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Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs

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Summary

This report discusses runaway and homeless youth, and the federal response to support this population. There is no single definition of the terms "runaway youth" or "homeless youth." However, both groups of youth share the risk of not having adequate shelter and other provisions, and may engage in harmful behaviors while away from a permanent home.

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. A youth's sexual orientation, sexual activity, school problems, and substance abuse are associated with family discord. The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility and overlap among the populations. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is supporting data collection efforts, known as *Voices of Youth Count,* to better determine the number of homeless youth. The 2017 study found that approximately 700,000 youth ages 13 to 17 and 3.5 million young adults ages 18 to 25 experienced homelessness within a 12-month period because they were sleeping in places not meant for habitation, in shelters, or with others while lacking alternative living arrangements.

From the early 20th century through the 1960s, the needs of runaway and homeless youth were handled locally through the child welfare agency, juvenile justice courts, or both. The 1970s marked a shift toward federal oversight of programs that help youth who had run afoul of the law, including those who committed status offenses (i.e., a noncriminal act that is considered a violation of the law because of the youth's age). The Runaway Youth Act of 1974 was enacted as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415) to assist runaways through services specifically for this population. The act was amended over time to include homeless youth. It authorizes funding for services carried out under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP), which is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The program was most recently authorized through FY2020 by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385). This law did not make other changes to the RHYP statute. Funding is discretionary, meaning provided through the appropriations process. FY2019 appropriations are $127.4 million.

The RHYP program is made up of three components: the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP). The *BCP* provides temporary shelter, counseling, and after care services to runaway and homeless youth under age 18 and their families. In FY2017, the program served 23,288 youth, and in FY2018 it funded 280 BCP shelters (most recent figures available). The *TLP* is targeted to older youth ages 16 through 22 (and sometimes an older age). In FY2017, the TLP program served 3,517 youth, and in FY2018 it funded 299 grantees (most recent figures available). Youth who use the TLP receive longer-term housing with supportive services. The *SOP* provides education, treatment, counseling, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to, or are at risk of being subjected to, sexual abuse, sex exploitation, and trafficking. In FY2017, the SOP grantees made contact with 24,366 youth.

The RHYP is a part of larger federal efforts to end youth homelessness through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The USICH is a coordinating body made up of multiple federal agencies committed to addressing homelessness. The USICH's *Opening Doors* plan to end homelessness includes strategies for ending youth homelessness by 2020, including through collecting better data and supporting evidence-based practices to improve youth outcomes. *Voices of Youth Count* is continuing to report on characteristics of homeless youth. In addition to the RHYP, there are other federal supports to address youth homelessness. HUD's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program is funding a range of housing options for youth, in

selected urban and rural communities. Other federal programs have enabled homeless youth to access services, including those related to education and family violence.

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Introduction

Running away from home is not a recent phenomenon. Folkloric heroes Huckleberry Finn and Davy Crockett fled their abusive fathers to find adventure and employment. Although some youth today also leave home due to abuse and neglect, they often endure far more negative outcomes than their romanticized counterparts from an earlier era. Without adequate and safe shelter, runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to engaging in high-risk behaviors and further victimization. Youth who live away from home for extended periods may become removed from school and systems of support. Runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple problems while they are away from a permanent home, including untreated mental health disorders, drug use, and sexual exploitation. They also report other challenges including poor health and the lack of basic provisions.[1]

Congress began to hear concerns about the vulnerabilities of the runaway population in the 1970s due to increased awareness about these youth and the establishment of runaway shelters to assist them in returning home. Congress and the President went on to enact the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415) to assist runaways through services specifically for this population. Since that time, the law has been updated to authorize services to provide support for runaway and homeless youth outside of the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare systems.[2] The Runaway Youth Act—now known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act—authorized federal funding to be provided through annual appropriations for three programs that assist runaway and homeless youth: the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP). Together, the programs make up the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP), administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

- ***Basic Center Program:*** Provides funding to community-based organizations for crisis intervention, temporary shelter, counseling, family unification, and after care services to runaway and homeless youth under age 18 and their families. In some cases, BCP-funded programs may serve older youth. Over 31,000 youth participated in FY2016, the most recent year for which data are available.
- ***Transitional Living Program:*** Supports community-based organizations that provide homeless youth ages 16 through 22 with stable, safe, longer-term residential services up to 18 months (or longer under certain circumstances), including counseling in basic life skills, building interpersonal skills, educational advancement, job attainment skills, and physical and mental health care. Over 6,000 youth participated in FY2016.
- ***Street Outreach Program:*** Provides funding to community-based organizations for street-based outreach and education, including treatment, counseling, provision of information, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth

[1] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*, October 2018 (hereinafter, USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*).

[2] The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was most recently reauthorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-385). The reauthorization provided an extension of funding through FY2020 and made no substantive changes. The law is authorized at 34 U.S.C. §11201 et seq.: Basic Center Program (34 U.S.C. §§11211-11213), Transitional Living Program (34 U.S.C. §§11221 – 11222), and Street Outreach Program (34 U.S.C. §11261). The law refers to the SOP as the Sexual Abuse Prevention program. Accompanying regulations are at 45 C.F.R. §1351 et seq. Information about these programs is drawn from statute, congressional budget justifications, reports to Congress, and funding announcements.

who have been subjected to, or are at risk of being subjected to, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution, and trafficking. SOP grantees made contact with more than 36,000 youth in FY2016.

This report begins with an overview of the runaway and homeless youth population. It then describes the challenges in defining and counting this population, as well as the factors that influence homelessness and leaving home. The report also provides background on federal efforts to support runaway and homeless youth, including the evolution of federal policies to respond to these youth, with a focus on the period from the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 to the present time. The report then describes the administration and funding of the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach programs that were created from authorizations in the act. The appendixes include funding information for the BCP program and discuss other federal programs that may be used to assist runaway and homeless youth.

Who Are Homeless and Runaway Youth?

Defining the Population

There is no single federal definition of the terms "homeless youth" or "runaway youth." However, HHS relies on definitions from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in administering the Runaway and Homeless Youth program: The act includes the following definitions:

- "Homeless youth," for purposes of the BCP, includes individuals under age 18 (or some older age if permitted by state or local law) for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who lack safe alternative living arrangements.
- "Homeless youth," for purposes of the TLP, includes individuals ages 16 through 22 for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who lack safe alternative living arrangements. Youth older than age 22 may participate if they entered the program before age 22 and meet other requirements.
- "Runaway youth" includes individuals under age 18 who absent themselves from their home or legal residence at least overnight without the permission of their parents or legal guardians.

Separately, the McKinney-Vento Act authorizes several federal programs for homeless individuals that are administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The definition of "homeless individual" in McKinney-Vento refers to "unaccompanied youth," which applies to selected homelessness programs. HUD's related regulation defines an "unaccompanied youth" as someone under age 25 who meets the definition of "homeless" in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act or other specified federal laws.[3] The regulation also provides

[3] The McKinney-Vento Act also authorizes the Education for Homeless Children and Youths program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and provides supports to assist homeless children and unaccompanied youth in schools. The program defines homelessness in part by reference to the definition of "homeless individual," as well as other criteria. For some of these definitions, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs.*

additional criteria, including that they have lived independently without permanent housing for at least 60 days.[4]

The research literature discusses definitions of runaway and homeless youth. While studies have often categorized young people based on their status as *runaways*, *homeless, or street youth*, a 2011 report suggests that overlap exists between these categories. The authors of the study note that these "typologies," or classifications, are too narrowly defined by the youth's housing status and reasons for homelessness, among other factors. The authors explain that typologies based on mental health status or age cohort are promising, but they suggest further research in this area to ensure that the typologies are accurate.[5]

Demographics

The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility. These youth often eschew the shelter system for locations or areas that are not easily accessible to shelter workers and others who count the homeless and runaways.[6] Youth who come into contact with census takers may also be reluctant to report that they have left home or are homeless. Determining the number of homeless and runaway youth is further complicated by the lack of a standardized methodology for counting the population and inconsistent definitions of what it means to be homeless or a runaway.[7]

Differences in methodology for collecting data on homeless populations may also influence how the characteristics of the runaway and homeless youth population are reported. Some studies have relied on point prevalence estimates that report whether youth have experienced homelessness at a given point in time, such as on a particular day. According to researchers that study the characteristics of runaway and homeless youth, these studies appear to be biased toward describing individuals who experience longer periods of homelessness.[8]

Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts

HUD requires communities receiving certain HUD funding to conduct annual point-in-time (PIT) counts of people experiencing homelessness, including homeless youth. The PIT counts include people living in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and on the street or other places not meant for human habitation. It does not include people who are temporarily living with family or friends. In the 2018 PIT count, communities identified 36,361 unaccompanied youth under age 25 (versus 40,799 in 2017) and another 8,724 under age 25 who were homeless parents (versus 9,434 in 2017).[9] While PIT counts do not provide a confident estimate of youth experiencing

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[4] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), "Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing: Defining 'Homeless'," 76 *Federal Register* 75994-76019, December 5, 2011.

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

[6] U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*, February 2013, p. 4 (hereinafter, USICH, *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*). See also, HUD, *Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide*, September 2014, pp. 61-62. (Hereinafter, HUD, *Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide*.)

[7] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*, pp. 2-3.

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

[9] HUD, *HUD 2018 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Populations and Subpopulations*, 2017 and 2018. HUD has reported on homeless youth under age 25 since the 2013 PIT count. HUD changed its methodology for counting homeless youth in 2015. Then, in 2017, HUD announced that it had "selected the PIT counts from January

homelessness across the country, they provide some information to communities about the potential scope of youth homelessness.[10]

Voices of Youth Count

The Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378), which renewed authorization of appropriations for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program through FY2013, also authorized funding for HHS to conduct periodic studies of the incidence and prevalence of youth who have run away or are homeless. Separately, the accompanying conference report to the FY2016 appropriations law (P.L. 114-113) directed HUD to use $2 million to conduct a national incidence and prevalence study of homeless youth as authorized under the Runaway and Homeless Youth program. HUD provided these funds to Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to carry out the study.[11] The study, known as *Voices of Youth Count*, used a nationally representative phone survey to derive national estimates and conducted brief surveys of youth and in-depth interviews of youth who had experiences of homelessness. The phone survey involved interviews with adults whose households had youth and young adults ages 13 to 25 and with adults ages 18 to 25. *Voices of Youth Count* estimated that approximately 700,000 youth ages 13 to 17 and 3.5 million young adults ages 18 to 25 had experienced homelessness within a one-year period, meaning they were sleeping in places not meant for human habitation, staying in shelters, or temporarily staying with others while lacking a safe and stable alternative living arrangement. This differs from the PIT counts because it includes individuals who are staying with others. The study also found that youth homelessness affected youth in rural and urban areas at similar levels.[12]

Other Research

A 2010 study on the lifetime prevalence of running away used longitudinal survey data of young people who were 12 to 18 years old when they were first interviewed about whether they had run away—defined as staying away at least one night without their parents' prior knowledge or permission—along with other behaviors.[13] In subsequent years, youth who were under age 17 at their previous interview were asked if they had run away since their last interview. Youth who had ever run away were asked how many times they had done so and the age at which they first did. The study found that 19% of those who ran away did so before turning 18; females were more likely than males to run away; and among white, black, and Hispanic youth, black youth have the highest rate of ever running away. Youth who ran away reported that they did so about three times on average; however, about half of runaways had only run away once. Approximately half of the youth had run away before age 14.

A subset of runaway youth is those in foster care. In FY2017, over 500 children in the United States had run away from their foster care home or other placement.[14] While this represents less

2017 as the baseline measure of homelessness among unaccompanied youth."

[10] USICH, *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*; and HUD, *Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide.*

[11] HUD, Office of Policy Development and Research, *PD&R Edge Online Magazine*, "HUD Funding Supports Chapin Hall's *Voices of Youth* Enabling Collection of Crucial Data on Youth Homelessness," August 2016.

[12] Matthew H. Morton, Amy Dworsky, and Gina M. Samuels, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America. National Estimates*, University of Chicago, Chapin Hall, 2017. (Hereinafter, Matthew H. Morton, Amy Dworsky, and Gina M. Samuels, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America. National Estimates*.) See also, Matthew H. Morton et al., *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in Rural America*, October 2018.

[13] Michael R. Pergamit, *On the Lifetime Prevalence of Running Away From Home*, Urban Institute, April 2010.

[14] HHS, ACF, ACYF, Children's Bureau, *The AFCARS Report, Preliminary FY 2017 Estimates, #25*, August 2018.

than 1% of all children in foster care, running away is more prevalent among older youth in care. A study of over 50,000 youth ages 13 through 17 in 21 states indicated that 17% ran away at least once during their first time in foster care. The study found that female, black, and Hispanic youth were more likely to run away than male and white youth in care. The study further found that youth were more likely to run away from congregate care (i.e., group care) settings compared to other settings, such as living with a relative or in a foster family home. Youth were also more likely to run away from care if they lived in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged counties or lived in a state that lacked a process to screen youth on the risk of running away.[15] States report on the characteristics and experiences of certain current and former foster youth through the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Among other information, states must report data on cohorts of foster youth beginning when they are age 17, and later at ages 19 and 21. Among youth surveyed in FY2015 at age 21, about 43% reported having experienced homelessness.[16]

Factors Influencing Homelessness and Leaving Home

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. According to the research literature, a youth's poor family dynamics, sexual activity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, school problems, and alcohol and drug use are strong predictors of family discord.[17] One-third of callers who used the National Runaway Safeline in 2017—a crisis call center funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program for youth and their relatives involved in runaway incidents—gave family dynamics (not defined) as the reason for their call.[18]

Further, a longitudinal survey of middle school and high school youth examined the effects of family instability (e.g., child maltreatment, lack of parental warmth, and parent rejection) and other factors on the likelihood of running away from home approximately two to six years after youth were initially surveyed. Researchers found that youth with family instability were more likely to run away. Family instability also influenced problem behaviors, such as illicit drug use, which, in turn, were associated with running away. Researchers further determined that certain other effects (e.g., school engagement, neighborhood cohesiveness, physical victimization, and friends' support) were not strong predicators of whether youth in the sample ran away.[19] In a study of youth who ran away from foster care between 1993 and 2003, the youth cited three primary reasons why they ran from foster care: to connect with their biological families, express their autonomy and find normalcy, and maintain relationships with nonfamily members.[20] The

(Hereinafter, HHS, ACF, ACYF, Children's Bureau, *The AFCARS Report, Preliminary FY 2017 Estimates, #25*.)

[15] Amy Dworsky, Fred Wulczyn, and Lilian Huang, "Predictors of Running Away from Out-of-Home Care: Does County Context Matter?", *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2018), pp. 101-115.

[16] HHS, ACYF, ACF, CB, *Highlights from the NYTD Survey: Outcomes Reported by Young People at Ages 17, 19, and 21 (Cohort 1)*, Data Brief #5, November 2016.

[17] Paul A.Toro, Amy Dworsky, and Patrick J. Fowler, *Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches*, HUD, Office of Policy Development and Research, September 2007; and Michael Pergamit et al., *Family Interventions for Youth Experiencing or At Risk of Homelessness*, Urban Institute, for HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, July 2016.

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

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

[20] Mark E. Courtney et al., "Youth Who Run Away from Out-of-Home Care," *Chapin Hall Center for Children Issue Brief*, no. 103 (March 2005), p. 2.

Voices of Youth Count study found that certain youth ages 18 to 25 were at heightened risk of experiencing homelessness. This included youth with less than a high school diploma or GED; who were Hispanic or black; who were parenting and unmarried; or identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ).[21] Gay and lesbian youth appear to be at greater risk for homelessness and are overrepresented in the homeless population, due often to experiencing negative reactions from their parents when they come out about their sexuality. The *Voices of Youth Count* study found that LGBTQ young adults ages 18 to 25 had more than twice the risk of being homeless than their heterosexual peers. LGBTQ youth made up about 20% of young adults who reported homelessness.[22] In addition, a study involving LGBTQ young adults in seven cities found that the most common reason youth became homeless was due to being kicked out or asked to leave the home of a parent, relative, foster home, or group home.[23]

Under an HHS grant, *Youth with Child Welfare Involvement at Risk of Homelessness*, the 18 grantees (state, local, and tribal child welfare agencies or community-based organizations) evaluated multiple risk factors for homelessness among child welfare-involved populations: which include those who have had numerous foster care placements, run away from foster care, been placed in a group home, had a history of mental health or behavioral health diagnoses, had juvenile justice involvement, had a history of substance abuse, been emancipated from foster care, and been parenting or fathered a child.[24]

Challenges Associated with Running Away and Homelessness

Runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple problems while they are away from a permanent home, including untreated mental health disorders, drug use, and sexual exploitation.[25] Studies of homeless youth indicate that they are more likely to experience mental health and substance abuse disorders than their counterparts in the general population. A literature review of studies on psychiatric disorders among homeless youth found high prevalence of conduct disorders, major depression, psychosis, and other disorders.[26] A study of participants in the Street Outreach Program found that about 6 out of 10 reported symptoms associated with depression and almost three-fourths reported that they had experienced major trauma, such as physical or sexual abuse or witnessing or being a victim of violence.[27] Substance abuse is more prevalent among youth who live on the street, compared to homeless youth who are in shelters. Still, both

[21] Matthew H. Morton, Amy Dworsky, and Gina M. Samuels, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America. National Estimates*.

[22] Matthew H. Morton et al., *Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America*, University of Chicago, Chapin Hall, 2018.

[23] Jama Shelton et al., "Homelessness and Housing Experiences among LGTBTQ Young Adults in Seven U.S. Cities," *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2018), pp. 9-33. See also, Laura E. Durso and Gary J. Gates, *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*, The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund, 2012.

[24] Christine Ross and Rebekah Selekman, *Analysis of Data on Youth with Child Welfare Involvement at Risk of Homelessness*, Mathematica Policy Research, for HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), OPRE Report #2017-54, August 2017.

[25] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*, pp. 5-7.

[26] Kate J. Hodgson et al., "Psychopathology in Young People Experiencing Homelessness: A Systematic Review," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 103, no 6 (June 2013).

[27] Les Whitbeck et al., *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report*, HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Data Collection Study Final Report*, April 2016 (hereinafter, Les Whitbeck et al. *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Final Report*).

groups of youth use alcohol or drugs at higher rates than their peers who live in family households, even after researchers control for demographic differences.[28]

While away from a permanent home, runaway and homeless youth are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation; sex and labor trafficking; and other victimization such as being beaten up, robbed, or otherwise assaulted. Some youth resort to illegal activity including stealing, exchanging sex for food or a place to stay, and selling drugs for survival. Runaway and homeless youth report other challenges including poor health and a lack of basic provisions.[29]

Evolution of Federal Policy

Prior to the enactment of the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 (Title III, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, P.L. 93-415), federal policy provided limited services to runaway and homeless youth.[30] If they received any services, most of these youth were served through the local child welfare agency, juvenile justice court system, or both. The 1970s marked a shift to a more rehabilitative model for assisting youth who had run afoul of the law, including those who committed status offenses such as running away. During this period, Congress focused increasing attention on runaways and other vulnerable youth due, in part, to emerging sociological models to explain why youth engaged in deviant behavior.[31] The first runaway shelters were created in the late 1960s and 1970s to assist them in returning home. The landmark Runaway Youth Act of 1974 decriminalized runaway youth and authorized funding for programs to provide shelter, counseling, and other services. Since the law's enactment, Congress and the President have expanded the services available to both runaway youth and homeless youth under what is now referred to as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. In more recent years, other federal entities have been involved in responding to the challenges facing runaway and homeless youth. These efforts are coordinated through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). **Figure 1** traces the evolution of federal policy in this area.

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

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is a major part of recent federal efforts to end youth homelessness through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. The USICH, established under the 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, is made up of several federal agencies, including HHS and HUD. The HEARTH Act, enacted in 2009 as part of the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (P.L. 111-22), charged USICH with developing a National Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.[32] In June 2010, USICH released this plan, entitled *Opening*

[28] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth,* pp. 5-7.

[29] Ibid, p. 7.

[30] Eric Beecroft and Seymour Janow, "Toward a National Policy for Migration," *Social Forces,* vol. 16, no. 4 (May 1938), p. 477; and Karen M. Staller, "Constructing the Runaway and Homeless Youth Problem: Boy Adventurers to Girl Prostitutes, 1960-1978," *Journal of Communication,* vol. 53, no. 2 (2003), p. 331.

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

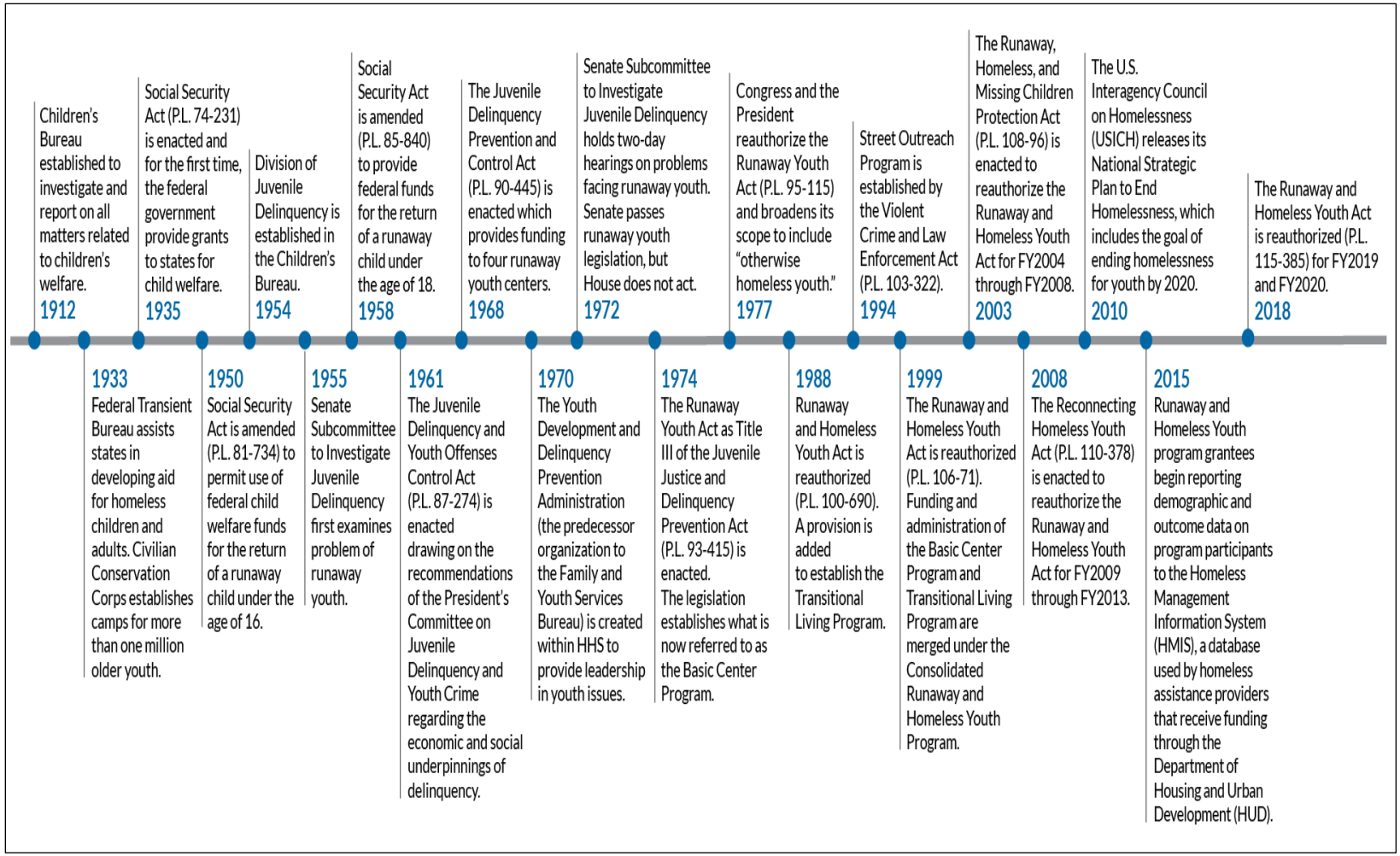
[32] The HEARTH Act specified that the plan should be made available for public comment and submitted to Congress and the President within one year of the law's enactment. USICH convened working groups made up of members of federal agencies to discuss ending homelessness among specific populations: families, youth, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and veterans. USICH, *Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Overview*. The council then held regional meetings to get feedback from various stakeholders, and it accepted public comments on its

Doors.[33] The plan set out goals for ending homelessness, including (1) ending chronic homelessness by 2015; (2) preventing and ending homelessness among veterans by 2015; (3) preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and (4) setting a path to ending all types of homelessness.

website during March 2010.

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

Figure 1. Evolution of Federal Policy on Runaway and Homeless Youth



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Focus on Youth Homelessness

In 2012, USICH amended *Opening Doors* to specifically address strategies for improving the educational outcomes for children and youth and assisting unaccompanied homeless youth.[34] USICH outlined its intention to improve outcomes for youth in four areas: stable housing, permanent connections, education or employment options, and socio-emotional well-being.

In 2013, a USICH working group developed a guiding document for ending youth homelessness by 2020. Known as the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness*, the document outlines a data strategy to collect better data on the number and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness. This data strategy includes coordinating the former data collection system for the Runaway and Homeless Youth program—referred to as RHYMIS—with HUD's Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). RHYMIS was a data system administered by HHS for previous RHYP grantees to upload demographic and other data for the youth they served. HMIS is a locally administered data system used to record and analyze client, service, and housing data for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in a given community.[35] As of FY2015, RHYP grantees stopped reporting to RHYMIS and instead report to HMIS. Grantees reported to RHYMIS on the basic demographics of the youth, the services they received, and the status of the youth upon exiting the programs. RHY grantees are now required to report this same (and new information) to HMIS. According to HHS, some grantees have had have encountered inaccurate software programming for their data standards or have had issues with successfully extracting their data to submit to HHS.[36]

The data strategy outlined in the framework also involves, if funding is available, designing and implementing a national study to estimate the number, needs, and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness. This is consistent with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act's directive for HHS to conduct a study of youth homelessness. As noted, this study—*Voices of Youth Count*—received funding from FY2016 HUD appropriations. In addition, HHS has supported other research on homeless youth, including factors associated with prolonged homelessness and risk factors for homelessness among children and youth with involvement in child welfare.[37] In 2018, the USICH issued a brief that outlines continued gaps in data on the homeless youth population, citing the need for greater understanding about the causes of youth homelessness and how youth enter and exit homelessness.[38] Separately, the framework also outlined a strategy to strengthen and coordinate the capacity of federal, state, and local systems to work toward ending youth homelessness. USICH has provided guidance to communities, including by establishing community-level criteria for ending homelessness and accompanying benchmarks to assess whether they have achieved an end to youth homelessness. [39] Still, the 2018

[34] USICH, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Amendment 2012*, September 2012. See also, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Council Meeting, presentation by Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, HHS, ACYF, June 12, 2012. In this context, unaccompanied youth refers to youth their own, youth who are parents and their children, adolescent siblings, and other groups composed of only youth.

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

[36] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2020*, p. 128.

[37] HHS, OPRE, "An Examination of Youth People Experiencing or At High Risk for Homelessness," and HHS, OPRE, "Building Capacity to Evaluate Interventions for Youth/Young Adults with Child Welfare Involvement At Risk of Homelessness (HARH), 2013-2019."

[38] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*, pp. 11-12.

[39] USICH, *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action*; USICH, *Preventing and*

USICH brief called for greater evidence regarding the impact of housing and service interventions in helping youth exit homelessness.[40]

Runaway and Homeless Youth Program

As mentioned, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act includes three authorizations of appropriations.

- The authorization of appropriations for the Basic Center Program and Transitional Living program is $127.4 million for each of FY2019 and FY2020. Under the law, 90% of the federal funds appropriated under the two programs must be used for the BCP and TLP (together, the programs and their related activities are known as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth program). Of this amount, 45% is reserved for the BCP and no more than 55% is reserved for the TLP. The remaining share of consolidated funding is allocated for (1) a national communication system to facilitate communication between service providers, runaway youth, and their families (National Safeline); (2) training and technical support for grantees; (3) evaluations of the programs; (4) federal coordination efforts on matters relating to the health, education, employment, and housing of these youth; and (5) studies of runaway and homeless youth.
- The authorization of appropriations for the Street Outreach program is $25 million for each of FY2019 and FY2020. Although the SOP is a separately funded component, SOP services are coordinated with those provided under the BCP and TLP.
- The authorization of appropriations for the periodic estimate of incidence and prevalence of youth homelessness is such sums as may be necessary for FY2019 and FY2020. Funding has not been provided by HHS under this authority, and as noted, funds appropriated to HUD for this purpose have been used to support *Voices of Youth Count.*

Table 1 shows funding levels for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program from FY2006 through FY2019. Over this period, funding has increased notably for the program three times, most recently from FY2017 to FY2018.[41] Congress has provided some guidance on how the additional funds are to be spent. In the conference report to accompany the FY2019 consolidated appropriations act, Congress stated that the increase should be provided to current TLP grantees whose awards end on March 31, 2019. The funding is to be used to continue services until new

Ending Youth Homelessness: A Coordinated Community Response, 2015; USICH, *Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebooks*, August 2016; USICH, *Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness*, January 2017; and USICH, *Advancing an End to Youth Homelessness: Federal and National Initiatives*, July 2017.

[40] USICH, *Homelessness in America: Focus on Youth*, p. 13.

[41] The first increase was likely due in part to heightened attention to the RHYP, as Congress began to consider legislation in FY2008 to reauthorize the program. Subsequent funding increases have included the change in BCP and TLP funding from FY2015 ($114.1 million) to FY2016 ($119.1 million) and again from FY2017 ($119.1 million) to FY2018 ($126.3 million). Increases since FY2015 appear to have been possible because of the overall increase in discretionary spending limits as part of budget deals over this period. For further information, see CRS Report R44874, *The Budget Control Act: Frequently Asked Questions*.

awards are made to those grantees, or for those grantees that did not receive a new grant, to provide services until the end of FY2019. Funding may then be used for additional new awards.[42]

[42] U.S. Congress, *Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 6157, Department of Defense for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2019, and for Other Purposes*, 115th Cong., September 13, 2018, p. 540.

Table 1. Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Funding, FY2006-FY2019 (as enacted)

Dollars in thousands; includes transfers or reprogramming of funds pursuant to authority of HHS Secretary

Program	2006	2007[a]	2008[b]	2009	2010	2011[c]	2012[d]	2013[e]	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
BCP	$48,265	$48,298	$52,860	$53,469	$53,744	$53,637	$53,536	$50,097	$53,350	$53,350	$54,439	$48,072	$54,430	$54,439
TLP[f]	39,511	39,539	43,268	43,765	43,990	43,902	43,819	41,004	43,650	43,650	47,541	53,564	$54,738	$55,841
SOP	15,017	15,027	17,221	17,721	17,971	17,935	17,901	16,751	17,141	17,141	17,141	17,086	17,141	17,141
Total	102,793	102,864	113,349	114,955	115,705	115,474	115,256	107,852	114,141	114,141	119,121	118,722	126,309	127,421

Source: CRS correspondence with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), January 2019; and HHS, *ACF Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, *FY2003*, p. H-48 (hereinafter, HHS, *ACF Justification*); HHS, *ACF Justification, FY2004*, p. H-45; HHS, *ACF Justification, FY2005*, p. H-89; HHS, *ACF Justification, FY2006,* p. D-41; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2007*, p. D-41; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2008*, pp. 92, 98; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2009*, p. D-42; HHS, *ACF Justification FY2010*, pp. 85, 92; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2012*, pp. 101, 109; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2013*, pp. 106, 113; HHS, *ACF Justification*, *FY2014*, pp. 105, 114; U.S. HHS, ACF, *All-Purpose Table—FY2012-2013;* HHS, *ACF Justification, FY2016*; and HHS, ACF, *ACF Justification, FY2017*; HHS, ACF, *ACF Justification, FY2019,* p. 126; HHS, *ACF Operating Plans for FY2016, FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019;* and U.S. House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 164, part No. 50, Book III (March 22, 2018).

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

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

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

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

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

e. The FY2013 appropriations include a 0.2% across-the-board rescission, reductions required by the sequestration order of March 1, 2013.

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

Basic Center Program

Overview

The Basic Center Program is intended to provide short-term shelter and services for youth and their families at centers operated by BCP grantees, which are public and private community-based organizations. Youth eligible to receive BCP services include those youth who are at risk of running away or becoming homeless (and may live at home with their parents), or have already left home, either voluntarily or involuntarily. To stay at the shelter, youth must be under age 18, or an older age if the BCP center is located in a state or locality that permits this higher age. Some centers may serve homeless youth through street-based services, home-based services, and drug abuse education and prevention services. Grantees seek to connect youth with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements. They also provide individual or group and family counseling, health care, education, and employment assistance.[43]

As specified in the law, BCP grantees or centers are intended to provide services as an alternative to involving runaway and homeless youth in the law enforcement, juvenile justice, child welfare, and mental health systems. Youth may stay in a center continuously up to 21 days. In FY2017, the program served 23,288 youth, and in FY2018 it funded 280 BCP shelters (most recent figures available).[44] These centers, which can shelter as many as 20 youth, are generally supposed to be located in areas that are frequented or easily reached by runaway and homeless youth.

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

Funding Allocation

BCP grants are allocated directly to grantees for a three-year period. Funding is generally distributed to entities based on the proportion of the nation's youth under age 18 in the jurisdiction where the entities are located. The 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico[45] each receive a minimum allotment of $200,000. Separately, the territories (currently, this includes American Samoa and Guam) each receive a minimum of $70,000. The amount of funding for each state or territory can further depend on whether grant applicants in that jurisdiction applied for funding, and if so, whether the applicant fulfilled the requirements in the authorizing law and grant application. For example, the authorizing law directs HHS to give priority to applicants who have demonstrated experience in providing services to runaway and homeless youth. HHS is to re-allot any funds designated for grantees in one state to grantees in other states that will not be obligated before the end of a fiscal year. See **Table A-1** for the

[43] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, January 4, 2018, pp. 11-13. (Hereinafter, HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*.)

[44] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2020*, p. 129.

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

amount of funding allocated for each state in FY2017 and FY2018. The costs of the BCP are shared by the federal government (90%) and grantees (10%).

Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration

In FY2008, HHS began funding a three-year *Rural Host Homes Demonstration Project*, which was initiated to expand BCP shelter and support services to runaway and homeless youth who live in rural areas not served by shelter facilities. The project supported grantees that provided youth with shelter (via host home families who were recruited, screened, and trained) and preventive services, including transportation, counseling, educational assistance, and aftercare planning, among others. Over the course of the three years, the project served 781 youth, 411 of whom received shelter and 370 of whom received preventive services without shelter.[46]

Transitional Living Program

Overview

Recognizing the difficulty that youth face in becoming self-sufficient adults, the Transitional Living Program provides longer-term shelter and assistance for youth ages 16 through 22 (or older if the youth entered the TLP prior to reaching age 22) who may leave their biological homes due to family conflict, or have left and are not expected to return home. Pregnant and/or parenting youth are eligible for TLP services. In FY2017, the TLP provided services to 3,517 youth. In FY2018, the program funded 229 organizations.[47]

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

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

- basic life-skills training, including consumer education and instruction in budgeting and the use of credit;
- parenting support and child care (as appropriate);
- building interpersonal skills;
- educational opportunities, such as GED courses and postsecondary training;
- assistance in job preparation and attainment; and

[46] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*, pp. 54-58. Under 34 U.S.C. §11244, HHS is authorized to fund demonstration projects that address the special needs of runaway youth and homeless youth programs in rural areas and the special needs of programs that place runaway youth and homeless youth in host family homes, among other needs.

[47] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2020*, p. 130.

- mental and physical health care services.[48]

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

Maternity Group Homes

As part of the FY2002 budget request, the George W. Bush Administration proposed a $33 million initiative to fund maternity group homes—or centers that provide shelter to pregnant and parenting teens who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect—as a component of the TLP. Although the TLP authorized services for pregnant and parenting teens prior to FY2002, the Bush Administration sought funds specifically to serve this population. Increased funds were ultimately provided to enable these youth to access TLP services. The 2003 amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 108-96) provided explicit authority to use TLP funds for this purpose. Since FY2004, funding for adult-supervised transitional living arrangements that serve pregnant or parenting women ages 16 to 21 and their children has been awarded to organizations that receive TLP grants. These organizations provide youth with parenting skills, including child development education, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote family well-being.[49]

Funding Allocation

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

Outcomes of Youth in the TLP

HHS is carrying out a study to learn more about the long-term outcomes of 1,250 youth who have used TLP services. The study seeks to describe the outcomes and to isolate and describe promising practices and other factors that may contribute to their successes or challenges. Of particular interest for the study is how services are delivered, the demographics of youth, and their socio-emotional wellness and life experiences. It involves both a process evaluation and impact evaluation, with youth randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., participation in the TLP) and control groups. The study seeks to address the following questions: (1) How do TLP programs operate, what types of program models are used to deliver services, and what services are delivered to homeless youth? (2) What are the long-term housing outcomes and protective factors for youth who participate in the TLP program immediately, six months, 12 months, and 18 months after exiting the program? (3) What interventions can be attributed to any positive outcomes experienced by youth who participate in the TLP? According to HHS, the pilot study revealed challenges "in collecting data from a large enough sample size of youth to detect any

[48] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, pp. 18-21.

[49] Ibid, pp. 20-21.

effects so that conclusions could be drawn about the impact of homeless youth served by TLPs." HHS is not certain how it will move forward with the study.[50]

Special Populations and Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration

In FY2016, HHS began the *Transitional Living Program Special Population Demonstration* project. The project funded nine grantees over a two-year period that tested approaches for serving populations that need additional support: LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to 21; and young adults who have left foster care because of emancipation. Grantees were expected to provide strategies that help youth build protective factors, such as connections with schools, employment, and appropriate family members and other caring adults. According to HHS, a process evaluation will assess how grantees are implementing the demonstration project.[51]

HHS separately funded a project from FY2012 through FY2014 to build the capacity of TLPs in serving LGBTQ youth. Known as *the 3/40 Blueprint: Creating the Blueprint to Reduce LGBTQ Youth Homelessness*, the purpose of the grant was develop information about serving the LGBTQ youth population experiencing homelessness, such as through efforts to identify innovative intervention strategies, determine culturally appropriate screening and assessment tools, and better understand the needs of LGBTQ youth served by RHY providers.[52] The website developed by the grantee, the University of Illinois at Chicago, identifies promising practices that serve LGBTQ youth who are experiencing homelessness and publishes information about their challenges.[53]

In FY2009, HHS began the *Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration Project*. Six states received grants to support TLPs in rural communities in serving young adults who have few or no connections to a supportive family structure or community resources. The five-year project sought to provide services across three main areas:

- survival support, which includes housing, health care (including mental health), and substance abuse treatment and prevention;
- community, which includes community service, youth and adult partnerships, mentoring, and peer support groups; and
- education and employment, which includes high school or GED completion, postsecondary education, and job training and employment.

[50] CRS correspondence with HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, January 2019. See also, HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, p. 48; and HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2019*, p. 133.

[51] HHS, ACF, "Transitional Living Program Special Population Demonstration Project: LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth and Young Adults Who Have Left Foster Care After Age 18," HHS-2016-ACF-ACYF-LG-1185; and HHS, ACF, FYSB, "2016 Transitional Living Program Special Population Demonstration Project Grant Awards," October 3, 2016. CRS correspondence with HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, January 2019.

[52] The project is named 3/40 with the idea that over its three years, it will reduce by 40% homelessness among youth who identify as LGBTQ. This has involved HHS, ACF, FYSB, "Runaway and Homeless Youth Capacity Building for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Questioning Youth Populations, Grant Announcement," HHS-2013-ACF-ACYF-CX-0638. HHS, "Family and Youth Services Bureau-funded Project Paves the Way for Serving LGBTQ Homeless Youth." HHS anticipates that an implementation evaluation report will be available in late FY2019 or early FY2020. CRS correspondence with HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, January 2019.

[53] The website is housed at the University of Illinois at Chicago in partnership with other organizations. See, University of Chicago at Illinois, Jane Addams College of Social Work, "3/40 Blueprint," https://www.340blueprintproject.com/.

The six states—Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Vermont—each received annual grants of $200,000. According to HHS, all of the sites engaged youth in positive youth development activities that included safe places for youth to go. In addition, they raised awareness about homelessness in rural areas and addressed some of the unique needs around employment, housing, and transportation. However, the sites also confirmed that there is a general lack of available housing for homeless youth and that transportation was the most critical impediment to serving these youth.[54]

Street Outreach Program

Overview

The Street Outreach Program provides runaway and homeless youth living on the streets or in areas that increase their risk of using drugs or being subjected to sexual abuse, prostitution, sexual exploitation, and trafficking[55] are eligible to receive services. The program's goal is to assist youth in transitioning to safe and appropriate living arrangements. SOP services include the following:

- treatment and counseling;
- crisis intervention;
- drug abuse and exploitation prevention and education activities;
- survival aid;
- street-based education and outreach;
- information and referrals; and
- follow-up support.[56]

Funding Allocation

Grants are awarded for a three-year period, and grantees must provide 10% of the funds to cover the cost of the program. In FY2018, 96 grantees were funded. In FY2017 grantees made contact with 24,366 youth.[57]

Data Collection Project

The Family and Youth Services Bureau initiated the Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project in 2012 to learn more about the lives and needs of homeless and runaway youth served by SOP grantees. The purpose of the project was to design services to better meet the needs of these youth. FYSB collected information through focus groups and computer-assisted personal interviews with 656 youth (ages 14 to 21 years) served by grantees in 11 cities. The project found

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

[55] The law refers to the definition of "severe forms of trafficking in persons," as defined at 22 U.S.C. §7102(9) and "sex trafficking," as defined at 22 U.S.C. §7102(10). Trafficking could refer to labor or sex trafficking of children under age 18 and any youth served in the SOP.

[56] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, pp. 22-24.

[57] HHS, ACF, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2019*, p. 137.

that participants were homeless on average for nearly two years and had challenges with substance abuse, mental health, and exposure to trauma. Youth most identified that they were in need of job training or help finding a job, transportation assistance, and clothing. The top barriers to obtaining shelter were shelters being full, not knowing where to go for shelter, and lacking transportation to get to a shelter. The study researchers concluded that more emergency shelters could help prevent youth from sleeping on the street. Further, they noted that youth on the streets need more intensive case management (e.g., careful assessment and treatment planning, linkages to community resources, etc.) and more intensive interventions.[58]

Training and Technical Assistance: RHYTTAC

HHS funds the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC) to provide technical assistance to RHYP grantees. HHS awarded a five-year cooperative agreement, from September 30, 2017, through September 29, 2020, to National Safe Place to operate RHYTTAC.[59] National Safe Place is a national youth outreach program that aims to educate young people about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations on their own. RHYTTAC is designed to provide training and conference services to RHYP grantees that enhance and promote continuous quality improvement to services provided by RHYP grantees. Further, RHYTTAC offers resources and information through its website, tip sheets, a quarterly newsletter, toolkits, sample policies and procedures, and other resources. RHYTTAC also provides assistance to individual grantees in response to their questions or concerns, as well as concerns raised by HHS as part of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Monitoring System (see subsequent section).[60]

National Communication System: National Runaway Safeline

A portion of the funds for the BCP, TLP, and related activities are allocated for a national communications system known as the National Runaway Safeline ("Safeline"). The Safeline is intended to help homeless and runaway youth (or youth who are contemplating running away) through counseling, referrals, and communicating with their families. Beginning with FY1974 and every year after, the Safeline, which until 2013 was called the National Runaway Switchboard, has been funded through the Basic Center Program grant or the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant. The Safeline is located in Chicago and operates each day to provide services to youth and their families across the country. Services include (1) a channel through which runaway and homeless youth or their parents may leave messages; (2) 24-hour referrals to community resources, including shelter, community food banks, legal assistance, and social services agencies; and (3) crisis intervention counseling to youth. In calendar year 2017, the Safeline handled nearly 30,000 contacts with youth (via phone, computer, emails, and postings), of which nearly three-quarters were from youth and 9% were from parents; the other callers were relatives, friends, and others.[61] Other services are also provided through the Safeline.

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

[59] CRS correspondence with HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, December 2017.

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

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

Since 1995, the "Home Free" family reunification program has provided bus tickets for youth ages 12 to 21 to return home or to an alternative placement near their home through Home Free.[62]

Oversight

HHS evaluates each RHYP grantee through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Monitoring System. Staff from regional ACF offices and other grant recipients (known as peer reviewers) inspect the program site, conduct interviews, review case files and other agency documents, and conduct entry and exit conferences. The monitoring team then prepares a written report that identifies the strengths of the program and areas that require corrective action.[63]

The Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 required that within one year of its enactment (October 8, 2009), HHS was to issue rules that specified performance standards for public and nonprofit entities that receive BCP, TLP, and SOP grants. On April 14, 2014, HHS issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for the new performance standards and other requirements for the Runaway and Homeless youth program grantees.[64] On December 20, 2016, HHS implemented a final rule that was similar to the provisions in the NPRM.[65] These standards are used to monitor individual grantee performance.

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) and the House Committee on Education and Labor have exercised jurisdiction over the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. HHS must submit reports biennially to the committees on the status, activities, and accomplishments of program grant recipients and evaluations of the programs performed by HHS. The most recent report was submitted in January 2018, and covered FY2014 and FY2015.[66]

The 2003 reauthorization law (P.L. 108-96) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act required that HHS, in consultation with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, submit a report to Congress on the promising strategies to end youth homelessness within two years of the reauthorization, in October 2005. The report was submitted to Congress in June 2007.[67]

As mentioned above, the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378) required HHS, as of FY2010, to periodically submit to Congress an incidence and prevalence study of runaway and homeless youth ages 13 to 26, as well as the characteristics of a representative sample of these youth. As discussed, Congress appropriated funding to HUD for this purpose and the study, known as *Voices of Youth Count*, includes multiple publications about its findings.[68] The 2008 law also directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to evaluate the process by which organizations apply for BCP, TLP, and SOP, including HHS's response to these applicants. GAO submitted a report to Congress in May 2010 on its findings.[69] GAO found weaknesses in several of the procedures for reviewing grants, such as that peer reviewers for the grant did not always

[62] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, p. 31.

[63] See HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Onsite Review Protocol: Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, February 2009.

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

[65] HHS, ACF, FYSB, "Runaway and Homeless Youth; Final Rule," 81 *Federal Register* 244, December 20, 2016.

[66] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, January 4, 2018.

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

[68] Matthew H. Morton, Amy Dworsky, and Gina M. Samuels, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America. National Estimates.*

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

have expertise in runaway and homeless youth issues and feedback on grants was not provided in a permanent record. In addition, GAO found that HHS delayed telling successful grantees that the grant had been awarded to them. HHS has implemented the recommendations made in the report.

Appendix A. Basic Center Program (BCP) Funding

Table A-1. Estimated BCP Funding by State and Territory, FY2018 (Final) and FY2019 (Estimated)

(Dollars in thousands)

State/Territory	FY2018	FY2019
Alabama	$587,980	$655,800
Alaska	400,000	400,000
Arizona	999,279	959,392
Arkansas	444,485	417,678
California	5,831,338	5,979,013
Colorado	977,061	743,581
Connecticut	652,462	472,686
Delaware	109,103	399,754
District of Columbia	399,732	399,732
Florida	3,144,993	2,427,572
Georgia	957,919	1,480,577
Hawaii	200,000	200,000
Idaho	91,023	255,704
Illinois	2,160,008	1,751,421
Indiana	1,014,258	934,665
Iowa	362,000	431,174
Kansas	200,000	426,133
Kentucky	794,176	597,921
Louisiana	672,658	660,401
Maine	545,937	545,937
Maryland	796,715	797,398
Massachusetts	995,436	820,746
Michigan	2,322,330	1,922,330
Minnesota	1,066,585	829,824
Mississippi	319,668	430,732
Missouri	1,438,346	1,141,448
Montana	200,000	200,000
Nebraska	600,000	600,000
Nevada	324,262	395,557
New Hampshire	200,000	200,000
New Jersey	1,346,189	1,182,647
New Mexico	680,598	480,622

State/Territory	FY2018	FY2019
New York	2,889,030	2,492,760
North Carolina	1,252,790	1,353,746
North Dakota	200,000	200,000
Ohio	1,692,034	1,555,951
Oklahoma	674,816	568,642
Oregon	1,592,271	1,192,271
Pennsylvania	1,647,067	1,592,759
Rhode Island	0	200,000
South Carolina	399,828	644,499
South Dakota	232,405	200,000
Tennessee	600,000	883,821
Texas	2,948,554	4,265,145
Utah	442,891	539,790
Vermont	200,000	200,000
Virginia	799,999	1,106,293
Washington	1,393,441	953,737
West Virginia	128,769	224,503
Wisconsin	825,243	764,447
Wyoming	100,000	200,000
Total for States	*48,853,679*	*48,278,814*
American Samoa	70,000	70,000
Guam	127,000	70,000
Northern Mariana Islands	0	70,000
Puerto Rico	400,000	436,286
Virgin Islands	0	70,000
Total for Territories	*597,000*	*716,286*
Total	**$49,450,679**	**$48,995,100**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, *FY2020*, pp. 133-134.

Note: The total does not include funding for training and technical assistance, research and evaluation, and program support. Some jurisdictions received $0 (Rhode Island, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands for FY2018) because the applications for funding from organizations in these jurisdictions scored too low to be funded.

Appendix B. Additional Federal Support for Runaway and Homeless Youth

Since the creation of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, other federal initiatives have also established services for such youth.

- *Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program* (YHDP): The omnibus appropriations laws for FY2016 through FY2018 enabled HUD to set aside up to $33 million (FY2016), $43 million (FY2017), and $80 million (FY2018) from the Homeless Assistance Grants account to implement projects that demonstrate how a "comprehensive approach" can "dramatically reduce" homelessness for youth through age 24. The appropriations laws each fiscal year direct this funding to up to 10 communities with the FY2016 funding; up to 11 communities with the FY2017 funding, including at least five rural communities; and up to 25 communities with the FY2018 funding, including at least eight rural communities. HUD has allocated $33 million to 10 communities for FY2016 and $43 million for FY2017.[70] In addition, HUD is taking steps to evaluate the YHDP grantee communities in developing and carrying out a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.[71]
- *100-Day Challenges to End Youth Homelessness*: Since 2016, cities have partnered with public and private entities to accelerate efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. A Way Home America and Rapid Results Institute, organizations that focus on pressing social problems, have provided support to the organizations. HHS provided training and technical assistance through RHYTTAC to the first three cities involved in the challenge: Los Angeles, CA; Cleveland, OH; and Austin, TX.[72] In general, participating communities have housed homeless youth and have identified new housing options for this population.[73]
- *Youth with Child Welfare Involvement At-Risk of Homelessness* (YAHR): HHS has funded grants to build evidence on what works to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have child welfare involvement. HHS awarded funds to 18 grantees for a two-year planning period (2013-2015).[74] Six

[70] The sites funded with FY2016 appropriations include six urban areas (Anchorage, AK; San Francisco, CA; Watsonville/Santa Cruz City and County, CA; Connecticut; and Cincinnati/Hamilton County, OH) and four rural areas (Kentucky; Grand Traverse, Antrim, and Leelanau Counties, MI; and OH). See, HUD, "FY 2016 YHDP Debrief," January 13, 2017. The sites funded with FY2017 appropriations include six urban areas (San Diego, CA; Louisville, KY; Boston, MA; Columbus, OH; Nashville, TN; and Snohomish, WA) and five rural areas (Northwest MN; NE; Northern NM, VT, and WA). See, HUD, "FY 2017 Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Community Selection Announcement," July 13, 2018.

[71] See, for example, HUD, "30-Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Evaluation of the HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project Evaluation," 73 *Federal Register* 81, April 26, 2018.

[72] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, "Follow the 100-Day Challenge to End Youth Homelessness," August 31, 2016, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/100-day-challenge and CRS correspondence with HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, December 2017.

[73] A Way Home America, "100-Day Challenge Overview," http://www.awayhomeamerica.org/100-day-challenge-overview/.

[74] M.C. Bradley, Emily Knas, and Lisa Klein Vogel, *Youth At Risk of Homelessness: Lessons Learned from the Planning Phase*, Mathematica Policy Research for HHS, ACF, OPRE, OPRE Report 2017-52a, August 2017.

of the grantees received additional funding to refine and test their service models during a second phase (2015-2018). A subset of those grantees will then be selected to conduct a rigorous evaluation of their impact on homelessness.[75]

Educational Assistance

Elementary and Secondary Education

In school year 2016-2017, more than 1.3 million children and youth were homeless. Of these students, over 118,000 were homeless youth unaccompanied by their families.[76] The Department of Education administers the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, which was established under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77), as amended.[77] This program assists state education agencies (SEAs) to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal access to the same, appropriate education, including public preschool education, that is provided to other children and youth. Grants made by SEAs to local education agencies (LEAs) under this program must be used to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth. Program funds may be appropriated for activities such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, and referral services for homeless children and youth, as well as providing them with medical, dental, mental, and other health services. McKinney-Vento liaisons for homeless children and youth in each LEA is responsible for coordinating activities for these youth with other entities and agencies, including local Basic Center and Transitional Living Program grantees. States that receive McKinney-Vento funds are prohibited from segregating homeless students from non-homeless students, except for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, supplemental services.[78] FY2019 funding for the program is $93.5 million.

Higher Education

According to a 2017 survey of 43,000 college students at selected colleges and universities, 9% of those attending four-year universities and 12% of those attending community college had been homeless in the last year. In addition, 37% of university students and 46% of community college students were housing insecure in the past year, meaning that they had difficulty paying rent or lived with others beyond the expected capacity of the housing, among other scenarios.[79]

The Higher Education Act (HEA) authorizes financial aid and support programs that target homeless students and other vulnerable populations. For purposes of applying for federal financial aid, a student's expected family contribution (EFC) is the amount that can be expected to be contributed by a student and the student's family toward his or her cost of education. Certain

[75] HHS, ACF, OPRE, "Building Capacity to Evaluate Interventions for Youth/Young Adults with Child Welfare Involvement At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH), 2013-2019," https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/building-capacity-to-evaluate-interventions-for-youth-with-child-welfare-involvement-at-risk-of-homelessness.

[76] National Center for Homeless Education," National Overview: Number of Homeless Children/Youth Enrolled in Public School by Year," http://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx.

[77] For additional information about the program, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs*.

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

[79] Sarah Goldrick-Rab et al., *Still Hungry and Homeless in College*, Wisconsin Hope Lab, April 2018.

groups of students are considered "independent," meaning that only the income and assets of the student (and not their parents or guardians) are counted.[80] Individuals under age 24 who have been verified during the school year as either (1) unaccompanied and homeless or (2) unaccompanied, self-supporting, and risk of homelessness.[81] This verification can come from a McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless children and youth in the local education agency; the director (or designee) of a program funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth program; the director (or designee) of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by HUD; or a financial aid administrator.

Separately, HEA provides that homeless children and youth are eligible for what are collectively called the federal TRIO programs.[82] This includes the following TRIO programs: Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and Educational Opportunity Centers. The TRIO programs are designed to identify potential postsecondary students from disadvantaged backgrounds, prepare these students for higher education, provide certain support services to them while they are in college, and train individuals who provide these services. HEA directs the Department of Education (ED), which administers the programs, to (as appropriate) require applicants seeking TRIO funds to identify and make services available, including mentoring, tutoring, and other services, to these youth.[83] TRIO funds are awarded by ED on a competitive basis. In addition, HEA authorizes services for homeless youth through TRIO Student Support Services—a program intended to improve the retention and graduation rates of disadvantaged college students—that include temporary housing during breaks in the academic year.[84] In FY2019, TRIO appropriations are $1.1 billion.[85]

Separately, HEA allows additional uses of funds through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to establish demonstration projects that provide comprehensive

[80] 20 U.S.C. §1087vv (Section 480(d) of the Higher Education Act). Other groups of eligible students include those age 24 or older; and students under age 24 who are, or were in foster care, or a ward of the court, or an orphan at age 13 or older; students in graduate or professional school; and students who are married, have legal dependents other than a spouse (i.e., children), are in the armed services, or are veterans of the armed services. Students may also be considered independent by a financial aid administrator who "makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstance."

[81] This is based on the definition of "homeless children and youths" and "unaccompanied youth" at 42 U.S.C. §11434a. "Homeless children and youths" refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and includes those who are (1) sharing housing with other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship; (2) living in hotels or motels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative arrangements; (3) awaiting foster care placement; (4) living in substandard housing; and (5) children of migrant workers). "Unaccompanied youth" refers to a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

[82] In 2008, the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA, P.L. 110-315) amended HEA to add foster youth as an eligible population for these services.

[83] General provisions: 20 U.S.C. §107a-11(Section 402A of the Higher Education Act, HEA); Talent Search: 20 U.S.C. §107a-12 (Section 402B of the HEA); Upward Bound: 20 U.S.C. §107a-13 (Section 402C of the HEA); and Student Support Services: 20 U.S.C. §107a-14 (Section 402D of the HEA). Notably, the section of HEA that authorizes the McNair Postbaccalaurete program does not specify that current and former foster youth are eligible for services under the program. Another section of the law (pertaining to documentation of status as a low-income individual) specifies that notwithstanding that section of the law, foster youth and certain former foster youth are eligible for all of the programs except the McNair Postbaccalaurete program.

[84] These changes were made by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (P.L. 110-315) in 2008. The Department of Education issued regulations to provide further clarification about the changes. See, U.S. Department of Education, "High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant Program, The Federal TRIO Programs, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program," 75 *Federal Register* 65712-65803, October 26, 2010.

[85] U.S. Congress, *Department of Defense for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2019, and for Other Purposes*, Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 6157, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., September 13, 2018, H.Rept. 115-292, p. 106.

support services for students who are or were homeless at age 13 or older.[86] FIPSE is a grant program that seeks to support the implementation of innovative educational reform ideas and evaluate how well they work. As specified in the law, the projects can provide housing to the youth when housing at an educational institution is closed or unavailable to other students. FY2019 appropriations for FIPSE are $5 million.[87]

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program[88]

Recently emancipated foster youth are vulnerable to becoming homeless. In FY2017, nearly 20,000 youth "aged out" of foster care.[89] The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), created under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169), provides states with funding to support children and youth ages 14 to 21 who are in foster care and former foster youth ages 18 to 21.[90] States are authorized to receive funds based on their share of the total number of children in foster care nationwide. However, the law's "hold harmless" clause precludes any state from receiving less than the amount of funds it received in FY1998 or $500,000, whichever is greater.[91] The program specifies funding for transitional living services, and as much as 30% of the funds may be dedicated to room and board. The program is funded through mandatory spending, and as such $140 million ($143 million as of FY2020) is provided for the program each year through the annual appropriations process.

Discretionary Grants for Family Violence Prevention

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), Title III of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-457), authorized funds for Family Violence Prevention and Service grants that work to prevent family violence, improve service delivery to address family violence, and increase knowledge and understanding of family violence. From FY2007 to FY2009, one of these projects focused on runaway and homeless youth in dating violence situations through HHS's Domestic Violence/Runaway and Homeless Youth Collaboration on the Prevention of Adolescent Dating Violence initiative. The initiative was created because many runaway and homeless youth come from homes where domestic violence occurs and may be at risk of abusing their partners or becoming victims of abuse. The initiative funded eight states and community-based organizations to address the issue of teen dating violence among runaway and homeless youth. The grants funded activities such as curriculum on dating violence, small groups for teens, and a sexual assault/dating violence reduction program. The initiative resulted in an online toolkit for advocates in the runaway and homeless youth and domestic and sexual assault fields to help programs better address relationship violence with runaway and homeless youth.[92]

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[86] 20 U.S.C. §1138 (Section 471 of the Higher Education Act).

[87] U.S. Congress, *Department of Defense for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2019, and for Other Purposes*, Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 6157, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., September 13, 2018, H.Rept. 115-292, p. 106.

[88] For additional information about the program, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*.

[89] HHS, ACF, ACYF, Children's Bureau, *The AFCARS Report, Preliminary FY 2017 Estimates, #25*.

[90] For additional information on the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*.

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

[92] HHS, ACF, ACYF, FYSB, *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act: Report to Congress, 2009-2010*, pp. 42-43.

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