



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



**Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)  
Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM)  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Q: What is the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program?**

A: The Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program is a \$115 million federal program that provides funds to community-based organizations and other non-profits across the country to prevent young people from becoming homeless when possible and to provide support and services to those who are already homeless, in order to get their lives back on track. RHY also provides funding to improve the quality of services to runaway and homeless youth through research, demonstration projects, a national switchboard, and training and technical assistance.

**Q: Why is the RHY Program releasing new rules?**

A: The Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, which reauthorized the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act through FY 2013, included a requirement for the establishment of performance standards for the three programs funded by the Act – the Basic Center, Transitional Living (including Maternity Group Home) and Street Outreach Programs. This rule meets that legislative requirement.

**Q: Were grantees and the public consulted in the creation of these rules?**

A: We place great value on the input of our grantees and the public. In 2009, FYSB brought together subject matter experts, technical assistance providers, Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees, and others to help inform the proposed rule. We also routinely obtained stakeholder perspectives through meetings, conferences, and training and technical assistance consultations.

**Q: Why has it taken so long for the rules to be published for comment?**

A: The Federal government does not take rule-making lightly. Once the document was drafted, it was reviewed by dozens of officials from within the Department of Health and Human Services and other Federal agencies to make sure the rules were legal, appropriate, and fair.

**Q: Why does this rule only affect runaway and homeless youth providers who accept funding from RHY? Shouldn't "all" runaway and homeless youth providers need background checks, etc.?**

A: The federal government does not directly regulate runaway and homeless youth services. These services are typically regulated by state and local governments through licensing requirements. As a condition of receiving RHY funds, however, we can require grantees to adhere to certain programmatic standards.

**Q: Will this rule impose additional reporting requirements on grantees not already approved by the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act?**

A: We understand the burden that reporting requirements place on grantees. This rule will not add additional burden.

**Q: Some of these standards look familiar to me. Are they all new?**

A: We already require grantees to conform to many of these standards as a requirement of funding. Those requirements have been included in funding opportunity announcements for years. In large part, this rule formally codifies the requirements into government regulation.

**Q: When this Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) is published, will the new performance standards take effect immediately?**

A: We provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the NPRM and invite comments during the 60-day period the NPRM is open for public comment, including comments on how long it may take to fully implement the proposed performance standards. We may make changes to the proposed performance standards based on the comments we receive. We understand that it may take some time to understand the new standards and bring programming into compliance with them. The final rule will establish the effective date for full implementation.

### **Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) NPRM and its Effect on LGBTQ Youth**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is committed to establishing core competencies and non-discriminatory service expectations for all runaway homeless youth program grantees that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity considerations through the rule making process. The following Q and A discusses how the proposed regulation will create a more affirming service environment for youth who may identify as lesbian, gay, transgendered, or questioning.

**Q: How will the proposed rule ensure a more affirming service environment for LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth?**

A: Under the proposed rule, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program will require youth workers to demonstrate core competencies in six domains. One of the domains that is critical for

establishing an understanding for working with a LGBTQ population is a “youth worker’s capacity for understanding and working with cultural and human diversity (including, but not limited to, gaining knowledge and skills to meet the needs of clients of a different race, ethnicity, nationality, religion/spirituality, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation).”

**Q: How will ACF ensure that grantees hire and retain youth workers who demonstrate these competencies?**

A: If necessary, ACF will provide technical assistance or short-term training on the proposed program standards. ACF has identified a training need for grantees in the areas of screening and assessment – particularly around each youth’s individual strengths and needs across multiple aspects of health, well-being and behavior in order to inform appropriate service decisions and provide a baseline for monitoring outcomes over time. Moreover, ACF would provide instruction to runaway or homeless youth service providers in skill areas that will directly strengthen service delivery.

**Q: Will the proposed rule require any increased outreach from grantees to the LGBTQ community?**

A: While the new rule will not increase outreach specifically for LGBTQ youth, the more expansive definition of outreach may encourage grantees to reach out to more specific subpopulations (to include LGBTQ) of youth who might not be aware of services. Outreach would be defined as a means to “finding runaway, homeless, and street youth, as well as youth at risk of running away or becoming homeless, who might not use services due to lack of awareness or active avoidance, providing information to them about services and benefits, and encouraging the use of appropriate services.”