



Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

ACTION

- Reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and increase funding to expand the number of youth served.

HISTORY

This year, Congress will reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), the major federal law overseeing services and supports for youth who are in need of temporary housing, shelter services, and related assistance. RHYA is authorized under Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. Title III provides federal funds for community-based agencies nationwide working to prevent homelessness among young people and to provide supports and opportunities to youth who experience homelessness.

RHYA comprises three major programs:

- **The Runaway and Homeless Youth (Basic Center) Grant Program** enables local nonprofit agencies to operate runaway and homeless youth centers that provide temporary shelter and counseling to runaway and homeless youth under age 18. Local centers may also provide street and home-based services and drug abuse education and prevention for runaway or homeless youth or youth in high-risk situations.

The Lighthouse Youth Crisis Center in Cincinnati, for example, is a 24-hour accessible emergency residential care facility offering crisis intervention, respite, family, and individual counseling for youth ages 10–17.

- **The Transitional Living Program (TLP)** supports community-based agencies that provide services and shelter to homeless youth ages 16–21 for up to 18 months, including information and counseling in basic lifeskills to promote transition to self-sufficiency and prevent long-term dependency on social services.

YouthCare in Seattle has three transitional living programs where young adults live in safe and structured homes with 24-hour support services. While there, young adults must

- complete a high school education or GED program;
- find a job within the first month of residency;
- pay 30% of their monthly gross income for fees (30% of the total is returned to youth when they leave to prepare them for apartment living);
- spend 40 hours a week productively with school, work, and extracurricular activities; and
- attend weekly group meetings to discuss house issues, concerns, and events.

- **The Sexual Abuse Prevention (Street Outreach) Program** awards competitive grants to local nonprofits for street-based outreach and education to runaway, homeless, and street youth who have experienced or are at risk for sexual abuse, prostitution, or sexual exploitation.

At Our Town Family Center in Tucson, Arizona, volunteers assist in outreach efforts to runaway youth, missing children, and homeless street youth in case management, advocacy, phone intake, and administrative support, and help the mobile outreach team cruise the streets to make contact with street youth in need of food, clothing, shelter, and medical information.

KEY FACTS

- In 1999, an estimated 1,682,900 children ran away from home.¹
- Some 300,000 youth experience homelessness every year.²
- In 1999, 150,700 youth were arrested for running away from home. Females account for most juvenile arrests for running away (59%).³
- In one study, 38% of runaway and homeless youth reported emotional abuse by a parent figure.⁴
- In another, 46% had been physically abused, and 17% had been forced into unwanted sexual activity by a family or household member.⁵

- Yet another study found that 25% of youth exiting foster care were homeless one or more nights during the first year after leaving care.⁶
- In 1999, approximately 70,000 youth were served by RHYA programs, including shelters, transitional living programs, and street outreach.⁷

SOURCES

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