature database.

To better reach an audience of very busy, highly mobile youth workers, NCFY launched a new website and completely redesigned its editorial process in FY10. The Clearinghouse now posts more than 150 web articles annually, frequent funding opportunities, monthly podcasts, a quarterly e-magazine, and a growing number of informational and instructional videos and online learning. All content is accessible via RSS feeds that can be set to download to handheld devices. The



redesigned website won a 2011 “Standard of Excellence” Award in the Government-Education category from the New Media Institute’s New Media Awards.

In its news feed, called The Beat, the Clearinghouse posts a series of recurring columns that address grantee needs, as determined by HHS, FYSB, training and technical assistance providers, and the grantees themselves:

- **Primary Sources:** A weekly research-to-practice digest of the newest research on runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth.
- **NCFY Recommends:** A weekly column of the most highly relevant Internet resources for youth workers.
- **Bright Idea:** A monthly column highlighting one agency’s innovative practice along with steps to replicate it.
- **Right on the Money:** A monthly column on fundraising and other topics related to building a sustainable organization. (The column won a 2011 Platinum Award for writing from MarCom, an international competition for any individual or company involved in the concept, writing and design of print, visual, audio and web materials and programs.
- **Ask NCFY:** A periodic advice column where experts address questions received by the Clearinghouse from the general public or grantees.

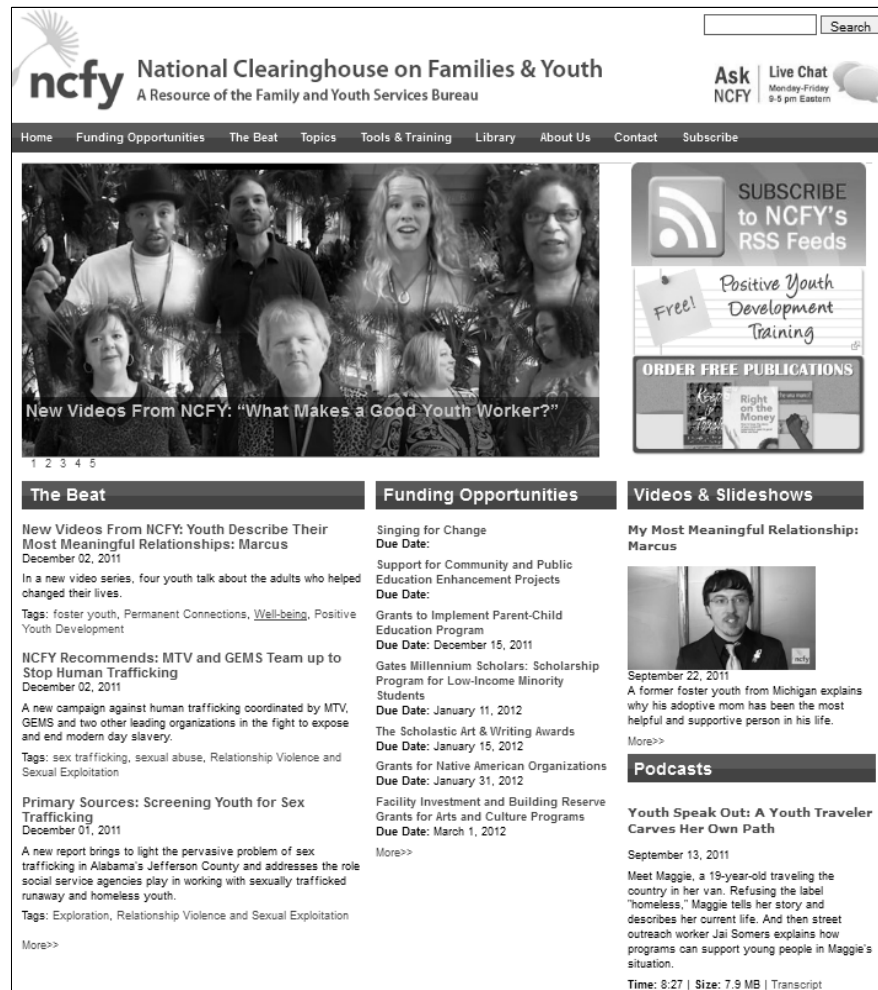


Figure 2: Redesigned NCFY Homepage

The award-winning quarterly **Exchange e-magazine** takes an in-depth look at FYSB’s priority topics. Topics covered in FY10 and FY11 included trauma-informed care, teen pregnancy prevention, and serving LGBTQ youth. (The issues on trauma-informed care and teen pregnancy prevention received 2011 awards for excellence in writing from MarCom. The issue on serving LGBTQ youth received a 2010 Apex Award for Publication Excellence in the writing category).

NCFY develops two award-winning bimonthly **podcast** series. In Youth Speak Out, young people explain what they need from youth workers and youth programs in their own words. Voices from the Field lets experts talk directly to youth workers and grantees about such issues as trauma, relationship violence, and sex trafficking. (The 2010 podcast interview with a victim of sex trafficking received a MarCom award in the podcast category).

In FY11, NCFY expanded into **video** with three series. The first asks agency directors to give their fundraising “elevator speech,” the second asks youth workers, “What makes a good youth worker?” and the third asks former runaway and foster youth, “What is your most meaningful relationship?”

NCFY continues to offer the **online training in Positive Youth Development** that was developed in FY09. In the two years covered by this report, a little more than 4,000 people completed the course. Of the 1,440 people that completed the course satisfaction survey over that two-year period, 95 percent agreed that they could use what they learned in their day-to-day work, and 91 percent said they would recommend the course to others.

An average of around 5,000 unique users visit the NCFY website every month. NCFY also promotes its products through a monthly e-newsletter, the **Youth Initiatives Update**, that is blasted to around 4,000 subscribers.

NCFY also maintains a small inventory of print publications and brochures for FYSB conferences and exhibits, 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 a limited number of publications to the general public through a shopping cart on its website, and distributes a small number of copies at more than 15 conferences a year. Conferences that NCFY staff attended in FY10 or FY11 relevant to runaway and homeless youth include:

- National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference
- National Pathways to Adulthood Conference
- National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference
- National Safe Place Conference
- National Indian Child Welfare Association Conference

Because ongoing print restrictions severely limit the amount of publications that can be disseminated at conferences, NCFY staff have begun to facilitate workshops in addition to exhibiting. Workshop topics have included Positive Youth Development, developing an elevator speech, crisis communications, storytelling as a fundraising tool, sustainability, and sexual health communication. NCFY staff also frequently give presentations on the NCFY website and other tools offered by the Clearinghouse.

The Clearinghouse also maintains a small call center, answering around 600 calls and e-mails from the public and grantees each year. Requests could be as simple as a question about grant eligibility or as complex as an in-depth research project. All calls and e-mails receive a response within one business day. More than 99 percent of respondents to a brief web-based satisfaction survey said they found the information they received helpful and 100 percent said they would utilize Clearinghouse services again.



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, National Runaway Switchboard, the National Resource Center on Youth Services, Youth and Family Services Network, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, the National Center for Homeless Education, and SparkAction. These organizations promote NCFY products in their e-newsletters, on Facebook pages and Twitter feeds, and on any communities of practice.

### **Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers**

To directly assist runaway and homeless youth grantees on programmatic issues, FYSB funds the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC). RHYTTAC enhances and promotes the continuous quality improvement of the services provided by Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees. It does so using high quality, capacity-building training, technical assistance, and consultation based on FYSB and grantee needs.

RHYTTAC works with an Advisory Board of 20-25 members representing grantees, federal staff, youth who have received runaway and homeless youth services, academics, and national organizations related to runaway and homeless youth. The Advisory Board provides guidance to RHYTTAC on the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities.

RHYTTAC employs a diverse set of strategies to meet the multiple and often complex training and technical assistance needs of grantees. Services are aimed at building the capacity of grantee agencies to deliver services that are supported by evidence and directed at improving youths' safety, well-being, permanent connections, and self-sufficiency. By providing timely information, training, technical assistance, and consultation, RHYTTAC helps grantees address both the programmatic and administrative aspects of running an effective FYSB-funded runaway and homeless youth program.

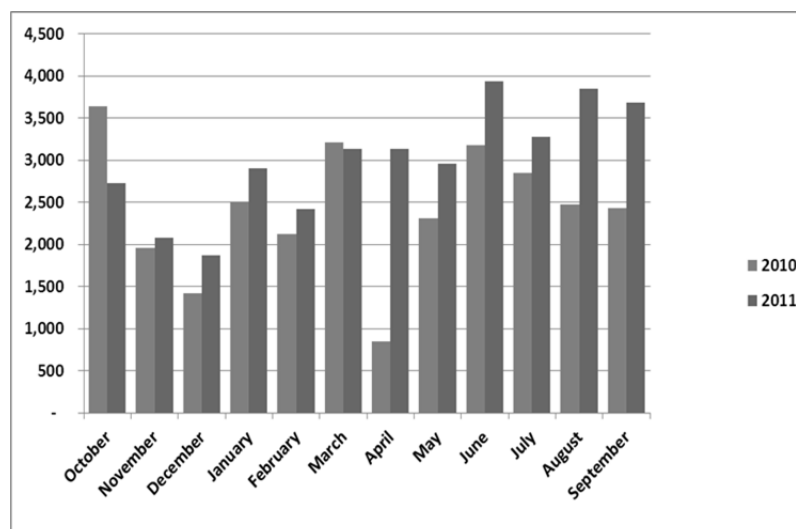
**Information Services:** RHYTTAC offers resources, information, and guidance on evidence-based service provision. The universal needs of runaway and homeless youth programs are met using a solutions desk that offers a 1-800 number, website, tip sheets, newsletters, resources, sample policies and procedures, and more. RHYTTAC's website provides timely information on runaway and homeless youth issues and serves as a one-stop portal where grantees can register for training and technical assistance or to receive consultation from RHYTTAC staff regarding a specific programmatic issue.

RHYTTAC's toll-free number received calls from and provided support to 1,152 Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees in FY10 and 841 grantees in FY11. While calls to the toll-free number decreased over the past two years, Web traffic increased significantly. For FY10 and FY11, a combined total of 64,874 total Web site visits were recorded.

The RHYTTAC website gives grantees access to on-demand training, resources, event registration, and timely announcements about issues affecting the provision of runaway and homeless youth services. RHYTTAC uses e-blasts to disseminate announcements to all grantees regarding new resources, programs, and services available from the Center.

RHYTTAC's tip sheets provide program and administrative staff with quick reference information on a variety of service delivery, programmatic, and administrative aspects of serving runaway and homeless youth. RHYTTAC staff follow legislative changes and trends in the field to identify topical issues for tip sheets. More than 25,000 copies of these newsletters have been disseminated through print and electronic formats since

**Figure 3: RHYTTAC Web Site Traffic**



RHYTTAC was funded in FY08. Seventeen tip sheets were published and disseminated to grantees in FY10 and FY11. Titles included: *Eligibility; Aftercare; Community Education; Outreach; H1N1; Technical Assistance; Legislative Provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act; Practical Application of the McKinney-Vento Act; Writing Grant Proposals for Foundations; Recognizing and Responding to Substance Abuse; Service-Learning; Succession Planning; Working with Head Start Programs: Tips to Serve Pregnant and Parenting Youth; HEARTH Act; Social Networking: Tips for Utilizing Social Networking in your Agency; Social Networking: Tips for Communicating with Youth Where They Are; and Trauma-informed Care.*

RHYTTAC also disseminated an electronic newsletter to all grantee agencies in FY10 and FY11. Each issue focused on a specific topic related to serving runaway and homeless youth, such as eligibility of youth for services, life skills, program management and evaluation, competent youth work, and trauma-informed care. *RHYTTAC e-News* also includes links for articles, resources, products, models, and activities. Website metrics show that some 3,600 people have viewed the electronic newsletters, which are archived and made available at: [www.rhyttac.ou.edu](http://www.rhyttac.ou.edu).

RHYTTAC developed and facilitates an online Community of Practice (CoP) to encourage networking and collaboration across the grantee community. CoP subgroups are available on basic center programs, maternity group homes, street outreach programs, rural host home demonstration projects, transitional living programs, and the Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth (SSRHY) grantees. Grantees can post questions, share knowledge around topical areas, and collaborate with their colleagues. To date, the CoP has been joined by 712 grantee agency staff. Grantees have engaged in over 304 discussions. Discussion topics include: evidence-based and evidence-informed practices; youth development; LGBTQ issues; human trafficking and child exploitation; point-in-time counts of homeless youth; legal issues; and more. In addition, grantees have accessed over 170 downloadable resource files. RHYTTAC conducted a survey of users to see how they are using this site. Agencies responded that the system

allowed them to increase their ability to serve their clients by being able to get questions answered by other grantees that were doing the same work. One grantee said that the sample program files on the CoP enabled them to download files and edit them to meet the needs of their agency. Ninety percent of users access the site multiple times throughout the week adding up to over 8,500 page views since the CoP was launched in FY09.

**Types of Training and Technical Assistance:** RHYTTAC’s training and technical assistance delivery system is designed to address the universal needs of all grantees, targeted needs of groups of grantees, and intensive needs of individual grantees. RHYTTAC brings grantees together in person through skill-based training, trainer certification, technical assistance clinics, and national conferences. Additional training is offered over the internet through e-learning and webinars. Topics have included: evidence-based practice; trauma-informed care; motivational interviewing; competency-based youth care work; mental health needs; domestic minor sex trafficking; best practices in serving Latino, African American, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ youth; youth engagement; Positive Youth Development; managing aggressive behavior; teaching life skills; and more.

**Table 7: Training and Technical Assistance Events**

Training and Technical Assistance Events	Number of Events		Number of Participants	
	2010	2011	2010	2011
<b>Skill-Based Training</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Trainer Certification Courses</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Technical Assistance Clinics</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>493</b>

### ***Skill-Based Training***

Skill-based trainings are designed to build the capacity of direct care staff, to provide grantees the ability to supervise their employees in positive youth work, and to enhance grantees’ ability to provide evidence-based services. In 28 skill-based trainings over the two-year period, 422 RHY providers developed important skills to assist them in their day-to-day work. Skill areas included: youth development; documentation; trauma-informed approaches; facilitating groups; program planning and operation; youth engagement; crisis intervention, de-escalation; professional ethics and boundaries; child and adolescent development; cultural diversity; advocacy; and more.

### ***Trainer Certification Courses***

Trainer Certification Courses are courses designed to increase the capacity of organizations. They enable agencies to have trainers on staff to continuously train existing staff and/or train new employees as they come into the organization. RHYTTAC offered a total of 22 Trainer Certification Courses in FY10 and

FY11. Courses included: Residential Child and Youth Care Professional; Managing Aggressive Behavior; Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment; Positive Youth Development; and Trauma-Informed Care. A total of 250 new trainers were certified.

Based on recent research and evidence-based practices in the area of trauma, RHYTTAC developed, piloted, and implemented a new trainer certification course on trauma-informed care. RHYTTAC worked with the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles (CHLA) to develop the course. CHLA plays a key role in the trauma-informed care network for runaway and homeless youth in California, and is a member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

### ***Technical Assistance Clinics***

TA Clinics are designed to facilitate targeted TA to like groups of grantees on particular programmatic and/or topical areas. Grantees are encouraged to bring sample policies and procedures and to work with the experienced facilitator and other grantees in attendance to discuss implementation and application in their programs. RHYTTAC held 55 TA Clinics across the country in FY10 and FY11. A total of 774 participants from RHY agencies across the country attended these clinics. Clinics over the past two years have covered such issues as: trauma-informed care; effective outreach; aftercare; mental health and substance abuse; case planning and documentation; program development and evaluation; serving LGBTQ youth; strategies for outreach and intervention with the Department of Education's Federal TRIO Programs, and more. Of particular significance has been the development and delivery of several TA Institutes targeted at grantees that are new, inexperienced, and/or addressing compliance issues from monitoring visits. These institutes offer key foundational information on legislative requirements, policy and procedures, reporting, staffing, evidence-based service provision, and sample forms and tools. Institute topics have included the Basic Center Program, Street Outreach Program, administrative issues, and trauma-informed care.

### ***Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting***

RHYTTAC plans and coordinates an annual Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting held in conjunction with the National Pathways to Adulthood Convening. The TLP Meeting provides an important forum for FYSB and TLP grantees to dialogue about current issues and trends in transitional living programming. RHYTTAC planned and coordinated the 2010 TLP Grantees Meeting in Chicago, IL, on August 24, 2010. A total of 177 grantees attended representing 110 grantee agencies from 43 states, Washington, D.C., and Guam. The meeting held on May 4, 2011, in Denver, CO, was attended by 200 participants from 120 agencies and 42 states, plus Washington, D.C., and Guam.

### ***National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference***

RHYTTAC convened the second annual grantee conference in San Antonio, TX, on November 17-19, 2009. The conference was attended by 442 grantees representing 252 agencies. RHYTTAC convened the third annual National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantees Conference on November 17-19, 2010, in Orlando, FL. The total number of participants was 493, represented 174 different agencies. The fourth annual conference is planned for November 2011 in Portland, Oregon.

### ***Distance Learning***

Distance learning opportunities are offered through live and pre-recorded webinars and a RHYTTAC e-Learning site.

**Table 8: Distance Learning Events and Participation**

Distance Learning	Number of Courses		Number of Participants	
	2010	2011	2010	2011
E-Learning	96	52	921	1946
Webinars	16	22	3901	8553

E-Learning: E-Learning is designed to meet the demands of providing high quality, subject-specific training in a cost effective manner for runaway and homeless youth grantees. E-Learning offers agencies and their staff free continuing education and professional development opportunities 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through curricula-based learning. Skill attainment is measured by pre- and post-test. This training medium was launched in early FY10 and has been enthusiastically embraced by grantees as a means to get needed staff training in a time of limited resources. It has been particularly useful for shift staff working in shelters, street outreach, and transitional living programs to obtain needed competency-based continuing education.

Since its inception in October 2009, 2,867 grantee staff from 288 different agencies have received 15,283 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) using the e-Learning system. Since 94 percent of users provide direct service, the majority of RHYTTAC courses are designed to enhance the capacity of these users to address micro level issues of providing direct services to youth such as: case planning and documentation; HIPPA requirements; group facilitation; aftercare; outreach; community education; FYSB Program requirements; eligibility requirements; trauma-informed care; harm reduction; etc. In addition, RHYTTAC also offers courses that are designed to help grantees address macro level issues such as: prevention of homelessness; disaster preparation; housing; program development; and both LGBT and racial/ethnic disproportionality in the youth served.

One of the most popular courses is the Residential Child and Youth Care Professional Course, which is based on the *Residential Child and Youth Care Professional Curriculum*. This is a 14-hour course spread across four modules. These modules are *Developing a Culture of Care*, *Understanding Child Development*, *Building Relationships* and *Teaching Discipline*. Content includes: Competency-based Approaches; The Role of the Residential Worker; Tools for Responding to the Milieu; Understanding Child Development; Adolescence: The Period from Puberty to Young Adulthood; Moral and Spiritual Development; Building Relationships; Culture and Relationships; Increasing Youth's Willingness to Form Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Relationships and Transition; Needs and Behaviors; and Teaching Discipline. Ninety-five percent of the customer satisfaction survey responses on this course have been positive. Users said they appreciate the interactive aspects of the course, and program management staff members have said that they incorporate concepts from this course into their daily work and encourage their staff to do the same.

Another popular course is *Understanding Poverty*. The Understanding Poverty course includes information designed to assist the learner in developing an understanding of the definition and effects of poverty, as well as strategies for working with youth and families in poverty. Ninety-nine percent of the customer satisfaction survey responses on this course have been positive. Users said they appreciate the video interactions within the course and the opportunity to practice their skills within a safe environment.

The E-Learning resource has been utilized by many grantees during this reporting period as a means of providing training opportunities to their staff at no cost to the agency. Grantees have also indicated that having the courses available at all hours, being able to stop and re-start a course without having to return to the beginning of the course, and the ability to print CEU certificates at the time of completion, has been beneficial in assisting them to meet licensing requirements and to track employee training hours.

Webinars: RHYTTAC worked closely with federal and national partners, including the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Assets for Independence program, Department of Justice, Department of Education, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, National Alliance to End Homelessness, SAMHSA's Homeless Resource Center, and the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, as well as grantees from across the country to develop and deliver 38 live or pre-recorded webinars to 12,454 participants over this two-year period. Webinars provide grantees with the opportunity to interact with RHYTTAC staff and presenters without the need for travel to a training event.

Webinars are recorded and distributed through our list-serve via a link to the website. A transcript of the webinar is developed and offered on the website along with a question and answer document for questions received during the webinar and/or as questions are submitted by those watching the event at a later date. Webinars are available for viewing on the RHYTTAC website for 6 months to one year. During that time, a pre- and post-test is developed for some webinars to convert them to e-learning. These e-learning webinars are then transitioned to the RHYTTAC e-learning platform and grantees can receive CEUs upon completion.

Ongoing customer satisfaction evaluation of the Center's training and technical assistance services has provided consistent positive feedback on the quality and relevance of the training and technical assistance offered. All feedback received is used to improve and modify training services to address the needs of runaway and homeless youth service providers.

### ***Conducting Research on Runaway and Homeless Youth Services***

FYSB's Research and Demonstration Program was authorized through FY13 under Part D, Sections 343 and 344, of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Special emphasis was given in the legislation to projects that support runaway and homeless youth in rural areas.

In FY10 and FY11, FYSB funded four research and demonstration projects to enhance knowledge about how best to provide services for runaway and homeless youth:

1. Rural Host Home for Basic Center Demonstration Project
2. Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration Project
3. Evaluation of Long-term Outcomes of Youth in Transitional Living Programs
4. Street Outreach Data Collection

### 1. Rural Host Home for Basic Center Demonstration Project

In rural America, lack of transportation and the geographic distance between people and services are challenging to overcome. Host home models, where young people are sheltered in private homes rather than a centralized emergency shelter facility, have shown promise in effectively addressing runaway issues in such communities. Through the Rural Host Home for Basic Center demonstration project, FYSB investigated the challenges of establishing a host home basic center model in rural areas and encouraged grantees to explore and document creative, replicable solutions to those challenges.

In FY10 and FY11, 19 grantees completed the second and third years of their three-year grants. While the final report on this project won't be available publicly until summer of 2012, a survey of grantees conducted in August 2011 indicated that approximately 70 host home families were recruited and the projects provided residential or nonresidential services to 2,600 youth. Youth stayed an average of 12 days in the host home.

#### **Challenges**

Grantees, which included both established youth-serving agencies and newcomers to runaway and homeless youth services, documented a number of challenges to providing host home services in rural communities, including:

**Licensing:** Several grantees had difficulty getting state and/or local licensing agencies to license host homes for the runaway and homeless youth population. Some grantees spent the majority of their three-year funding period working with licensing agencies to educate them on the model. This is not a challenge that is unique to rural communities, however.

#### **Families and Youth, Inc.: Robert's Story**

"Robert" grew up in the Sunland Park area of Las Cruces, NM, where his parents were undocumented migrant workers. He grew up poor with no resources. Young people in his community were heavily involved in gangs and drugs but Robert didn't want to go down that road at first. As he got older, though, he wasn't able to resist the temptations of friends and drugs.

Robert was brought to the Families and Youth, Inc. Family-Based Shelter by a member of the community after his parents had been deported to Mexico and he hit rock bottom. Robert was placed with a two-parent household in the community of Hatch, NM. Family-Based Shelter referred Robert to individual therapy, substance abuse counseling, job readiness training, life skills training, and medication management. All these services combined with the structure, supervision, and consistency of the rural host home family allowed Robert to prepare for independence. Family-Based Shelter was also able to locate extended family in Texas and began the process for Robert to join Job Corps.

**Outreach:** Oftentimes, homelessness in rural communities is invisible, as young people bounce from couch to couch in the homes of friends. Many grantees found that they had a hard time convincing local communities of the need for their services.

**Youth resistance:** Runaway and homeless youth, who often come from violent or traumatizing homes, were hesitant to be placed back in home environments. One grantee said: “I think the host home model can be confusing to kids who are in crisis. It seems a bit too much like foster care and the intimacy factor is a bit concerning to them.” The demonstration grantees that were able to place the most youth were able to clearly delineate between foster care and host home services through conversation with the youth.

**Recruitment and retention:** The host home model often requires families to volunteer to take in homeless youth in communities where homelessness isn’t seen as a problem. As a result, finding and retaining host home families was difficult and labor intensive.

### **Accomplishments**

Faced with a host of challenges, the grantees worked to devise solutions, including:

**Recruitment:** Grantees identified and implemented a number of strategies to recruit host home families, including word-of-mouth, recommendations from other host home providers, advertising and radio, presentations to faith-based and civic groups, and community events.

**Retention:** While keeping a host home family engaged can be difficult, grantees developed a number of techniques, including:

- Holding events or social gatherings, such as holiday parties, potlucks, etc.;
- Providing respite assistance and consistent contact by case workers;
- Providing ongoing training;
- Utilizing the host home frequently; and
- Giving monetary incentives (payment, gift cards).

**Community Acceptance:** Grantees reported that persevering with a multi-pronged outreach approach slowly generated acceptance in the communities they served. One grantee said the project eventually gained “complete acceptance from schools to have the case manager see the youth” as well as receiving “referrals from everywhere, hospitals, parents, police, schools, local mental health dept., churches.”

While grantees felt that they could have accomplished more with a longer grant, they believed that they had made real progress at a system level. Another grantee stated: “We began a culture shift from ‘all services are in the main community and you need to access them there,’ to ‘let’s work to keep ALL youth in their own community and make the connections there.’”

## **2. Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration: Addressing the Challenges of Rural Homelessness**

In FY08, FYSB funded a five-year Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth (SSRHY) Demonstration in three states: Colorado, Iowa, and Minnesota. The following year, three additional states were also awarded five-year grants: Oklahoma, Nebraska and Vermont. Those grants end in FY13 and FY14,



respectively. The Demonstration's purpose has been to explore ways to improve the delivery of services and supports to youth who live in rural communities and have little or no connection to stable housing and family situations. This includes runaway and homeless youth as well as youth making unsuccessful transitions out of foster care.

Each state grantee has been directed to collaborate with the FYSB-funded Transitional Living Program provider serving the rural community or communities chosen by the state. Youth participation, community outreach, and collaboration have been major themes pursued in SSRHY program operations. The goal of the Demonstration has been to help targeted rural youth make successful transitions to adulthood by improving their connections to survival support services, education and employment services, and to the communities in which they reside. A comprehensive evaluation of the demonstration will be conducted in the final year of each cohort.

### **Challenges**

So far, SSRHY has confirmed many things. First, rural homelessness differs from urban homelessness in that it is less visible. The image of youth being idle on the streets, sleeping on steam grates or panhandling on street corners does not fit the rural reality. Rural homelessness instead is characterized by "couch-surfing" -- youth finding transient and temporary shelter in the homes of friends, neighbors, and family. Secondly, this "invisibility" poses two distinct challenges for the Demonstration: (1) it allows rural communities to be largely unaware of the problem; and (2) it presents challenges to youth providers in estimating the extent of rural youth needs. Third, SSRHY has confirmed the difficulties faced by many rural communities -- low, no or dwindling employment opportunities; low, no, or negative population growth; low or no growth in the housing stock; as well as fewer facilities and resources to meet the communities' needs. Fourth, next to the lack of housing, lack of transportation emerges as the most critical impediment to serving homeless rural youth by limiting access to services and supports. Fifth, SSRHY's rural communities are less likely to exhibit duplications in their service delivery. Pressure to serve youth with relatively sparse resources has, in many cases, forced high levels of provider cooperation and collaboration. The relatively smaller network of providers has made communication and collaboration easier than might be the case in larger urban communities. A sixth lesson from the Demonstration is that rural youth are at particularly high risk because, more so than urban youth, they have little to do and nowhere to go to do it. The single loudest complaint we hear from young people in the SSRHY Demonstration is the need for safe places and something to do.

**Figure 4: A Couch is Not a Home Logo**



## Accomplishments

The six Demonstration Projects have grappled with these issues in unique ways tailored to the needs, circumstances and capacities of their collaborations. The following highlights only a few examples of their efforts to meet these challenges. A full report of accomplishments will be made available after the Demonstration is complete in FY14.

**Invisibility:** One of the early major efforts in SSRHY has been to raise awareness about homelessness in the targeted communities. The project in Colorado, for instance, mounted a campaign featuring a cartoon image whose slogan is, "A Couch is Not a Home." The cartoon and slogan have been printed on projects t-shirts, brochures, newsletters, placards and billboards as part of their information

dissemination within the Colorado Demonstration communities.



Figure 5: High-Low Project Exhibit

The Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP) created an exhibit called The HighLow Project that went on exhibit in the Capitol Rotunda, in Washington, D.C., between October 2 and October 8, 2011. The HighLow Project consists of stories from 12 RHY youth. Each story has two parts: one recounting a moment that marked a high point in the young person's life and the other marking a low point. The exhibit

presents each of the stories by displaying the two photos along with an audio track,

recorded by the youth that describes the high or low point depicted in the photo. The audio track is accessed through a telephone located underneath each photo.

**Rural Employment Challenges:** One creative approach to the lack of rural employment growth is "Caring Hearts" -- a youth-run business, started by the Iowa Project in 2010. Caring Hearts provides lawn and garden care services to the elderly and disabled in the Boone Community targeted by the project. As part of this enterprise youth are employed by the business and connected with mentors and other supporters who can assist with job training and supervision. In a separate initiative, the IA project has collaborated with Iowa Comprehensive Human Services (a workforce development provider) to expand an existing jobs placement program so youth can work with a local business for six to eight weeks with their salaries paid by the program. Job preparedness classes are also provided for the participating youth. The expectation is that the business will retain the youth as an employee at the end of the job training. Eight youth are currently placed with five local businesses.

The Nebraska project enrolls many of its SSRHY youth in education and training programs at Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC). WNCC offers certification programs that range from six weeks to two years in areas such as health care, trucking, and machine repair that are in high demand in the Panhandle.

**Housing:** To address their housing challenges, the Vermont project has been combining SSRHY monies with funds received from the State Office of Economic Opportunity to support transitional housing. With these funds the project leased a newly constructed, five-unit apartment building in downtown Newport to provide SSRHY transitional housing.

The Colorado project has benefited from a legislative change. On March 31, 2011, the Governor of Colorado signed HB 11-1079, which expands safe housing capacity to include licensed host family homes. It also creates an option for the court to evaluate the potential for youth to become homeless after discharge from care and, where deemed necessary, to extend a youth in foster care up to the age of 21 to complete his/her self-sufficiency goals.

**Transportation:** The Iowa Project created a bicycle loan program where the City of Boone Police Department donated the unclaimed bicycles it was holding for use by RHY youth on a revolving basis. The project is planning to expand this program into a business by recruiting a retired community member to act as a mentor and instructor for a youth-led bicycle repair business.

**Maximizing Collaboration:** The Nebraska Project located in the Nebraska Panhandle involves four counties and is centered around the town of Scottsbluff. Its partners: the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation; the Panhandle Partnership for Human Services; the Western Nebraska Community College; Community Partnership of Western Nebraska; and other local agencies are pursuing an ambitious goal -- to create a "Full Prevention System" that de-categorizes youth programs and "blends and braids" youth funding in ways that create a more comprehensive and integrated approach to meeting the needs the young people of the region.

**Safe Places with Something to Do:** All of the SSRHY projects have engaged youth in positive youth development activities and several have opened facilities to combine these activities with the need for safe places for youth to go and things to do. In March 2011, the Oklahoma project attracted more than 100 people to the grand opening of "The Spot" -- a facility in Watonga, OK, that was leased for SSRHY. The Spot received generous donations of recreational equipment from the community including \$8,000.00 in fitness equipment from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of NE. SSRHY youth designed the interior space including the color scheme and did all of the painting and clean up in preparation for the opening. The Spot has become the focal point in Watonga for youth meetings, networking and recreation.

Similarly, last spring, the Iowa project opened a youth facility called The HUB in Boone, IA. Like The Spot in OK, The HUB is intended both as a safe place for SSRHY youth networking as well as a "HUB" for youth services. Services provided consist of: individual skill building, life skill groups with DMACC (Des Moines Area Community College), Dream Teams, Job Placement, Caring Hearts, and Case Management. Youth come to The HUB both by appointment and as drop-ins.

The SSRHY Demonstration has brought a new focus on the needs of rural youth in the six participating states -- one that is helping them and FYSB gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the particular circumstances, needs, and challenges facing rural youth who lack secure connections to families and shelter. The results of these and other efforts are already informing FYSB about promising approaches and potential best practices that are likely to continue to evolve from their work. FYSB will

be conducting its evaluation of the Demonstration beginning in 2012 and expects to report on conclusions by 2014.

### **3. Evaluation of Long-term Outcomes of Youth in Transitional Living Programs**

To determine which housing, services, and program models are more effective in preventing homelessness and improving the long-term social and emotional well-being of runaway and homeless young people, FYSB contracted Abt Associates, an independent research firm with considerable experience in studying homelessness, to design an evaluation of long-term housing and other outcomes for youth in transitional living programs. This study was required in Section 119 of the Runaway, Homeless Youth and Missing Children's Assistance Act (P.L. 108-96), which reauthorized the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in 2003.

Though the evaluation has been delayed by competing priorities over the years, it is now expected to begin in FY12. Survey instruments have been finalized and approved through the Office of Management and Budget. The evaluation will be implemented in several phases. Participating agencies will be interviewed about their organizational structure, service delivery models as well as their framework for implementing positive youth development strategies. A baseline for participating youth will also be established upon entry and exit of the program. The final phases of the study involve collecting additional youth feedback by phone or through online surveys at six and 12 months after exiting the Transitional Living Program.

### **4. Street Outreach Data Collection**

To better understand the needs of youth served by the Street Outreach Program, FYSB funded 11 grantees at the end of FY10 to participate in a data collection effort in partnership with the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. During the first year, grantees participated in a planning meeting in Washington, D.C., to discuss the data needed and a feasible method for collecting that data. FYSB staff then conducted a literature review of data collection methodologies used with homeless street populations and searched for researchers with expertise in studying homeless youth. The Bureau ultimately contracted with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln to design the study and train the 11 grantee agencies in how to conduct it. In FY12, grantees will conduct personal interviews with homeless youth through a Respondent Driven Sampling approach, as well as focus groups. A final report should be available in FY13.

## **Section E: The Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of the Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program (Street Outreach Program)**

### ***Purpose of the Street Outreach Program***

Today, in communities across the country, young people are living on the streets or in unstable living situations, such as friends' homes or overcrowded apartments. On the run from homes characterized by abuse, neglect, or parental drug or alcohol abuse, these youth do not have the security that many of their peers take for granted.

Without the adult protection of parents, guardians, or relatives, youth risk being sexually exploited or abused by adults. Youth also may engage in “survival sex” as a way to get money or food. Studies reveal wide variations in the proportions of homeless youth affected by sexual exploitation and abuse, from 2

**Table 9: SOP Grant Funding**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Grantees*</b>	<b>Total Grant Funding</b>	<b>Number of duplicated contacts</b>
<b>2010</b>	157	\$16.6 million	852,022
<b>2011</b>	155	\$16.3 million	693,270

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

percent to 46 percent, with a cluster of research finding 15 to 30 percent of homeless youth falling victim.<sup>18</sup>

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 against such harm by building relationships between street youth and program outreach staff. Grantee programs attempt to reach runaway,

homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of sexual exploitation or abuse and other dangers. 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: 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?***

Homeless street youth have become part of the landscape in most large American cities, and are found in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the United States. Yet nationally, little is known about their exact numbers and demographics. We know that FYSB-funded street outreach workers made contact with young people on the streets around 1.55 million times in 2010 and 2011. Because outreach workers do not press youth to disclose personal information, data collected by FYSB does not give an unduplicated count, or specify young people’s ages, race or ethnicity, or even gender. We know anecdotally 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. 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 above, many homeless youth struggle with mental health and substance abuse problems. A substantial proportion of homeless youth (some estimate between 20 and 40 percent) are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2009). Homeless Youth and Sexual Exploitation: Research Findings and Practice Implications. Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/2559>.

<sup>19</sup> Ray, N. (2006). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

### ***What Problems Do Youth on the Street Face?***

Once on the street, youth face further abuse and victimization. Compared to 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; however, they are less likely to be connected to traditional service systems than housed youth. Homeless youth, therefore, often end up in dangerous environments with limited access to resources.

While youth end up on the street for a variety of reasons, almost all of them are coping with trauma. Research suggests that most homeless youth have experienced multiple traumatic events both before becoming homeless and once on the street. In particular, 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 can also feel disconnected from the world and have trouble relating to other people.

### ***What Do Street Outreach Programs Do to 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. They 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

### **What's In Your Bag?**

Effective street outreach is well-planned, thoughtful, and responsive to the diverse needs of young people living in precarious environments. Some items street outreach workers carry with them are:

- bus tokens
- candy and healthy snacks
- instant soup packets
- individual cereal cartons
- water and Gatorade
- feminine hygiene products
- toothbrushes, toothpaste
- dental floss, sewing kits, iron-on seam repair kits, Velcro, and safety pins for repairing clothing
- washcloths, hand sanitizer, wet wipes
- first aid kits, cough drops
- self-care kits for stomach ache, headache, sore throat, cuts and wounds, etc., with instructions on how to know when you're sick, how to treat yourself, and when to seek medical care
- flashlights
- single load packages of laundry detergent and quarters for Laundromat
- eyeglass repair kits
- blankets
- clothing like underwear, long johns, socks, boots, gloves, jackets, hats, hoodies, shoes
- rain jackets
- cosmetics
- wallets
- travel alarm clocks and day planners
- school and art supplies
- backpacks and duffel bags
- dog food (for street youths' pets)
- \$5 gift certificates to fast food restaurants
- \$5-\$15 gift certificates to pharmacies for prescriptions
- wallet-sized cards with agency phone numbers and the outreach worker's names
- resource lists (e.g., where to find hot meals, food pantries, shelters, or dental and medical care)
- legal aid information card

that serve free meals, or in public parks and basketball courts. Some programs collaborate with local school districts, which allow them 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 items (see sidebar above), anything that could build rapport and improve the situation of a young person who may be hungry, cold, lonely, afraid, abused, or sick. They also provide crisis intervention and referrals to counseling and treatment, as appropriate.

In FY10 and FY11, outreach workers distributed 883,536 health and hygiene products, positively improving young people's health and safety. More than 1.23 million food and drink packages were given out, so that many fewer young people would go hungry or suffer dehydration. And grantees distributed almost 1.7 million printed resources to youth to provide them with important information and help connect them with essential community resources.

Young people who are willing to go are immediately referred to shelter. Each street outreach program is required to have 24-hour access to a local emergency shelter that is appropriate for youth. Once outreach staff has placed a youth

there, they are required to have around-the-clock access to the facility to be able 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 QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), an empirically-based suicide prevention method that helps outreach workers recognize the warning signs of suicide and persuade young people to get help.<sup>20</sup> They may also use other evidence-based methods, such as motivational interviewing, a collaborative but client-centered counseling style used to facilitate changes in behavior.

#### **Measuring Outcomes: Wichita Children's Home**

The Wichita Children's Home in Wichita, Kansas, the city's oldest organization serving homeless young people, helped over 100 young people get off the streets and into safe shelter in 2010. Here is other data on the outcomes of its work reaching out to and supporting homeless youth:

- 93 percent of youth in crisis or rescue situations end up in a safe place.
- 85 percent of youth who attended a support group can report three ways they are engaging in safer behaviors and can identify someone to call in a dangerous or crisis situation.
- 98 percent of youth who attended a Danger and Violence Prevention presentation feel better prepared to handle a dangerous or crisis situation.

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<sup>20</sup> *QPR Institute*, Research Evidence for QPR Institute Educational Training Programs, Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.qprinstitute.com/research.html>

Often, however, youth living on the streets are not willing to go into a shelter, at least not at first. They don't trust adults, object to the rules enforced in a shelter environment, and often do not believe that they need help. Many have substance abuse issues that they are not ready to address. Most have also developed tight-knit street "families" and therapeutic relationships with dogs that they don't want to leave behind. In those instances, street outreach workers can spend considerable time building trust and helping young people make incrementally better decisions until they may be ready to seek shelter or other services.

### **The Challenge of Street Outreach: Maggie's Story**

Maggie is a 19-year-old traveling the country in her van and busking with her accordion. Maggie left home at 16 after her parents divorced and slept where she could with friends and in an abandoned school. However, she refuses to be called "homeless."

**Maggie:** No, I am not homeless. I live in a van. I can go anywhere I want, anytime in the continental America or Mexico or Canada. I haven't been to Mexico or Canada yet. But I can pretty much go anywhere I want at any time. I really wouldn't want to stay in a shelter of any kind. I have a place to stay. My van has a bed in the back of it. I can make my own money, get my own food, and I have my own bed. So why do I need to go to a shelter?

Jai Somers, Street Outreach Coordinator for the Florida Keys Children's Center says that traveling youth need to be met on their own terms.

**Somers:** The youth we've worked with have had a broad range of experiences. But it has been one of the more common ones that a young person is traveling across the country in a van.

If I were meeting Maggie on... let's say she's playing the accordion on the street, I would certainly introduce myself. And I would give her a basic pamphlet about our resources. And if she would allow me to engage her a little bit further, I would start to get to know her.

As a street outreach worker, I would be concerned whether or not her "mobile home" is actually and thoroughly a safe and secure place for her to live. Does it have locks on the doors? Are the tires going to blow out before she gets to the next city? Is it registered? Does she know where to park it so she doesn't get towed? If she does, what happens then?

There's information that I would want to hopefully gather from Maggie so I could help her make smarter choices. So if we're working with a young person who absolutely refuses to identify as homeless, we respect that. However, our role in that case is to make sure that they know what exists that we can do for them or other agencies could do for them if they so choose, and the potential risks regarding their choices.

To help them build trust with street youth, programs are encouraged to employ staff whose gender, race/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.



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

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 who are at risk of being, sexually abused or exploited.

### ***What Are the Outcomes of Street Outreach Programs?***

As mentioned above, RHYMIS has focused primarily on collecting process data, or what street outreach programs do. That data collection will be expanded to include outcomes information once the initiative discussed in the introduction is complete. However, we do know that street outreach workers made almost 1.55 million contacts with young people on the street in FY10 and FY11. Of those contacts, RHYMIS tells us that 49,980 young people moved from the street to

#### **Measuring Outcomes: Hollywood Homeless Youth**

The Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership, a collaborative of nine homeless youth-serving organizations, shared data related to its outreach efforts to serve street youth in Los Angeles. Data revealed increases in the number of youth who:

- Accessed drop-in center services;
- Developed individualized case plans with a case manager;
- Participated in group workshops and individual counseling; and
- Demonstrated knowledge about services available to them, including health and mental health services, education and career services, and legal assistance.

a shelter for at least one night. Shelter, in this instance, could be provided by any community service providers, and not just FYSB-funded Basic Centers.

### **Section 386: Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System**

To ensure that the local programs it funds 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 FYSB Basic Center, Transitional Living, or 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 reports that the HHS Secretary delivers to Congress; and
- **Assistance to grantees**—providing information and assistance to grantees to enable them to improve facilities, services, and activities.

FYSB conducted onsite monitoring of 94 grants in FY10, representing 13 percent of all active grants. In FY11, 101 grants were monitored, representing 14 percent of all grants. Where budgetary constraints precluded onsite reviews, FYSB Program Specialists monitored grants over the telephone and through reviews of RHYMIS data, bi-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. Selected because of their experience and knowledge as managers of well-functioning FYSB-funded programs, they bring an expert perspective to the process. This background enables them to evaluate project performance against their own programmatic and administrative experiences and to share with grantees successful approaches to working with runaway and homeless youth.

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 out 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. They might suggest ways to increase the number of youth a program serves. They also might 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, federal staff, in consultation with senior officials of the Family and Youth Services Bureau, will determine whether the grantee is in substantial compliance with legislation, program standards, and the approved grant. To be in substantial compliance, a grantee does not necessarily have to fulfill each and every condition or requirement described in its approved grant. Overall, however, a grantee must be delivering the services as described. 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 on these suggestions; however, they are not binding on the grantee and do not trigger a follow-up review.

In FY10 and FY11, some non-binding suggestions included:

- *Youth Participation:* Keeping documentation of how are youth being involved in program design, service delivery, or implementation.
- *Outreach and Community Education:* Improving the cultural appropriateness of outreach materials or broadening outreach to underrepresented subpopulations that may be eligible for services.
- *Staff and Staff Development:* Improving documentation around annual evaluations and training, strengthening supervisory structures, or addressing high rates of staff turnover.

### **Non-Compliance**

A grantee found to be not in substantial compliance 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 not in substantial compliance if they are using structures or operational plans that are so flawed that consideration must be given to not renewing grant funding unless these conditions are corrected. In those cases, the monitoring team prepares a written report that identifies strengths and areas that require corrective action. 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 non-compliance 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 deficiencies were resolved. The grantee may be subject to an onsite follow-up review within a year after the conclusion of the first site visit. If the grantee is still not in substantial compliance at the conclusion of the follow-up review, the

situation will be remanded to senior leadership of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for appropriate action. Non-compliant grantees may be placed on financial restrictions, may be denied continuation funding, or may have the grant revoked. In FY10 and FY11, most grantees were able to resolve their compliance issues, however, through targeted, intensive technical assistance. Over those two years, only three grantees lost their grants – through voluntary relinquishment -- because of non-compliance.

### **Targeted, Intensive Technical Assistance**

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC) supports the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System by working with grantees to address the areas of non-compliance that were identified by monitors.

In FY10 and FY11, the top five areas of non-compliance included:

- *Safe and Appropriate Shelter* (59 percent): Issues included too many or not enough beds, lack of 24-hour access, inappropriate admission criteria, or safety hazards.
- *Individual Intake and Case Planning* (54 percent): Issues included no immediate assessment of needs and/or no documentation of such assessment, no assessment of eligibility, serving youth who are too old or too young, failure to document notification (or attempted notification) of parent within 24-72 hours of youth's arrival, no documentation of individual, group, and family counseling, and no documentation of education services.
- *Individual Client Files* (43 percent): Issues included no written case plan and assessments, out-of-date case notes, and unclear documentation.

### **Intensive TA Brings Grantee to Compliance**

**Problem:** A Federal project officer identified a FYSB grantee organization with two FYSB grants (Basic Center and Street Outreach) that was not incorporating Positive Youth Development (PYD) in its services, as required under both grant programs. PYD ensures that

- youth help create their own treatment plans;
- youth are involved in program planning; and
- staff listen to and address youth's needs.

**Assessment:** RHYTTAC staff spoke with the newly appointed Executive Director, a Program Director, and line staff. The turnover in leadership was an opportunity for change but also a cause of some confusion for staff. The Program Director seemed overwhelmed by his duties, which made it difficult for him to focus on making PYD a priority.

**Recommendations:** Improve youth-adult partnerships at the organization by

- creating a formal process for continually gathering feedback from youth and acting on it before they leave the program, rather than simply conducting exit interviews and surveys;
- providing a way youth can informally write down their needs and concerns about the programs whenever they feel like it; and
- holding a 2-day PYD training for staff.

**Followup:** RHYTTAC provided a 2-day PYD training for six staff members. A long term goal is to eventually prepare the organization to create a Youth Advisory Committee or have youth as part of the governing board.

- *Aftercare* (39 percent): Issues included no documentation of an aftercare plan or aftercare services.
- *Case Outcomes* (36 percent): Issues included incomplete assessments, missing aftercare plans, no documentation of where youth exited, and no plan for follow-up and referral resources for youth returning home.

In FY10 and FY11, RHYTTAC provided intensive technical assistance to 72 organizations, representing 135 programs, as a result of concerns or suggestions raised during monitoring. Each organization received multiple types of support based on their individual needs as determined in conjunction with FYSB and the grantee during the initial conference call to review the monitoring report.

The Center provided non-compliant grantees with support, including written materials (e.g. sample policies and procedures), conference calls, and online meetings with individual grantees as well as onsite and offsite consultation with extensive follow-up. Comprehensive assessment, thorough design and delivery, and regular, targeted follow-up ensure intensive technical assistance services facilitate continuous service improvement and capacity building within individual grantee agencies. Monitoring reports, RHYMIS data, corrective action reports, and other program-specific materials are used to design the targeted technical assistance response for each grantee.

In addition, RHYTTAC makes peer-to-peer links between experienced and less experienced grantees, enabling grantees to learn from successful programs and share their expertise. Grantees have been enthusiastic about providing other programs with guidance, suggestions, and materials, including policy and procedure manuals, resident handbooks, case file packets, and outreach materials.

### **Looking Ahead: The Future of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program**

FYSB is committed to the federal government's goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness by 2020. In order to get young people off the streets and into stable housing, the Bureau believes that it is imperative to facilitate healing and recovery and promote the social and emotional well-being of youth and families that have experienced maltreatment, exposure to violence, and/or trauma. In the years ahead, the Bureau will ensure that effective interventions are in place to build skills and capacities that contribute to the healthy, positive, and productive functioning of youth into adulthood.

Runaway and homeless youth who have experienced maltreatment, exposure to violence, and/or trauma experience negative outcomes along several domains, each of which must be addressed in order to foster social and emotional well-being and promote healthy, positive functioning.

**Understanding Experiences:** A fundamental aspect of the human experience is the development of a world view through which one's experiences are understood. Whether that perspective is generally positive or negative influences how experiences are interpreted and integrated. For example, one is more likely to approach a challenge as a surmountable, temporary obstacle if his or her frame includes a sense that "things will turn out all right." On the contrary, negative experiences can color how future experiences are understood. Ongoing exposure to family violence might lead youth to believe that relationships are generally hostile in nature and affect their ability to enter into and stay engaged in safe

and healthy relationships. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program will address how youth frame what has happened to them in the past and shape their beliefs about the future.

**Developmental Tasks:** People grow physically and psychosocially along a fairly predictable course, encountering normal challenges and establishing competencies as they pass from one developmental stage to another. However, adverse events have a marked effect on the trajectory of normal social and emotional development, delaying the growth of certain capacities, and, in many cases, accelerating the maturation of others. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program will focus on intervention strategies that are attuned to the developmental impact of negative experiences and address related strengths and deficits to ensure youth develop along a healthy trajectory.

**Coping Strategies:** The methods that youth develop to manage challenges both large and small are learned in childhood, honed in adolescence, and practiced in adulthood. Those who have been presented with healthy stressors and opportunities to overcome them with appropriate encouragement and support are more likely to have an array of positive, productive coping strategies available to them as they go through life. For youth who grow up in unsafe, unpredictable environments, the coping strategies that may have been protective in that context may not be appropriate for safer, more regulated situations. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program will focus on interventions that help youth transform maladaptive coping methods into healthier, more productive strategies.

**Protective Factors:** A wealth of research has demonstrated that the presence of certain contextual factors (e.g., supportive relatives, involvement in after-school activities) and characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, relationship skills) can moderate the impacts of past and future negative experiences. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program will focus on building these protective factors that are so fundamental to resilience.

The skills and capacities in these areas support youth as challenges, risks and opportunities arise. In particular, each domain influences the capacity of youth to establish and maintain positive relationships with caring adults and supportive peers. The necessity of these relationships to social and emotional well-being and lifelong success in school, community, and at home are central to all interventions with vulnerable youth.

An important component of promoting social and emotional well-being includes addressing the impact of trauma, which can have a profound effect on the overall functioning of youth. FYSB promotes a trauma-informed approach, which involves understanding and responding to the symptoms of chronic interpersonal trauma and traumatic stress across the domains outlined above, as well as the behavioral and mental health aftereffects of trauma.

FYSB anticipates a continued focus on social and emotional well-being in the coming years as a critical component of its overall mission to ensure positive long-term safety, well-being, self-sufficiency, and permanent connection outcomes for runaway, homeless and street youth.