



# A STORY OF SURVIVAL:

## Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention for Runaway and Homeless Youth

Among a sample of runaway and homeless youth (RHY) ages 14 to 21:

**23.4 months** is the average length of time RHY have been homeless in their lives.<sup>1</sup>

**6 months** is the average length of RHY's first episode of homelessness, among those who were homeless more than once.<sup>1</sup>



20%–40% of all RHY identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ).<sup>2</sup>

RHY have higher rates of sexual risk behaviors and outcomes:



95% of RHY are sexually active.<sup>3</sup>

Almost half of female RHY have been pregnant at some point in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 5** RHY have had a sexually transmitted infection.<sup>4</sup>

RHY are more likely to have experienced sexual violence:



30% of RHY report histories of sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 4** RHY have exchanged sex for money, shelter, food, or drugs.<sup>1</sup>  
This is **3X** more likely to be true for LGBTQ youth who are homeless.<sup>5</sup>

What can you do to support runaway and homeless youth in adolescent pregnancy prevention (APP) programs and services?

**1 Help RHY meet their immediate physical and emotional needs.** Prepare a list of resources for helping youth find shelter, food, clothing, and health care services, including access to sexual health resources.

**2 Establish connections with youth-friendly organizations that provide sexual, mental, and/or physical health services.** RHY may have a distrust of authority figures as a result of abuse and neglect. Know which referrals are youth-friendly and prepare youth for what to expect.

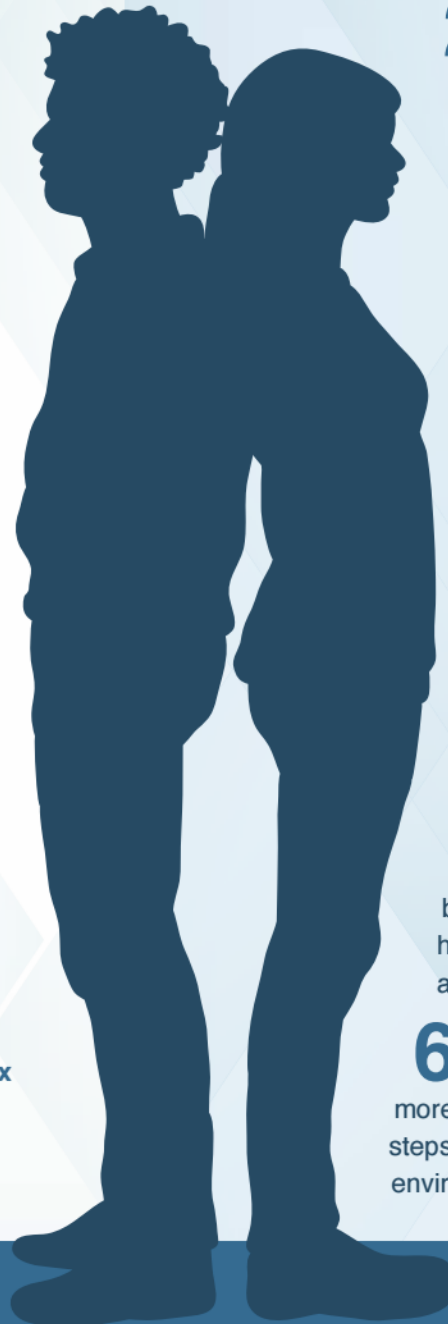
**3 Create safe spaces to discuss gender and sexuality.** RHY may have left their homes because they were not safe to express their identities. Ensure that programs and spaces are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, and language.

**4 Educate yourself and your team on the impacts of trauma.**

Consider how your APP program may trigger past experiences of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse and establish a plan for supporting youth when they are triggered.

**5 Use positive youth development strategies to help RHY develop and strengthen their skills.** A strengths-based, trauma-informed approach promotes healthy behavior by focusing on youth assets and increasing access to support systems.

**6 Be available and patient!** RHY may have difficulty regulating emotion and need more time to learn new skills. Focus on positive steps and changes (big or small) and create an environment of safety, trust, and support.



# Resources

## Data and Policy on Runaway and Homeless Youth

### **Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs**

A.L. Fernandes-Alcantara, Congressional Research Service Report: RL33785  
[www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33785.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33785.pdf)

### **An Emerging Framework for Ending Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness**

National Alliance to End Homelessness.  
[www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youth\\_overview](http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youth_overview)

### **Street Outreach Program Data Collection Study Final Report, 2016**

Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/street-outreach-program-data-collection-study](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/street-outreach-program-data-collection-study)

## Runaway and Homeless Youth and Sexual Health

### **Issue Brief: Consequences of Youth Homelessness**

National Network for Youth  
[www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief\\_Youth\\_Homelessness.pdf](http://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf)

### **Issue Brief: Pregnant and Parenting Homeless Youth**

National Network for Youth  
[www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief\\_Pregnancy-and-Parenting-2007\\_2010ish.pdf](http://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Pregnancy-and-Parenting-2007_2010ish.pdf)

## Working with Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma

### **Complex Trauma: Facts for Services Providers Working with Homeless Youth and Young Adults**

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
[www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/complex\\_trauma\\_facts\\_homeless\\_youth\\_final.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/complex_trauma_facts_homeless_youth_final.pdf)

### **Linking the Roads: Working with Youth Who Experience Homelessness & Sexual Violence**

National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
[www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/linking-roads-working-youth-who-experience-homelessness](http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/linking-roads-working-youth-who-experience-homelessness)

## Runaway and Homeless Youth who are LGBTQ

### **Seeking Shelter: the Experiences and Unmet Needs of LGBT Homeless Youth**

A. Cray, K. Miller, & L.E. Durso  
[www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/LGBTHomelessYouth.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/LGBTHomelessYouth.pdf)

### **Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness**

N. Ray  
[www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/HomelessYouth.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/HomelessYouth.pdf)

## References

- 1 Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, Street Outreach Program. (2016). *Data Collection Final Study Report*. Accessed September 2016: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/street-outreach-program-data-collection-study>
- 2 Dylan Nicole, D. K. (2004). City enters partnership to assist lesbian and gay homeless youth. *Nation's Cities Weekly*, 27(10).
- 3 Beech, B., Myers, L., Beech, D. & Kernick, N. (2003). Human immunodeficiency syndrome and hepatitis B and C infections among homeless adolescents. *Seminars in Pediatric Infectious Diseases*, 14 (1), 12-19.
- 4 Tyler, K.A. et al. (2007) Sexual health of homeless youth: prevalence and correlates of sexually transmissible infections. *Sexual Health*, 4(1), 57-61.
- 5 Rabinovitz, S., Desai, M., Schneir, A., & Clark, L. (2010). *No way home: Understanding the needs and experiences of homeless youth in Hollywood*. Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership.



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