

FACT SHEET: The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (RHYTPA), S. 2646 will strengthen effective prevention of human trafficking

Unsheltered youth are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation and 28% of youth living on the street trade sex for basic needs such as food or shelter.¹ Similarly, a New York City provider of services to homeless youth found that approximately one in four youth had been a victim of sex trafficking or had engaged in survival sex with 48% of youth having done so because they did not have a safe place to stay.²

Youth who have been victims of abuse are more likely to exchange sex for the basic necessities they lack—shelter, food or other basic needs.³ 21-42% of runaway and homeless youth were sexually abused before leaving home.⁴ A Las Vegas youth shelter found that 71% of domestic minor sex trafficking survivors had been sexually abused.⁵

HOUSING AND BASIC NEEDS PREVENTS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Basic Center Programs (BCP) and Transitional Living Programs (TLP) prevent vulnerable youth from becoming victims of human trafficking by providing them with a safe place to stay, crisis interventions services and meeting their basic needs. The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act, S. 2646:

- Provides training on human trafficking, trauma, sexual abuse and assault.
- Improves the process for referring youth, including those who have been victims of human trafficking, to appropriate mental health services.
- Provides counseling, trauma-informed services and appropriate referrals to youth who have been victims of human trafficking.

STREET OUTREACH IDENTIFIES VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Street Outreach Programs (SOP) help 25,000 youth find shelter each year. These critical services were developed to serve sexually abused street youth, what is now known as human trafficking. The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act, S. 2646:

- Updates existing language by adding human trafficked and sexually exploited youth to the populations that these street-based services target.
- Provides funding for Street Outreach Programs to continue providing these critical services to those with the greatest risk of human trafficking.

DATA COLLECTION IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

There is a dearth of information about the number of runaway and homeless youth as well as those who have been victims of human trafficking. Better research will enable us to accurately scale up the outreach and services these young people need. The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act, S. 2646:

- Requires programs to collect and report the number of youth served who are victims of human trafficking.
- Adds human trafficking as a population to be included in the National Study on Prevalence, Needs and Characteristics of Homeless Youth in America.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Provides:

Street Outreach Programs

Outreach to runaway, homeless and human trafficked youth to build relationships and refer youth to vital services at street locations and drop-in centers

Basic Center Programs

Temporary housing with crisis intervention services to minors including counseling, family reunification and aftercare.

Transitional Living Programs

Longer-term housing with supportive services for homeless 16 to 21 year olds, including education, job preparation, health care—funds Maternity Group Homes.

National Study of the Prevalence, Needs and Characteristics of Homeless Youth in America

Collects data about the runaway and homeless youth population in the United States in order to scale-to-need the prevention and crisis intervention services homeless youth need to thrive.

¹ Jody M. Greene, Susan T. Ennett, & Christopher L. Ringwalt, *Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth*, 89 Am. J. Pub. Health 1406, 1408 (1999), available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1508758/pdf/amjph00009-0102.pdf>.

² Covenant House, *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York 6* (2013), available at <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>.

³ Kristen Finklea, Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, & Alison Siskin, Congressional Research Serv., R41878, *Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States* 6 (2014).

⁴ Jody M. Greene et al., U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Services Admin. on Children, Youth and Families, HHS-100-99-0006, *Sexual Abuse Among Homeless Adolescents: Prevalence, Correlates, and Sequelae 2-9* (2002), available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/sex_abuse_hmless.pdf.

⁵ Linda A. Smith, Samantha Healy Vardaman & Melissa A. Snow, Shared Hope International, *The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children 31-32* (2009) available at http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf.

FACT SHEET: Homeless Youth Programs Are Cost-Effective and Provide Care for Vulnerable Youth

Programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) (42 U.S.C. 5701 et seq.) have been providing youth-appropriate services to young people and their families during times of crisis. These services are a cost-effective way for youth to gain stability, reconnect with their families and prevent them from becoming chronically homeless adults.

DATA INDICATES THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT COSTS TO THE PUBLIC ASSOCIATED WITH HOMELESSNESS

These costs include expenses in public assistance, law enforcement, and health services. For instance, in 2009, the public cost of services – including shelter, public assistance, law enforcement, and health services – for a homeless individual in Los Angeles was \$2,897 per month, significantly higher than the \$605 per month for residents in supportive housing.⁶

HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY INVOLVED IN PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Homeless and runaway youth are disproportionately likely to become involved with the juvenile justice and foster care systems, struggle to maintain participation in school or the workforce, and engage in risk behaviors such as substance use – all of which carry significant costs to the public. For instance:

- *Juvenile Justice.* Approximately 93,000 young people are held in juvenile justice facilities across the United States and 70% of these youth are held in facilities that cost \$241 per day per youth.⁷
- *Education and Employment.* As many as 75% of runaway youth drop-out of school, limiting employment opportunities and wage earnings. The economic costs of not finishing high school ranges from \$606,000 to \$966,000.⁸
- *Substance Abuse.* Rates of substance use are higher among homeless youth than housed youth. Economic costs associated with substance abuse vary but can be significant – one study estimated that the lifetime costs of a heavy drug user in lost labor productivity, treatment expenses, medical expenses (both emergencies and routine), risk of death, drug-related crimes, and arrests, among others, range from \$622,000 to \$1.6 million.⁹

Community-based organizations are nimble and effective in their ability to respond to families and youth in crisis.

HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS CAN BE A COST EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO OTHER SYSTEMS

Programs aimed at homeless and runaway youth not only promote the health and wellbeing of homeless youth but also create substantial economic savings for the broader public.

A study in Oregon found that the savings for case management and transitional housing programs equated to \$7.45 in savings for every \$1 invested.¹¹

- The public would save \$5 to \$20 million if 500 youth from juvenile justice residential facilities were moved to community-based Transitional Living Programs, where they re-engage with school and employment.
- Many youth in the child welfare system would benefit from participating in Transitional Living Programs to help them learn to live independently rather than being placed with a foster family—which could lead to savings as high as \$19,175 per child.¹⁰
- An analysis of programs for runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth in Oregon found savings of approximately \$4 for every \$1 spent on a suite of prevention, intervention, stabilization, education, and training services.¹¹

⁶ Daniel Flaming, Patrick Burns, & Michael Matsunaga, Economic Roundtable, Where We Sleep: The Costs of Housing and Homelessness in Los Angeles (2009) available at http://www.economicrct.org/summaries/Where_We_Sleep.html.

⁷ Justice Policy Institute, The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense (2009) available at http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_ji_ps.pdf.

⁸ Katherine Cahn, Ally Jamieson, Don Schweitzer & Hannah Slevin, Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services, Strong Youth and Smarter Communities: An Analysis of Oregon's Investment in Runaway and Homeless Young Programs (2009) available at <http://www.macchomeless.org/taskfiles/Oregon%20Homeless%20Youth%20Programs%20Assessment.pdf>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Andrew Cray, Katie Miller & Laura Durso, Center for American Progress, Seeking Shelter: The Experiences and Unmet Needs of LGBT Homeless Youth (2013) available at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2013/09/26/75746/seeking-shelter-the-experiences-and-unmet-needs-of-lgbt-homeless-youth/>.

¹¹ New Avenues for Youth, The Economic Benefits of Helping Homeless Youth (2006) available at http://www.newavenues.org/docs/Cost_Benefit-final_PDF.pdf.