

FACT SHEET

THE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH + TRAFFICKING PREVENTION ACT



The Runaway And Homeless Youth And Trafficking Prevention Act (RHYTPA) will make critical updates to the RHYA program

For over 45 years, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) has provided the foundation for American communities' responses to youth and young adult homelessness.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (RHYTPA) needs to be reintroduced in the 117th Congress. RHYTPA would enact critical changes to plug youth into networks of support that power their growth and success. RHYTPA would make the following critical updates:

- Extending the allowable length of stays in Basic Center Programs from 21 to 30 days (or longer as state law allows)
- Ensuring Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion assistance
- Increasing age eligibility for services up to the age of 25 in Transitional Living Programs
- Comprehensive nondiscriminatory practices across all RHYA funded programs
- Programs and services will also ensure staff training on human trafficking, trauma, sexual abuse, and assault
- Basic Center Programs are to engage in outreach with victims of sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking in persons, or sex trafficking
- Transitional Living Programs will extend services to survivors of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.
- Increases authorized appropriations levels to \$362 million annually
- Clarifies that providers can serve more than 20 youth per program and have more than 20 beds in a building

In addition, RHYTPA needs to add a prevention services program to more intensively focus on providing prevention services to young people at risk of experiencing any form of homelessness.

The following vital programs are made possible by RHYA:

01

STREET OUTREACH

provides education, prevention, treatment, counseling, connection, and referrals to vital services to prevent sexual abuse and human trafficking for youth at-risk of and experiencing trafficking and homelessness

02

BASIC CENTER

provides temporary housing with, counseling, therapeutic family intervention, connection to education, and supportive services for minors experiencing homelessness for youth under the age of 18

03

TRANSITIONAL LIVING

provides longer-term housing with supportive services, including Maternity Group Homes for pregnant and parenting youth

04

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

24/7 national phone, text, and online communications system which connects youth and families in crisis with prevention services and reunifies families

05

NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

provides training and technical assistance to all RHYA grantees

We will not effectively address homelessness in America unless we focus resources and bold investments on young people.



4.2 MILLION YOUTH IN AMERICA ARE AT RISK OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In a typical year, 4.2 million young people experience homelessness in America.

Youth experiencing homelessness are trafficked at high rates – unsheltered youth are more likely to fall victim to sex trafficking. According to a 2016 report from the Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), 24% of youth living on the streets exchanged sex for money, and 27.5% did so for a place to stay. Covenant House International found that nearly one-in-five youth had been a victim of human trafficking – inclusive of sex and labor trafficking or both.

Youth victims of abuse are more likely to exchange sex for the necessities they lack (e.g., shelter or food) – FYSB's 2016 report noted that 23.5% of respondents had been abused before leaving home. A Las Vegas youth shelter found that 71% of domestic minor sex trafficking survivors had been sexually abused.

Providing housing, basic life needs, and services prevents our young people from being exploited and/or trafficked for sex and/or labor. RHYA providers have been at the forefront of this work in American communities for over four decades.

SERVING YOUNG PEOPLE PREVENTS CHRONIC ADULT HOMELESSNESS

Research has found that homelessness among young people is a fluid experience. Many young people experience different types of homelessness, from couch-surfing to sleeping on the streets or in a shelter. American youth experiencing homelessness are a shifting population of young people who use temporary situations to get by when they cannot stay in a home of their own.

Investing in a young person's life will enable them to avoid chronic homelessness, intergenerational cycles of poverty, and pervasive instances of trauma.

Additional research from cities has shown that a high proportion of their chronically homeless adult population first experienced homelessness as a young person under 25. The City of Seattle found 43% of their unsheltered homeless population first experienced homelessness as a minor (18%) or as a young adult between 18 and 24 (25%).

RHYA PROGRAMS ARE AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SYSTEMS-INVOLVEMENT

RHYA programs prevent trafficking, identify survivors, and provide housing and services to runaway, homeless, and disconnected youth. RHYA has been a necessary bridge for our youth, but more recently, these vital programs have worked to meet the unprecedented need for safe and stable housing and supportive services for youth experiencing homelessness and trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased child and youth homelessness due to high unemployment, unstable living conditions, and job insecurity. Some RHYA providers have seen their wait lists double.

RHYA programs are effective:

- According to FYSB data, 90% of transitional living program participants exit to a safe place and 75% are employed or looking for work at exit.
- A Covenant House analysis of 15 U.S. cities over a 12-month period, found that youth who accessed transitional housing, particularly for longer periods, experienced positive outcomes related to housing, employment, education, and access to services. Importantly, the data showed youth of color had higher rates of stable housing exits and higher rates of employment after utilizing transitional housing.

Unfortunately, these programs have been chronically underfunded since their inception, despite costing less than other systems. Only 25% of RHYA applicants receive funding due to a lack of funding.



TO LEARN MORE: Visit WWW.NN4YOUTH.ORG | or contact Darla Bardine at darla.bardine@nn4youth.org