



Association of New York State Youth Bureaus

2015-2016 RHYA BUDGET PRIORITY FACT SHEET

Add a total of \$2.4 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, which would include a restoration of \$254,456.00 for a total of \$4.7 million. This funding would allow for an expansion of or to build upon existing beds. In addition, a review of the methodology and data collection is needed to assure positive outcomes for the youth.

Despite significant investments proposed for Homeless Assistance and Services in the proposed 2015-16 Executive Budget, there is no specific support for unaccompanied minors or the runaway and homeless youth population. We urge the Legislature to address the need for increased programming and services for the youth served by the RHYA programs.

ANYSYB asks for your support of one of New York's most vulnerable populations: homeless youth. Runaway and homeless youth, ages 16 to 24, often fall between the cracks of the State's child welfare and adult homeless systems. Runaway and homeless youth shelters provide for the basic needs of thousands of homeless youth throughout New York, as well as offer case management, mental and medical health care, educational and vocational programs, legal services, programs for young mothers and a panoply of other services.

There are approximately 950 beds in RHY programs in New York State to serve the estimated 59,791¹ homeless youth. Yet, the current level of funding

for RHY services is 60% less than what it was in 2008. According to OCFS, current funding levels allows for \$2,169 annually per bed. In New York City, there are only 350 government-funded beds despite a 2007 (preeconomic downturn) estimate that, on any given night, there are 3,800 homeless youth sleeping on city streets.

For example, one shelter in New York City turned away 135 unduplicated young people in the last 30 days and 323 in the last 90 days. Between Rochester and Madison County, there are only 46 RHY beds to serve hundreds of identified homeless youth, and in Poughkeepsie, cuts in state RHY funding have resulted in a 65% decrease in the number of youth they are able to serve, from 175 to only 60. When a youth shelter bed is not available, youth are referred to adult homeless shelters that are not developmentally appropriate and can put the young person at risk of exploitation.

Youth are often afraid of adult shelters and therefore spend their nights on the streets, which puts them at risk of experiencing violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In a 2013 study, approximately one fourth of surveyed homeless youth had either been trafficked or felt

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194 WASHINGTON AVE., SUITE 415, ALBANY, NY 12210
JACKIE NEGRI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR • 518.436.8712 • JACKIE@NYCAPRR.COM • WWW.ANYSYB.NET
ANDREA SMYTH, LOBBYIST, A SMYTH ADVOCACY • 518.795.5270 • ANDREA@ASMYTHADVOCACY.COM

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2015-2016 RHYA BUDGET PRIORITY FACT SHEET (CONT'D)

they had no choice but to trade sex for food, money, or shelter.² Pimps and other traffickers often take advantage of the thinly-stretched RHY shelter system by informing youth that shelters are full and offering a place to stay, leading to exploitation and trafficking. Ultimately, New York State cannot be on the forefront of fighting human trafficking if we insufficiently fund homeless youth services.

Homeless young people, without assistance, are less likely to complete their education, find and sustain employment, and maintain stable mental and physical health. Preliminary data from a three-year research study with NYU is already demonstrating

how effective RHY programs are at changing the trajectories of youth away from crime, chronic homelessness and public assistance, and toward success and self-sufficiency.

While New York has been at the forefront in the fight for LGBT equality, LGBT youth are overrepresented within New York's homeless youth population. The proportion of homeless youth who identify as LGBT is as high as 40%³, yet in the U.S., only 5-7% of all youth identify as LGBT. Ending youth homelessness is an important next step toward achieving true equality for all New Yorkers.

ANYSYB asks that the Legislature add a total of \$2.4 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, which would include a restoration of \$254,456.00 for a total of \$4.7 million.

1 OCFS RHY Annual Report, 2012.

2 <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>

3 Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. (2012). *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

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