

**Report to Congress on the
Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs
Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013**

**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

Almost 40 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 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. Also, these young people often fail to develop the educational and job-readiness skills that are so crucial to financial and housing stability in adulthood.

Young people who live on the streets are at high risk of developing serious, 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 and human trafficking.

For all these reasons, programs that keep young people from being homeless – whether by providing preventive services or rapid, effective family reunification (if appropriate) or 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 & Families of the U.S. 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. These three programs are:

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

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 FYSB funds effectively meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System assesses each program's services.

This report documents the ways that FYSB, continuing its 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) 2012 and 2013.

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 FY12 and FY13. The report also includes information about the monitoring of grantees, as required by Section 386 of the Act.

Introduction

Every year, as many as 550,000 young people up to age 24 are homeless for more than a week, according to one estimate by the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Of those young people, 380,000 of them are minors – not yet old enough to sign a lease or even apply for federal assistance for themselves. According to the Alliance, after six months, as many as 50,000 of these young people are still living with acquaintances or remain on the streets, losing or having lost contact with the people and places that usually protect and guide adolescents through emerging adulthood: schools, family, coaches, and faith institutions.

Young people who live on the streets are at high risk of developing serious, life-long health, behavioral, and emotional problems. Compared to youth who have never run away, they suffer from high rates of depression¹, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.² They tend to abuse drugs and alcohol³ and are often survivors of physical and sexual abuse.⁴ The longer they are exposed to the streets, the more likely they are to fall victim to commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.⁵ Moreover, while on the streets, they fail to develop many of the educational and job-readiness skills that are so crucial to financial and housing stability in adulthood.⁶

¹ Shelton, K.H., P.J. Taylor, A. Bonner, M. Van den Bree (2009) Risk factors for homelessness: evidence from a population-based study. *Psychiatric Services*, 60, 465–472.

² 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

³ Thompson, S., Barczyk, A., Gomez, R., Dreyer, L., & Popham, A. (2010). Homeless, street-involved emerging adults. Attitudes toward substance use.. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25(2).

⁴ 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

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Ferguson, K. M., Bender, K., Thompson, S. J., Maccio, E. M., & Pollio, D. (2012). Employment Status and Income Generation Among Homeless Young Adults Results From a Five-City, Mixed-Methods Study. *Youth & Society*, 44(3), 385–407. doi:10.1177/0044118X11402851

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, reauthorized by the

Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008, and administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

A Safety Net is Born

Thirty-nine 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 been asked to leave home by their families.

FYs 12-13 FUNDING IMPACT

Each Street Outreach Program grantee got an average of **151 youth** off the streets and into shelter for at least one night.

Each Basic Center Program grantee provided emergency care and counseling to an average of **114 youth**.

Each Transitional Living Program grantee provided intensive, long-term support to an average of **18 transition-aged young people**.

The National Runaway Safeline handled an average of more than **263 calls a day** from youth, parents, and allies.

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 Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program, known as the **Street Outreach Program**.

The Act sought to ensure that runaway and homeless youth could find emergency shelter – through the Basic Center Program – in every state. Congress believed that temporary shelter, along with rapid intervention by case workers and other social service providers, would keep young people safe until they could be 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. Expanding that safety net, Congress created the Transitional Living Program in 1988 for youth between the ages of 16 and 22 who could not safely return home. In an effort to prevent human trafficking, a street outreach component was added in 1994.

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

Supporting 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.

Commitment to Ending Youth Homelessness

To combat and ultimately end youth homelessness requires a comprehensive coordinated approach that marshals all federal, state, and local resources around a common, research-based framework. In 2009, through the HEARTH Act (P.L. 111-22), Congress mandated that the United States Interagency Council on

2012 Amendment to Opening Doors Strategy to End Youth Homelessness

Strategy 1: Get better data

Phase 1:

- Develop better strategies for counting youth in point-in-time counts of homelessness.
- Coordinate federal data systems that collect information on youth experiencing homelessness and their receipt of services.

Phase 2: Launch a national study on the prevalence and characteristics of youth homelessness.

Phase 3: Use the national study methodology to make periodic estimates of youth homelessness over time.

Strategy 2: Build capacity for impact

Phase 1:

- Disseminate a preliminary, research-informed intervention model for approaching service delivery.
- Review screening and assessment tools and effective interventions to improve youth outcomes.

Phase 2: Improve service capacity for homeless youth and subpopulations.

Homelessness (USICH) develop a "national strategic plan" to end homelessness. Presented to the Office of the President and Congress on June 22, 2010, *Opening Doors* was the nation's first comprehensive strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

Opening Doors serves as a roadmap for joint action by HHS and the 18 other USICH member agencies, along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors. The 2012 Amendment to *Opening Doors* was developed to specifically address what strategies needed to be undertaken to assist unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. The resulting two-pronged strategy includes 1) collecting better data about youth experiencing homelessness, and 2) building the capacity of systems and organizations to deliver effective services.

1. Collecting Better Data

FYSB is integrally involved in the effort to collect better data on runaway and homeless youth. Activities in FY12 and FY13 include:

Youth Count! – FYSB worked with USICH and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Education (ED) to launch *Youth Count!*, an initiative to identify promising strategies for counting unaccompanied homeless youth through innovative implementations of HUD's 2013 Point-in-Time (PIT) count. In January 2013, nine runaway and homeless youth grantees across the country participated in *Youth Count!* A process study on the first count was published in FY13. The study report included recommendations for finding and recording information on unaccompanied homeless youth.

Federal Data Integration – FYSB continued its work with HUD to integrate the two federal systems that collect data on homeless individuals and families. A goal of integration is to get a more complete picture of how many youth are being served in each system and which services they are accessing. In FY13, HUD published for public comment the new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data standards that incorporate Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) data collection questions. Once final standards are in place, FYSB will work with HUD to beta test the system in 2014. FYSB will then begin training its grantees on the new system prior to its implementation in 2015.

Research and Demonstration – FYSB has three efforts under way to develop a better understanding of the needs of runaway and homeless youth: an evaluation of the Transitional Living Program; a study of youth served by the Street Outreach Program; and a newly funded demonstration project focused on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning homeless (LGBTQ) youth. Each project is described more fully in Section D below.

2. Building the Capacity of Systems

As required by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, FYSB drafted a performance standards regulation for the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach Programs. Once published, the new standards will set the minimum requirements that FYSB-funded runaway and homeless youth projects must meet. The regulation was published for public comment in April 2014.

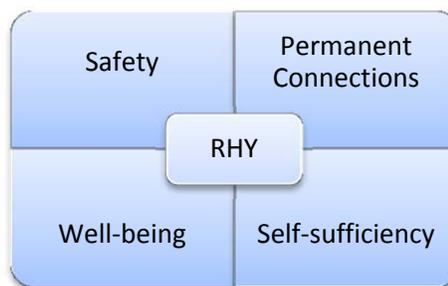
To contextualize and supplement the new standards, FYSB released a framework (see Figure 1) based upon what research to date has shown are the most important outcomes for youth at risk. The framework, developed in consultation with the field, includes four outcomes: safety, permanent connections, well-being, and self-sufficiency. In FY12, FYSB developed a series of draft indicators for each of the three Runaway and Homeless Youth programs through a literature review, working groups with the field, peer review, and site visits with grantees.

The 2012 Amendment to Opening Doors further refined the outcomes for runaway and homeless youth to include 1) stable housing, 2) permanent connections, 3) well-being, and 4) education or employment. The Amendment also put forward a draft model for improving the outcomes among youth (see Figure 2 below).

When the model was released, FYSB began modifying requirements and educating grantees and the runaway and homeless youth field on the model's different components:

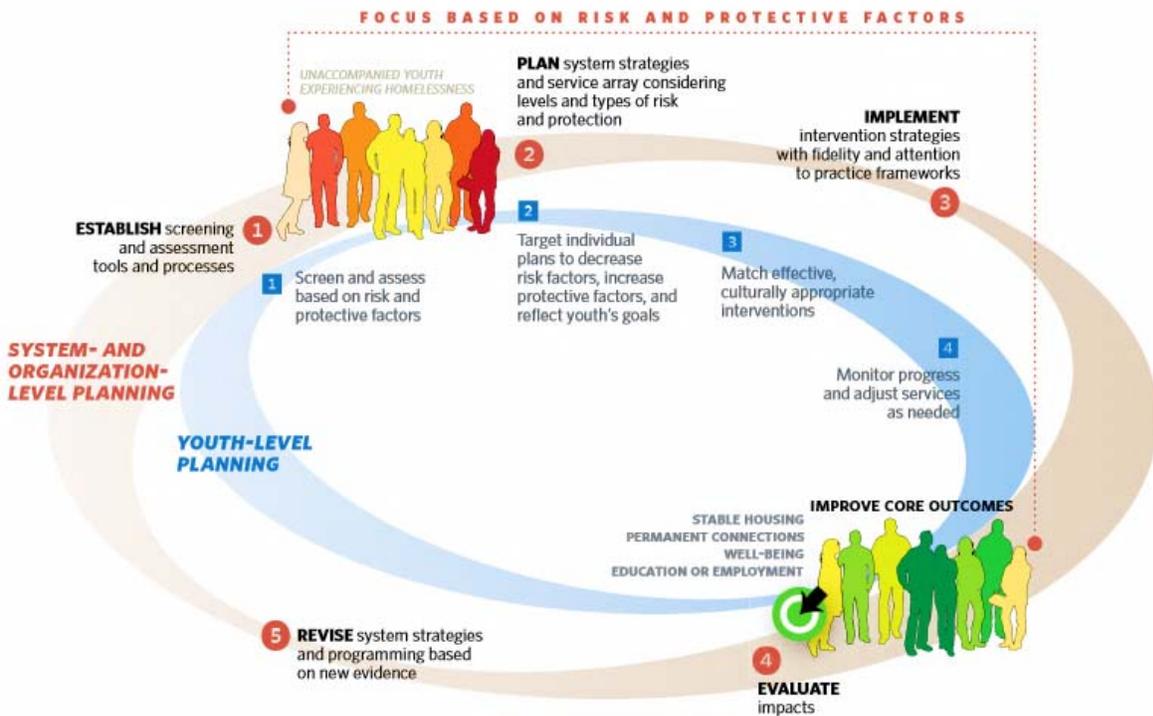
1. **Screening and assessment:** In FY12, FYSB began requiring that grantees use appropriate screening and assessment tools to determine whether the young people entering programs have a history of trauma, mental health concerns, or substance abuse, among other issues.
2. **Personalized case planning:** In FY12, organizations applying for Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grants were required to design a project plan that included personalized case planning for all young people, taking into account their risk and protective factors and their goals for the future.
3. **Evidence-based and evidence-informed interventions:** In its FY12 and FY13 funding opportunity announcements, FYSB required grantees to use frameworks, practices and interventions that have evidence of effectiveness. Training and technical assistance and other resources were provided to help grantees understand and implement:
 - a. Trauma-informed care and positive youth development frameworks; and

Figure 1: Runaway and Homeless Youth Outcomes



- b. Specific practices, including motivational interviewing and trauma therapies, that have some indication of effectiveness with young people with similar characteristics as runaway and homeless youth.
4. **Evaluating performance:** To begin measuring the outcomes of runaway and homeless youth programs, FYSB enhanced the assessment and monitoring of grantee performance, in FY12, using a dashboard that monitored specific areas of grantee performance.

Figure 2: Youth Intervention Model



Underserved and Underrepresented Populations

In FY12 and FY13, FYSB also devoted much attention to underserved and underrepresented populations, including minor victims of domestic sex trafficking and LGBTQ and Tribal youth.

- **Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation** – FYSB worked to better understand and support the needs of victims of sex trafficking, who are often homeless youth. In FY12, FYSB brought together representatives from the FBI Office for Victim Assistance and four grantees that have had the most experience working with trafficked youth to discuss how to best collaborate to recover and provide services to victims of sex trafficking. That meeting informed the design of training and technical assistance offered to grantees around serving trafficked youth.
- **LGBTQ Youth** – In FY12, FYSB strengthened protections for LGBTQ youth who access runaway and homeless youth services. Grantees are now required to have policies

prohibiting harassment based on race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity (or expression), religion, and national origin. Grantees must have procedures established to monitor harassment claims, address them, and document corrective action(s) taken. Such procedures assure that programs are safe, inclusive, and non-stigmatizing by design and in operation.

- **Tribal Youth** – In FY11, three percent of basic center youth and six percent of transitional living program youth self-identified as Native American. In November 2012, a focus group was convened to assess current service levels and approaches to Native youth homelessness. Representatives of tribes, tribal organizations, federal agencies and Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees provided input that is being used to develop guidance to improve services to Native youth who enter non-Native programs. The Youth Intervention Model is the framework for this guidance.

Two Years of Progress in Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

As required by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, the remainder of this report outlines “the status, activities, and accomplishments of entities that receive grants under parts A, B, C, D, and E,” in FY12 and FY13. 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.

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.

The Basic Center Program is the federal government’s network of emergency shelters for youth up to age 18, housed

Table 1: Basic Center Program Grant Funding, FYs 2012 and 2013

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding	Number of Exiting Youth
2012	321	\$48.2 million	37,022
2013	303	\$45.1 million	33,830

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

Table 2: Snapshot of Youth Served by Basic Center Program in FYs 2012 and 2013, Excluding Brief Contacts (percentage)

Gender	2012	2013
Female	52	52
Male	48	48
Other	<1	<1

Age	2012	2013
10 or under	4	3
11-14	36	37
15-17	60	60
Other	<1	<1

Race/Ethnicity	2012	2013
White	51	51
Black or African American	32	33
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	3
Asian	<1	<1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1	<1
More Than One	4	5
Not Provided	8	8
Hispanic or Latino (all races)	20	19

from a basic center program, including shelter or preventive services, such as mediation and family and individual counseling.

Boys and girls are served almost equally; slightly more than half of young people entering basic centers are girls (see Table 2). The programs serve young people of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds. While the majority of youth served are white (just more than half of all youth served), African American youth were overrepresented (about one-third of youth) compared to

mainly at nonprofit organizations and a few public health departments (see Table 1 above). 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 Basic Center Program is able to meet the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth and their families and to connect them with services that can help them in the longer term. The preferred outcome for these youth is to safely return them home or find a stable place where they can stay – for instance, with a caring relative or at a transitional living program.

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

Who Are the Youth Served by the Basic Center Program?

Basic centers may serve youth under 18 years old. Most youth are between the ages of 15 and 17, though programs have worked with youth as young as 10 years old. In FY12 and FY13 a total of 72,600 youth received services

their representation in the general population in FY12 and FY13. Native American youth also were overrepresented.

In FY12 and FY13, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth composed 5.7 percent of basic center youth whose sexual orientation was reported in FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS). Transgender youth accounted for about 0.2 percent of basic center youth in both years, based on RHYMIS data. Grantees indicate that RHYMIS data may not be conclusive, however. Because youth often have difficulty trusting shelter staff at first, many youth workers collecting the demographic information may not press the youth to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Likewise, the youth may be reluctant to disclose that she or he is gay or transgendered. Research on homeless youth demographics suggests that 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.⁷

Most young people served by basic centers have only recently run away or become homeless. The majority (83 percent) come to basic centers from the home of a parent, guardian, relative, or friend. Fewer than 1 in 10 served youth has been living on the street.

In addition to young people who received preventive or shelter services, basic centers served another 140,282 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 six consecutive hours and may include providing food or clothing; referrals for counseling, health care, or other services; outreach to youth who may need assistance; and outreach to public and private agencies that work with youth and families. Brief contacts may have been with youth, parents, social workers, teachers, friends, or other concerned parties.

Demographic information is not collected for brief contacts.

What Problems Do Youth Who Come to Basic Centers Face?

Youth who come to basic centers have a myriad of problems. According to RHYMIS, more than 9 out of 10 youth served by basic centers say they face difficult family dynamics at home, such as constant fighting and screaming. More than 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, as compared to 20 percent for boys.

⁷ 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.

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

Because of these issues many youth are coping with trauma. In particular, young people who have been exposed to violence may have symptoms such as “hyper-arousal” (a nervous system in a chronic state of alertness), difficulty relating to other people, and problems regulating their own behavior.

Another major issue for these young people is school (see Table 3). Close to two-thirds of basic center youth are regularly attending school when they begin receiving services, and about 5 percent have dropped out. Around 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. Youth who have repetitive conflict at home tend to perform substantially worse in school than do their peers. Poor academic performance is a common consequence of family conflict and also becomes a contributing factor to more conflict.

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 basic center youth who cannot return home and are old enough to seek housing on their own cite issues around emancipation, low-cost housing, rental agreements, and securing resources for security deposits.

Table 3: Snapshot of Situation at Entry for Youth Served by Basic Center Program in FYs 2012 and 2013 (percentage)

Living Situation at Entry	2012	2013
Private residence	86	87
Street	7	6
Shelter	2	2
Residential program	2	1
Detention center	1	1
Don't know	1	1

School Status at Entry	2012	2013
Attending regularly	66	66
Attending irregularly	19	20
Dropped out	5	5
Don't know	5	5
Graduated high school or obtained GED	1	<1
Suspended or expelled	3	3

What Do Basic Centers Do to Help Youth?

When it passed 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.”

Spotlight on Sasha Bruce Youthwork: Anthony’s Story

Anthony was 13 years old when he lost his grandmother to heart disease. He did not know his father, and his mother’s substance dependency would make staying with her impossible. Anthony wound up on the streets of Washington, DC.

Eventually, Anthony found his way to the welcoming doors of Sasha Bruce House, the emergency youth shelter operated by Sasha Bruce Youthwork. Sasha Bruce is funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

“My first time even enrolling into the program at the shelter it was like, ‘Oh my goodness, I didn’t know none of these people,’ and I felt really awkward and uncomfortable sleeping in the bed next to complete strangers,” Anthony said.

But the relationships he developed with the Sasha Bruce House staff, such as youth worker George Montgomery, helped keep him on track.

“Mr. George was always there if we needed to talk to him,” Anthony said. “He was always able to listen and give us advice.”

When Anthony decided that he wanted to go to college, George helped him think through his choices and even took him on college tours.

In spring 2013, after serving as student body president, Anthony graduated Summa Cum Laude from St. Augustine University in Raleigh, NC. George attended Anthony’s graduation.

“The great thing that Sasha Bruce imposes on people is that once you are in a program, they build a relationship with the homeless teenager and remain in their lives,” Anthony said. “Because at the end of the day, they know that we didn’t go through anything positive in our lives and we need the support.”

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.

Spotlight on Janus Youth Services: Jenni’s Story

Jenni was 18 when she ran away from her California hometown. She ended up in Portland, OR, where she had heard there was plenty of help for runaway and homeless youth. At Janus Youth Services, a Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantee, she found emergency shelter, food and other services.

More importantly, she found a way to feel more at home in her own skin.

Jenni heard about Portland’s Native American Youth and Family Center from her case manager. The center reconnected her with her Native heritage, specifically her tribe’s belief in “two-spiritedness,” which says that every person embodies both feminine and masculine spirits. Inspired by this message, Jenni finally felt comfortable acknowledging and celebrating the fact that she is a lesbian.

Jenni’s newfound self-understanding has helped her find stability she never had. She thinks of The Native American Youth and Family Center’s staff as her family, and her case manager, Anne, as her older sister. Their relationship is a bedrock for Jenni because of Anne’s support during the time that she was coming to terms with her sexuality.

“Anne told me a couple of her stories,” says Jenni, “and I knew that she was okay. That’s when I knew I could trust her, and I had no problems saying, ‘Hey, I’m gay.’ I knew that I could tell her everything.”

Youths’ need for shelter may be addressed either through a centralized emergency shelter facility or a “host home” in the community. In host homes, 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. It is important to note that in some cases, basic centers are able to keep young people from leaving home at all. Between 15 and 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 few as two or three 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 youths’ needs and deal with the most urgent issues first.

Case Management and Counseling

Case managers also work with the young people to set goals for their stay. For example, 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 intensive 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 house them, or find a longer-term youth program, such as a transitional living program.

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

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,

- 96 percent were either attending school or had graduated;
- 98 percent were living in a home-like setting;
- 93 percent of youth had not been arrested since leaving the program;
- 90 percent of youth had a personal doctor or health care provider; and
- 98 percent reported that services had a positive impact on them.

Basic centers also help youth to meet their physical and dental health care needs. Some programs collaborate with community health centers, assist youth and families in applying for Medicaid when eligible, and connect youth to professional volunteers and interns. Some agencies have medical staff on site. However, the majority of programs rely on extensive collaboration by signing 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 Therapy⁸, Brief Strategic Family Therapy⁹, Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention¹⁰, Functional Family Therapy¹¹, and Aggression Replacement

Measuring Outcomes: Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs

In FY13, with direct input from youth, a coalition of runaway and homeless youth programs in Vermont adopted a new set of indicators for measuring young people's progress. The indicators are directly aligned with FYSB's four outcomes of safety, well-being, self-sufficiency, and permanent connections. Youth complete a survey called the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Resiliency Assessment at intake, exit, and every six months of participation in services. A full report was not available prior to publication of this Report to Congress. However, the initial outcomes reported by the Coalition are positive:

- 91 percent of youth served by Vermont runaway and homeless youth programs exited to a safe living situation;
- All youth served by Vermont runaway and homeless youth programs were able to identify individual strengths and resiliency factors that helped them cope with distress and transition to adulthood successfully; and
- More than 90 percent of youth left Vermont programs reporting an increase in at least one resiliency indicator related to safety, well-being, self-sufficiency, or permanent connections.

In FY14, the coalition will partner with the University of Vermont to evaluate the new resiliency assessment. Director Calvin Smith says, "We think this will strengthen the validity and reliability of our new instrument and the methodology our programs use to administer it. We look forward to sharing the results and our tool with other runaway and homeless youth programs, and others interested in our work."

⁸ Alternatives for Families: A Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Retrieved on August 4, 2013, from <http://www.afcbt.org/node/95#whatis>

⁹ University of Miami Health System. BSFT Program Effectiveness. Retrieved on August 4, 2013, from http://bsft.org/BSFT_Effectiveness

¹⁰ [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.](#)

¹¹ Functional Family Therapy. Retrieved on August 4, 2013, from www.fftinc.com/

Training.¹² 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 also may provide or arrange for tutoring or meet with teachers (and sometimes teachers and parents together) to develop support strategies for the youth. Some programs also provide work-readiness training and job-search assistance, as well as life-skills training, particularly to older youth.

Discharge Planning, Follow-up, 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 option is unavailable), 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 HUD housing assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, and supplemental food vouchers for parenting teens.

After young people leave basic centers, staff follow up¹³ 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.

¹² National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention: Evidence-Based Program Fact Sheets. Retrieved on August 4, 2013, from <http://www.promoteprevent.org/publications/ebi-factsheets/aggression-replacement-training%C2%AE-art%C2%AE>

¹³ 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.

What Are the Outcomes of Basic Center Services?

Data collected in RHYMIS does not currently provide 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 (safety, permanent connections, well-being, and self-sufficiency) will provide 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 problems. In fact, around 70 percent of youth who stay in a basic center shelter return to the home of a parent or guardian.

Nearly 95 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 have not experienced abuse to be reunited with family. Where a youth cannot be returned safely home, the program attempts to place them with friends or relatives or in a residential program. The Seattle program also has found that youth who abuse drugs are more difficult to help in a short period of time and more likely to drop out of their basic center program than young people without substance abuse issues.

Measuring Outcomes: Ozone House

Twelve months after participating in Family Reunification Services at Ozone House, a shelter in Ann Arbor, MI,

- 97 percent of youth have safe and stable housing
- 97 percent of youth have at least one supportive person in their lives;
- 75 percent of youth communicate better with their families; and
- 79 percent of youth are attending school regularly.

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

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.

The Transitional Living Program has two major goals: (1) to promote the social and emotional well-being of young people living away from home; and (2) to prepare youth to become independent, supporting themselves and, in some cases, their own children.

To meet these aims, the Transitional Living Program supports more than 200 agencies that provide longer-term residential services to older, homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 22 for up to 21 months (see Table 4). Youth younger than 18 who pass the 21-month mark may stay in the program until their 18th birthdays.

Table 4: Transitional Living Program Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding	Number of Entering Youth
2012	205	\$39.4 million	4,046
2013	206	\$37.2 million	3,322

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

Individual transitional living programs also 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. Indeed, running away more than doubles a teenager's chances of pregnancy in her first year away from home.¹⁴

For this reason, the 2008 reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act explicitly included maternity group homes within the Transitional Living Program to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting youth. In maternity group homes, young people learn parenting skills, child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote their long-term economic independence and ensure the well-being of their children.

¹⁴ Thrane, L.E. and X. Chen. (2012). Impact of running away on girls' pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(2), 443-449.

Who Are the Youth Served by Transitional Living Programs?

In FY12 and FY13, a total of 7,368 youth received shelter and support services from a transitional living program (see Table 5).

More than half of young people entering a transitional living program (57 percent in FY12 and 54 percent in FY13) had recently run away from or been asked to leave a private residence. About 20 percent had come from a shelter or another residential program, and between 11 and 12 percent 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.

LGBTQ youth comprised about 10 percent of young people served by transitional living programs in FY12 and 12 percent in FY13, as reported in RHYMIS. Transgender youth accounted for 0.5 percent of young people in FY12 and one percent in FY13, according to RHYMIS data. But research on homeless youth demographics suggests that as much as 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.^{15,16} 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.

Table 5: Snapshot of Youth Served by the Transitional Living Program in FYs 2012 and 2013 (percentage)

Gender	2012	2013
Female	60	59
Male	40	40
Other (including transgender)	<1	1

Race/Ethnicity	2012	2013
White	45	45
Black or African American	36	38
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	4
Asian	1	1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1
More Than One	5	5
Not Provided	7	6
Hispanic or Latino (all races)	15	15

Age	2012	2013
15-16	4	5
17-18	45	43
19-20	43	44
21	8	9

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Unknown. (2010). Gay and transgender youth homelessness by the numbers. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Accessed August 1, 2013, at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2010/06/21/7980/gay-and-transgender-youth-homelessness-by-the-numbers/>

Many youth workers do not press youth to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity during intake and youth may be reluctant to be truthful about that information before they begin to trust program staff.

What Problems Do Youth In Transitional Living Programs Face?

Youth who participate in transitional living programs have a multitude of challenges.

First and foremost, many youth come to transitional living programs because they or their families face housing difficulties (see Table 6). Transitional living program residents are, on

Table 6: Snapshot of Situation at Entry for Youth Served by the Transitional Living Program in FYs 2012 and 2013 (percentage)

Living Situation at Entry	2012	2013
Private residence	57	54
Shelter	20	20
Street	12	12
Residential program	5	7
Another situation	6	6
Don't know	<1	<1

School Status at Entry	2012	2013
Attending regularly	34	32
Graduated high school	25	29
Obtained GED	9	7
Dropped out	20	20
Attending irregularly	10	9
Don't know	2	1
Suspended or expelled	<1	1

average, young adults expected to live on their own, but who have little ability to find, pay for, or sustain housing. Indeed, over 81 percent of youth cite housing as an issue they face, and more than one-third identify insufficient income.

About two-thirds of youth served by transitional living programs say they face difficult family dynamics at home, such as constant fighting and screaming. Around 30 percent of youth have suffered abuse and neglect or have witnessed a family member being abused or neglected. Their responses are consistent with the research, which shows that youth most commonly become homeless because of disruptive or unstable family environments.¹⁷

Whatever hardship they face, research suggests that most homeless youth experience multiple traumatic events both before and after becoming homeless.¹⁸ Young people who have been exposed to violence may have symptoms such as hyper-

¹⁷ Shelton, K.H., P.J. Taylor, A. Bonner, M. Van den Bree (2009) Risk factors for homelessness: evidence from a population-based study. *Psychiatric Services*, 60, 465–472.

¹⁸ 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

arousal, which can cause irritability, anger, and difficulty concentrating. Young people who have experienced trauma also may have trouble relating to other people and problems regulating their own behavior.

Around four in ten youth report struggling with mental health problems, and around 27 percent of youth say they have issues with drinking and drugs. About 18 percent in FY12 and 16 percent in FY13 report health-related concerns.

Additionally, homeless youth often find it difficult to concentrate on their education because they often move around and devote much of their time and attention to daily survival. About 56 percent of youth in transitional living programs cite education or school as a challenge. About a third of youth entering transitional living programs attend school regularly. Another third graduate or obtain their GED and some homeless young people continue on to college.

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 plans, 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. Many programs combine the three models, using a phased system that moves youth from more supervised to less supervised surroundings as they learn to live on their own. Regardless of the model used, programs may house up to 20 youth at one time.

The most commonly used model, **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 continually supervise youth in the home and regularly check up on each young person's progress in the program.

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 facility 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. Some organizations provide youth with a rent subsidy, while others ask youth to pay all of their rent.

In scattered-site apartment programs, staff visit the youth 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 the program.

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 while others seek volunteers.

Building Skills for Life

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

Spotlight on Promise House: Ryan’s Story

Ryan’s mother passed away when he was 10. He and his siblings lived on their own for a while before family members took them in. At age 18, Ryan found himself couch-surfing and sleeping in local parks after his older brother kicked him out of his house.

Ryan began to turn his life around after finding Promise House, a FYSB-funded Transitional Living Program in Dallas, TX. The change started one afternoon when Ryan’s house parent asked him how his day was--a simple question that most people take for granted.

“It was the first time in a long time that anyone had cared enough to be interested in me,” he says. “I knew I had found a place I could belong.”

Ryan started attending time- and money-management classes, and with help from Promise House’s supportive staff, graduated high school. He now attends Mountain View College, where he is working towards a degree in filmmaking.

“If I didn't have Promise House in my life, I would probably still be on the streets. I am sure that I would be drinking and doing drugs like so many others I know,” Ryan says.

“I now have a direction and purpose.”

To determine how they can best support young people, and to determine youths' 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 life skill topics, such as self-care, social development, work and study skills, and money management. Based on the rating in each area, staff members help youth decide what steps to take to improve their knowledge of these life skills. More about Casey Life Skills is available online at <http://caseylifeskills.force.com>.

Youth begin acquiring these skills through 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 graduate from high school or attain a GED credential, postsecondary training, or vocational education. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act also requires transitional living programs to coordinate with McKinney-Vento school district liaisons.
- **Assistance in job preparation and attainment.** Programs work to increase young people's employability, offering them opportunities to build workplace skills as well as providing

Measuring Outcomes: The Harbour

The Harbour, located in Park Ridge, IL, runs both a transitional living program and a maternity group home. Of the 30 youth in the transitional living program:

- 100 percent who completed the program were determined to have basic living skills, as assessed by the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment.
- 97 percent who completed the program attended school regularly, graduated from school, obtained a GED or passed 3 out of 5 sections of the GED.

The same agency's maternity group home served 24 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.

career counseling, guidance on dress and grooming, and information about workplace etiquette. Programs aim to match youth with jobs that fit their skills, financial needs, and career aspirations.

- **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 who are pregnant or have a child are more likely to get help applying for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, HUD housing assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, childcare assistance, and other forms of public aid.

Spotlight on Sea Haven: Craig's Story

For Craig, a college student seeking a degree in human services, Sea Haven for Youth provided more than shelter. The runaway and homeless youth provider in North Myrtle Beach, SC, also offered Craig an internship to help run and improve the agency's transitional living program.

As an intern, Craig received the same training and job experience as a full-time staff person. He also used the internship to share his experiences with other youth who could benefit from the program.

"It helps me feel better and allows me to give back to people who are going through the same things I have been through," he said.

Many programs report using evidence-based practices like motivational interviewing – a goal-directed, client-centered counseling style – to elicit behavioral changes.¹⁹ The technique helps young people explore their own motivations for change and understand the gap between their current behavior and desired life goals. Programs that address problem behaviors related to alcohol and drugs often use motivational interviewing to gain a better sense of young people’s attitudes toward substance use.²⁰

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 had a wide array of traumatic experiences, including domestic violence and traumatic loss.²¹

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 fair 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 after youth leave the program.

Aftercare also may involve providing counseling before youth exit the program, helping young people develop their own long-term plans, continuing individual and family counseling after

¹⁹ 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>.

²⁰ Thompson, S., Barczyk, A., Gomez, R., Dreyer, L., & Popham, A. (2010). Homeless, street-involved emerging adults. Attitudes toward substance use.. Journal of Adolescent Research, 25(2).

²¹ 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>.

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 providing them with any services or support they may need.

What Are the Outcomes of Transitional Living Programs?

As previously mentioned, 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 planned data gathering efforts, as described in the Introduction, will provide much more robust data for subsequent Reports to Congress.

What FYSB can say is that about 88 percent of youth who leave transitional living programs, whether they complete them or not, make what are called "safe exits," moving on to stable housing either in a private residence or a residential program, rather than going back to the instability of the street

or a homeless shelter or to an unknown location. By providing training and technical assistance on exit planning and ways to collaborate with community partners on housing and employment for young people, 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, thus increasing their chances of maintaining stable housing. Many FYSB grantees also are working with their local continuums of care and broader anti-homelessness and anti-poverty coalitions to address larger issues like tight rental and job markets that may stand in the way of stable housing for young people.

Upon their exit from a transitional living program, an average of 68 percent of youth over the two year period had graduated from high school or obtained a GED, or attended school regularly. Additionally, in FY12 and FY13, around a quarter of young people leaving transitional

Measuring Outcomes: Walker's Point Youth & Family Center

Walker's Point Youth & Family Services in Milwaukee, WI, gathered data for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, about how well young people were meeting goals they set for themselves upon entering the program. Of the youth served by the transitional living program:

- 87 percent of residents made progress on their counseling goals (as assessed by staff at time of discharge).
- 78 percent had made progress on their educational goals (such as graduating or receiving a GED) by the time they left the program.
- 76 percent of youth ages 18-21 had made progress on their work goals (such as obtaining a job or a better job) and were receiving a paycheck at time of discharge.

living programs were employed, while half were looking for work. Grantees report that these numbers are reflective of the larger issue of youth unemployment.

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 Safeline (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. During FY12 and FY13, a frontline team of staff and more than 300 highly committed volunteers answered the calls. These hotline volunteers, along with other volunteers in data entry and information fulfillment roles, provided 15,652 hours of service in FY12 and 12,570 hours during FY13.

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

NRS' frontline crisis team handled 105,763 calls in FY12 and 86,345 calls in FY13. The daily average was 289 in FY12 and 236 in FY13. Call volume typically peaked on Monday and decreased slowly throughout the week.

In FY12, 53 percent of the youth-related crisis callers identified the youth's situation as runaway, homeless, or throwaway²² as compared to 50 percent in FY13 (see Table 7). In FY12, the remaining 47 percent of crisis callers were youth in crisis (32 percent), youth contemplating running away (14 percent), or youth suspected missing by parents but not reported as a runaway (1 percent). In FY13, the remaining 50 percent of crisis callers were comprised of youth in crisis (30 percent), youth contemplating running away (19 percent), and youth suspected missing by parents but not reported as a runaway (1 percent).

In June of FY10, NRS began collecting data on crisis callers' race and ethnicity (see Table 8 below). This new data informs strategies on conducting targeted outreach and marketing to populations who more closely reflect the demographics of callers.

NRS has a dedicated phone line for hearing-impaired youth. Those with hearing impairments also are able to access services

Table 7: Crisis Caller Demographics, FYs 2012 and 2013 (percentage)

Gender	2012	2013
Female	70	71
Male	30	29
Transgender	0	<1

Age	2012	2013
18-21	45	41
12-17	55	59

Status of Youth Crisis Callers	2012	2013
Runaway	34	30
Youth in crisis		30
Contemplating running away	14	19
Homeless	13	14
Throwaway	6	6
Suspected missing	1	1
Ward of State/court	2	2
Former ward of State	3	2

Time on Street Before Calling	2012	2013
1-3 days	44	46
4-7 days	9	8
1-3 weeks	21	20
1-2 months	12	12
3-6 months	7	7
over 6 months	7	7

²² 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.

electronically, with email, live chats, or posts to online bulletin boards. To assist callers whose first language is not English, NRS has bilingual staff and volunteers and contracts with a translation services for 144 different languages.

Youth call the hotline for many reasons. The most frequently reported issues stayed consistent in FY12 and FY13. The top 10 issues identified were: family dynamics; economics; peer social issues; transportation; school-related issues; mental health; youth and family services; alcohol and drugs; physical abuse; and emotional or verbal abuse. These data may under-represent the incidence of highly sensitive issues, such as whether youth identify as LGBTQ or whether they have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as youth may be reluctant to share such information.

Table 8: Callers' Race and Ethnicity, FYs 2012 and 2013 (percentage)

Race/Ethnicity	2012	2013
White/Caucasian	40	40
Black or African American	32	30
Hispanic or Latino	16	17
Multi-Racial	6	6
Not Provided	2	3
American Indian or Alaskan	2	2
Asian	2	1
Native Hawaiian or other	<1	<1

Trauma-Sensitive, 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 10,123 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 publicly available online in resource directories, such as www.211.org

Service providers are invited to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NRS. These agreements outline the relationship and referral process between the organizations. MOUs are valid for a three-year period. The current cycle ends in April 2014. In FY13, NRS executed MOUs with 1,116 agencies. As agency profiles are updated, or new resources researched for inclusion, each agency is invited to either renew their current agreement or sign a first agreement.

NRS provided 13,607 referrals in FY12 and 17,861 referrals in FY13. Because the crisis line is anonymous and caller identification is not used, data cannot be collected on whether referrals are utilized.

To connect homeless youth who are no longer in their home communities to appropriate housing and other community-based services at their new locations, hotline staff and volunteers mediate conference calls between young people and community agencies that can assist them. NRS mediated 1,168 such calls in FY12 and 1,765 calls in FY13.

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

Spotlight on NRS: Aimee's Story

Aimee, 13, called NRS with thoughts of running away from home. She was frustrated with the problems that she had been having with her family, as well as a group of bullies at school. Aimee said that her parents didn't listen to her when she talked and blamed her for things that she did not do. Her older sister also was treating her poorly and bullying her. Besides being bullied at home, Aimee said there was a group of girls at school that liked to make fun of her and start rumors about her. Their bullying made her think about not going to school or skipping the classes with the bullies.

Aimee and an NRS frontline team member discussed things Aimee could do to cope with her situation. She had already talked to her cousin, the school principal, and the school guidance counselor. She also had decided she could just walk away from the group of bullies and find other friends to hang out with. Talking to NRS, Aimee realized how much support she had been getting at school from her cousin, the school faculty, and her new friends. The bullies didn't seem so bad to her anymore. NRS discussed resources related to bullying, just in case she had more questions or wanted to report a case of bullying later on. Aimee said she would try to talk to her parents again and see if they would listen.

NRS offered to conference a call with her parents to help Aimee talk about her feelings. NRS also did a role-play with her over the phone to practice what she wanted to say to her parents and some responses to how they might react. Aimee decided not to have a conference call, but she did walk through what she was going to say to her parents. She thanked NRS and said she would call back if her talk with her parents did not go well.

youth and their parents to facilitate positive communication and initiate family reunification.

Message Relay Between Youth and Families

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

The following is a real message left by a youth: “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 at NRS. The following is a real message left by a parent: “I am worried about you and I hope that you are safe. I would like to know what’s going on. You are welcome to come back home.” NRS offered the message relay service 544 times in FY12 and 346 times in FY13. There were 224 messages from runaway youth taken in FY12 and 188 messages in FY13. The NRS’ three-part research project facilitated by the National Opinion Research Center in 2010 found that more than half (58.5 percent) of runaway and homeless youth reported having access to a cell phone at least some of the time while away from home,²³ allowing them to contact family when they

Annual Hotline Survey	2012	2013
Agreed to participate in the survey	62	64
First time caller to the hotline	89	86
Agreed to the statement, “overall, NRS was effective in helping me today”	99	98
Responded “Yes” to “would you contact NRS again if you needed help”	99	99
Responded “Yes” to “would you refer others to the hotline”	99	99

are ready.

Crisis Line Quality Assurance

²³ Pergamit, M. R., and Ernst, Michelle. (2010) Runaway Youth’s Knowledge and Access of Services. National Runaway Switchboard.

NRS's annual hotline survey was developed in collaboration with the Center for Community and Organizational Development at DePaul University in Chicago, and is offered to crisis line callers for a 7-day period each year (see Table 9).

www.1800RUNAWAY.org

In FY12 and FY13, NRS continued to focus on building its online presence through its website, www.1800RUNAWAY.org, and its social media platforms (see Figure 3 below). In FY12, NRS created a mobile website, giving youth and families in crisis a quicker way to access NRS information and services on their smart phones. Also in FY12, NRS was granted an Adword grant from Google. The in-kind donation allots NRS up to \$10,000 monthly in media dollars to bid on more prominent ad space on Google. In January 2013, NRS launched its new name with a logo and brand expression. NRS updated its website with a new National Runaway Safeline logo, the 'Here to listen. Here to help.' tagline, and new photography reflecting youth in less dire situations. The consulting firm facilitating the branding project recommended photography reflecting youth in a more positive and engaging manner. NRS secured a pro bono photographer to build a portfolio of photography featuring diverse youth connecting to NRS on phones. In addition, NRS continues to add videos onto the website explaining different services. The videos show NRS staff answering questions about different aspects of NRS. NRS continues to enhance www.1800RUNAWAY.org to be a user-friendly, youth-centered design with search engine optimization to enable youth searching the Internet to more easily find NRS.

From the National Runaway Safeline's Online Message Board

I share a room with my little brother who tries his personal best to annoy me, and we got into a fight a couple of days ago, and I tried to explain to my mom what happened, but the only story she'd believe was her own. This has happened many times, and truly I'm TIRED...I also feel like I have anger issues but I've never shared this with anyone. Sometimes I use my stress ball I found in my house. But I really have too much anger for that. I need help...

On the website, youth and adults can anonymously seek information about a range of issues, including family conflict, peer relationships, problems with school, personal and family mental health, and abuse and neglect. In July 2013, NRS initiated the 2013 Youth and Parent Tips Campaign. The initiative is collecting tips from youth and parents for youth and parents. The results will be featured as a resource for youth and parents on the website.

The media section serves as a user-friendly source of information for reporters so they can 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.

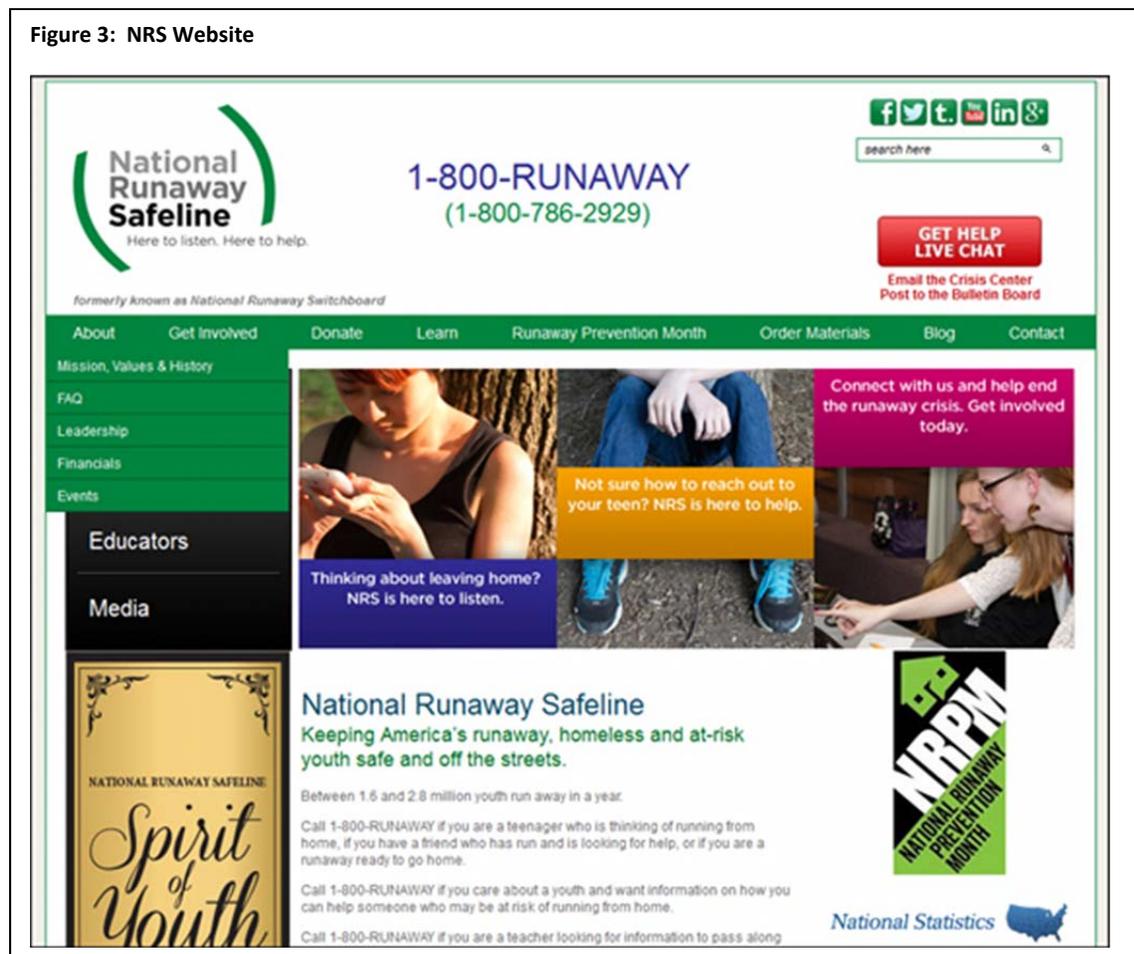
Educators can find and download the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* on the website in English and Spanish.

In FY12, the website had 135,513 visits. In FY13, traffic increased to 230,279 visits.

In FY12 and FY13, NRS also continued to enhance its youth-centered initiatives by contracting a former call center volunteer, who is now a college student. His role is to post ongoing information on Tumblr. Utilizing his knowledge of NRS and his youthful perspective, NRS has been able to build a presence on Tumblr and increase its visibility online. In addition, NRS has utilized call center supervisors and former NRS employees to blog about caller issues on the website. This insider perspective has more effectively connected potential callers to services and produced new content to optimize search engines.

Over the past two years, NRS has increasingly used social media vehicles to connect with youth and the adults who are concerned about them. NRS focused on using not only Twitter and Facebook but also Tumblr, Four Square, and LinkedIn to drive traffic to its website and connect

Figure 3: NRS Website



new people to NRS services. During FY12 and FY13, NRS reached 3,047 Facebook likes and 2,294 Twitter followers.

National Runaway Safeline provides a comprehensive live chat service for youth who want access to NRS services online. Youth can access live chat from any page of NRS' website daily from 4:30-11:30pm Central Standard Time. Live chat allows an immediate response and uninterrupted dialogue with frontline team members. While chatting with youth, team members can direct them to Web resources, "pushing" links to community-based services or informational websites directly to the youth. These resources include 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. In FY12, NRS received 2,489 chat requests resulting in 1,125 substantive chat conversations. The remaining 1,364 chat requests either terminated abruptly or otherwise did not provide enough information for documentation. In FY13, NRS received 3,690 chat requests resulting in 1,678 substantive chat exchanges.

NRS staff members also respond to online bulletin board postings. Postings on the bulletin board range from discussions of family issues, legal issues and parenting to peer pressure and relationships. NRS responded to 415 bulletin postings in FY12 and 981 in FY13 (a 136 percent increase).

Youth also contact NRS via email. Crisis emails increased significantly in FY12 and FY13. In FY11, NRS responded to 506 crisis emails. In FY12, NRS responded to 1,142 crisis emails, amounting to a 125 percent increase. The trend of youth contacting NRS via online avenues continues to show growth in FY13 as NRS responded to 1,605 crisis emails, a 41 percent increase over FY12.

Staff members respond to information requests, whether bulletin board posting or email, within two hours, day or night.

Family Reunification Through Home Free

Since 1995, NRS has worked in partnership with Greyhound Lines to administer the Home Free program, which reunites runaway and homeless youth ages 12 through 20 with their families by giving them free bus tickets home. When returning home to family members is not an option, runaway and homeless youth ages 18 through 20 may receive free tickets to alternative living arrangements, such as the homes of extended family members or transitional living programs near their homes. FYSB basic centers often use Home Free to reunite out-of-state runaways with their families. The program has provided more than 14,000 rides home since its inception.

NRS discussed Home Free services with 2,143 youth in FY12. Of those young people, 464 completed the steps of the Home Free process, which includes a conference call between youth and a parent or guardian, and received free bus tickets to return home or go to an alternative living arrangement. In FY13, NRS discussed Home Free services with 1,775 young people and issued a free bus ticket to 469 of them.

Getting the Word Out About Runaway Prevention and Services

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

National Runaway Prevention Month: For 11 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 promote NRPM events and activities across the country. Organizations report hosting "Green Sock Day," a jean's day fundraiser, candlelight vigils, press conferences, family-focused events, and green light bulb distribution parties.

First used by a local runaway and homeless youth program, green light bulbs have become the NRPM symbol. The green light bulb project has led to a new green socks initiative. In FY12 and FY13, NRS encouraged partners across the country to wear green socks to build NRPM awareness. In addition, green sock pictures were publicized on social media. NRS handed out green socks with 1-800-RUNAWAY at the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field in FY12 and FY13. The Cubs prominently featured "November is National Runaway Prevention Month" on their iconic stadium sign throughout the month.

In FY12 and FY13, NRS offered "NRPM in a Box," a starter kit containing posters, green light bulbs, green light lapel pins, and other materials organizations could use to build their local initiatives. In FY12 and FY13, NRS continued NRPM Social Media Action Day to help social service organizations inexpensively promote NRPM. By using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media vehicles, NRS seeks to create a ripple effect, connecting youth with services via the Internet.

Street Team: In May 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 FY13, there were 408 Street Team members in 44 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.

Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum: With a grant from Elizabeth Morse Genius Trust Foundation and in collaboration with DePaul University's Center for Community Organization and Development, NRS developed a first-of-its-kind resource, the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum (RPC)*. This interactive, 14-module curriculum is designed to address interpersonal and coping skills, increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention, educate teens about alternatives to running away, and encourage youth to seek and access help from trusted community members. In FY12, 3,978 youth (with some duplication) participated in the curriculum in an individual activity, one or more modules, or in all 14 modules as evidenced by the demographic forms received. In FY13, 3,991 youth participated. 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 showed an average increase in knowledge ranging from 10 percent to 31 percent among youth who participated 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

NRS oversaw a 20-week project to implement the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* at eight sites across the country during both FY12 and FY13. Each site maintained a cohort group of at least 12 youth to participate in each of the 14 modules. In addition, NRS oversaw the use of "Module 6: Runaway Reality" at 10 sites in multiple states during both FY12 and FY13. Each site facilitated at least five sessions (totaling 50 sessions) of the module in community venues.

Evaluation: In 2012, NRS conducted an evaluation of the Home Free program, focusing on 432 youth and families who received bus tickets in 2011. The evaluation team included a doctoral-level principal evaluator, a doctoral-level project director, a master's-level senior level evaluation associate and a team of five evaluation associates. The evaluation team worked in collaboration with NRS staff. The resulting project manuscript, "A Family-Based Intervention for Runaway Youth: The Home Free Program," was accepted for consideration in May 2013 for publication in *Children and Youth Services Review*. Quantitative data highlights include:

- 99.1 percent of youth returned home as expected after using Home Free.
- 77.4 percent of youth did not leave home again after Home Free. Of youth who did leave home again after using Home Free, 65 percent had a history of leaving home prior to receiving services.
- 84.5 percent of parents reported that the issues that led to youth running away were either somewhat, mostly, or completely resolved one month after Home Free; 90.3 percent reported the same level of resolution at the time of the evaluation interview which occurred up to 18 months after receiving Home Free services.
- 68.3 percent of parents reported that their youth used less alcohol or other substance after Home Free.

Research: NRS has determined that research data describing the plight of runaway youth is an effective means of building awareness among the media, funders, and the public. NRS continues to release its annual crisis caller statistics, highlighting trends over a 10-year period. The report can be found at:

http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/Trend_report_2013_Summary_Page.pdf. In FY13, NRS also included a look at state-by-state call-volume trends with the report at: http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/State_trends_report_-_Final.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.

Long-Term Effects of Running Away: In September 2012, NRS released more 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 goal of the September 2012 release was to examine the connection between school characteristics and runaway behavior. While a fair amount of research has analyzed the effects of school characteristics on adolescent behaviors including sexual behavior, drop-out rates, and academic achievement, the connection between school characteristics and adolescent runaway behavior has never been examined. In addition, this report employs two types of dependent variables, both explicit runaway behavior and the more moderate behavior of spending a night away from home without parental permission. The study uses a nationally representative panel survey to identify the correlations between school characteristics at time one and the two measures of runaway behaviors for the same adolescents at time two. Exploratory crosstab analysis was used to pinpoint correlations

between school-level variables and runaway behavior. These results guided variable selection for the hierarchical linear model, which examined both individual and school-level correlates of runaway behavior. The results of this study offer compelling evidence that running away from home as an adolescent is correlated with school-level characteristics, and that schools vary in terms of the slopes of these relationships.

Key findings from the Chi Square Models include:

- Students from schools in the South are the least likely to run away (3.3 percent) and the least likely to spend a night away (11.2 percent) from home. Students from schools in the West are the most likely to run away (5.2 percent) and to spend a night away from home (16.2 percent).
- Students from schools in urban areas are less likely to spend a night away from home (12.4 percent) than students in either the suburbs or rural areas (14.6 percent).
- Both runaway episodes and nights away without permission are more common for students in schools with average class sizes over 30.
- Parent involvement matters. In schools with more than 10 percent of parents involved in the school's parent-teacher association, the night away rate is 2.1 percent lower than in schools with lower levels of involvement.

Key Findings of the Hierarchical Linear Models:

- School level variables continue to be statistically significant predictors of runaway behavior with the inclusion of individual-level controls of race, gender, age, parental economic status, birthplace, and prior abuse history.
 - Schools with lower attendance rates, larger average class sizes, and faster teacher turnover have higher runaway rates.
 - Schools in the Northeast and schools with lower attendance rates and lower levels of involvement in the parent-teacher association have higher rates of spending a night away without parental permission. Students from schools in the South are less likely to stay away overnight without permission.

NRS released the first installment of the longitudinal study findings in September 2011, and both studies are available in their entirety at <http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/>.

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 FY12, NRS distributed 377,270 brochures and prevention materials by mail and at conferences. In FY13, 162,511 hardcopy materials were

distributed. These materials can be printed directly from the NRS website (http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/promotional_materials/).

Entertainment and Media: In FY12 and FY13, NRS also spread its message by collaborating with media outlets and entertainment professionals. NRS uses a multi-faceted approach in building visibility, including public service announcements, media pitching and placement, and the NRPM campaign.

NRS' live chat television PSA featuring award-winning entertainer Chris "Ludacris" Bridges was distributed in May 2011 to 800 stations across the country. During the distribution year, it aired 28,694 times at 309 stations in 121 markets.

NRS' SPUN television PSA about bullying was distributed in May 2012 to 800 stations across the country. During the distribution year, it aired 49,017 times at 344 stations in 129 markets.

NRS was featured in various media vehicles, including:

- Radio feature release (October-December 2011) announced results of the longitudinal study and reached more than 13.7 million listeners in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Dallas, Houston, and Atlanta.
- Radio Media Tour of 19 stations across the country (April 2012) conducted by Dr. Gary Harper to discuss volunteer appreciation month and trend analysis from NRS' caller statistics.
- September Issue; Redbook; National; "Creating a Home for Homeless Teens" article encourages readers to volunteer for NRS and plugs website.
- August 1; Education Week Blog; National; "More Parental Involvement Means Fewer Runaways" blog post reports findings from the School Characteristics study released by NRS.
- August 10; Sacramento Bee; Sacramento, CA; "Runaway Hotline Has Many Calls from Sacramento Area" article reports findings from the School Characteristics study.
- September 6; KLUV 98.7 Morning Show (CBS Radio); Dallas, TX; Dr. Gary Harper discussed NRS crisis call trends, findings from the school characteristics and Home Free studies, and general NRS information.
- October 3; Huffington Post Live; National; "Girl Who Hashtagged Wolf" was a panel interview including Dr. Harper discussing the situation where the 16-year-old Kara Alongi had been found after tweeting she was in danger, causing a social media craze to help find her.

- October 12; Chicago Tribune; Chicago, IL; “Life’s Tough Lessons: Lack of Schooling Didn’t Prevent Author Nami Mun from Learning” article referenced her volunteer work with NRS.
- November 24; Boston Globe; Boston, MA; “Runaway’s father helping other parents of missing children” article included a statistic from NRS.
- November 28; MTV Against Our Will Blog; National; “A Day in My Life: What It’s Like to Volunteer with the National Runaway Safeline was a guest blog post from new youth board member Sofia Katsaggelos.
- December 3; NPR Here & Now radio show; National; “A Parents’ Guide to Finding a Runaway Child” included a statistic from NRS.
- January 3; Lawndale News; Chicago, IL; “Just a Phone Call Away” article is completely about NRS, its services, and how to get involved.
- January 13th, 16th, 20th; Chicago Tribune; Chicago, IL; a ¼ pro bono advertisement announces launch of National Runaway Safeline.
- January 23; Windy City Times; Chicago, IL; “Runaway Hotline Rebrands” article announces NRS’ new name.

NRPM generates a lot of media attention for NRS and its services each year. In 2011, 48 organizations participated in the Social Media Day of Action, resulting in 17,296 impressions of #NRPM2011 on Twitter; 40,000 impressions of "Runaway Prevention Month" on Twitter; 40,000 impressions of @1800RUNAWAY on Twitter. In 2012, 81 participating organizations participated in the Social Media Day of Action, resulting in 323,693 impressions of #NRPM2012 on Twitter; 299,136 impressions of "Runaway Prevention Month" on Twitter; 334,165 impressions of @1800RUNAWAY on Twitter. Twelve organizations (2011) and 26 organizations (2012) reported Green Sock Day activities. Proclamations were signed in Illinois, California, Wisconsin, South Carolina, and Alabama.

Figure 4: New Logo for National Runaway Safeline



On January 15, 2013, the National Runaway Switchboard became the National Runaway Safeline as a way to become more relevant and accessible to youth (see Figure 4). For 24 hours at 42 minutes on the hour (in honor of the organization’s founding 42 years earlier), NRS conducted an activity at NRS’ headquarters and online. In addition, NRS reached out to national partners to participate in communities across the country as an opportunity to promote the name change. Activities included candlelight vigils and posting the new video explaining the name change.

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 FY12 and FY13:

Association of Missing and Exploited Children Organizations (AMECO): NRS collaborates with AMECO to provide crisis services and education and prevention materials to families of runaway and homeless youth nationwide. NRS has integrated AMECO's member organizations into its nationwide referral resource database.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA): NRS' *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* "Runaway Reality" module is featured in the BGCA "Kids in Control" curriculum, which is promoted to club leaders. In FY12, eight BGCA sites participated in the full 14-module implementation research project, and in FY13, five BGCA sites participated. BGCA is a NRPM Task Force member and includes information about NRPM on its intranet for their sites nationwide.

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

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

Child Helpline International (CHI): NRS is a member of this international organization, which is working to develop youth hotlines in all countries worldwide. NRS provides technical assistance on crisis intervention training, volunteer recruitment and management, and program evaluation. NRS serves on CHI's New Technology Advisory Council. CHI has sponsored NRS' participation in past trainings for hotline service providers in Cartagena, Columbia; Tirana, Albania; Madrid, Spain; Mexico City, Mexico; and Windhoek, Namibia.

Children of the Night "With Out Wall" (WOW): NRS collaborates with Children of the Night providing resources to America's teens forced to live on the streets. NRS provides materials, such as wallet cards and the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, to Children of the Night and their WOW program partners nationwide.

Covenant House Nineline Crisis Line: In FY12, due to a lack of funding, this nationwide youth hotline reduced its hours of crisis line operations to 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. daily with NRS handling off-hour youth crisis calls. In May 2013, the Nineline ceased live operation, but still

maintained the toll-free number, which provides youth crisis callers an automatic option to connect directly with 1-800-RUNAWAY for assistance.

Crisis Text Line (CTL): NRS serves on the national advisory board to support the development of CTL and provide expertise in the area of online crisis intervention delivery in recognition of the growing demand for crisis support through a medium that teens already use and trust: text messaging. CTL is an independent subsidiary of DoSomething.org and works in partnership with existing hotlines, organizations, and experts.

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

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

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

National Safe Place: NRS and National Safe Place have a long history of collaboration to help get youth to safety. In FY12 and FY13, 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 National Safe Place shelters within 30 miles, the youth is provided the 1-800-RUNAWAY number to contact immediately for additional services. TXT 4 HELP provided over 960 referrals to NRS in FY12 and over 800 referrals in FY13. An additional component of the partnership is the promotion of runaway prevention and increased community awareness of the runaway youth issue. In FY12 and FY13, NRS and National Safe Place secured ten Safe Place sites nationwide to implement the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* "Runaway Reality" module in community venues.

NRPM 2011: Making the Connection (FY12): For National Runaway Prevention Month 2011, *Making the Connection*, NRS combined forces with 12 partners: National Network for Youth, National Center for Homeless Education, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth, National Safe Place, National Association of School Nurses, National Resource Center for Youth Services, Circle of Parents, National Assembly on School-based Healthcare, National Association of School Resource Officers, School Social Workers Association of America,

Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Girls, Inc. NRPM activities were held in 20 states. Proclamations were signed in Illinois, California, Wisconsin, and Alabama.

NRPM 2012: Numbers Tell the Story (FY13): For National Runaway Prevention Month 2012, *Numbers Tell the Story* (see Figure 5), NRS

combined forces with 15 partners: American Association of School Administrators, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers, Concerned Black Men – National Organization, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth, National Association of Police Organizations, National Assembly on School-Based Healthcare, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Center for

Homeless Education, National Network for Youth, National Resource Center for Youth Services, National Safe Place, School Social Workers Association of America, and Girls, Inc. NRPM activities were held in 29 states. Proclamations were signed in Illinois, California, Wisconsin, South Carolina, and Alabama.

True Colors Fund: NRS collaborates with the True Colors Fund to survey direct service providers on their program and services for LGBTQ youth and support each other in connecting with LGBTQ youth nationwide.

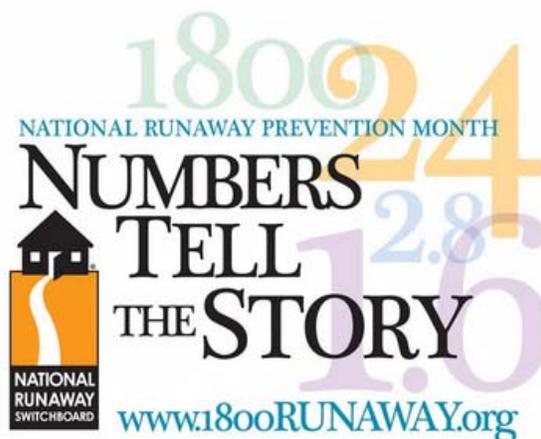
Section D: Coordinating, Training, Research and Other Activities

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 and evidence-informed 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.

Figure 5: National Runaway Prevention Month, 2012



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 participates in 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. In February 2013, IWGYP released the [Pathways for Youth](#) strategic plan for federal collaboration around youth. 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 implement Opening Doors, the federal government's strategic plan to end homelessness (please see Introduction).
- 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 participates in 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 work closely to build a system of support for victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

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

Providing Shelter: Homeless young people who graduate from Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs or live in areas not served by FYSB programs often need subsidized housing until they can make a full transition to self-sufficiency. FYSB 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 for the families they come from. FYSB and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's [Homelessness Resource Center](http://homeless.samhsa.gov), at <http://homeless.samhsa.gov>, share knowledge and resources about evidence-based strategies to prevent and treat substance abuse and mental health issues among runaway and homeless youth.

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 Center.

National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth

Established by FYSB in 1992, 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 21,000 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, the clearinghouse posts to its [website](#) more than 250 short 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.

NCFY redesigned and launched its website in FY13 to fully comply with all Federal requirements, including the White House Digital Strategy Initiative, the Plain Language Initiative, and 508 compliance (see Figure 6). The website is fully mobile responsive, meaning that the interface changes to fit any screen size – desktop, tablet or phone. The new website won a Best in Class (Government) award from the Interactive Media Awards in 2013, scoring 100 percent in content, 97 percent in feature functionality, and 97 percent in usability.

In its news feed, 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:

- **Research:** 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.
- **Program Strategies:** A monthly column highlighting one agency’s innovative practice along with steps to replicate it.
- **Fundraising:** A monthly column on fundraising and other topics related to building a sustainable organization.
- **Ask NCFY:** A periodic advice column where

Figure 6: NCFY Homepage



experts address questions received by the clearinghouse from the general public or grantees.

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

The award-winning quarterly [NCFY Reports e-magazine](#) takes an in-depth look at FYSB's priority topics. Topics covered in FY12 and FY13 included well-being, substance abuse, mental health, and evidence-based practices, among others.

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 building a trauma-informed organization, secondary trauma, and training staff to use evidence-based practices.

NCFY also produces videos, multimedia content, and slideshows and continues to offer the **online training in Positive Youth Development** that was developed in FY09 and updated in FY13. 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 8,000 unique users visit the NCFY website every month. NCFY also promotes its products through a twice-monthly e-newsletter, [NCFY News](#), which 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 its website and distributes materials at more than 15 conferences a year. Conferences that NCFY staff attended in FY12 or FY13 relevant to runaway and homeless youth included:

- National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference
- National Pathways to Adulthood Conference
- Department of Labor Fed Fair
- Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Grantee 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 sexual health communications, secondary trauma

and self-care, and using social media and multimedia to promote an organization’s case. NCFY also has given more than a dozen presentations on clearinghouse products and services to grantees from the Department of Labor, Department of Education, and HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement, among others.

NCFY 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 use NCFY 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 Safeline, 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 their communities of practice.

In FY12, NCFY launched a Facebook page and a Twitter feed (see Figure 7). The Clearinghouse posts 4 to 5 Facebook posts a day and received 442 “likes” by the end of FY13. The Twitter feed had 465 followers by the end of FY13. NCFY also conducted two Twitter Chats, around Dating Violence Awareness Month and sexual health for LGBT youth.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance

To enhance and promote the continuous quality improvement of the services provided by Runaway and Homeless Youth Program

Figure 7: NCFY Facebook Page



grantees, FYSB funds training and technical assistance. In FY12, the University of Oklahoma completed the final years of two five-year cooperative agreements for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training Center (RHYTC) and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Technical Assistance Center (RHYTAC). In FY12, the Bureau issued a funding opportunity announcement for a cooperative agreement that consolidated the two centers into one comprehensive training and technical assistance center. National Safe Place won that peer-reviewed competition and assumed responsibility for operating the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC) on October 1, 2012. For the purposes of this report, training and technical assistance activities for FY12 and FY13 will be described separately, since they can't be compared from year to year.

FY12: Runaway and Homeless Youth Training Center and Runaway and Homeless Youth Technical Assistance Center

In FY12, the centers employed a diverse set of strategies 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. To advance that effort, the centers worked with an Advisory Board of 20 to 25 members representing grantees, federal staff, youth who had received runaway and homeless youth services, academics, and national organizations related to runaway and homeless youth.

Information Services: In FY12, the centers offered resources, information, and guidance on evidence-based service provision through a solutions desk that offered a toll-free number, [website](#), and community of practice.

The centers' toll-free number received 1,695 calls from Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees in FY12. The number of calls increased significantly over FY11 due to FYSB's roll-out of a new grant management information technology system. The centers also received more than 1,100 emails during FY12. The centers' website, which gave grantees access to on-demand training, resources, event registration, and timely announcements about issues affecting the provision of runaway and homeless youth services, received 42,125 web visits in FY12.

The online Runaway and Homeless Youth Community of Practice (COP) encouraged networking and collaboration across the grantee community. Grantees could post questions, share knowledge around topical areas, and collaborate with their colleagues. By the end of FY12, there were 811 active members of the COP. In addition, grantees had access to more than 170 downloadable resource files, including four tip sheets published in FY12: *Harm Reduction: Advice from Leaders in the Field*; *Positive Youth Development*; *What is Harm Reduction*; and *What is Evidence-based Practice?*

Training and Technical Assistance: The centers brought grantees together in person through skill-based training, trainer certification, technical assistance clinics, and national conferences (see Table 10). Additional training was offered over the Internet in the form of e-learning and webinars. Topics 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 10: Training and Technical Assistance Events, FY 2012

Type of Events	Number of Events	Number of Participants
Skill-Based Training	10	154
Trainer Certification Courses	11	118
Technical Assistance Clinics	24	406
Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting	1	176
National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference	1	654

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 FY12, 10 skill-based trainings were provided to 154 participants.

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. The training center offered a total of 11 trainer certification courses in FY12. Courses included residential child and youth care professional; managing aggressive behavior; positive youth development; and trauma-informed care. A total of 118 new trainers were certified.

Technical Assistance Clinics

Technical assistance clinics are designed to facilitate targeted technical assistance 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. The technical

assistance center held 24 clinics across the country in FY12. A total of 406 participants from grantee agencies across the country attended those clinics.

Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting

The training center planned the annual Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting in New Orleans, LA, June 27-29, 2012. The meeting provided a forum for FYSB and 176 Transitional Living Program grantee representatives to discuss current issues and trends in transitional living programming.

National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference

The training center convened the fourth annual grantee conference in Portland, OR, on November 15-17, 2011. The conference was attended by 654 grantees representing 285 agencies from across the country, as well as Guam and Puerto Rico. The overall conference evaluation showed an average score of 4.2 (on a five-point scale) for the conference site speakers, and conference activities.

Distance Learning

Distance learning opportunities were offered in the form of live and pre-recorded webinars and an e-learning portal.

Webinars: The technical assistance center worked closely with federal and national partners, as well as grantees from across the country to develop and deliver nine live or pre-recorded webinars to 6,849 participants in FY12. Webinars were recorded and available for viewing on the website through the end of FY12.

E-Learning: 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. Nineteen new courses were added in FY12, bringing the total available to 169. Since the inception of the e-learning portal in October 2009, 3,851 grantee staff from 231 different agencies received 21,327 hours of continuing education units (CEUs).

FY13: Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center

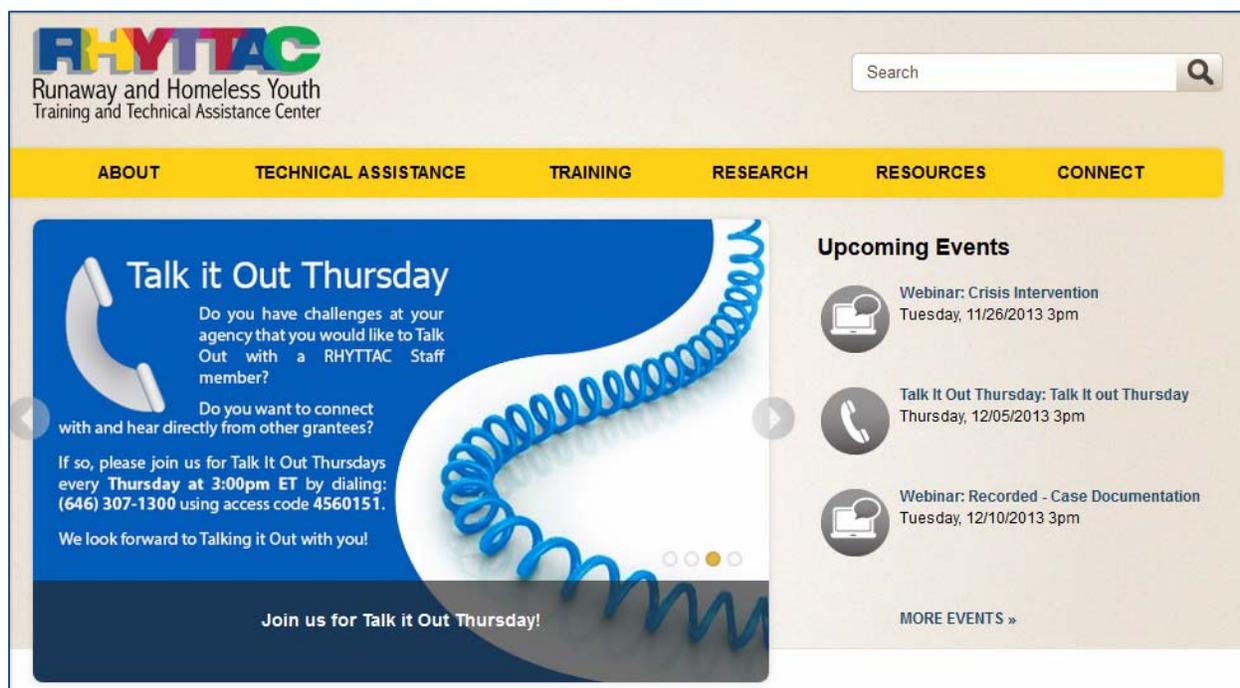
As stated above, the cooperative agreement to operate the newly consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC) was awarded to National Safe Place on October 1, 2012.

The activities described in subsequent sections are based on three principles. The first focuses on providing quality, cost-effective services to grantees. Organizations operating runaway and homeless youth programs have not been immune to economic challenges. Recognizing the

increased challenges that organizations face in supporting travel activities of staff, RHYTTAC has focused on building more distance learning opportunities to address identified needs.

The second principle focuses on data-supported, evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies. There has not been sufficient national research to create a comprehensive evidence-based resource for organizations working with runaway and homeless youth. However, there is consistent and documented support for strategies that are shown to correlate well with improved outcomes. RHYTTAC works to educate local organizations on these strategies (e.g., trauma-informed care and positive youth development) and to support the staff of these organizations during implementation of new initiatives.

Figure 8: RHYTTAC Website



The third principle is based on the understanding that services must be relevant and reflective of the grantee experience at the local level. To this end, RHYTTAC has prioritized gathering information directly from grantees to identify and address shared challenges to meeting program requirements and outcome targets. This focus also allows RHYTTAC to identify trends in service and practice efforts that may influence the runaway and homeless youth field and enhance programmatic efforts on a national scale.

RHYTTAC utilizes a combination of information resources and activities to meet the identified needs of organizations and to support FYSB in ensuring that all grantees are meeting federal expectations. To shape those activities, RHYTTAC works with an Advisory Board of 30 members representing grantees, federal staff, youth, academics, and national organizations that serve

specific youth populations and/or are part of the network of support for federally funded runaway and homeless youth services.

National partners include the National Runaway Safeline, the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, The Trevor Project, and the National Congress of American Indians. The primary academic partner for RHYTTAC is the University of Tennessee – Children’s Mental Health Research Center, one of only seven research centers funded by the National Institutes of Health to focus on the well-being of children and youth.

Information Services: As part of the new cooperative agreement, a new RHYTTAC website was launched on February 25, 2013, at www.rhyttac.net (see Figure 8 above). Since the launch, the website has demonstrated steady growth in the categories of new users and visits to the site. At the end of FY13, there were 21,044 visits to the RHYTTAC website and 11,073 unique visitors.

RHYTTAC also assumed responsibility for the existing online Community of Practice (COP) to encourage networking and collaboration across the grantee community. By the end of FY13, the COP had 674 members.

Training and Technical Assistance: RHYTTAC’s training and technical assistance delivery system is designed to address the training and technical assistance needs of grantees as determined by Federal Project Officers, grantee requests, or RHYTTAC staff (see Table 11). In FY13, topics have included evidence-based practice; motivational interviewing; crisis intervention screenings and assessment tools; trauma-informed care; bullying and harassment; competency-based youth care work; mental health needs; domestic minor sex trafficking; effective youth engagement; positive youth development; effective aftercare; outcomes; logic models; healthy boundaries; and more.

Table 11: Training and Technical Assistance Events, FY 2013

Training and Technical Assistance Events	
Skill-Based Training (site-based, recorded webinars and facilitated webinars)	1,699
Technical Assistance Clinics	57 organizations with 82 representatives
Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting	127
National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference	567

Technical Assistance Clinics

In FY13, RHYTTAC initiated the use of the IGNITE model to focus assistance on solutions to identified challenges at the local level. This model helps grantees to identify issues that may

hinder them from reaching goals or meeting federal expectations. The group of grantees, with RHYTTAC staff facilitation, then work together to identify solutions that are relevant, cost effective, and feasible to the organizations. One grantee from the first IGNITE clinic in Louisville, KY, stated, “I am so appreciative that I am leaving this experience with a list of solutions that I know have worked with other organizations like mine.” Another stated, “This opportunity was about improving our services – not just about complaining about what doesn’t work.” RHYTTAC also has continued delivery of several technical assistance 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 include the Basic Center Program, the Street Outreach Program, administrative issues, and trauma-informed care.

Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting

RHYTTAC planned and coordinated the 2013 Transitional Living Program Grantees Meeting in Baltimore, MD, on August 7, 2013. A total of 127 staff attended, representing 97 grantee agencies.

National Runaway and Homeless Youth FYSB Grantee Conference

RHYTTAC convened the national event for all Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees in November 2012 in Indianapolis, IN. This event brought together 567 participants, including representation from all 50 states, Guam and Washington, DC. More than 60 learning sessions were provided, and all grantees heard directly from federal staff regarding program requirements and priorities for organizations receiving federal funding.

Web-Based (Self-Directed) Learning

RHYTTAC offers e-learning designed by professionals in the field that meet each of the required staff training topics (see Table 12). Such requirements include basic counseling skills, understanding poverty, sexual exploitation of youth, substance abuse issues, cultural competency, emergency preparedness, and trauma-informed care.

Table 12: Web-Based Learning Use, FY 2013

Number of Courses Offered	Number of Active Users	Number of Educational Sessions
117	1,829	8,339

Grantee Initiated Technical Assistance

While some technical assistance offerings are driven by monitoring and reporting deficiencies, RHYTTAC also seeks to engage grantees in developing an understanding of the value of using available resources and staff support at the onset of challenges rather than as a result of a

federal finding. Weekly conference calls are available to all grantees. These calls are designed to support a group response to identified challenges. This framework normalizes the challenge and encourages supportive development of solutions and utilization of resources. RHYTTAC operates an info@rhyttac.net email address and a toll-free number that facilitates direct communication with grantees to meet identified needs. In FY13, RHYTTAC implemented a tracking system that captures the initial request, identifies the staff member responsible for follow-up, and provides a structure for documenting dates and outcomes related to resolving the request. Since implementation of the system, more than 238 contacts from grantees have been addressed.

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 FY12 and FY13, FYSB funded three research and demonstration projects to enhance knowledge about how best to provide services for runaway and homeless youth:

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

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

In FY08, FYSB funded a five-year demonstration, Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth (SSRHY), in three states: Colorado, Iowa, and Minnesota. The following year, three additional states were awarded five-year grants: Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Vermont. 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 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 personal connections in three main areas:

- *Connections to Survival Support Services:* Housing, healthcare, substance abuse, and/or mental health services

- *Connections to Education/Employment:* High School/GED completion, post-secondary education, employment, training, and/or jobs
- *Connections to Community:* Community service, youth and adult partnerships, mentoring, peer support groups, and/or positive youth development activities

The first cohort finished its grants at the end of FY13. Portions of the group's annual meeting, held in July, were given over to the first cohort's reflections on its experience and advice for the second cohort, which is ending in FY14. Particular emphasis was placed on sustainability: ensuring that the growth and progress made from the SSRHY demonstration continues past the expiration of the grant itself.

Challenges

The SSRHY Demonstration has confirmed that rural homelessness differs from urban homelessness in that it is less visible. Rather than typical images of youth on the streets, sleeping on benches or panhandling on street corners, rural homelessness is characterized by "couch-surfing," where young people find short-term, temporary shelter in the homes of friends, neighbors, and family. Demonstration participants agree that this "invisibility" poses two distinct challenges to their work:

- (1) It allows rural communities to be largely unaware of the problem
- (2) It presents challenges to youth providers in estimating the extent of rural youth needs

The SSRHY demonstration has further confirmed the difficulties faced by many rural communities, particularly in the stark recent economic climate: dwindling employment opportunities, low or negative population growth, limited affordable housing, and fewer facilities and resources to meet the communities' needs.

After lack of housing, demonstration participants cited a lack of transportation as the most critical impediment to serving homeless rural youth. With greater distances to travel than urban or suburban youth, and fewer public options for covering that distance, rural homeless youth have limited access to services and supports.

However, pressure to serve youth with relatively sparse resources has, in many cases, encouraged 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; therefore, SSRHY rural communities are less likely to exhibit duplications in their service delivery.

A major lesson from the demonstration is that rural youth remain at particularly high risk because they often have little social or recreational options and few safe, supportive places to

find new ones. The single biggest issue young people in the SSRHY demonstration raise is the need for safe places and something to do.

Accomplishments

The six demonstration projects have grappled with these issues in unique ways tailored to the needs, circumstances, and capacities of their communities. 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.

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. 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 in fitness equipment from Nebraska's Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. 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, the Iowa project opened a youth facility called The HUB in Boone, IA. Like The Spot, The HUB is intended both as a safe place for youth networking as well as a "HUB" for youth services. Services provided include individual skill building, life skill groups with Des Moines Area Community College, job placement, and case management. Youth come to The HUB both by appointment and as drop-ins.

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. More recently, the campaign included multiple public service announcements for local television, featuring young people talking about the experience of being a rural homeless teen.

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., October 2-8, 2011. The HighLow Project consists of stories from 12 runaway and homeless 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.

The Nebraska SSRHY project this year produced a youth media exhibit that mixed pictures with written testimony challenging the common perception of homeless young people. Fifteen youth participants shared their stories of becoming homeless, how they came to a program, and what it has meant for their lives. The exhibit attracted local political and business leaders and was covered in the local media.

The Minnesota group also has promoted new state legislation and changes to existing legislative language that give voice and dignity to homeless youth. Trafficked youth are no longer classified as lawbreakers, for example. New trainings around positive youth development have been mandated for law enforcement, as have cultural competence trainings for better tribal services.

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. 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 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 also are provided. The expectation is that the business will retain the youth as an employee at the end of the job training. At the end of FY13, eight youth were placed with five local businesses.

The Nebraska project enrolls many of its SSRHY youth in education and training programs at Western Nebraska Community College. The College offers six-week to two-year certification programs in high-demand careers such as health care, trucking, and machine repair.

Housing: To address youth housing challenges, the Vermont project has been combining SSRHY funding 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 transitional housing to rural homeless youth.

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 or her self-sufficiency goals.

Transportation: The Colorado group has spearheaded a project called All Points Transit in the town of Montrose, allowing for reduced bus fares for youth.

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 runaway and homeless 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 of the young people of the region.

In Iowa, demonstration participants have had a series of meetings with state agencies on helping at-risk youth secure an education. There was concern that educators didn’t have a sense of who the most at-risk youth were. SSRHY participants in Iowa are developing a system that allows data collected on individual youth to be accessed from anywhere while still maintaining young people’s safety and privacy.

The Oklahoma project partnered with Oklahoma Freewheel, a state organization that promotes a yearly bicycle trip through the state’s smaller towns. Youth from the program in Watonga helped about 1,600 riders by carrying bags, showing them to camping sites, and leading tours of the town. In recognition of this work, the local Chamber of Commerce became a major advocate of the SSRHY project and is now one of the project’s major partners. Members of the chamber come to The Spot to talk with young people about employment and occasionally extend job opportunities.

Connectivity: Above all, the SSRHY project has promoted young people’s connection to their individual communities and service providers. Many of the youth don’t even realize they’re involved in “SSRHY” programs or that they’re getting “services” at all – what they value most are the relationships with staff members who have helped them and the sense of belonging that comes from attentive, personalized care and connection with helpful adults. Youth are being helped for specific problems, like substance abuse, pregnancy, and unemployment, but the emphasis is on building a rapport and providing young people with a sense that they matter. In site visits, youth at each program have invariably pointed out individuals who have helped them.

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

The 2003 Reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act called for the study of long term outcomes for youth who are served through the Transitional Living Program. As a result, a research study was initiated and designed to capture pre- and post-survey data from youth up to 12 months after program exit. However, in response to the growing need for evidenced-based programming and in an attempt to align with the HHS goal to support more rigorous program evaluation, the study design was revised to include both an impact and implementation component.

Participating transitional living programs will be interviewed about organizational structure, service delivery models, and outcome goals as well as their frameworks for implementing positive youth development strategies. A randomized control trial design also will collect direct youth feedback by phone and online at 6, 12 and 18 months to assess long-term outcomes for housing, employment, and social and emotional wellness.

Independent contractor Abt Associates, Inc., is conducting the study. A final report is expected by FY16.

3. 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 (ACYF). During the first year, grantees participated in a planning meeting in Washington, DC, 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. In FY12, grantees ultimately contracted with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) to design the study, work with ACYF on obtaining Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance, and train the 11 grantee agencies in how to implement the data collection. In FY13, grantees conducted personal interviews and focus groups with homeless youth, employing Respondent Driven Sampling and convenience sampling methods. Grantees obtained no-cost extensions from UNL due to contracting delays. A final report will be available in FY14.

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

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 trafficked. 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 percent to 46 percent, with a cluster of research finding 15 to 30 percent of homeless youth falling victim.²⁴

According to one study, 70 percent of youth on the street eventually become victims of some form of commercial sexual exploitation.²⁵

Table 13: Street Outreach Program Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	Number of Grantees*	Total Grant Funding	Number of Duplicated Contacts
2012	138	\$16.3 million	781,096
2013	107	\$14.8 million	668,165

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

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 (see Table 13). 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 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 781,000 times in FY12 and 668,000 times in FY13. Because outreach workers do not press youth to disclose personal information, data collected by FYSB does not give an unduplicated count, nor does it specify young people’s ages, race or ethnicity, or even gender.

²⁴ 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>.

²⁵ National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth. (201?). Bought and Sold: Helping Young People Escape from Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Retrieved on August 5, 2013 from <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/bought-and-sold-helping-young-people-escape-commercial-sexual-exploitation>

We know anecdotally and from reviews of the literature that many youth on the street have fled intolerable situations at home, most often due to abuse, domestic violence, parental mental illness, or substance use.^{26, 27} According to some studies, homeless young people use and abuse drugs and alcohol at alarming rates, perhaps as high as 50 to 84 percent.^{28, 29, 30} 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 researchers estimate between 20 and 40 percent) are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.³¹

What Problems Do Youth on the Street Face?

Once on the street, youth face further abuse and victimization.³² 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 also are 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.

²⁶ Tyler, K. A., Hagewan, K. J., & Melander, L. A. (2011). Risk Factors for Running Away among a General Population Sample of Males and Females. *Sociology Department, Faculty Publications*. Paper 150. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sociologyfacpub/150>.

²⁷ Pergamit, M., Ernst, M., Benoit-Bryan, J., & Kessel, J. (2010). Why They Run: An In-Depth Look at America's Runaway Youth. National Runaway Switchboard. Retrieved from http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run/report/.

²⁸ Xiang, X. (2013). A review of interventions for substance use among homeless youth. *Research on Social Work Practice, 23*(1), 34-45. doi: 10.1177/1049731512463441

²⁹ Kimberly Bender, K., Sanna J. Thompson, S. J., Kristin Ferguson, K., Chelsea Komlo, C., Chelsea Taylor, C., & Yoder, J. (2012). Substance use and victimization: Street-involved youths' perspectives and service implications. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(12), 2392-2399. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.09.008

³⁰ Collins, J. & Slesnick, N. (2011). Factors associated with motivation to change hiv risk and substance use behaviors among homeless youth. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 11*(2), 163-180. doi: 10.1080/1533256X.2011.570219

³¹ 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.

³² Coates, J. & McKenzie-Mohr, S. (2010). Out of the frying pan, into the fire: Trauma in the lives of homeless youth prior to and during homelessness. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 37*(4), 65-96.

While youth end up on the street for a variety of reasons, almost all of them are coping with trauma. A study of 146 homeless youth from Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Denver found that 57 percent had experienced a traumatic event and 24 percent met the criteria for a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis.³³ 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 also can 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

Spotlight on Somerset House: Brian's Story

At 17 years old, Brian found himself sleeping in an empty garage. He had run away from home to escape the screaming and fighting that went on there. He liked school, but he found it too hard so he dropped out and spent his days hanging out at a nearby park instead.

At the time, Brian says, he thought of himself as a nobody.

All that changed when Brian began talking to street outreach counselors from Somerset Home for Temporarily Displaced Children, a FYSB-funded program in Bridgewater, NJ. Brian began opening up about himself and his troubles at home. Somerset staff learned that he liked sports and had happy memories of baseball camp.

Over time, the outreach team persuaded Brian that he needed a safe place to sleep. They took him to Brahma House, Somerset's short-term residential program for young people in crisis. There, Brian got a hot shower, clean clothes and a good meal.

The next day, case managers began working with Brian on creating a long-term housing plan. They determined he needed treatment for severe emotional trauma and found a residential program where he would get help.

Somerset Home didn't send Brian off empty-handed. He left with a duffel bag full of clothes, toiletries and even a baseball glove to help him reconnect with the sport he loved. Brian also left Somerset with a team that cared about him and continued to check on his progress.

Brian's transition hasn't been an easy one, and he still faces times of anger and sadness. But connecting him to the right program has helped him make progress while living in a safe and nurturing environment. Brian knows he will continue facing ups and downs, but he is grateful to everyone who stands by him along the way, especially the Somerset Street Outreach team.

³³ Bender, K., Ferguson, K., Thompson, S., Komlo, C., & Pollio, D. (2010). Factors associated with trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder among homeless youth in three U.S. cities: The importance of transience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 23*(1), 161-168.

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

In FY12, outreach workers distributed 617,820 health and hygiene products, positively improving young people’s health and safety. In FY13, 620,541 were distributed. Similarly, 746,265 food and drink packages were given out in FY12 and 791,266 in FY13, so that many fewer young people would go hungry or suffer dehydration. And in FY12, grantees distributed over 985,000 printed resources to youth to provide them with important information and help connect them with essential community resources. In FY13, 786,395 were distributed.

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.³⁴ They also may use other evidence-based methods, such as motivational interviewing, a collaborative, client-centered counseling style used to facilitate changes in behavior.

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

³⁴ *QPR Institute*, Research Evidence for QPR Institute Educational Training Programs, Retrieved on March 29, 2012, from <http://www.qprinstitute.com/research.html>

to address. Many have 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.

To help them build trust with street youth, programs are encouraged to employ staff whose gender, race and ethnicity, and life experiences are similar to those of the young people being served. Many programs use paid or volunteer peer outreach workers who team up with adults on their shifts. Some agencies favor peer workers who have been homeless or on the brink of homelessness. Programs find that peers sometimes have an easier time than adults forming connections with street youth and giving them advice and hope. Research supports the influence positive peer support can have, as evidenced by a study of homeless youth engaged in HIV prevention both in person and online.³⁵

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,

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 127 young people get off the streets and into safe shelter from March 2012 to March 2013. Additional data Wichita Children’s Home collects on the outcomes of its work reaching out to and supporting homeless youth include:

- 93 percent of youth in crisis or rescue situations ended up in a safe place in 2012 (257 of 275 youth).
- 90 percent of youth who attended a support group in 2012 were able to report three ways they were engaging in safer behaviors and could identify someone to call in a dangerous or crisis situation.
- 99 percent of youth who attended a presentation on danger and violence prevention felt better prepared to handle a dangerous or crisis situation.

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.

³⁵ Rice, E., Tulbert, E., Cederbaum, J., Barman, A. A., & Milburn, N. G. (2012). Mobilizing homeless youth for hiv prevention: a social network analysis of the acceptability of a face-to-face and online social networking intervention. *Health Education Research*, 27(2), 226-36.

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. Programs also 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 once the street outreach data collection initiative mentioned in section D above is complete. However, we do know that street outreach workers made almost 782,000 contacts with young people on the street in FY12. Of the young people reached via those contacts, RHYMIS tells us that 22,835 moved from the street to a shelter for at least one night. In FY13, 19,936 young people sought shelter from the 668,165 contacts street outreach workers made. Shelter, in this instance, could be provided by any community service providers, and not just FYSB-funded basic centers.

Section F: 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 Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach Program grantee is required to have an onsite review at least once in three years.

Onsite reviews ensure:

- **Compliance with grant requirements**—determining whether federal grants are being used for the purposes for which they are made;
- **Program assessment**—collecting additional information on the status, activities, and accomplishments of grantees for the biennial 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 79 grants in FY12 and 87 grants in FY13. 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 are encouraged to 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 FYSB officials, 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 based on these suggestions; however, they are not binding on the grantee and do not trigger a follow-up review.

In FY12 and FY13, some 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 of annual evaluations and training, strengthening supervisory structures, or addressing high rates of staff turnover.

Non-Compliance

A grantee is not compliant if the project is not providing key services as described in the grant or is not reaching significant numbers or categories of at-risk youth. Organizations also can be considered non-compliant 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 FY12 and FY13, most grantees were able to resolve their compliance issues, however, through targeted, intensive technical assistance.

Targeted, Intensive Technical Assistance

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 federal and peer monitors. In FY12, the centers provided technical assistance to 27 grantees. In FY13, RHYTTAC provided intensive technical assistance to 110 organizations as a result of concerns or suggestions raised during monitoring or reporting of data. Each organization received multiple types of support based on their individual needs as determined by FYSB and the grantee.

RHYTTAC provided non-compliant grantees with support, including written materials (e.g. sample policies and procedures), conference calls, and online meetings with individual grantees. 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: Ending Youth Homelessness and Human Trafficking

FYSB is committed to providing leadership on two key federal initiatives in the years ahead: the Opening Doors Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness and the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking.

In the three years since the government launched the Opening Doors strategic plan, FYSB and its federal partners have made significant progress. A framework for ending youth homelessness has been developed. A national research agenda has been put in place that prioritizes getting a better picture of the size and composition of the homeless youth population. And a sense of urgency and shared purpose has been built that encourages federal partners to work together to keep every young person safe.

Moving forward, it will be important to keep these shared goals in mind, to listen to social service providers who work with homeless youth, and to make sure every step FYSB takes is headed in the right direction. For example, at a recent meeting of the Runaway and Homeless

Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center advisory board, grantees expressed concern that HUD's outcomes, which stress quickly moving people into stable housing, may be at odds with the need to slowly build young people's independent living skills. In the coming years, FYSB will work closely with HUD and other federal entities to ensure that best practices in homelessness prevention and intervention can be adapted to the needs of developing youth.

FYSB also sees a crucial opening for change and further coordination in the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking, released near the end of FY13. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program has been serving runaway and homeless young people coerced into sex trafficking for years and can play a key role in the plan's four goals of:

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

FYSB looks forward to engaging its partners in implementing these federal initiatives and bringing them to bear on everything done to strengthen youth and families.