FACT SHEET

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT PROGRAM

Every year, 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness on their own, of which 700,000 are youth ages 13 to 17 and 3.5 million are young adults ages 18 to 25.¹ The federal government provides targeted support to youth experiencing homelessness through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

RHYA provides necessary support to youth that promotes positive youth development, healthy connections to caring adults, life skills development, education, and employment. The origin of RHYA was in 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to provide youth-specific community-based services as an alternative to involvement in the policing and incarceration systems for youth status offenders.² RHYA programs prevent exploitation, violence, and chronic adult homelessness.³

**ASK:** $300 million for FY24 appropriations

RHYA programs have been chronically underfunded. The cost of not investing in the lives of youth experiencing homelessness translates into an economic burden that affects not only our young people, but also taxpayers and society more generally. Researchers have found that taxpayers face an estimated fiscal cost of $248,182 per youth and $613,182 *social cost per youth.*⁴

$300 million will support approximately 1,400 RHYA projects in communities across the US to help approximately 49,034 young people access housing and connect with 70,000 youth via street outreach and drop-in centers.

**ASK:** RHYA is long overdue for reauthorization and needs critical updates

Last reauthorized in 2018 (P.L. 115-385), the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program provides appropriate, relevant, and readily accessible services critical to addressing episodic or longer-term homelessness among youth, including family reunification when safe and appropriate.

The following critical updates are needed to improve this program and help more young people in crisis:

- New provisions to combat trafficking and prohibit discrimination.
- Increase the length of stays in Basic Centers from 21 to 30 days or longer, as state law allows.
- Increase grant award amount and overall program funding.
- Increase allowable age for Transitional Living Programs.
- Fix the 20-bed per building regulation.
- New funding stream focused on preventing homelessness among youth.

*social cost is the total costs to society including lost earnings, lost tax payments, public crime expenditures, victim costs, welfare support programs, education, excess tax burden and public housing support.*
ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IS POSSIBLE.

Experiences of homelessness too often prevent youth and young families from joining America’s workforce, transitioning safely and successfully to adulthood, and becoming a civically engaged community member. Systemic racism, economic crisis, and related family and individual stress means we need to act with urgency.

BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth disproportionately experience homelessness, as well as youth who don’t finish high school or earn an equivalent degree, youth who are parents, and youth who are system-involved. Most young adults experiencing homelessness are not in shelters or on the streets due to fear of policing and the child welfare system, as well as ineligibility for mainstream housing resources. These hidden homeless situations leave youth disconnected from networks of support due to frequent moves, and put youth’s health at risk.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program funding is critical to filling the gaps of other systems.

Table 1: Funding History of RHYA and FY 2024 Ask

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year (FY)</th>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Number of Grants Awarded</th>
<th>total spending per youth (divided by 4.2M youth in need)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2019</td>
<td>$127.4 Million</td>
<td>619 grants</td>
<td>$30 per young person/year</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2020</td>
<td>$135 Million</td>
<td>635 grants</td>
<td>$31 per young person/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2021</td>
<td>$137 Million</td>
<td>825 grants</td>
<td>$31.25 per young person/year</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2022</td>
<td>$140 Million</td>
<td>845 grants</td>
<td>$33 per young person/year</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2023</td>
<td>$146 Million</td>
<td>875 grants</td>
<td>$33 per young person/year</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2024 ASK</td>
<td>$300 Million</td>
<td>1,400 grants</td>
<td>$68 per young person/year</td>
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</table>

LEARN MORE: • Visit https://nn4youth.org/policy/federal-policy-on-youth-homelessness/rhya/
• Contact Darla Bardine at darla.bardine@nn4youth.org

REFERENCES

5. Morton. Missed Opportunities.