

Family and Youth Services Bureau Background on Runaway and Homeless Youth and Positive Youth Development

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), within the Administration on Children and Families (ACF), administers programs that provide services to an adolescent population of runaway, homeless and street youth. Estimates of this population vary from 1 to 3 million. Many of these youth have left home to escape abusive situations or because their parents/guardians could not meet their basic needs for food, shelter and a safe, supportive environment. Many live on the streets or away from home without parental supervision and are highly vulnerable. They may be exploited by dealers of illegal drugs, or become victims of street violence or members of gangs which provide protection and a sense of extended family. They may be drawn into shoplifting, survival sex or dealing drugs in order to earn money for food, shelter, clothing and other daily expenses. They often drop out of school, forfeiting their opportunities to learn and to become independent, self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

On the street, these youth may try to survive with little or no contact with medical professionals, the result being that health problems may go untreated and worsen. Without the support of family, schools and other community institutions, they may not acquire the personal values and work skills that will enable them to enter or advance in the world of work. Finally, as street people, they may create substantial law enforcement problems and endanger themselves. All these problems, real and potential, call for a community-based program *positive youth development* approach to address the needs of runaway, homeless and street youth.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau has worked to promote a *positive youth development* framework for all FYSB activities. This approach, which is asset-based rather than problem-focused, is intended for policy and program developers, program managers, youth services professionals, and others who care about young people. It intends to enhance capacity to develop service models and approaches that direct youth toward positive pathways of development. The youth development approach is predicated on the understanding that all young people need support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. With this support, they can develop self-assurance and create a happy, healthy, and successful life. Key elements of positive youth development are:

- Ongoing relationships with caring adults;
- Safe places with structured activities;
- Healthy start and future;
- Marketable skills through effective education; and
- Opportunities to give back through community service.

If these factors are being addressed, young people can become not just "problem free" but "fully-prepared" and engaged constructively in their communities and society.

Positive developmental opportunities should be available to all young people during adolescence. Adolescents need opportunities to fulfill their developmental needs — intellectually, psychologically, socially, morally and ethically. Youth benefit from experiential learning, and they need to belong to a group while maintaining their individuality. At the same time, they want and need support and interest from caring adults. They also need opportunities to express opinions, challenge adult assumptions, develop the ability to make appropriate choices, and learn to use new skills, including leadership.

It is FYSB's hope and expectation that awareness of this approach and its importance for serving youth will increase. The FYSB publications, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth* and *Reconnecting Youth and Community: A Youth Development Approach*, are widely distributed as source documents for positive youth development concepts and applications. Both are currently available from the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth (NCFY) at <http://www.ncfy.com> (301-608-8098). Additionally, a recent statement of principles for positive youth development, endorsed by a broad range of agencies, institutions and organizations, may be found in the brochure: *Toward A Blueprint For Youth: Making Positive Youth Development A National Priority*. Multiple copies of this resource are available from NCFY or it can be found online at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/youthinfo/blueprint.htm> .

Legislative Authority

Grants for Runaway and Homeless Youth programs are authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Act, as amended by Public Law 106-71. Text of this statute may be found at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/grant.htm>

Definitions

HOMELESS YOUTH — The term 'homeless youth' means an individual who is not more than 21 years of age; and for the purposes of the Transitional Living Program not less than 16 years of age; for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative; and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

STREET YOUTH — The term 'street youth' means an individual who is a runaway youth; or indefinitely or intermittently a homeless youth; and spends a significant amount of time on the street or in other areas that increase the risk to such youth for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution, or drug abuse.

YOUTH AT RISK OF SEPARATION FROM THE FAMILY — The term 'youth at risk of separation from the family' means an individual who is less than 18 years of age; and who has a history of running away from the family of such individual [or of threatening to do so]; whose parent, guardian, or custodian is not willing to provide for the basic needs of such individual; or who is at risk of entering the child welfare system or juvenile justice system as a result of the lack of services available to the family to meet such needs.

DRUG ABUSE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION SERVICES — The term 'drug abuse education and prevention services' means services to runaway and homeless youth to prevent or reduce the illicit use of drugs by such youth; and may include individual, family, group, and peer counseling; drop-in services; assistance to runaway and homeless youth in rural areas (including the development of community support groups); information and training relating to the illicit use of drugs by runaway and homeless youth, to individuals involved in providing services to such youth; and activities to improve the availability of local drug abuse prevention services to runaway and homeless youth.

HOME-BASED SERVICES — The term 'home-based services' means services provided to youth and their families for the purpose of preventing such youth from running away, or otherwise becoming separated, from their families; and assisting runaway youth to return to their families; and includes services that are provided in the residences of families (to the extent practicable), including intensive individual and family counseling; and training relating to life skills and parenting.

STREET-BASED SERVICES — The term 'street-based services' means services provided to runaway and homeless youth, and street youth, in areas where they congregate, designed to assist such youth in making healthy personal choices regarding where they live and how they behave; and may include identification of and outreach to runaway and homeless youth, and street youth; crisis intervention and counseling; information and referral for housing; information and referral for transitional living and health care services; advocacy, education, and prevention services related to alcohol and drug abuse; sexual exploitation; sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); and physical and sexual assault.

TRANSITIONAL LIVING YOUTH PROJECT — The term 'transitional living youth project' means a project that provides shelter and services designed to promote a transition to self-sufficient living and to prevent long-term dependency on social services.

SHELTER — The term "shelter" includes host homes, group homes and supervised apartments. As currently understood in the field: "Host homes" are facilities providing shelter, usually in the home of a family, under contract to accept runaway and/or homeless youth assigned by the RHY service provider and are licensed according to State or local laws. "Group homes" are single-site residential facilities designed to house RHY clients who may be new to the program or may require a higher level of supervision. These dwellings operate in accordance with State or local housing codes and licensure. "Supervised apartment" is a single unit dwelling or multiple unit apartment house operated under the auspices of the TLP service provider for the purpose of housing program participants.

STREET BASED OUTREACH AND EDUCATION — The term "street-based outreach and education" includes education and prevention efforts directed at youth that are victims of offenses committed by offenders who are and are not known to the victim.

TEMPORARY SHELTER — The term "temporary shelter" means the provision of short-term (maximum of 15 days) room and board and core crisis intervention services on a 24-hour basis.

Family and Youth Services Bureau Basic Center Program

History

In the early 1970s, national attention focused on runaway and homeless youth. There was widespread concern about youth who were away from home and in at-risk situations, usually through no fault of their own. Few community services existed that provided them with shelter or helped to reunite them with their families.

At the same time, efforts to help these young people were beginning at the local level. Local youth service professionals had begun building a system of care for youth who had run away from home, and they recommended changes in the way those young people were being handled by existing social service systems. Concurrently, there was recognition at the Federal level that youth committing "status offenses" (behaviors considered offenses only if carried out by a minor, such as truancy or running away) needed supervision, care, and guidance rather than punishment. Those forces came together during congressional hearings on runaway youth held in January 1972. The hearings began a process that resulted in congressional passage, 2½ years later, of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) of 1974 (Public Law 93-415). The JJDPA created a system of financial support for States that was linked to several mandates designed to improve community treatment of young people in at-risk circumstances. To receive Federal JJDPA funding, for example, States had to agree to deinstitutionalize status offenders, including runaway youth. To support deinstitutionalization efforts, Congress authorized the Basic Center Program through the JJDPA's Runaway Youth Act (RHYA). The Basic Center Program would provide a system of care for young runaways outside the traditional child protective services, law enforcement, or juvenile justice agencies. Congress assigned administration of the Basic Center Program to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The DHHS' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) began funding local communities to operate Basic Centers in 1974.

Purpose

Today, the Basic Center Program is part of FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program and is authorized by the RHYA, as amended by the [Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act](#) (Public Law 106-71). (To view the Act, you must first download and install the free [Acrobat Reader](#), if you have not previously done so.) Through the Basic Center Program, FYSB provides financial assistance to establish or strengthen community-based programs that address the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth and their families. The central purpose of these programs is to provide youth with emergency shelter, food, clothing, counseling, and referrals for health care. The Basic Centers seek to reunite young people with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements.

FYSB encourages its grantee programs to support young people through a youth development approach once their primary needs have been addressed. That approach suggests that the best way to prevent young people's involvement in risky behavior is to help them achieve their full potential. Youth development strategies, therefore, focus on giving young people the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and become involved in their communities.

Services Provided

While each Basic Center is slightly different, all Basic Centers are required to offer the following types of assistance to young people and their families:

- Food, clothing, medical care, or other services that youth need (offered either directly or by referral)
- Individual, group, and family counseling
- Recreation programs

- Outreach targeting both youth who may need assistance and other public or private agencies that work with youth and families
- Aftercare services for youth after they leave the shelter

FYSB's Grant Award Process

FYSB solicits applications through an annual *Federal Register* announcement. Applications are competitively reviewed by peer panels, and successful applicants receive 3-year grants.

For More Information

For further information about FYSB's Basic Center Program, contact the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth; P.O. Box 13505; Silver Spring, MD 20911-3505; (301) 608-8098; fax: (301) 608-8721; www.ncfy.com.

Family and Youth Services Bureau Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth

History

Thousands of young people run away from their homes, are asked to leave their homes, or become homeless in the United States each year. Since 1975, under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA), as amended, the Federal Government has funded emergency shelter programs for runaway and homeless youth that provide for the immediate needs of these youth and their families and promote family reunification. Unfortunately, however, many young people who are homeless today cannot return to their families. Some have escaped abusive situations; others are the victims of neglect, abandonment, or severe family conflict.

In response to the growing concern for these youth, Congress determined that many young people need long-term, supportive assistance that emergency shelter programs were not designed to provide. As a result, Congress created the Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP) as part of the 1988 Amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), Title III of the JJDPA. The TLP was modeled after several successful demonstration projects funded in the early 1980s by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Congress assigned administration of the TLP to the DHHS. The DHHS' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) funded the first TLP projects in 1990.

Purpose

Today, the Transitional Living Program is part of FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program and is authorized by the RHYA, as amended by the [Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act](#) (Public Law 106-71). (To view the Act, you must first download and install the free [Acrobat Reader](#), if you have not previously done so.) Through the TLP, FYSB supports projects that provide longer term residential services to homeless youth ages 16–21 for up to 18 months. These services are designed to help youth who are homeless make a successful transition to self-sufficient living. TLP grantees are required to provide youth with stable, safe living accommodations and services that help them develop the skills necessary to move to independence. Living accommodations may be host family homes, group homes, or "supervised apartments." (Supervised apartments are either agency-owned apartment buildings or "scattered site" apartments, which are single-occupancy apartments rented directly by young people with support from the agency.)

In addition, FYSB encourages its grantee programs to support young people through a youth development approach. This approach suggests that the best way to prevent young people's involvement in risky behavior is to help them achieve their full potential. Youth development strategies, therefore, focus on giving young people the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and become involved in their communities.

TLP grantees are required to offer the following services, either directly or by referral:

- Safe, stable living accommodations
- Basic life-skill building, including consumer education and instruction in budgeting, using credit, housekeeping, menu planning, and food preparation
- Interpersonal skill building, including enhancing young people's abilities to establish positive relationships with peers and adults, make decisions, and manage stress
- Educational opportunities, such as GED preparation, postsecondary training, or vocational education
- Assistance in job preparation and attainment, such as career counseling and job placement

- Education, information, and counseling to prevent, treat, and reduce substance abuse
- Mental health care, including individual and group counseling
- Physical health care, including routine physicals, health assessments, and emergency treatment

FYSB's Grant Award Process

FYSB solicits applications through an annual Federal Register announcement. Applications are competitively reviewed by peer panels, and successful applicants receive 3-year grants.

For More Information

For further information about FYSB's TLP, contact the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth; P.O. Box 13505; Silver Spring, MD 20911-3505; (301) 608-8098; fax: (301) 608-8721; www.ncfy.com.

Family and Youth Services Bureau Street Outreach Program

History and Purpose

Today, in communities across the country, there are young people living on the streets, running from or being asked to leave homes characterized by abuse, neglect, or parental drug or alcohol abuse. Once on the streets, such youth are at risk of being sexually exploited or abused by adults for pleasure or profit.

To prevent the sexual abuse or exploitation of these young people by providing them with services that help them leave the streets, Congress established the Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program, through the Violence Against Women Act of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-322). That program created Grants for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (also known as the Street Outreach Program) to fund street-based outreach and education for runaway and homeless youth and youth on the streets who have been, or are at risk of being, sexually abused and exploited.

Congress assigned administration of the Street Outreach Program to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Since 1996, the DHHS' Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) has funded communities to operate projects through the Street Outreach Program. Today, the program is authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended by the [Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act](#) (Public Law 106-71). (To view the Act, you must first download and install the free [Acrobat Reader](#), if you have not previously done so.)

Services Provided

The Street Outreach Program is part of FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Through the program, FYSB awards grants to private, nonprofit agencies to conduct outreach designed to build relationships between grantee staff and street youth. The goal of these efforts is to help young people leave the streets. The local grantees provide a range of services directly or through collaboration with other agencies, specifically those working to protect and treat young people who have been, or who are at risk of being, subjected to sexual abuse or exploitation. These services include the following:

- Street-based education and outreach
- Access to emergency shelter
- Survival aid
- Individual assessments
- Treatment and counseling
- Prevention and education activities
- Information and referrals
- Crisis intervention
- Followup support

In addition, FYSB encourages its grantee programs to support young people through a youth development approach. That approach suggests that the best way to prevent young people's involvement in risky behavior is to help them achieve their full potential. Youth development

strategies, therefore, focus on giving young people the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and become involved in their communities.

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FYSB solicits applications through an annual *Federal Register* announcement. Applications are competitively reviewed by peer panels, and successful applicants receive 3-year grants.

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