



# Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs

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## Summary

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. These two groups also include “throwaway” youth who are asked to leave their homes, and may include other vulnerable youth populations, such as current and former foster youth and youth with mental health or other issues.

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. A youth’s relationship with a step-parent, sexual activity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, school problems, and alcohol and drug use are strong predictors of family discord. The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility and overlap among the populations. Determining the number of these 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. Estimates of the homeless youth exceed 1 million. Estimates of runaway youth—including “throwaway” youth (youth asked to leave their homes)—are between 1 million and 1.7 million in a given year.

From the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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., running away). In 1974, Congress passed the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93-415) to assist runaways outside of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP) has since been expanded through reauthorization laws enacted approximately every five years since the 1970s, most recently by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378) in 2008.

The RHYP currently authorizes federal funding for three programs—the Basic Center Program, Transitional Living Program, and Street Outreach Program. The Basic Center Program provides temporary shelter, counseling, and after care services to runaway and homeless youth under age 18 and their families. The BCP serves approximately 40,000 to 50,000 youth per year. The Transitional Living Program is targeted to older youth ages 16 through 22 (and sometimes an older age), and serves approximately 3,500 to 4,000 youth each year. Youth who use the TLP receive longer-term housing with supportive services. The Street Outreach Program 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 and exploitation. Each year, the SOP makes hundreds of thousands of contacts with street youth (some of whom have multiple contacts). Related services authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act include a national communication system to facilitate communication between service providers, runaway youth, and their families; training and technical support for grantees; and evaluations of the programs, among other activities. The 2008 reauthorizing legislation expanded the program, requiring HHS to conduct an incidence and prevalence study of runaway and homeless youth.

In addition to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, other federal programs support runaway and homeless youth. Assistance can be provided through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, discretionary grants for family violence prevention, and the Chafee Foster Care Independent Living program for foster youth.

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## Introduction

Running away from home is not a recent phenomenon. Folkloric heroes Huckleberry Finn and Davey 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 that promote positive development. They might also resort to illicit activities, including selling drugs and prostitution, for survival.

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. Since that time, Congress has authorized services to provide support for runaway and homeless youth outside of the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare systems. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), as amended, authorizes federal funding for three programs to assist runaway and homeless youth—the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP)—through FY2013.<sup>1</sup> These 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:** To provide outreach, 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.
- **Transitional Living Program:** To support projects 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, interpersonal skills building, educational advancement, job attainment skills, and physical and mental health care.
- **Street Outreach Program:** To provide street-based outreach and education, including treatment, counseling, provision of information, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

This report begins with a brief discussion of the reauthorization of and appropriations for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, followed by an overview of the runaway and homeless youth population. The report describes the challenges in defining and counting the runaway and homeless youth population, as well as the factors that influence homelessness and leaving home. In particular, youth who experience foster care are vulnerable to running away or becoming

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<sup>1</sup> RHYA was most recently reauthorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Protection Act (P.L. 110-378). 42 U.S.C. §4701 et seq. For additional information about the 2008 reauthorization law, see CRS Report RL34483, *Runaway and Homeless Youth: Reauthorization Legislation and Issues in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress*, by Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara.

<sup>2</sup> In 42 U.S.C. §4701 et seq., this program is referred to as the Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program.

homeless while in care or after having been emancipated from the system. The report also provides background on the evolution of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act from the 1970s until it was last amended in 2008. It then describes the administration and funding of the Basic Center, Transitional Living, and Street Outreach programs that were created from the act, as well as the functions of their ancillary components. Finally, the report discusses 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, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services relies on the definitions from the program’s authorizing legislation and its accompanying regulations.<sup>3</sup> The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines homeless youth for purposes of the BCP as individuals under age 18 (or some older age if permitted by state or local law) who are unable to live in a safe environment with a relative and lack safe alternative living arrangements. For purposes of the TLP, homeless youth are individuals ages 16 through 22 who are unable to live in a safe environment with a relative and lack safe alternative living arrangements. Youth older than age 22 may participate if they entered the program before age 22 and meet other requirements.<sup>4</sup> The accompanying regulations further define homeless youth as being in need of services and shelter that provide supervision and care.<sup>5</sup> The act and regulations describe runaway youth as 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.<sup>6</sup>

Although these current policy definitions are distinct, youth can be homeless *and* runaways. The American Medical Association’s Council on Scientific Affairs argues that the distinctions between the two groups are artificial and may be counterproductive. Their report on this population concludes that most youth on the streets are both runaways and homeless because they have no home to which they are willing or able to return.<sup>7</sup>

Some definitions of runaway and homeless youth may include a sub-population known as “throwaway” youth (or “push outs”) who have been abandoned by their parents or have been told to leave their households. These youth may be considered part of the homeless population if they lack alternative living arrangements. However, the most recent federal study of runaway youth—the National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway

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<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development use definitions of homelessness that are different than those used by HHS. The U.S. Department of Justice uses a different definition for runaway youth. For some of these definitions, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs and Recent Legislation*, coordinated by Libby Perl.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to the enactment of the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378), the law did not authorize an older age for youth to stay at a BCP or TLP-funded site. Further, the law specified that youth ages 16 through 21 were eligible for the TLP program.

<sup>5</sup> 45 C.F.R. §1351.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* The regulations reference “family” rather than “parent” or “legal guardian.”

<sup>7</sup> American Medical Association Council of Scientific Affairs, “Health Care Needs of Homeless and Runaway Youths,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, v. 262, no. 10 (September 1989).

Children-2 (NISMART-2) conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice—includes throwaway youth in its estimates.<sup>8</sup> The study de-emphasizes distinctions between runaway and throwaway populations because many youth experience both circumstances, and the categorization of a runaway or throwaway episode frequently depends on whether information was gathered from the youth (who tend to emphasize the throwaway aspects of the episode) or their care takers (who tend to emphasize the runaway aspects). Some definitions of runaway and homeless youth, including those used by HHS, include “street youth” because they lack shelter and live on the street and in other areas that increase the risk of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, drug abuse, and prostitution.<sup>9</sup>

## 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> Further, some studies examine homelessness based on the age of youth (i.e., under age 18 or 18 and older).

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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> The sample location may also misrepresent the characteristics of the population generally.<sup>14</sup> Surveying youth who live on the streets may lend to the perception that all runaway and homeless youth are especially deviant. Youth surveyed in locations with high rates of drug use and sex work, known as “cruise areas,” tend to be older, to have been away from home longer, to have recently visited community-based agencies, and to be less likely to attend school than youth in “non-cruise areas.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Runaway/Throwaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics,” by Heather Hammer, David Finkelhor, and Andrea J. Sedlak, *OJJDP NISMART Bulletin*, October 2002, [http://www.missingkids.com/en\\_US/documents/nismart2\\_runaway.pdf](http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/documents/nismart2_runaway.pdf). (Hereinafter, U.S. Department of Justice, “Runaway/Throwaway Children.”)

<sup>9</sup> §42 U.S.C. §5732a.

<sup>10</sup> 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. (Hereinafter, Christopher L. Ringwalt et al., “The Prevalence of Homelessness Among Adolescents.”)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 1325-1326.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Andrea L. Witkin et al., “Finding Homeless Youth: Patterns Based on Geographical Area and Number of Homeless Episodes,” *Youth & Society*, vol. 37, no. 1 (September 2005), pp. 62-63.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



Further, the research literature on the number and characteristics of runaway and homeless youth is fairly limited and dated. Some of the studies focus on the demographics of either—homeless youth; runaway youth; or unaccompanied youth, which encompasses both runaways and homeless youth. One commonly cited study states that more than a million youth ages 12 to 17 are homeless annually. Another study, based on data from 1999, found that 1.7 million youth under the age of 18 ran away that year. Finally, other research focuses on the general category of unaccompanied youth—who may be runaway and/or homeless—and estimates the number of these youth (ages 16 to 24) who are most at risk of facing negative outcomes.

As discussed later in the report, the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378), which renewed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program through FY2013, authorizes funding for HHS to conduct periodic studies of the incidence and prevalence of youth who have run away or are homeless. HHS has not conducted such a study, and additional funding has not been appropriated for this purpose.

## **Homeless Youth**

A 1998 study in the *American Journal of Public Health* used the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 1992 National Health Interview Survey of youth ages 12 to 17 to determine the number of those who were homeless.<sup>16</sup> In the survey, youth were asked whether, in the past 12 months, they had spent one or more nights in a specific type of shelter not intended to be a dwelling place (e.g., in an abandoned building, public place, outside, underground, or in a stranger's home) or a youth or adult shelter. Based on their responses, researchers calculated that 5% of the population ages 12 to 17—more than 1 million youth in a given year—experienced homelessness. The researchers concluded that the prevalence of staying at a particular dwelling place while homeless was constant across racial groups, socioeconomic status, youth who lived with both parents and those who did not, and youth who lived in cities of varying sizes. However, boys were more likely to experience homeless episodes, especially as these episodes related to sleeping in a shelter or outside.<sup>17</sup>

Measured characteristics of homeless youth vary depending on the source of the sample and methodology. Some evaluations of homeless youth indicate that gender representation varies across sample locations. Surveys from family shelters suggest either even numbers of females and males, or more females (see below for a discussion of the gender of youth using federally funded Basic Center shelters).<sup>18</sup> Although studies tend to document that homeless youth generally reflect the ethnic makeup of their local areas, some studies show overrepresentation of racial or ethnic minorities relative to the community (black youth are overrepresented at the Basic Center shelters).<sup>19</sup> The history of homelessness among youth also varies by the sample location. Youth in shelters tend to have short periods of homelessness and have not experienced prior homeless episodes while youth living on the streets are more likely to demonstrate patterns of episodic (i.e.,

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher L. Ringwalt et al., "The Prevalence of Homelessness Among Adolescents," pp. 1326-1327.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 1327.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy," *The 1998 National Symposium on Homeless Research*, (1998), pp. 1-2, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-Youth.htm>. (Hereinafter, Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy.")

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



multiple episodes adding up to less than one year) or chronic homelessness (i.e., being homeless for one year or longer).<sup>20</sup>

## **Runaway and Thrownaway Youth**

Three oft-cited studies provide annual and lifetime estimates of runaway and thrownaway youth. One study, conducted by HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), found that 1.6 million youth (7%) ages 12 to 17 had run away from home and slept on the street in a 12-month period (in 2002). These youth were more likely to be male (55%) than female, and nearly half (46%) were ages 16 or 17.<sup>21</sup> The NISMART-2, a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), estimates that 1.7 million youth under age 18 left home or were asked to leave home in 1999.<sup>22</sup> About seven out of ten (68%) were between the ages of 15 and 17. Males and females were equally represented in the population. White youth made up the largest share of runaways (57%), followed by black youth (17%) and Hispanic youth (15%). Nearly all (99%) runaway and thrownaway youth returned to their homes. Approximately 77% were gone for less than one week; 15% were gone for one week to less than one month; and 7% were gone from one month to less than six months. Less than 1% were not returned but located. About 1 out of 10 (10%) traveled less than one mile. Almost one-third (30%) traveled between 1 and 10 miles; an additional 30% traveled 10 to 50 miles; 10% traveled 50 to 100 miles; and 13% traveled more than 100 miles. Information about distance traveled was not available for 9% of runaways.

A 2010 study of runaway youth's 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 run away and the age at which they first ran away. The study found that 19% of youth ran away before turning 18 years old; 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.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Statistics, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*, 2002, <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k4/runAways/runAways.htm>. (Hereinafter, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*.)

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 7. DOJ awarded funds for a follow-up study known as NISMART-3. As with NISMART-2, NISMART-3 will measure the number of stereotypical kidnappings by strangers and the prevalence of familial abductions; lost, injured, or otherwise missing children; runaway children; and thrownaway children. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Grant Solicitation, *OJJDP FY 2010 National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children 3*, 2010, <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/grants/solicitations/FY2010/NISMART3.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael R. Pergamit, *On the Lifetime Prevalence of Running Away From Home*, Urban Institute, April 2010, <http://www.urban.org/publications/412087.html>.

## Unaccompanied Youth

While the research literature has often categorized young people based on their status as *runaways, throwaways, or street youth*, a 2011 study 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.<sup>24</sup>

The authors go on to cite a study of 250 youth in the Detroit area that identified three categories of unaccompanied youth based on their risk-taking behaviors and other factors:

1. **Transient but not connected:** These youth had fewer mental health or substance use issues but were most unstable in terms of housing and school connections and showed the most extensive histories of homelessness.
2. **High-Risk:** These youth were more likely to report a history of sexual abuse, had more sexual partners, were more likely to have dropped out of school, and struggled the most with depression, conduct, and substance abuse problems
3. **Low-Risk:** These youth showed the least extensive histories of homelessness and housing instability and had the fewest issues with behavior or substance use.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), a nonprofit organization that works to end homelessness, used these findings to estimate the number of youth under age 24 who are unaccompanied and most at risk for negative outcomes. In estimating the number of youth under age 18, NAEH focused on the nearly 380,000 from NISMART-2 who were gone for more than one week, including youth who did not return or for whom no further information was available. Based on the NISMART-2 data (and applying the proportions of youth in the Detroit study who were in each risk category), NAEH estimated that about 53,000 (14%) of these unaccompanied youth were in high-risk (“unstably connected”) or transient but not connected (“chronically disconnected”) categories. In estimating the number of unaccompanied youth ages 18 to 24, NAEH approximated the number of older youth reported in adult emergency shelter or transitional housing programs at some point during 2011 (thereby excluding youth on the streets or in unsafe housing arrangements). Of the estimated 150,000 young adults who were unaccompanied, 28,000 (18%) were in the high-risk or transient but not connected categories.<sup>25</sup>

## Factors Influencing Homelessness and Leaving Home

Youth most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away. A literature review of homeless youth found that a youth’s relationship with a step-parent, sexual activity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, school problems, and alcohol and drug use were strong predictors of family discord.<sup>26</sup> Of those callers who used the National Runaway

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<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness, “An Emerging Framework for Ending Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness,” March 6, 2012, <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/an-emerging-framework-for-ending-unaccompanied-youth-homelessness>.

<sup>26</sup> Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, “Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy,” p. 5.

Switchboard (a federally sponsored call center for youth and their relatives involved in runaway incidents) nearly one-third attributed family conflict as the reason for their call.<sup>27</sup> Using data from a longitudinal survey of youth who were in middle school and high school, researchers examined the effects of family instability (i.e., 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. Running away also increased the chances of running again. Researchers further determined that environmental effects (i.e., school engagement, neighborhood cohesiveness, physical victimization, and friends' support) were not strong predictors of whether youth in the sample ran away.<sup>28</sup> Other research using the same longitudinal data examined peer networks and their influence on running away. Friends of runaway youth were more likely to be involved in minor deviant behaviors, such as skipping school, and had poorer school performance; however, runaways were just as well-liked and interacted as frequently with friends as did their nonrunaway counterparts.<sup>29</sup>

Gay and lesbian youth appear to be overrepresented in the homeless population, due often to experiencing negative reactions from their parents when they come out about their sexuality. In five studies of unaccompanied youth in mid-size and large cities, between 20% and 40% of respondents identified as gay or lesbian.<sup>30</sup>

## **Youth in Foster Care**

Runaway and homeless youth have described abuse and neglect as common experiences. Over 20% of youth in the NISMART-2 reported being physically or sexually abused at home in the prior year or feared abuse upon returning home.<sup>31</sup> Youth who run away often have a history of involvement in the foster care system. On the last day of FY2011, states reported 5,870 foster children (1% of all foster children) as "runaways."<sup>32</sup> A study of youth who ran away from foster care between 1993 and 2003 by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago found that the average likelihood of an individual running away from foster care placements increased over this time period.<sup>33</sup> Youth questioned about their runaway experiences cited three primary reasons why they ran from foster care. First, they wanted to reconnect or stay connected to their biological families even if they recognized that their families were neither healthy nor safe. Second, youth wanted to express their autonomy and find normalcy among sometimes

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<sup>27</sup> National Runaway Switchboard, "NRS Call Statistics," [http://www.nrs-crisisline.org/news\\_events/call\\_stats.html](http://www.nrs-crisisline.org/news_events/call_stats.html).

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> Xiaojin Chen, Lisa Thrane, and Michele Adams, "Precursors of Running Away During Adolescence: Do Peers Matter?" *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2012), pp. 487-497.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Ray, *Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, pp. 12-14, <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/HomelessYouth.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System Report #18 (*Preliminary Estimates for FY2011*), June 2012, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/afcars-report-19>. (Hereinafter, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *AFARS Report #19*.)

<sup>33</sup> 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, <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/brief/youth-who-run-away-out-home-care>.

chaotic events. Many youth explained that they already felt independent because they had taken on adult responsibilities beginning at a young age. Third, youth wanted to maintain surrogate family relationships with non-family members. Youth in the study were more likely than their foster care peers to abuse drugs and to have certain mental health disorders.

Youth who experience foster care are also vulnerable to homelessness after emancipating from the child welfare system. Each year about 26,000 youth “age out” of foster care, many of whom lack the proper supports to successfully transition to adulthood.<sup>34</sup> Only about two-fifths of eligible foster youth receive independent living services.<sup>35</sup> Of those youth who do receive services, few have adequate housing assistance. Research on youth who emancipate from foster care suggests a nexus between foster care involvement and later episodes of homelessness. In a study of 26-year-olds who had emancipated from foster care in three states, approximately 15% had experienced homelessness since their last interview at age 23; slightly over half stated that they had been homeless more than once, and almost one-quarter stated they had been homeless four or more times.<sup>36</sup> One-quarter of these youth had couch surfed, defined as “moving from one temporary housing arrangement provided by friends, family, or strangers, to another.” Over 60% of the young adults who had couch surfed since their most recent interview at age 23 had done so more than once, including 35% who reported at least four episodes.<sup>37</sup>

## **Risks 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. In a 1996 evaluation of street youth (ages 13 to 17) in a Hollywood cruise area, about one-quarter met clinical criteria for major depression compared to 10% or less of their peers in the general population.<sup>38</sup> However, youth who live on the streets in cruise areas may experience greater challenges than other homeless and runaway youth who stay in other locations. Another study that compared rates for many mental disorders between homeless youth and the general youth population concluded that they were similar, although homeless youth had significantly higher rates of disruptive behavior disorders.<sup>39</sup>

Drug use also appears prevalent among the runaway and homeless youth population. The SAMHSA study found that nearly 30% had used marijuana and almost one-quarter used any illicit drug other than marijuana.<sup>40</sup> NISMART-2 reported that 17% of runaway youth used hard

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<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *AFCARS Report #19*.

<sup>35</sup> Mark E. Courtney and Darcy Hughes Huerig. “The Transition to Adulthood for Youth ‘Aging Out’ of the Foster Care System” in Wayne G. Osgood et al., eds., *On Your Own Without a Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 27-32. (Hereinafter, Courtney and Huerig, “Youth ‘Aging Out’ of the Foster Care System.”)

<sup>36</sup> Mark E. Courtney et al., *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26*, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, December 2011, p. 12, [http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation\\_Report\\_12\\_30\\_11.pdf](http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_12_30_11.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Robertson and Toro, “Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy,” p. 7. The clinical criteria are found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, a handbook used most often to diagnose mental disorders in the United States.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Substance Abuse Among Youth Who Had Run Away From Home*.

drugs (not defined) and 18% were in the company of someone known to be abusing drugs when they were away from home.<sup>41</sup> Runaway and homeless youth are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, and are at high risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Some youth resort to illegal activity including stealing, prostitution, and selling drugs for survival. Runaway and homeless youth report other challenges including poor health and the lack of basic provisions.<sup>42</sup>

## Evolution of Federal Policy

Prior to the passage of the 1974 Runaway Youth Act (Title III, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, P.L. 93-415), federal policy was limited in the area of runaway and homeless youth. If they received any services, most such 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. The first runaway shelters were created in the late 1960s and 1970s to assist them in returning home. The landmark Runway Youth Act of 1974 decriminalized runaway youth and authorized funding for programs to provide shelter, counseling, and other services. Since 1974, Congress has expanded the services available to both runaway youth and homeless youth. **Figure 1**, at the end of this section, traces the evolution of the act.

### Early Years: 1930s-1960s

#### Federal Legislation on Homeless Youth

The federal government first addressed the problem of youth homelessness during the Great Depression when it established programs to provide relief services for children and youth, often accompanied by their families, who left home to find work and became homeless. The estimated number of homeless individuals in 1933 was 2 million to 5 million, of whom 20% to 30% were boys.<sup>43</sup>

In response to the influx of homeless adults and youth to the nation's cities, the Federal Transient Relief Act of 1933 established a Transient Division within the Federal Transient Relief Administration to provide relief services through state grants. Also in 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps opened camps and shelters for more than 1 million low-income older youth. In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration by executive order to open employment bureaus and provide cash assistance to poor college and high school students. Together, these programs helped to reduce the number of homeless and transient youth. According to the July 1935 Federal Transient Relief Act's Monthly Report, 50,000 young people

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Runaway/Thrownaway Children," p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro, "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy," p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Beecroft and Seymour Janow, "Toward a National Policy for Migration," *Social Forces*, vol. 16, no. 4 (May 1938), p. 477. (Hereinafter, Eric Beecroft and Seymour Janow, "Migration.")



were homeless and/or transient at that time.<sup>44</sup> The Transient Division was disbanded shortly thereafter.

## **Federal Legislation on Runaway Youth**

Homeless youth were generally considered a problem that had ended after the Great Depression, but youth running away from home was emerging as a more serious issue. At about the same time the federal government withdrew funding for homeless and transient youth services provided during the Great Depression, it enacted, for the first time, separate and unrelated legislation to assist vulnerable youth—including runaways—through state grants. As originally enacted, the Social Security Act of 1935 (P.L. 74-231) authorized indefinite annual funding of \$1.5 million for states to establish, extend, and strengthen public child welfare services in “predominately rural” or “special needs” areas. For purposes of this program (now at Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act), these were described as services “for the protection and care of homeless, dependent, and neglected children, and children in danger of becoming delinquent.”<sup>45</sup> In 1950 (P.L. 81-734), Title IV-B was amended to allow state grants to be used to pay the cost of returning a runaway child under the age of 16 to his or her home state from another state. In 1958, the program was again amended (P.L. 85-840) to increase the age of runaways who could receive this aid to 18 and to include 15 days of maintenance (i.e., room and board) for each child in cases where the costs could not be met by his or her parents or the agency institution legally responsible for the care of that child.

The passage of the 1961 Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act (P.L. 87-274) focused on the environmental and underlying sociological factors of deviant behavior among youth. Unaccompanied minors on the street fit the image of troubled, and potentially delinquent youth. This image was further entrenched as some runaway youth joined the Counterculture Movement of the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> The first runaway centers (Huckleberry House in San Francisco, the Runaway House in Washington, DC, and branch offices of the Young Women’s Christian Association and Traveler’s Aid Society) opened during the late 1960s to provide shelter, counseling, and other services to youth and their families. The centers received little, if any, federal funds, and relied primarily on the donations of churches and other nonprofit entities.

## **The Runaway Youth Act of 1974**

Concerned that an increasing number of runaway youth were entering the juvenile justice system, the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Judiciary Committee conducted hearings on runaway youth in 1972 to explore the problems facing this population.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>45</sup> In 1962 (P.L. 87-543), child welfare services were formally defined under Title IV-B as “public social services which supplement, or substitute for parental care and supervision for the purpose of (1) remedying or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in, the neglect abuse, exploitation, or delinquency of children, (2) protecting and caring for homeless, dependent, or neglected children, (3) protecting and promoting the welfare of children, including the strengthening of their own homes where possible or, where needed, the provision of adequate care of children away from their homes in foster family homes or day-care or other child-care facilities.” P.L. 109-288 (2006) removed reference to homeless youth.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Juvenile* (continued...)

Testimony from government officials, youth workers, and community leaders focused on the lifestyles of youth, as well as their interaction with police and increasing reliance on runaway centers. Runaway youth were concentrated in areas like the Haight District in San Francisco and New York City's Greenwich Village, often staying in filthy, overcrowded houses (known as "pads") with other youth and adults. Police officers routinely sent unaccompanied youth to juvenile detention centers. The few runaway centers operating in the early 1970s were underfunded, understaffed, and unable to help youth cope with the reasons they ran away. A fractured home life and problems with school were most often cited as motivation for leaving home. Youth who ran away because they were abused or neglected were not always placed under the protection of the state. These youth, like most runaways, had to secure permission from their parents to stay overnight at a runaway center.

The subcommittee also heard testimony regarding the need to establish and federally fund programs to assist runaway youth. At the time, states could only use Social Security Title IV-B funds for runaway youth to return them to their state of origin (not for intrastate transfer). Other federal funding streams that targeted runaway youth were also limited. The Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-445) authorized funding for approximately four runaway centers from 1968 to 1972. The primary purpose of the legislation was to provide assistance to courts, correctional systems, schools, and community agencies for research and training on juvenile justice issues.

Although the Senate passed legislation to assist runaway youth, the House did not act; however, two years later, in 1974, Congress passed the Runaway Youth Act as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP, P.L. 93-415). A total of \$10 million for each fiscal year, FY1975 through FY1977, was authorized to provide temporary shelter, family counseling, and after-care services to runaway youth and their families through what is now referred to as the Basic Center Program. To receive funding under Title III, states had to decriminalize runaway youth and provide services outside of the juvenile justice system. The legislation also included a provision requiring a comprehensive survey of runaway youth.

## **Expanding the Scope of the Act**

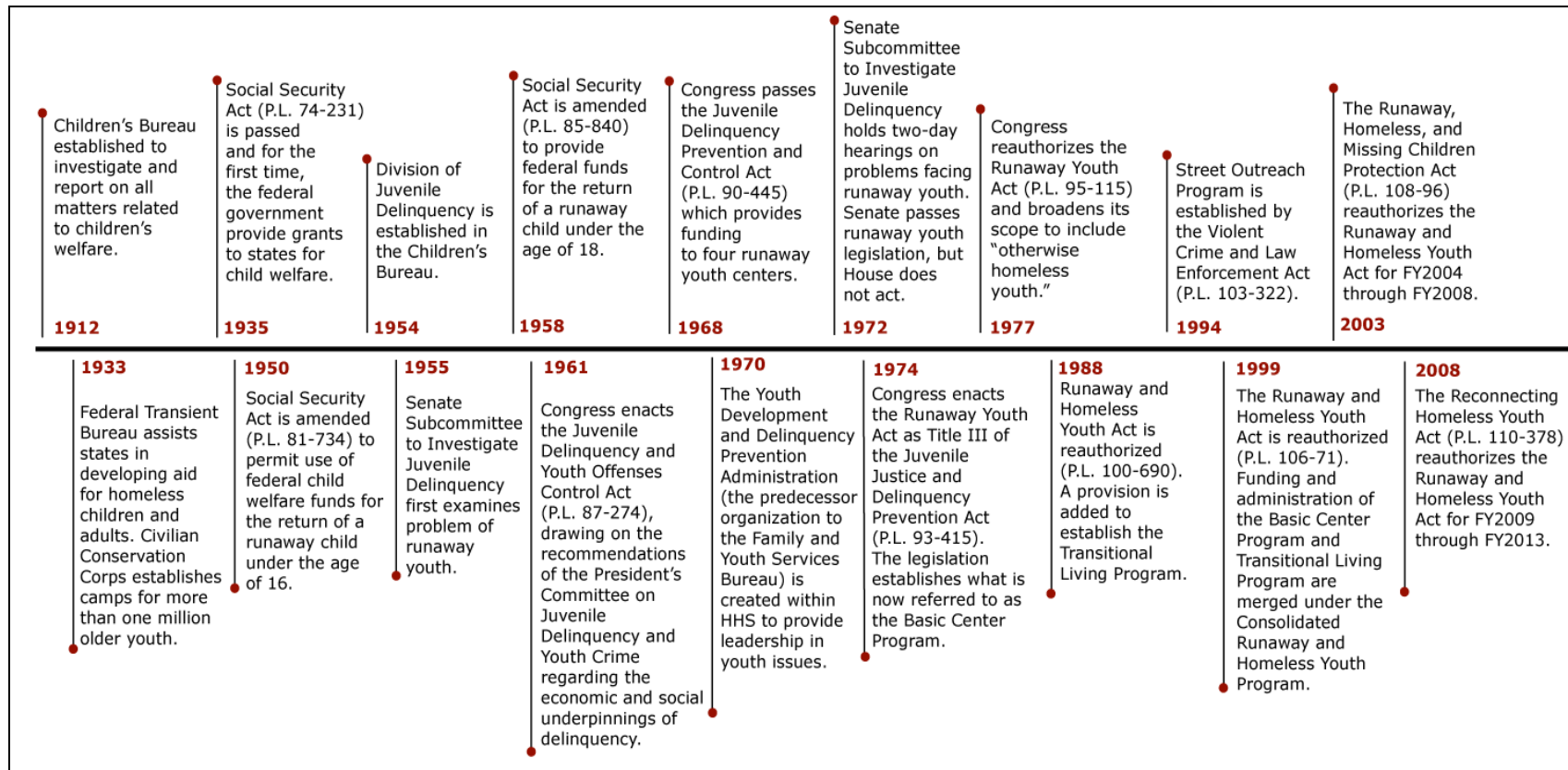
Through the Juvenile Justice Amendments to the JJDP in 1977 (P.L. 95-115), Congress reauthorized the Runaway Youth Act for FY1978 and expanded its scope to include homeless youth. Such youth became eligible for services provided through the Basic Center Program. Two other programs were later added that targeted specific sub-populations of runaway and homeless youth. Congress established the Transitional Living Program through the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690) to meet the needs of older youth ages 16 to 21. The impetus for passing the legislation was the success of demonstration transitional living projects in the 1980s. The other major program, the Street Outreach Program, was created in 1994 by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322). The purpose of the program is to serve homeless youth living on the streets. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was most recently reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-378), which extended the program's funding authorization through FY2013 and authorized funding for a prevalence and incidence study of the homeless youth population, among other activities

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(...continued)

*Delinquency*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., January 13-14, 1972 (Washington: GPO, 1972).



**Figure I. Evolution of Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Policy**

**Source:** Created by the Congressional Research Service.

# Funding and Description of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program

## Federal Administration and Funding

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau within HHS's Administration for Children and Families. The funding streams for the Basic Center Program and Transitional Living Program were separate until Congress consolidated them in 1999 when RHYA was reauthorized (P.L. 106-71). Under current law, 90% of the federal funds appropriated under the consolidated program 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 federal funding is allocated for (1) a national communication system to facilitate communication between service providers, runaway youth, and their families; (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. Although the Street Outreach Program is a separately funded component, SOP services are coordinated with those provided under the BCP and TLP.

**Table 1** shows funding levels for the RHYP from FY2001 through FY2012.<sup>48</sup> Over this period, funding has been significantly increased for the program twice—from FY2001 to FY2002 and FY2007 to FY2008. The first increase was due to the doubling of funding for the Transitional Living Program. Although the TLP authorized services for pregnant and parenting teens prior to FY2002, the Bush Administration sought funds specifically to serve this population and Congress provided the increased funds to enable these youth to access TLP services. In FY2003, amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 108-96) authorized TLP funds to be used for services targeted at pregnant and parenting teens at TLP centers known as Maternity Group Homes. The second funding increase was likely due in part to heightened attention to the RHYP, as Congress began to consider legislation in FY2008 to reauthorize the program. FY2012 funding for the program was the same level as funding for FY2011, except that the program was subject to an across-the-board rescission of 0.189%. Funding for FY2012 was \$115.4 million.

Funding for FY2013 is provided under the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (P.L. 112-175) to March 27, 2013. The law was not accompanied by a conference report or explanatory statement that provided appropriations by program. Guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires funds to be obligated at the lower of the (1) percentage of the year covered by the CR or (2) "historical seasonal rate of obligation" for the period of the year covered by the CR.<sup>49</sup> As enacted, annualized funding for FY2013 is \$116 million.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The program did not receive funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 110-5), the omnibus stimulus law.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Office of Management and Budget, "Apportionment of the Continuing Resolution(s) for FY2013," OMB Bulletin No. 12-02, September 28, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Operating Plan for FY 2013*.

**Table 1. Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Funding, FY2001-FY2013, as Enacted**

(Dollars in thousands)

Program	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007 <sup>a</sup>	FY2008 <sup>b</sup>	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011 <sup>c</sup>	FY2012 <sup>d</sup>	FY2013 <sup>f</sup>
BCP	\$48,338	\$48,288	\$49,473	\$49,171	\$48,786	\$48,265	\$48,298	\$52,860	\$53,469	\$53,744	\$53,637	\$53,536	\$53,864
TLP <sup>f</sup>	20,740	39,736	40,505	40,260	39,938	39,511	39,539	43,268	43,765	43,990	43,902	43,819	44,087
SOP	14,999	14,999	15,399	15,302	15,178	15,017	15,027	17,221	17,721	17,971	17,935	17,901	17,901
Total	84,127	103,023	104,202	104,733	103,902	102,793	102,864	113,349	114,955	115,705	115,474	115,256	115,961

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2003, p. H-48; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2004, p. H-45; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2005, p. H-89; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2006, p. D-41; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2007, p. D-41; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2008, pp. 92, 98; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2009, p. D-42; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2010, pp. 85, 92; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2012, pp. 101, 109; Administration for Children and Families *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees*, FY2013, pp. 106, 113; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012*, Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2055, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., December 15, 2011, H.Rept. 112-331, p. 1196; Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (P.L. 112-175) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Operating Plan for FY 2013*.

**Note:** BCP and TLP funds are appropriated together under what is known as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth program. SOP funds are appropriated separately.

- a. The fourth Continuing Resolution for the FY2007 budget (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 include a 1.7% across-the-board rescission on Labor-HHS-Education programs.
- c. The FY2011 appropriations include a 0.2% across-the-board rescission.
- d. The FY2012 appropriations include a 0.189% across-the-board rescission.
- e. Funding for FY2013 is provided under the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (P.L. 112-175) to March 27, 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 through public and private community-based centers. 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, as added by the 2008 reauthorization act (P.L. 110-378), 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 older than 18 through street-based services, home-based services, and drug abuse education and prevention services.

BCP centers were designed to provide these services outside of the law enforcement, juvenile justice, child welfare, and mental health systems. For FY2011, the program supported 342 BCP shelters in all 50 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico.<sup>51</sup> These centers, which generally shelter as many as 20 youth, are located in areas that are frequented or easily reached by runaway and homeless youth. The shelters seek to reunite youth with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements. They also provide food, clothing, individual or group and family counseling, mentoring, and health care referrals. Youth may stay in a center continuously up to 21 days and may re-enter the program multiple times.<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup> The project supported 19 grantees that recruited, screened, trained, and provided ongoing services to approximately 90 host home families who provided housing to 2,600 youth in their homes. Youth received transportation, counseling, educational assistance, and aftercare planning. Youth stayed at the host homes for an average of 12 days.

HHS is using the project to assess the efficacy of rural host homes, and plans to issue a final report on the project in late calendar year 2013. Grantees have identified challenges and accomplishments with the model. Among the challenges were difficulty with licensing host homes for the runaway and homeless youth population; conveying to local communities that youth homelessness is prevalent; and resistance by youth who raised concerns that home environments were not the best placements for them. Grantees addressed these challenges by

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<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2013*, p. 109.

<sup>52</sup> Prior to the enactment of the 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378), youth could stay at a BCP center for up to 15 days, as authorized under rules promulgated by HHS. See 45 C.F.R. 1351.1(a).

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009*, no date specified, p. 59, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/docs/508-fysb-congress-0809.pdf>. (Hereinafter, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*.) 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, under 42 U.S.C. §5714-23.

recruiting host home families using a variety of strategies, including word of mouth and recommendations from other host home providers; retaining host home families by holding events and social gatherings; providing respite assistance and ongoing training; and working closely with stakeholders in the community (e.g., schools, hospitals, churches) to generate acceptance for the model.<sup>54</sup>

BCP grantees—community-based public and private organizations—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. Centers maintain confidential statistical records of youth (including youth who are not referred to out-of-home shelter services) and the family members. The centers 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.

HHS evaluates BCP organizations using the Basic Center Program Performance Standards, which relate to how well the needs of runaway and homeless youth and their families are being met. Nine of these standards address service components (i.e., outreach, individual intake process, and recreational programs) and six focus on administrative functions or activities (i.e., staffing and staff development, reporting, and individual client files).

### **Funding Allocation**

BCP grants are allocated by formula to each state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories and are then distributed (by HHS) on a competitive basis to community-based organizations. The amount of BCP funding available is based on the jurisdiction's proportion of the nation's youth under age 18, and under the law, these jurisdictions receive a minimum of \$200,000. Pursuant to the 2008 reauthorization act (P.L. 110-378), HHS is to re-allot any funds from one state to other states that will not be obligated before the end of a fiscal year. Separately, each of the territories (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands) receive a minimum of \$70,000 of the total appropriations. (Prior to the enactment of P.L. 110-378, the states were to receive a minimum of \$100,000 and territories received a minimum of \$45,000.) See **Table A-1** for the amount of funding allocated for each state in FY2011 and FY2012. The costs of the Basic Center Program are shared by the federal government (90%) and grantees (10%). Community-based organizations apply directly to the federal government for the BCP grants. Grants may be awarded for up to three years. Funding priority is given to organizations that have demonstrated experience in providing services to runaway and homeless youth, and to those who apply for less than \$200,000 in funding per fiscal year. Funding for the second and third year, however, depends on the availability of funds and the grantee's satisfactory performance.

### **Youth Served in the Program**

BCP grantees serve only a fraction of the estimated more than 1 million youth under the age of 18 who run away or are homeless. Data on youth served in the BCP are collected via the NEO-

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<sup>54</sup> Correspondence with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau in December 2012.



RHYMIS information system. NEO-RHYMIS collects information twice during the fiscal year from program grantees on the basic demographics of the youth, the services they received, and the status of the youth (i.e., expected living situation, physical and mental health, and family dynamics) upon exiting the programs. RHYMIS was updated in 2004 to reduce the burden of reporting the data. Now known as NEO-RHYMIS, the system has received routine data submissions from nearly all Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees.<sup>55</sup> Detailed analysis of RHYMIS data is provided below for the BCP (and TLP). This analysis is generally not available elsewhere.

According to the FY2012 NEO-RHYMIS report of all grantees, 36,861 youth used BCP services (the number of youth served in each year from FY2006 through FY2011 ranged from 41,307 to 52,243).<sup>56</sup> Of these youth, 19,444 (51.9% %) were female and 17,621 (47.8% %) were male. **Figure 2** shows the greatest percentage of youth served were ages 15 and 16 (40.7% %). The centers also served youth age 12 and younger (12.1% %), youth ages 13-14 (27.4%), 17-18 (19.7% ), and older than 18 (0.1% ).

Youth who visited the centers represented a variety of racial backgrounds (see **Figure 3**), although 8.4% did not report their race. Although white youth made up the majority (15.4%) of the youth served, black and American Indian or Alaska Native youth were overrepresented compared to their share of the general population.<sup>57</sup> In FY2012, black youth comprised one-third (32.2%) of the BCP population, but made up about 15% of the 10- to 19-year-old population around that same period. Similarly, American Indian or Alaska Native youth comprised 2.4% of the BCP population in FY2012, but were 1.0% of the general population ages 10 to 19. The share of Asian youth who used RHY services (0.7%) in FY2012 was well below their share of the population overall (3.9%). Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander youth (0.6%) were slightly overrepresented relative to their share of the general population (0.2%), while multiracial youth (4.4%) were also overrepresented in BCP when compared to the general population (3.5%). More than 7,000 (19.8%) of youth reported being Hispanic. Hispanic youth made up about the same share relative to their representation generally, about 19%. Nearly 8% of youth did not report their ethnicity.

Approximately one out of ten (9.8%) of youth identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning in FY2012. In addition, 6.9% of youth reported having spent some time in foster care and 5.3% of youth had been in the juvenile justice system at some point in their lives.

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<sup>55</sup> See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, "Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System Fact Sheet," <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/rhymis-fact-sheet>.

<sup>56</sup> NEO-RHYMIS allows users to retrieve reports on a variety of topics, including the number of youth at BCP or TLP shelters, demographic features of the youth, the type of services youth receive, and information about their living status at entrance and exit, among other types of reports. Some of the reports are newer (i.e., they were introduced in recent years) and have more comprehensive data than the older reports. For example, the older reports include only "female" and "male" gender records and not "transsexual (male to female and female to male)," "other," and "unknown." The older reports also do not handle invalid codes in the field and missing data in the same way. For these reasons, the total number of youth varies slightly across the reports for a given fiscal year, depending on whether the reports are newer or older. This discussion of youth in the BCP (and TLP, later in this report) primarily includes percentages, and not actual numbers, due to the differences in numbers across the reports.

<sup>57</sup> Based on CRS analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, *2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?\\_program=ACS&\\_submenuId=&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=).

Also in FY2012, the greatest share of youth were referred by law enforcement or juvenile justice officials (26.1%), followed by referrals from their parents (22.6%), self-referrals (10.8%), other youth-serving agencies or programs (8.9%), schools (8.9%), and child welfare agencies (7.3%). According to NEO-RHYMIS, at the time of their entrance to the BCP shelters in FY2012, 74.0% of youth had lived with their parents or legal guardians, 11.5% lived with other relatives or friends, and 6.6% lived on the streets, among other locations. Nearly 85% percent of the youth were in school; however, about one out of five (22.8%) students attended irregularly (i.e., attended one to three days a week, on average). Just over 5.0% had dropped out and the remainder of youth had graduated, had obtained a GED, were suspended or expelled, or had a school status that was unknown.

While at the BCP shelter, nearly all youth received counseling (92.5%) basic support, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation (92.4%) Youth also received planning for after care (78.4%), life skills training (66.3%), recreational activities (56.9%), education (32.1%), and substance abuse prevention (22.8%), among other services at the shelters.<sup>58</sup> Upon exiting, almost 7 out of 10 youth (69.6%) went to live with their parents. However, youth also exited to a relative or friend's home (11.9%), the street (3.8%), and residential programs such as a TLP or independent living program (4.8%), among other locations.

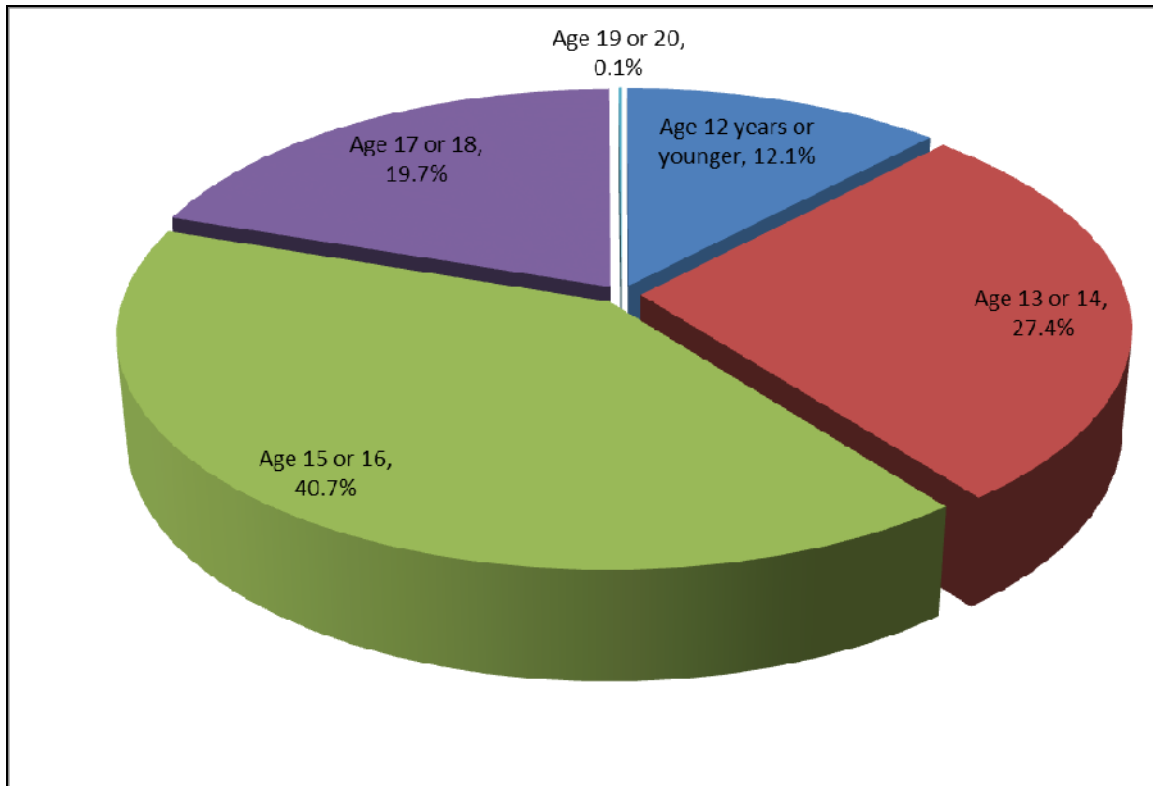
The issues of concern cited most by youth and staff at the time of exiting in FY2012—in order of frequency—were family dynamics, education, mental health, abuse/neglect, and substance abuse. Finally, in FY2012, BCP shelters reported turning away 1,823 youth by phone and 290 youth in person due to a lack of bed space, for a total of 2,113 youth (compared to 2,629 youth in FY2008; 2,919 youth in FY2009; and 4,464 youth in FY2010).

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<sup>58</sup> The total number of youth who received services was not provided. Therefore, the share of youth is based on the number of youth who are included in the NEO-RHYMIS report on gender distribution.

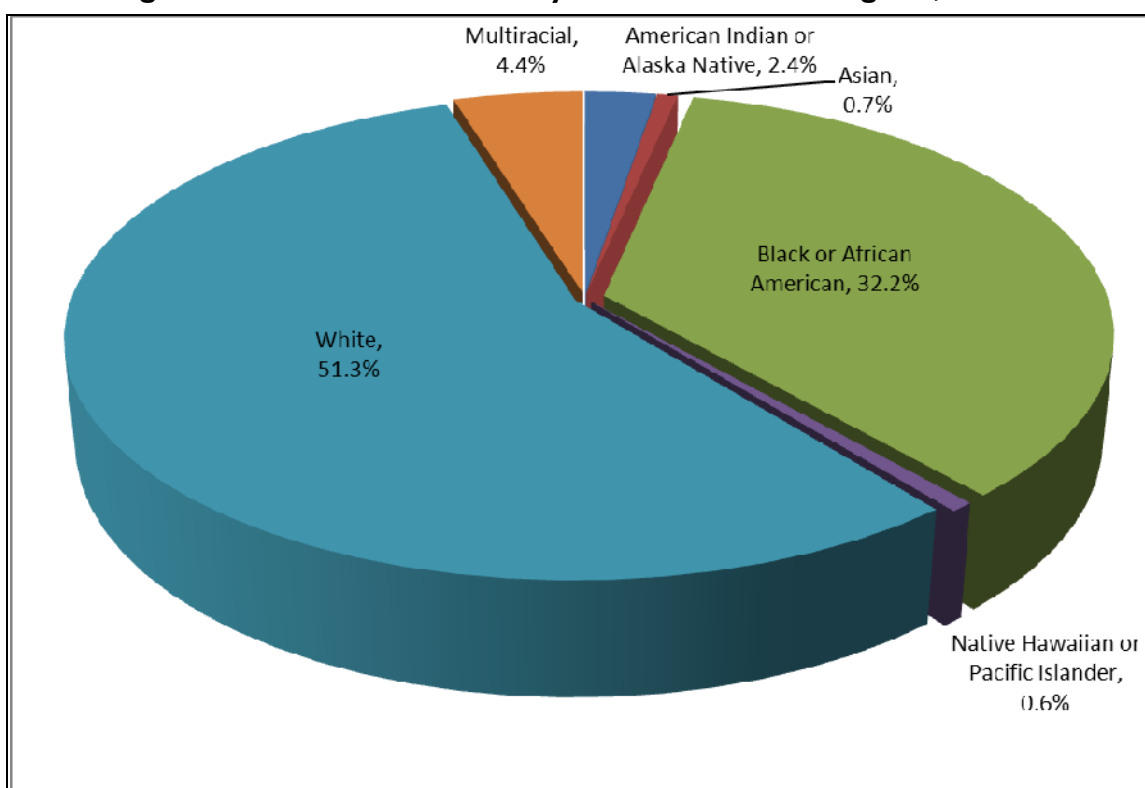


**Figure 2. Age of Youth Served by the Basic Center Program, FY2012**



**Source:** Congressional Research Service analysis of NEO-RHYMIS data.

**Note:** Based on data from 36,861 youth.

**Figure 3. Race of Youth Served by the Basic Center Program, FY2012**

**Source:** Congressional Research Service analysis of NEO-RHYMIS data.

**Notes:** Chart does not total to 100% because the data are based on the 33,775 youth who provided information about their race. An additional 8.4% (3,086) youth did not provide information about their race.

## 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 FY2011, the TLP supported 215 organizations.<sup>59</sup>

Each TLP grantee may shelter up to 20 youth at host family homes, supervised apartments owned by a social service agency, or scattered-site apartments, and single-occupancy apartments rented directly with the assistance of the agency. The 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378) continues to allow youth to remain at TLP projects for up to 540 days (18 months) or longer for youth under age 18 and adds that a 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

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2013*, p. 110.

means circumstances in which a youth would benefit to an unusual extent from additional time in the program. The new law further authorizes that 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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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

- basic life-skills training, including consumer education and instruction in budgeting and housekeeping;
- interpersonal skill building;
- educational preparation, such as GED courses and post-secondary training;
- assistance in job preparation and attainment;
- education and counseling on substance abuse;
- one-to-one mentoring; and
- mental and physical health care services.

TLP centers develop a written plan designed to help transition youth to independent living or another appropriate living arrangement, and they refer youth to other systems that can coordinate 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.

In FY2009, HHS began the Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth Demonstration Project.<sup>60</sup> These states are partnering with TLPs in rural communities to serve young adults who have few or no connections to a supportive family structure or community resources. The five-year project is helping 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. The six states had one year for planning their projects and are now in the implementation phase. Evaluation of the project is underway.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, Grant Announcement, *Demonstration Project Rural Host Homes for Basic Center Program*, HHS-2209-ACF-ACYF-CX-0081. HHS is authorized to fund demonstration projects that address the special needs of runaway and homeless youth programs in rural areas under 42 U.S.C. §5714-23.

<sup>61</sup> Annual grants of \$200,000 were awarded to six states: Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Vermont. The demonstration is jointly carried out by FYSB and the Children's Bureau, a separate office within the Administration for Children and Families. Based on correspondence with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau in December 2012.

## **Funding Allocation**

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

## **Youth in the Program**

In FY2012, NEO-RHYMIS reported that the Transitional Living Program served 3,880 youth (in each year from FY2006 through FY2010, the number of youth served annually in the TLP was 3,880 to 4,395). Of these youth, 60.8% were female and 38.7% were male. Just over 4% of youth were age 16; 44.4% were ages 17 to 18; 42.9% were ages 19 to 20; and 8.5% were ages 20 to 21. Slightly less than half (45.6%) were white, 36.0% were black, and the remaining youth identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (4.4%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.9%), Asian (0.8%), or multi-racial (4.8%). Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and multiracial youth were at least slightly overrepresented, while white and Asian youth were underrepresented, compared to their share in the general population ages 15 to 24 in recent years.<sup>62</sup> Among youth who reported their ethnicity, 14.9% of youth were Hispanic, which is less than their share of the general population of approximately 19%.

Nearly one out of ten (9.8%) of youth at TLPs in FY2012 identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning. In addition, 20.2% of youth spent time in foster care and 10.0% had been in the care of the juvenile justice system at some time in their lives. In FY2012, 26.5% of youth in TLP were pregnant or parenting.

In FY2012, youth most often self-referred or were referred to the TLP by other youth-serving agencies or programs, or by a relative or friend. Prior to living at the TLP, youth lived in a variety of locations: the homes of their friends and relatives (27.7%) or parents (16.4%), in shelters (19.5%), or on the street as runaway or homeless youth (12.1%), among other locations. Also in FY2012, 43.7% of the youth in TLPs were in school, of whom one out of ten (9.6%) attended irregularly; 19.6% had dropped out; 24.0% had graduated from high school; and 8.5% obtained a GED. The remaining youth either were suspended or expelled, or the youth's school status was not known. While at the TLP, the majority of youth received basic support such as shelter and transportation (95.0%); planning for services after care (91.4%); life skills training (89.6%); counseling (83.3%); education (63.5%); and employment services (74.0%), among other services.

Approximately one-third (32.2%) of youth completed the program. The remaining youth did not complete the program: 28.3% did not complete the program because of other opportunities, 17.8% did not complete the program and had no other plans, and 21.7% of youth were expelled or involuntarily discharged from the program. Youth who completed the program were in the program on average for 313 days, compared to 136 to 139 days for other youth who did not complete the program.

Youth and staff identified as issues of concern upon exiting—in order of frequency—housing, family dynamics, the youth's unemployment, school/educational issues, and mental health status

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<sup>62</sup> Based on Congressional Research Service analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, *2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?\\_program=ACS&\\_submenuId=&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=)

of the youth. Youth reported that at exit, most (78.5%) would live in a private residence, including on their own or with parents, other family, or friends; 5.0% would live in a residential program; and 0.3% would join the military. Some youth reported that they would exit to an “unsafe exit,” which RHYMIS classifies as on the street (2.9%), to a shelter (1.6%), or to an unknown location (6.0%). Less than 1% would exit to a mental hospital; 3.3% would exit to another setting. Further, as they left the program, 40.2% of the youth were in school, with one out of three of in-school youth (33.6%) attending irregularly (this is compared to 9.6% of in-school youth attending irregularly upon entry). Upon leaving, youth reported their physical, mental, and dental health status. For each of these categories, 42.3% to 62.1% of youth reported having good health and 2.0% to 11.4% reported having health that was “not good”; 34.4% to 54.6% of youth reported that their health status was unknown.

In FY2012, 2,182 youth were turned away by phone; 1,306 youth were turned away in person; and 1,131 were placed on a waiting list, for a total of 4,619 youth turned away. The total number of turnaways varied in previous years (5,113 youth in FY2008; 6,446 youth in FY2009; and 6,720 in FY2010).

### **Outcomes of Youth in the TLP**

Efforts are underway at HHS to learn more about the long-term outcomes of youth who are served by the Transitional Living Program.<sup>63</sup> In FY2007, HHS contracted with Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of the TLP at select grantee sites. The study seeks to describe the outcomes of youth who participate in the program and to isolate and describe promising practices and other factors that may contribute to their successes or challenges. Of particular interest to the study will be service delivery approaches, youth demographics, socio-emotional wellness, and life experiences. The study will involve both a process evaluation and impact evaluation, with youth randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., entry into TLP) and control groups. The study will 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?

In FY2008, Abt researchers conducted three site visits to TLP grantees (in Dallas, TX; Portland, OR; and Wichita, KS) and held a series of consultations with HHS and outside experts to inform the design of the study.<sup>64</sup> The TLP grantee sites are those from the FY2012 new grantee award

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<sup>63</sup> Based on correspondence with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau in January 2010. See also, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, p. 59. (Hereinafter, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, p. 16).

<sup>64</sup> HHS issued a proposed information collection request for public comment about the evaluation in the *Federal Register* on August 25, 2008. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, “Proposed Information Collection Activity; Comment Request,” 73 *Federal Register* 50022, August 25, 2008.

cycle. This is to ensure that participating grantees will have continuous TLP funding for at least five years after the survey commences.<sup>65</sup>

## **Maternity Group Homes**

For FY2002, the 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. Congress did not fund the initiative as part of its FY2002 appropriation. However, that year Congress provided additional funding to the TLP to ensure that pregnant and parenting teens could access services (H.Rept. 107-376). A total of \$39.7 million was appropriated for the TLP, which included an additional \$19.2 million over the FY2001 TLP appropriation to ensure that funds would be available to assist pregnant and parenting teens.

The 2003 amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 108-96) provided statutory authority to use TLP funds for Maternity Group Homes. 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. Of the 71 TLP grantees in FY2012, 13 were Maternity Group Homes.<sup>66</sup> These organizations provide youth with parenting skills, including child development education; family budgeting; health and nutrition, and other skills to promote their well-being and the well-being of their children.

## **Street Outreach Program**

### **Overview**

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, or sexual exploitation are eligible to receive services through the Street Outreach Program. 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.

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<sup>65</sup> Based on correspondence with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau in February 2012 and December 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## **Funding**

The SOP is funded separately from the BCP and TLP and is authorized to receive such sums as may be necessary. Since FY1996, when funding for the Street Outreach Program was first provided, community-based public and private organizations have been eligible to apply for SOP grants. Grants are generally awarded for a three-year period, and grantees must provide 10% of the funds to cover the cost of the program. Applicants may apply for a \$100,000 grant each year for a maximum of \$200,000 over that period. Approximately \$18 million was appropriated to fund 155 grantees in FY2011, many of which were to operate in coordination with BCPs and TLPs.<sup>67</sup>

## **Youth in the Program**

According to FY2012 NEO-RHYMIS data, street workers with the grantee organizations made 772,732 contacts with street youth (the SOP made between 724,339 and 852,022 contacts in each year from FY2006 through FY2012). Of those youth, most received health and hygiene products, food and drink items, and written materials.

## **Incidence and Prevalence Studies**

The 2008 reauthorization law (P.L. 110-378) requires HHS to estimate at five year intervals—beginning within two years of the enactment of the law (October 8, 2010)—the incidence and prevalence of the runaway and homeless youth population ages 13 to 26. The law also directs HHS to assess the characteristics of these youth. HHS is required to conduct a survey of and direct interviews with a representative sample of the youth to determine past and current socioeconomic characteristics, barriers to obtaining housing and other services, and other information HHS determines useful, in consultation with states and other entities concerned with youth homelessness. HHS is to consult with the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness regarding the study overall. The study must be submitted to the House Education and the Workforce Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee and made available to the public.

The new law does not specify the methodology for carrying out the studies, except to say that HHS should make the estimate on the basis of the best quantitative and qualitative social science research methods available. Further, if HHS enters into an agreement with a non-federal entity to carry out the assessment, the entity is to be a non-governmental organization or individual determined by HHS to have expertise in this type of research.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, as amended, authorizes Congress to appropriate such sums as may be necessary to fund the studies. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this purpose.

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<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2013*, p. 115.



## Training and Technical Assistance

In FY2012, HHS allocated just over \$6 million in BCP and TLP funds for training and technical assistance (Congress has not appropriated final funding for FY2013). This assistance included funding for a national training and technical assistance center, discussed below; the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, which provides information on runaway and homeless youth issues, among other related topics; a national communications system, discussed below; and the administration of the management information system (NEO-RHYMIS), discussed briefly in the “Congressional Oversight” section (and in the sections on BCP and TLP participants).<sup>68</sup>

HHS provides training and technical assistance to RHYP grantees through its Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Program. Until FY2007, HHS awarded funds to multiple non-profit organizations to provide this assistance in each of the Administration for Children and Families’ regions.<sup>69</sup> From FY2008 through FY2012, HHS reorganized the technical assistance providers, and created two national centers—the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training Center and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Technical Assistance Centers. These centers were collectively known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC), and were operated by the University of Oklahoma’s National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS). HHS awarded a five-year grant, from FY2013 through FY2017, to National Safe Place to operate RHYTTAC. 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 of 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 intensive assistance to individual grantees in response to their questions or concerns, as well as concerns raised by HHS as part of its Monitoring System (see below).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2013*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>69</sup> Technical support providers offered assistance through the Regional Training and Technical Assistance Provider System. The providers worked closely with ACF regional office staff to identify grantee needs and review the results of evaluations conducted by HHS staff. Based on these analyses, the provider needs assessments, and grantee requests, the providers offered several types of services, including regional and state-level conferences that address topics of interest to grantees, on-site and telephone consultations, workshops and training on issues of concern, and resource materials.

<sup>70</sup> For further information, see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, “Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers Fact Sheet,” October 12, 2012, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/rhyttac-fact-sheet>.

## **National Communication System<sup>71</sup>**

A portion of the funds for the BCP, TLP, and related activities—known collectively as the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Program—are allocated for a national communications system (that is, the National Runaway Switchboard) to help homeless and runaway youth (or youth who are contemplating running away) through counseling and referrals and communicating with their families. Beginning with FY1974 and every year after, the National Runaway Switchboard has been funded through the Basic Center Program grant or the Consolidated Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant. The Switchboard is located in Chicago and operates each day to provide services to youth and their families in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. 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 recent years, the Switchboard has handled more than 100,000 calls annually, about half of which were from youth and one-third of which were from parents; the remaining callers were relatives, friends, and others.<sup>72</sup>

Other services are also provided through the Switchboard. Since 1995, the “HomeFree” family reunification program has provided bus tickets for youth ages 12 to 21 to return home or to an alternative placement near their home (such as an independent living program) through HomeFree.<sup>73</sup>

## **Oversight**

### **Oversight of Grantees**

ACF evaluates each Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant recipient 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.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> HHS provides information to the public about runaway and homeless youth through the National Communications System (i.e., the National Runaway Switchboard). Further, the National Clearinghouse on Youth and Families, a FYSB-funded resource center, produces publications for the public about the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Finally, RHYA grantees conduct local advocacy and outreach efforts, and public service announcements to attract youth eligible for services. As described in grant announcements for the BCP, TLP, and SOP, grant applicants are evaluated, in part, on the basis of their efforts to establish outreach efforts to youth, including minority sub-groups of youth, where applicable. For further information, see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, pp. 33-34 and 39.

<sup>72</sup> The Switchboard also has a special phone line for hearing-impaired callers and access to AT&T’s language translation service. Its website provides information to those seeking non-crisis related information. National statistics on use of the National Runaway Switchboard are available at [http://www.1800runaway.org/news\\_events/call\\_stats.html](http://www.1800runaway.org/news_events/call_stats.html).

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs*, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Onsite Review Protocol: Runaway and Homeless* (continued...)

## **Congressional Oversight**

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce 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.<sup>75</sup> These reports generally include data on the youth served by the programs which are generated by RHYMIS.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup>

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 above, Congress has not appropriated funds for this purpose.

The law also directed the Government Accountability Office 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.<sup>78</sup> GAO found weaknesses in several of the procedures for reviewing grants, such as that peer reviewers for the grant did not always 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. Grantees reported that this affected decisions about hiring staff and other decisions. GAO noted that HHS policy does not prohibit HHS from telling grantees immediately. Finally, GAO found that information about why applicants were unsuccessful often included information that was not always clear or specific. GAO made recommendations to address these issues.

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(...continued)

*Youth Programs*, February 2009, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/onsite-review-protocol.pdf>; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, "Basic Center Performance Standards," <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/bcp-performance>.

<sup>75</sup> The most recent report is for FY2008 and FY2009, as referenced above.

<sup>76</sup> NEO-RHYMIS data are available online by state, region, and grantee organization at [https://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis/custom\\_reports.html](https://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis/custom_reports.html).

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *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. See 42 U.S.C. §5701.

<sup>78</sup> 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/new.items/d10335.pdf>.

## **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. Four of these initiatives—Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Shared Vision for Youth initiative, and Discretionary Grants for Family Violence Prevention Program—are discussed below.

### **Educational Assistance**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77), as amended, established the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>79</sup> 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. Liaison staff for homeless children and youth in each LEA are responsible for coordinating activities for these youth with other entities and agencies, including local Basic Center and Transitional Living Program grantees.

To receive funding, each state must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education that indicates how the state will identify and assess the needs of eligible children and youth; ensure that they have access to the federal, state, and local food programs and the same educational programs available to other youth; and resolve problems concerning delays in and barriers to enrollment and transportation. Education for Homeless Children and Youth grants are allotted to SEAs in proportion to grants made under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which allocates funds to all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico based on the percentage of low-income children enrolled in a school or living in the nearby residential area. However, no state can receive less than the greater of \$150,000, 0.25% of the total annual appropriation, or the amount it received in FY2001 under this program. The Department of Education must reserve 0.1% of the total appropriation for grants to the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The agency must also transfer 1.0% of the total appropriation to the Department of the Interior for services to homeless children and youth provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Amendments to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 authorized funding for the program through FY2007. Congress has continued to appropriate funding for the program.

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<sup>79</sup> Other programs assist homeless youth and their families through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, although none are targeted exclusively to runaway and homeless youth. For additional information about these programs, see CRS Report RL30442, *Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs and Recent Legislation*, coordinated by Libby Perl.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) reauthorized and amended the program explicitly to prohibit states that receive McKinney-Vento funds 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. Prior to the reauthorization, homeless children in some districts attended class in separate buildings or schools. Advocates raised concerns that these children, including those enrolled in classes that were equal in quality to the classes attended by their non-homeless peers, were receiving an inferior education because they were physically separated. The act exempted four counties (San Joaquin, Orange, and San Diego counties in California and Maricopa County in Arizona) from these requirements because they operated separate school districts for homeless students in FY2000, as long as (1) those separate schools offer services that are comparable to local schools; and (2) homeless children are not required to attend them. The Department of Education must certify annually that the school districts meet these requirements.<sup>80</sup>

## **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. Some 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.<sup>81</sup> The initiative funded projects carried out by faith-based and charitable organizations that advocated or provided direct services to runaway and homeless youth or victims of domestic violence. The grants funded training for staff at these organizations to enable them to assist youth in preventing dating violence. The initiative resulted in the development of 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.<sup>82</sup> HHS no longer funds the initiative.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Individual 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 RL32716, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Analysis of Changes Made by P.L. 108-446*, by Ann Lordeman and Nancy Lee Jones.

<sup>81</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Discretionary Programs*, October 2010, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/familyviolence/discretionary.htm>.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Runaway & Homeless Youth and Relationship Violence Toolkit*, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/rhy-dv-toolkit>.

<sup>83</sup> Based on correspondence with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau in February 2011.

## Chafee Foster Care Independence Program<sup>84</sup>

Recently emancipated foster youth are vulnerable to becoming homeless. In FY2012, approximately 26,000 youth “aged out” of foster care.<sup>85</sup> 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 youth who are expected to emancipate from foster care and former foster youth ages 18 to 21.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> The program authorizes funding for transitional living services, and as much as 30% of the funds may be dedicated to room and board. The program is mandatory, and as such Congress appropriates \$140 million for the program each year. Child welfare advocates have argued that the housing needs of youth “aging out” of foster care have not been met despite the additional funds for independent living that are provided through the CFCIP.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> For additional information about the program, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*, by Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau, *AFCARS Report #19*.

<sup>86</sup> For additional information on the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, see CRS Report RL34499, *Youth Transitioning from Foster Care: Background and Federal Programs*, by Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara.

<sup>87</sup> Prior to the passage 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.

<sup>88</sup> Courtney and Huerfano, “Youth ‘Aging Out’ of the Foster Care System,” p. 54.



## Appendix.

**Table A-1. Basic Center Funding by State and Territory, FY2011-FY2012**

(Dollars in thousands)

State/Territory	FY2011 Actual	FY2012 <sup>a</sup> Enacted
Alabama	\$709,366	\$689,917
Alaska	200,000	200,000
Arizona	1,032,132	1,1010,985
Arkansas	444,052	428,157
California	5,852,228	5,833,733
Colorado	712,841	752,549
Connecticut	527,074	527,074
Delaware	188,787	200,000
District of Columbia	440,580	340,580
Florida	2,638,450	2,519,263
Georgia	1,572,202	1,574,828
Hawaii	162,432	200,000
Idaho	266,342	266,342
Illinois	1,943,558	1,950,511
Indiana	774,921	993,788
Iowa	449,718	446,375
Kansas	395,235	444,402
Kentucky	579,997	606,147
Louisiana	866,581	673,419
Maine	227,759	200,000
Maryland	598,319	816,190
Massachusetts	891,689	857,970
Michigan	1,988,488	1,408,371
Minnesota	786,077	808,725
Mississippi	349,723	447,777
Missouri	894,678	868,214
Montana	200,000	200,000
Nebraska	554,273	274,250
Nevada	406,829	403,983
New Hampshire	200,000	200,000
New Jersey	1,283,893	1,262,723
New Mexico	779,499	594,499



State/Territory	FY2011 Actual	FY2012 <sup>a</sup> Enacted
New York	2,770,988	2,690,348
North Carolina	1,387,582	1,401,210
North Dakota	200,000	200,000
Ohio	1,687,614	1,676,176
Oklahoma	570,254	570,254
Oregon	1,119,853	804,149
Pennsylvania	1,725,725	1,720,573
Rhode Island	182,878	200,000
South Carolina	549,828	641,207
South Dakota	200,000	200,000
Tennessee	825,892	923,853
Texas	3,542,716	4,219,369
Utah	513,801	535,791
Vermont	200,000	200,000
Virginia	1,053,603	1,130,900
Washington	1,170,954	992,498
West Virginia	254,297	254,297
Wisconsin	834,848	825,520
Wyoming	200,000	200,000
Subtotal	47,908,556	47,386,917
Indian Tribes	0	0
Migrant Program	0	0
American Samoa	0	70,000
Federated States of Micronesia	0	0
Guam	70,000	70,000
Marshall Islands	0	0
Northern Mariana Islands	0	70,000
Palau	0	0
Puerto Rico	200,000	515,483
Virgin Islands	0	70,000
Subtotal	270,000	795,483
<b>Total<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>48,178,556</b>	<b>48,182,400</b>

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, FY2013*, pp. 111-112.

- a. Funding requested for FY2013 is identical to funding enacted in FY2012.
- b. The total does not include funding for technical assistance, research evaluation, demonstration projects, and program support.

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