



**Office of Children  
and Family Services**



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2015**

## **RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH**

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## Executive Summary

### Runaway and Homeless Youth

Youth and young adults who are living on the streets or who do not have consistent, stable housing are highly vulnerable. Homelessness is not just a problem in large urban centers such as New York City or Buffalo. Young people in suburban and rural communities also face homelessness. Runaway and homeless youth are often fleeing neglect, abuse, and conflict in their homes. These youth are generally still physically and emotionally developing and, when they experience homelessness, often do not complete their education, lack general life skills, and have little or no work experience.<sup>1</sup> Homelessness and running away from home also make youth vulnerable to violence, crime, and sexual exploitation at the hands of other youth and adults.<sup>2</sup>

#### New York State Legal Framework

In 1978, New York State adopted the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), following the passage of the federal Runaway Youth Act, Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. The RHYA, which is codified under Article 19-H of the Executive Law, (Sections 532 – 532-e of the Executive Law) provides the legal framework for the state, in conjunction with municipalities, to develop strategies to serve runaway and homeless youth who are in need of shelter and services.

As defined in Section 532-a of the Executive Law:

- **Runaway youth** means a person under the age of 18 years who is absent from his or her legal residence without the consent of his or her parent, legal guardian, or custodian.
- **Homeless youth** means a person under the age of 21 who is in need of services and is without a place of shelter where supervision and care are available.

In accordance with Section 532-e of the Executive Law, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) must among other things:

- Visit, inspect, and make periodic reports on the operation and adequacy of approved runaway and transitional independent living support programs (TILPs);
- Certify residential facilities serving runaway and homeless youth;
- Maintain a register of approved runaway and TILPs and runaway and homeless youth service coordinators;
- Develop and promulgate regulations concerning the coordination and integration of services for runaway and homeless youth; and
- Submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature detailing the numbers, characteristics, and service needs of runaway and homeless youth statewide.

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<sup>1</sup> *What Works to End Youth Homelessness?* The National Network for Youth, Web. <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-What-Works-to-End-Youth-Homlessness.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Pergamit, Michael R. "On the Prevalence of Running Away from Home." (2010): Web. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412087-On-the-Prevalence-of-Running-Away-from-Home.PDF>.

In accordance with the RHYA, New York State has developed a system of programs and services to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. This includes services offered through crisis shelter programs<sup>3</sup> and transitional independent living support programs<sup>4</sup> as well as non-residential services offered through such programs that address the needs of runaway and homeless youth through hotlines, street outreach programs, and case management.

In accordance with the RHYA, OCFS also developed and promulgated regulations that may be found in Title 9 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules, and Regulations (NYCRR) Sub-parts 182-1 and 182-2. The RHYA regulations concern the coordination and integration of services available for runaway and homeless youth that are intended to:

- protect runaway and homeless youth;
- establish and coordinate services to help runaway and homeless youth cope with and resolve problems;
- reunite youth with parents, guardians or legal custodians, whenever possible; and
- help homeless youth progress from crisis shelter programs and TILPs to independent living.

Each municipality that is seeking state aid to provide runaway and homeless youth services must develop a runaway and homeless youth plan in accordance with the needs of the runaway and homeless youth. To the extent that funding is available, municipalities may be eligible to receive reimbursement from New York State for up to 60 percent of the costs associated with the establishment and operation of runaway and homeless youth programs and services. Reimbursement is subject to the availability of funding as well as the approval of the municipality's runaway and homeless youth service plan by OCFS.

### Overview of Statewide Findings

Below are highlights from the *2015 Survey of Certified Programs* conducted by OCFS:

- At year-end 2015, there were **93** runaway and homeless youth (RHY) residential programs certified by OCFS, with a total bed capacity of **1,030** beds.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2015, there were **7,953** admissions to RHY residential youth programs, representing **5,133** individual youth. Of the 5,133 youth:
  - **1,387** were classified as runaway youth
  - **3,746** were classified as homeless youth
  - Seven percent of youth in RHY residential programs had accompanying children
  - Statewide, the majority of youth admitted to crisis shelters and TILPs were female
  - Youth accessing crisis shelters were significantly older in the five boroughs of New York City (NYC) than in the Rest of the State (ROS)

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<sup>3</sup> Approved runaway programs, as defined by New York State Executive Law, Section 532-a(4), consist of runaway and homeless youth crisis shelters and interim family programs.

<sup>4</sup> Transitional independent living support programs in this report are in the form of either a group residence or a supported residence.

<sup>5</sup> This figure represents certified bed capacity. However, due to staffing requirements and other factors, the actual number of available beds may be lower.

- The top three self-reported service needs for youth coming into programs were parental conflict, health and behavioral health issues, and education issues.

## **New York State Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Array**

New York State has both residential and non-residential services for runaway and homeless youth.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Residential Programs***

In accordance with 9 NYCRR sections 182-1.9 (d)(1) and 182-2.9 (d)(1), participation by youth in RHYA programs is voluntary and may be terminated by the youth at any time. Youth and young adults, therefore, cannot be forced or mandated to stay in RHYA programs. However, program recipients may be required to leave programs due to aging out, behavioral issues, or reaching the statutory limits for lengths of stay.

New York State regulates the following types of RHY residential programs:

- Crisis Shelter Programs
  - **Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter** – a residential facility for runaway and homeless youth, all of whom are either under the age of 18 years or between the ages of 16 and 21 years
  - **Interim Family Home** – a private dwelling providing temporary shelter to a maximum of two runaway and homeless youth, under the age of 21 years, as part of an interim family program, which is sponsored, inspected, and supervised by an authorized agency
- Transitional Independent Living Support Programs (TILPs)
  - **Group Residence** – a residential facility for a maximum of 20 homeless youth ages 16 to 21 years, providing an environment to develop and practice independent living skills
  - **Supported Residence** – a residential facility for a maximum of five homeless youth of the same gender, ages 16 to 21 years, providing an environment that approximates actual independent living

### ***Non-Residential Programs***

Non-residential programs serve runaway and homeless youth, as well as youth who are at risk of homelessness. The programs also serve the families of these youth, where appropriate. Services provided by these programs include, but are not limited to:

- Advocacy
- Case Management
- Drop-In Centers
- Educational Services and Vocational Training
- Family Reunification
- Health Care
- Hotlines

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<sup>6</sup> Non-residential services are included in the definition of TILPs in the Executive Law.

- Legal Services
- Recreation
- Street Outreach

## Findings

### Data Sources and Methodology

OCFS requires certified RHYA residential programs to report data annually, which is compiled in an aggregate report. This 2015 annual report includes information from 87 programs in 23 counties and New York City. Of these 87 programs, 35 are crisis shelter programs and 52 are transitional independent living support programs. Data from six programs was incomplete and not included in this report.

There is currently no method to identify specific youth within the overall RHYA system. Some transient youth are served by multiple programs, so the “individual youth” counts will have some duplication of youth numbers across programs, but not within programs. However, any duplicate count has been eliminated within a single program.

Data in the charts and tables within this report have been divided into New York City (NYC) specific data, which references the five boroughs of NYC only, and the Rest of State (ROS), which references all other counties in the state. The charts and tables that report on New York State (NYS) reflect both NYC and ROS data inclusively.

### Characteristics of Youth Admitted to Certified RHY Residential Programs

- **5,133** individual<sup>7</sup> youth were reported to have been admitted to residential programs statewide:
  - **4,441** were served in crisis shelter programs
    - **2,121 were from NYC**
    - **2,320 were from ROS**
  - **692** were served in TILPs
    - **283 were from NYC**
    - **409 were from ROS**
  - **362** of the youth were parents who were accompanied by **368** dependent children across the state.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that 35 percent of the youth had more than one admission to the same program; the total number of admissions to residential programs was 7,953.

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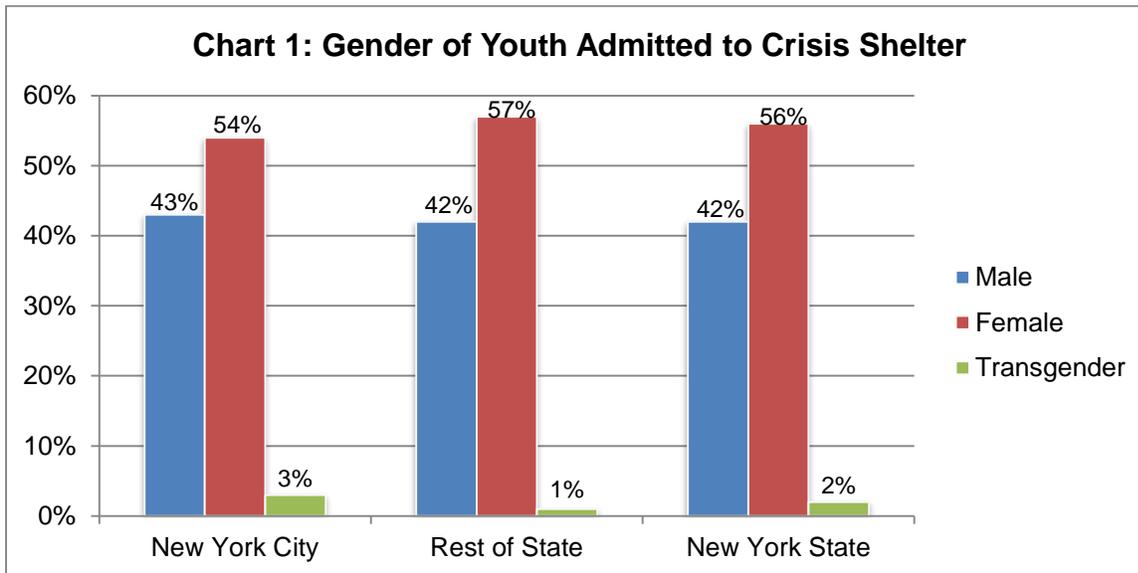
<sup>7</sup> This number includes duplications when an individual youth was admitted to more than one shelter.

<sup>8</sup> Note: The dependent children of runaway and homeless youth are not included in the data throughout this report.

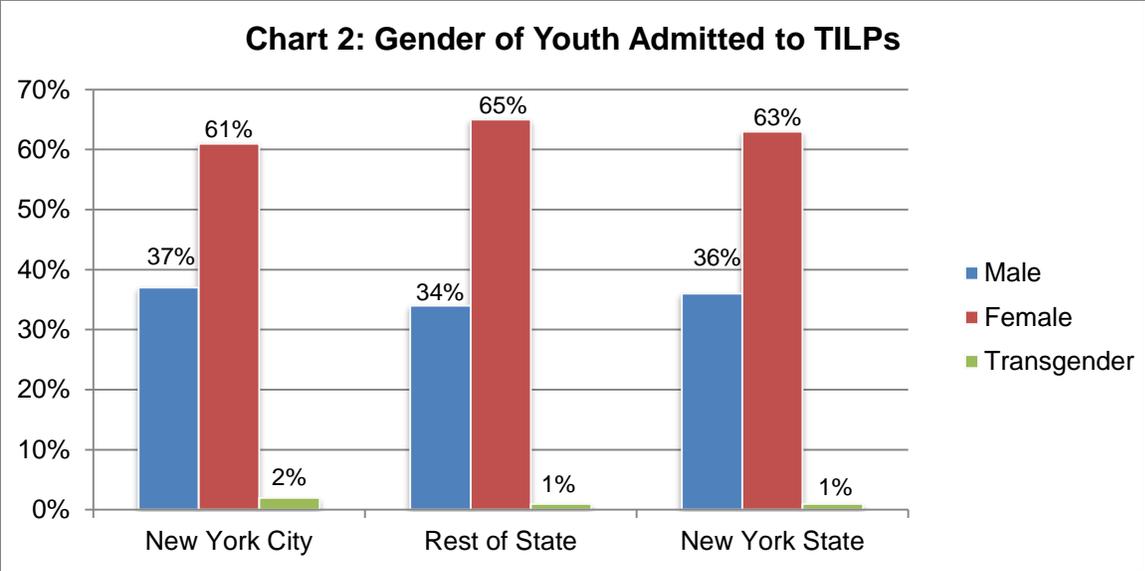
|                                | NYC          |              | ROS          |              | NYS          |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                | 2014         | 2015         | 2014         | 2015         | 2014         | 2015         |
| <b>Duplicated Admissions</b>   | <b>4,459</b> | <b>4,781</b> | <b>3,098</b> | <b>3,172</b> | <b>7,557</b> | <b>7,953</b> |
| Crisis Shelter Programs        | 4,176        | 4,425        | 2,725        | 2,742        | 6,901        | 7,167        |
| TILPs                          | 283          | 356          | 373          | 430          | 656          | 786          |
| <b>Unduplicated Admissions</b> | <b>2,293</b> | <b>2,404</b> | <b>2,642</b> | <b>2,729</b> | <b>4,935</b> | <b>5,133</b> |
| Crisis Shelter Programs        | 2,062        | 2,121        | 2,265        | 2,320        | 4,327        | 4,441        |
| TILPs                          | 231          | 283          | 377          | 409          | 608          | 692          |

### **Gender**

The majority of youth in both crisis shelter programs and TILPs statewide was female. NYC had a greater percentage of transgender youth in both crisis shelter programs and TILPs than the ROS.

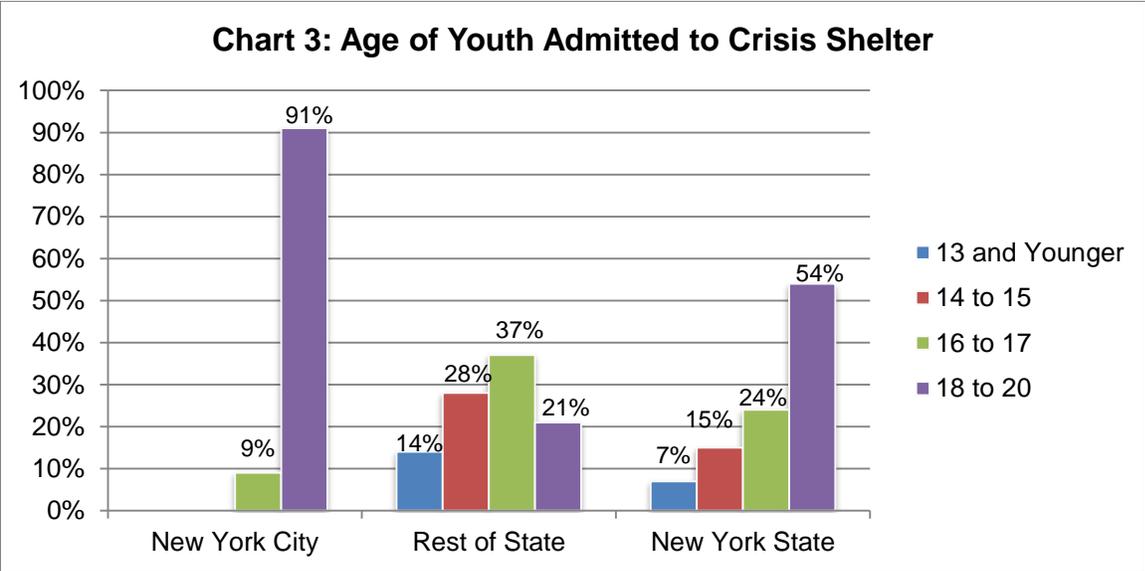


Note: Less than 1 percent in New York City did not disclose gender.

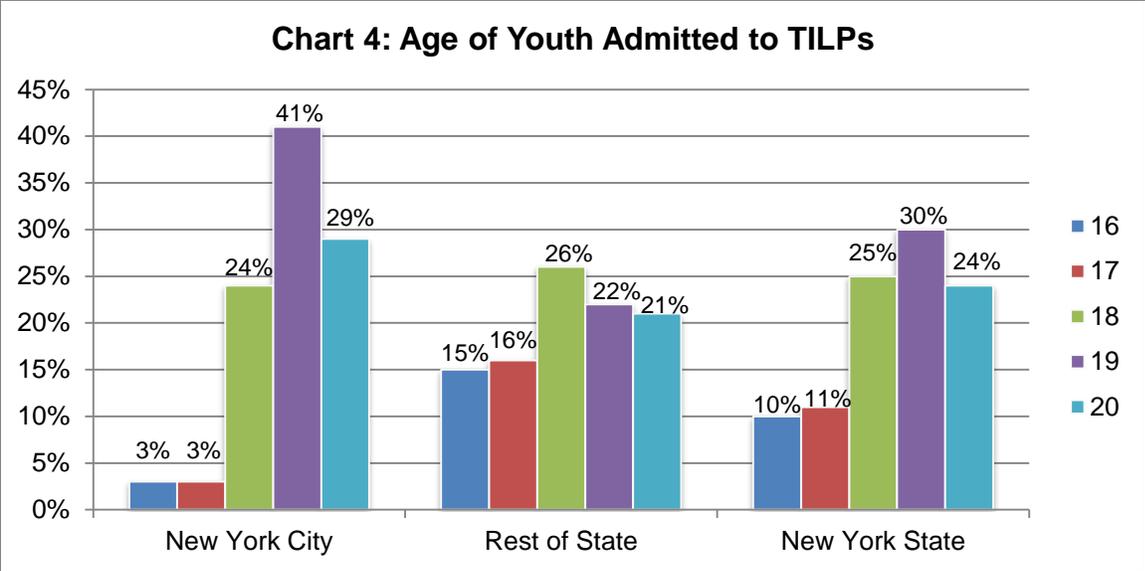


**Age**

Youth served in crisis shelter programs in NYC are significantly older than youth in crisis shelters in the rest of the state. Fewer than 1percent of youth using crisis shelters in 2015 in NYC were identified as under 16 years old compared to 42 percent in ROS. The age of youth in TILPs is consistent with the age differences in crisis shelters in NYC and ROS.

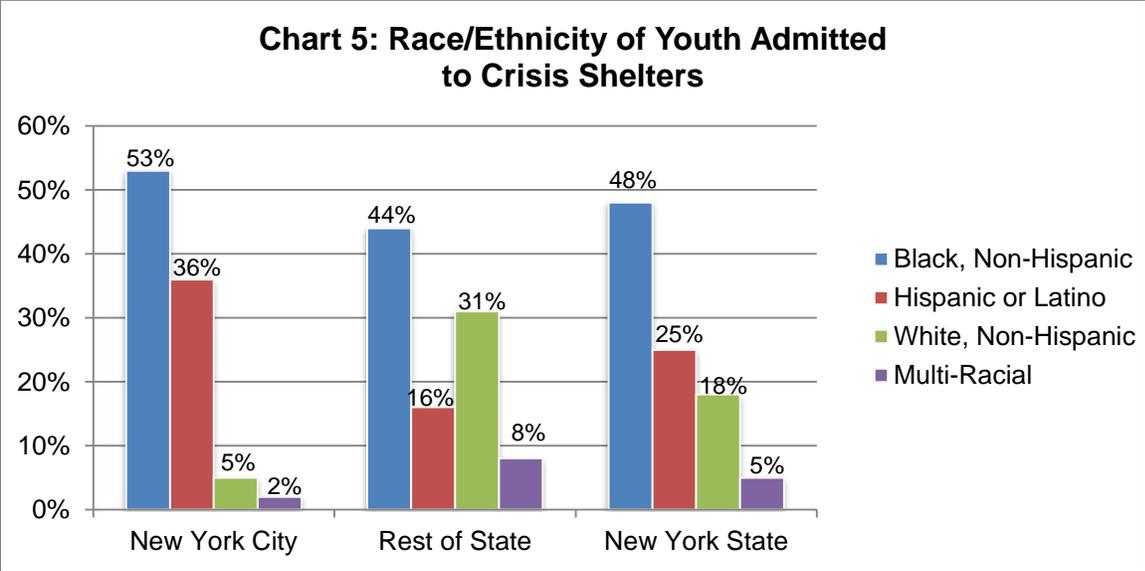


Note: Less than 1percent of New York City respondents identified age 13 and younger and age 14 to 15.



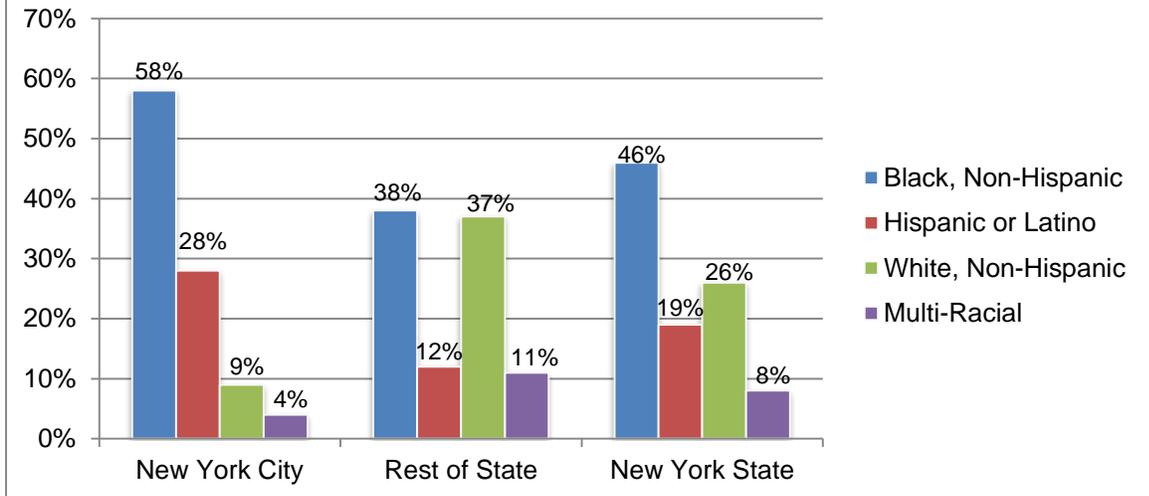
**Race/Ethnicity**

The most predominant group of youth statewide who used crisis shelter programs and TILPs was black, non-Hispanic. Less than 1 percent of youth in crisis shelters statewide identified as Asian, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.



Note: Three percent in NYC and less than 2 percent in NYS identified as Unknown/Non-Disclosed.

**Chart 6: Race/Ethnicity of Youth Admitted to TILPs**



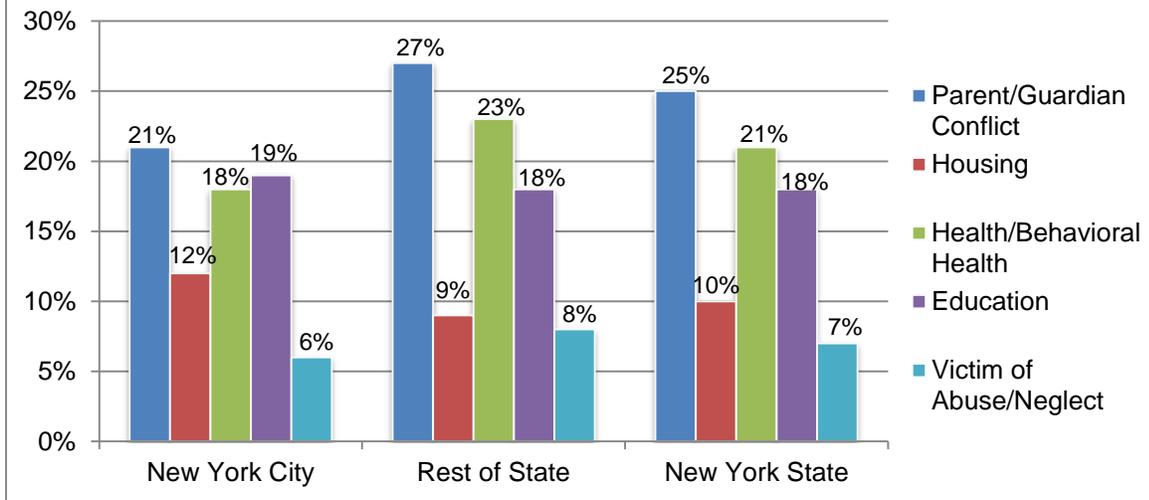
Note: Less than 1 percent in NYC identified as Asian.  
 Less than 1percent in ROS identified as Native American/Alaskan Native.

**Problems and Service Needs**

The charts below show the largest categories of problems and service needs that were self-reported by youth at the time of their intake into RHYA residential programs.

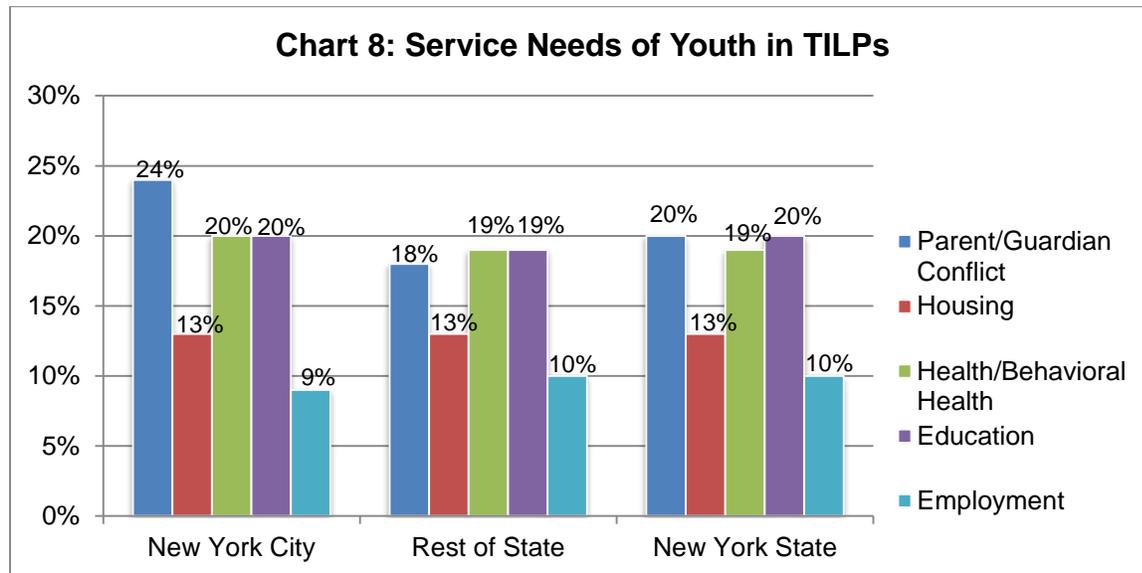
The majority of youth in crisis shelter programs in NYC and in the ROS identified parental issues as the top service need. As Chart 7 indicates, youth in ROS report health and behavioral health as a primary service need in higher percentages than youth in NYC, and NYC youth report education and housing needs in higher numbers than youth in the rest of NYS.

**Chart 7: Service Needs of Youth in Crisis Shelters**



In TILPs, the most predominant service need for youth in NYC was parental issues. Education and health and behavioral health were the most predominant service needs for youth in the ROS

of NYS. Youth who were in TILPs had more similar needs across the state than youth who were in crisis shelters.



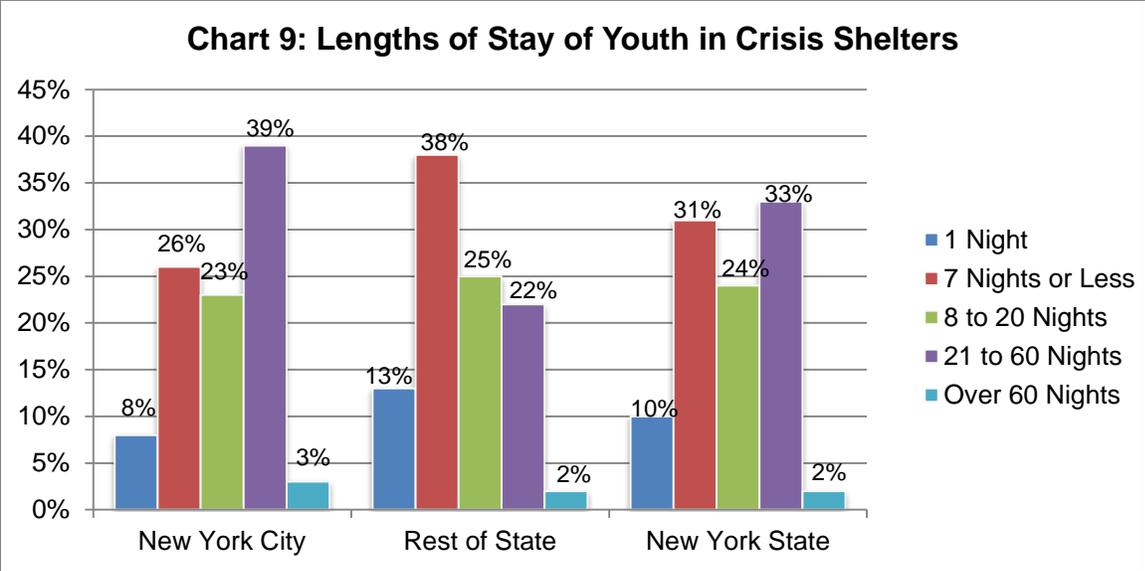
In response to the needs identified by and with the youth, programs provided a wide array of services. The most common services provided to runaway and homeless youth in residential programs were:

- Basic Needs (e.g., food, clothing, hygiene)
- Case Management
- Counseling/Mental Health Supports
- Health Care
- Education Services
- Independent Living Skills
- Employment Skills
- Alternative Housing

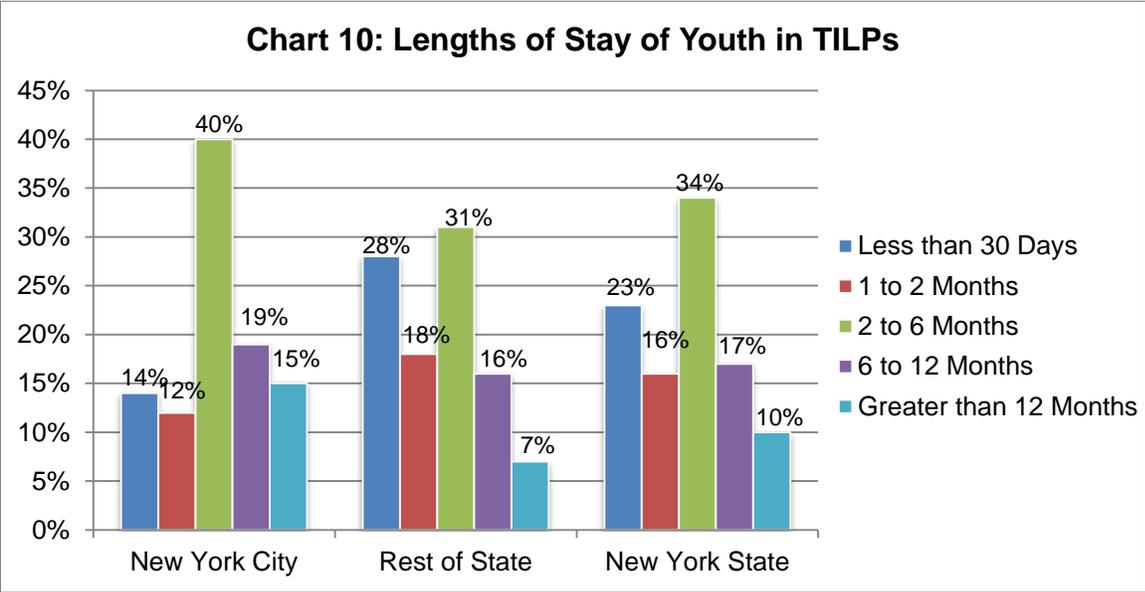
These services were provided either directly by the residential program or through a network of referrals to community services available to that program and the youth in the program.

### **Length of Stay in Residential Programs and Living Situation at Exit**

The most common length of consecutive stay was 21 to 60 nights for youth staying in crisis shelter programs in NYC, while the most common length of consecutive stay was seven nights or less for youth in the ROS. Overall, youth in NYC appear to have stayed in crisis shelter programs longer than their peers in the ROS. The numbers below reflect the consecutive nights that youth spent in the programs.



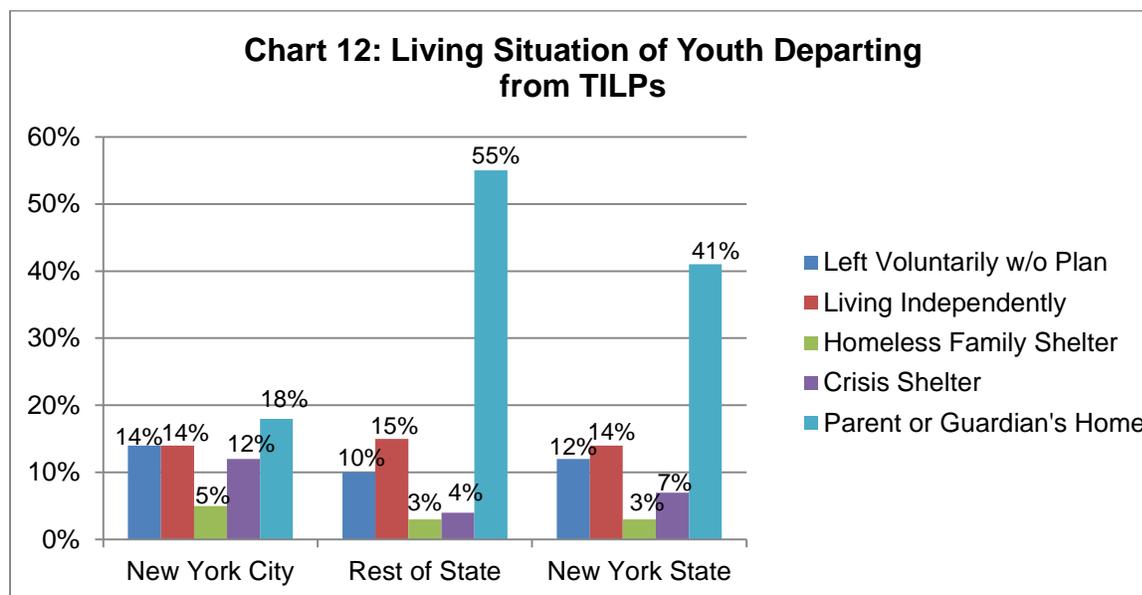
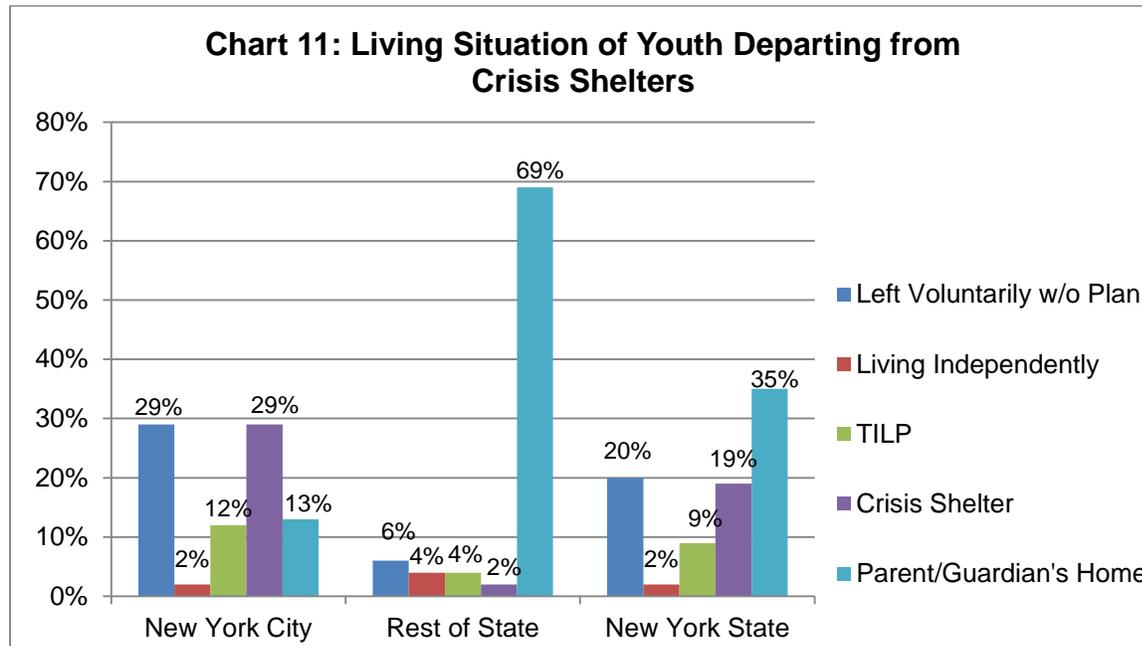
In TILPs statewide, the most common length of consecutive stay was two to six months. At exit, the majority were either living independently or with a parent/guardian.



In 2015, there were **6,752** departures from crisis shelter programs and **577** departures from TILPs. These are duplicated counts, due to the fact that youth may cycle in and out of programs and that each departure is counted separately.

As seen in Chart 11, *Living Situation of Youth Departing from Crisis Shelters* (p. 12), a significantly higher proportion of youth who exited from both crisis shelter programs and TILPs in ROS returned to their families than in NYC. The majority of youth who exited from crisis shelter programs in NYC either left without a place known to staff or entered a different crisis shelter.

The charts below indicate the top five known living situations of youth who left RHY residential programs.



### Runaway and Homeless Youth Identified but Not Served

In 2015, there were **1,181** instances<sup>9</sup> when a youth was turned away from a crisis shelter or a TILP due to no available space; **980** of those instances were reported by crisis shelter programs, and **201** were reported by TILPs.

<sup>9</sup> Due to the inability to identify duplicate youth across programs, it is not possible to say how many individual youth were turned away. This number represents individual program's reports of turning youth away.

Capacity data was collected at the program level. Without unique identifiers assigned to individual youth through a centralized data system, and without permissions for sharing confidential information across programs, there is currently no way to discern whether youth who were turned away from one program received services from another program.

#### Crisis Shelter Capacity

In NYC, four agencies operated 10 crisis shelter programs within the five boroughs. Eight programs reported at least one night in 2015 in which its shelters were full, with a range of six to 365 nights full across all programs. There were **837** instances where a youth was turned away from a crisis shelter in NYC due to lack of capacity at one of the shelters.

In ROS, 23 agencies operated 25 crisis shelter programs, and of those, 10 reported at least one night in which they were full, with a range of two to 88 nights full. There were **143** instances where a youth was turned away from a crisis shelter in ROS due to lack of capacity. There were no nights when interim family programs reported being full to capacity.

#### TILP Capacity

In NYC, nine agencies operated 17 TILPs within the five boroughs. Of these 17 programs, 15 programs reported at least one night in 2015 in which the shelters were full, with a range of 35 to 356 nights full across all agencies. There were **153** instances where a youth was turned away from a TILP in NYC due to lack of capacity.

In ROS, 16 agencies operated 35 TILPs, and of those, 27 reported at least one night in which they were full, with a range of three to 348 nights full. There were **48** instances in which a youth was turned away from a TILP in ROS due to lack of capacity.

### **Non-Residential Program Services**

Non-residential services for runaway and homeless youth include case management, street outreach, runaway prevention in schools, drop-in centers, hotlines, medical and mental health supports, including HIV and STD risk-reduction to high-risk or homeless youth, programs for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning/Queer youth, emergency housing financial assistance, provision of basic household supplies, and general support.

In 2015, the primary reasons that brought youth to non-residential programs were:

- Basic needs (food, clothing, hygiene products)
- Conflict with parent/guardian
- Case management and counseling
- Housing issues
- Education-related issues
- Employment services

## Summary

New York State saw a slight increase in 2015 in certified bed capacity for runaway and homeless youth as well as a small increase in the number of unduplicated youth served and the number of admissions to residential programs. The number of youth who were classified as runaways by these programs increased by nearly 40 percent in ROS and decreased in NYC by 40 percent, while admissions of youth identified as homeless decreased slightly for ROS (13 percent) and increased slightly for NYC (12 percent). Youth identified parental issues as the most common reason they needed services in both NYC and ROS. Youth in NYC had a much longer average length of stay in crisis shelters than youth in ROS, while the average length of stay for TILPs was approximately equal in NYC and ROS. There were fewer instances in 2015 when youth were turned away from crisis shelters due to a lack of space than the previous year (35 percent decrease), but more instances when youth were unable to be housed in TILPs due to lack of space (35 percent increase).

## Appendix 1: Programs by Region at Year End 2015

| Counties by Region   | Program Type                                     | # of programs | # of beds  |
|--|--|---------------|------------|
| <b>Albany Region</b><br>Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington | Crisis Shelter Programs                          | 4             | 43         |
|  | Transitional Independent Living Support Programs | 8             | 48         |
| <b>Albany Region Subtotals</b>   |  | <b>12</b>     | <b>91</b>  |
| <b>Buffalo Region</b><br>Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming   | Crisis Shelter Programs                          | 3             | 37         |
|  | Transitional Independent Living Support Programs | 6             | 38         |
| <b>Buffalo Region Subtotals</b>  |  | <b>9</b>      | <b>75</b>  |
| <b>New York City Region</b><br>Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond  | Crisis Shelter Programs                          | 10            | 412        |
|  | Transitional Independent Living Support Programs | 23            | 163        |
| <b>New York City Subtotals</b>   |  | <b>33</b>     | <b>575</b> |
| <b>Rochester Region</b><br>Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates   | Crisis Shelter Programs                          | 5             | 32         |
|  | Transitional Independent Living Support Programs | 0             | 0          |
| <b>Rochester Region Subtotals</b>  |  | <b>5</b>      | <b>32</b>  |
| <b>Spring Valley Region</b><br>Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester  | Crisis Shelter Programs                          | 8             | 83         |
|  | Transitional Independent Living Support Programs | 6             | 65         |

|   |   |           |              |
|---|---|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Spring Valley Subtotals</b>  |   | <b>14</b> | <b>148</b>   |
| <b>Syracuse Region</b><br>Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland,<br>Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison,<br>Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St.<br>Lawrence, Tioga, Tompkins | Crisis Shelter Programs                             | 6         | 31           |
|   | Transitional Independent Living<br>Support Programs | 14        | 78           |
| <b>Syracuse Region Subtotals</b>  |   | <b>20</b> | <b>109</b>   |
| <b>Statewide Total</b>  |   | <b>93</b> | <b>1,030</b> |

## **Appendix 2: Agencies with Certified Programs in 2015**

### **Albany Region**

- CAPTAIN Youth & Family Services
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany
- Equinox, Inc.
- SAFE Inc. of Schenectady
- WAIT House

### **Buffalo Region**

- Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.
- Compass House
- Family and Children's Service of Niagara, Inc.
- The Franciscan Center
- United Church Home

### **New York City Region**

- Ali Forney Center
- Covenant House New York Under 21, Inc.
- Girls Educational & Mentoring Services
- Good Shepherd Services, Inc.
- Imeinu, Inc.
- Inwood House
- Project Hospitality, Inc.
- Safe Horizon, Inc.
- Safe Space NYC, Inc.
- SCO Family of Services

### **Rochester Region**

- Salvation Army
- The Center for Youth Services, Inc.

### **Spring Valley Region**

- Children's Village, Inc.
- Family and Children's Association
- Family of Woodstock, Inc.
- Green Chimneys Children's Services
- HONORehg, Inc.
- Hudson River Housing, Inc.
- Mercy Center Ministries
- SCO Family of Services
- Smith Haven Ministries, Inc.
- Town of Huntington Youth Bureau

### **Syracuse Region**

- Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth
- Catholic Charities of Broome County
- Family Nurturing Center of Central New York, Inc.
- John Bosco House, Inc.
- Oswego County Opportunities, Inc.
- The Salvation Army, Syracuse Area Services
- YWCA of the Mohawk Valley

# Appendix 3: New York State Regional Map

