

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center

Tip Sheet: Eligibility for RHY Programs

TLP

TLP projects provide long term residential services to homeless youth ages 16-21. For TLP purposes, FYSB defines “homeless youth” as an individual who is not less than 16 years of age and less than 22 years of age, or not less than 22 years of age as of the expiration of the maximum period of stay permitted, (18 to 21 months) if such individual commences such stay before reaching 22 years of age and for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and has no other safe alternative living arrangement. (See Section 387 RHY Act, as amended)

It is important to note that the 2008 amendment to the RHY legislation makes it clear that youth who enter TLP residential services before their 22nd birthday are eligible for the entire 18 to 21 months of residence if necessary. Youth who begin residential services before they turn 18 years of age may be eligible to remain beyond 21 months if they would be leaving the program prior to their 18th birthday (up to an additional 180 days).

Youth in TLP programs must be “non-systems”. However, by non-systems we mean that they are not eligible for residential support from a state or federal program, such as the child protective system, DMH, DMR or the juvenile justice system. Many people are involved with one or more “system” but are not eligible for residential assistance from that source. Those youth would still be eligible for RHY services if “it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative (or) ...other safe alternative living arrangement”.

MGH (a sub-set of TLP)

In addition to the eligibility statement above, the MGH Program supports projects that provide longer term residential services for homeless pregnant and parenting young people between the ages of 16 and 21, as well as their dependent children.

The children of MGH program participants are not considered “homeless youth” and are not counted as homeless youth served. They are counted as “children of homeless youth in an MGH program”. There are no minimum or maximum age limits on the children of homeless youth

For example, if a program proposes to serve 6 pregnant/parenting youth they would be required to have a capacity of 6 beds for youth plus a minimum of 6 beds for children of youth. Some programs have been counting children of youth in number of RHY served. Please separate these population groups (youth and children of youth) in your reports.

Youth with children in the custody of the state are eligible for MGH services if they are working toward reunification with the child(ren). Youth who experience a miscarriage, stillbirth, or decide to place a child for adoption are eligible for MGH services post event.

BCP

Basic Center programs may provide emergency shelter to eligible youth for up to 21 day. Youth who are eligible for emergency shelter care must be less than 18 years of age.



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There is no minimum age included in the Basic Center legislation. However, in their application, each Basic Center Grantee identifies the age range they will serve. The grant targets youth and their families. Many Basic Center programs provide a wide range of outreach and on-site prevention services as well as access to emergency shelter. These services are provided to youth who are at risk of homelessness as well as those who are currently homeless.

SOP

Eligibility for service from SOP programs includes all youth who are eligible for TLP and Basic Center programs. Since street outreach work is by its nature often less intensive than TLP or BC work, programs may never know the age and system status of many youth served. The primary goals of Street Outreach Programs is to reduce risk (especially the risk of sexual exploitation) and promote safety through education, crisis intervention and referral to whatever services may be necessary. It is expected that youth who enter into more intensive services with street outreach staff (for example, short term case management or family mediation) should be homeless or at-risk youth in need of shelter, crisis intervention or prevention services and meet the eligibility guidelines of BCP and /or TLP.

Non-Systems Youth:

RHY programs are designed to serve “non-systems” youth. By non-systems, we mean any youth who is not being served in a substantial way by Child Protective services, the Juvenile Justice system or other “system” (DMR, DMH, etc). For example, a youth who receives case management and residential services from a state DMR or Child Protective System would not be a non-systems youth. However, if that youth were a runaway it might be necessary to provide services to that youth until the system was able to provide for them. The first priority is to keep youth safe, regardless of eligibility status. After that is accomplished, we expect youth who are being served by the “system” will be provided for by the system. RHY programs are expected to collaborate with child protective, and other systems and act a bridge when necessary.

Six Key Questions to assist in determining eligibility (their questions):

Does the youth meet the FYSB definition of Runaway, Homeless, and/or Street Youth?

Is the youth in the age range of eligibility for services?

Is the youth pregnant or parenting?

Is youth currently in foster care, child protective services, or juvenile justice?

Has the youth been removed from the custodial/parental home by a child welfare agency pending investigation of allegations/suspensions of abuse/neglect?

What are the state and local regulations related to serving runaway, homeless, and/or street youth in your service area?

For more detailed information about ELIGIBILITY for RHY Programs please see the RHY Act which is available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/rhy-act>.



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