



**Office of Children
and Family Services**



RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

Annual Report

2014

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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 often flee neglect, abuse, and conflict in their homes. 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.¹ Homelessness and running away from home also make youth vulnerable to violence, crime, and sexual exploitation at the hands of other youth and adults².

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 Article 19-H of the Executive Law, created the framework for the state, in conjunction with counties, to develop strategies to serve runaway and homeless youth who are in need of emergency shelter and short-term services.

As defined by Section 532-a of the Executive Law and 9 NYCRR 182-1.2:

- **Runaway youth** is 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** is 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

Since 1978, New York State has developed a system of services to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. These services include crisis shelter programs and transitional independent living programs (TILP), as well as non-residential services that address the needs of youth through hotlines, street outreach programs and case management.

The RHYA regulations (9 NYCRR 182-1 and 9 NYCRR 182-2³) were subsequently promulgated to:

- Protect runaway and homeless youth
- Establish and coordinate services to help youth cope with and resolve problems
- Reunite youth with parents, guardians or legal custodians whenever possible
- Help homeless youth progress from crisis shelter programs and transitional independent living support programs to independent living

¹ *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-Homelessness.pdf>

² 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>

³ Full text of the RHY regulations can be found in Title 9, Subtitle E, Part 182 of the New York State Codes, Rules and Regulations: <http://www.dos.ny.gov/info/nycrr.html>.

Each county develops a plan to address the needs of runaway and homeless youth. To the extent that funding is available, municipalities are eligible to receive reimbursement from New York State for the costs associated with the establishment and operation of programs and services for such youth. Reimbursement is based on the availability of funding and the approval of the runaway and homeless youth service plan.

Section 532-e of the Executive Law requires the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to:

- Review and certify residential facilities serving runaway and homeless youth
- Maintain a registry of certified programs which serve this population
- Develop and promulgate regulations concerning coordinating and integrating services to runaway and homeless youth
- Inspect and report on the operations and adequacy of residential and transitional programs for runaway and homeless youth
- Submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature detailing the numbers, characteristics, and service needs of runaway and homeless youth statewide

Overview of Statewide Findings

Below are highlights from the 2014 Survey of Certified Programs conducted by OCFS:

- At year-end 2014, there were **86** residential youth programs certified by OCFS with a total bed capacity of **997** beds.⁴
- In 2014, there were **7,557** admissions to residential programs, representing **4,935** individual youth. Of those:
 - **1,192** were classified as runaways
 - **3,743** were classified as homeless youth
 - Four percent of youth in any residential program had children
 - Statewide, the majority of youth admitted to crisis shelters and TILPs were girls
 - Youth accessing crisis shelters were significantly older in NYC than in the rest of the state (ROS)
- Parental conflict, housing issues and health issues were the top three identified needs for youth coming into programs
- Over **13,000** calls related to youth homelessness were handled statewide by hotlines

NYS Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Array

The New York State Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provides for both residential and non-residential services to runaway and homeless youth.

⁴ This figure represents certified bed capacity. However, due to staffing requirements and other factors, the actual number of available beds may be lower.

Residential Programs

As stated by the regulations at 9 NYCRR 182-1.9 (d)(1) and 182-2.9 (d)(1), participation by youth in RHY programs is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Youth and young adults, therefore, cannot be forced or mandated to stay in RHY programs. However, they may be required to leave programs due to aging out, behavioral issues, or reaching the statutory limits of lengths of stay.

New York State regulates the following types of residential programs:

- Crisis Shelter Programs
 - **Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelters** – Congregate residential facilities for youth, all of whom are either under the age of 18 or between the ages of 16 and 21
 - **Interim Family Homes** – Private dwellings providing shelter to a maximum of two youth under the age of 21, which are sponsored, inspected and supervised by an authorized agency
- Transitional Independent Living Support Programs (TILP)
 - **Group Residences** – Residential facilities for a maximum of 20 homeless youth ages 16 to 21, providing an environment to develop and practice independent living skills
 - **Supported Residences** – Residential facilities for a maximum of five youth of the same gender, ages 16 to 21, 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 in this category include, but are not limited to:

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

Funding

OCFS funds RHY programs through county youth bureaus based upon a county's need. The youth bureaus distribute the funding to the programs located within their counties or city. The State Aid allocation for 2014 totaled \$2,610,300. Funds can support crisis shelter programs, transitional independent living support programs and/or non-residential programs. In addition,

counties can use Youth Development Program funding to provide support services to youth in an approved runaway or transitional independent living support program.

Findings

Data Sources and Methodology

OCFS requires certified RHY residential programs to report data annually, which is compiled in an aggregate report. This 2014 annual report includes information from 38 agencies in 21 counties and New York City. These 38 agencies run 36 crisis shelter programs and 50 transitional independent living support programs.

There is currently no method to identify specific youth within the overall RHY system. It is likely that some transient youth are served by multiple programs, so the “individual youth” counts may have some duplication of youth numbers across programs, but not within programs.

Characteristics of Youth Admitted to Certified RHY Residential Programs

- **4,935** individual⁵ youth were reported to have been admitted to residential programs statewide:
 - **4,327** were served in crisis shelter programs
 - **2,062** were from NYC
 - **2,265** were from ROS
 - **608** were served in transitional independent living support programs
 - **308** were from NYC
 - **377** were from ROS
 - **280** of the youth were parents who were accompanied by **310** dependent children across the state.⁶

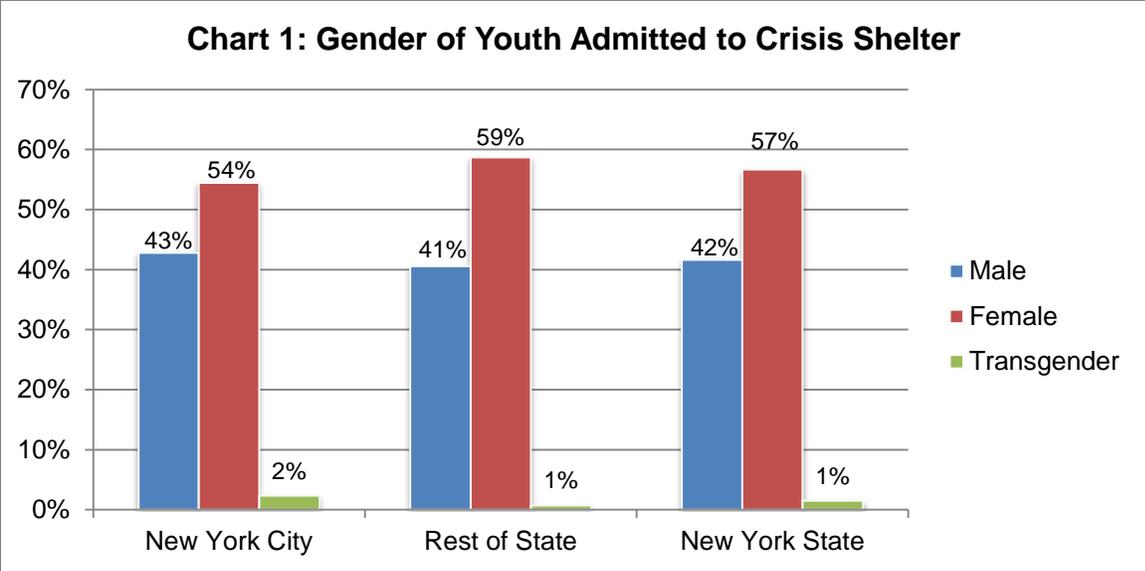
It is important to note that 35% of the youth had more than one admission to the same program, as the total number of admissions to residential programs was 7,557.

Gender

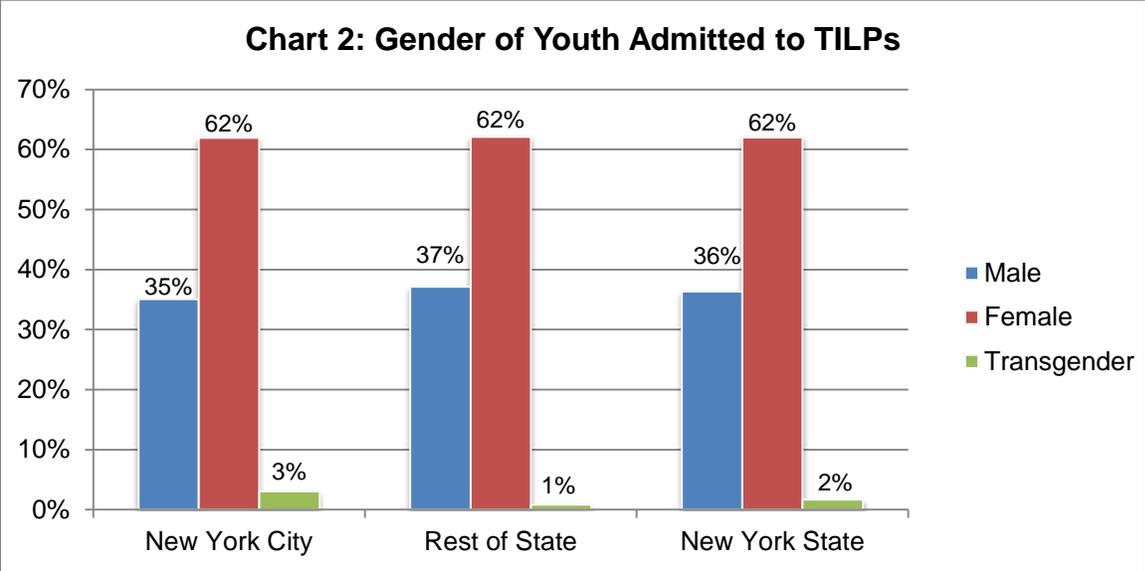
The majority of youth in both crisis shelter programs and TILPs statewide was female. New York City had a greater percentage of transgender youth in both crisis shelter programs and TILPs than the rest of the state.

⁵ This number includes duplications when an individual youth was admitted to more than one shelter.

⁶ Note: the dependent children of runaway and homeless youth are not included in the data throughout this report.

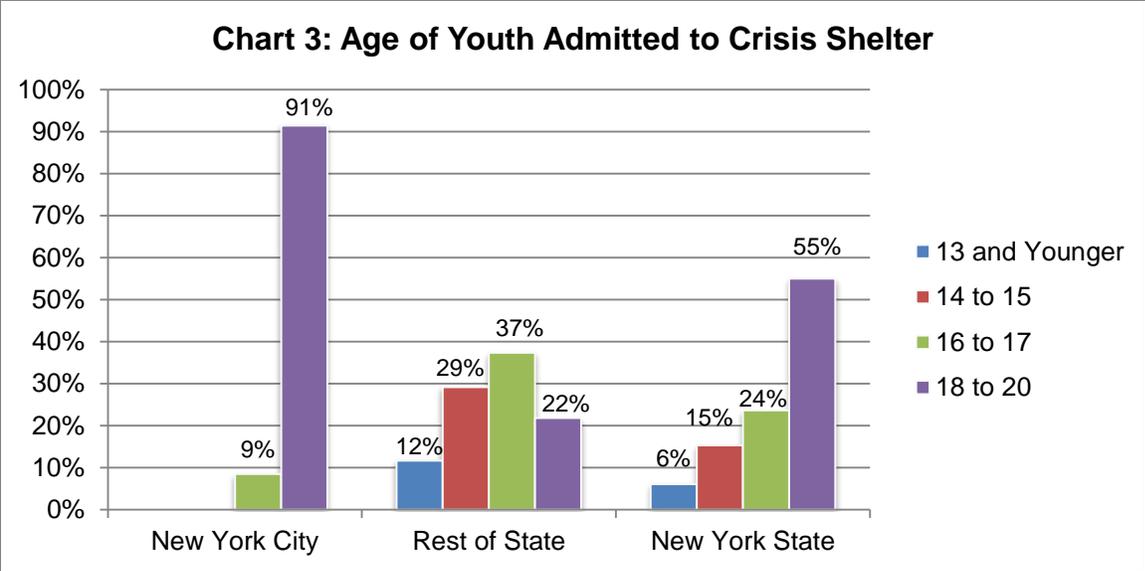


Note: Less than 1% in each category did not disclose gender.

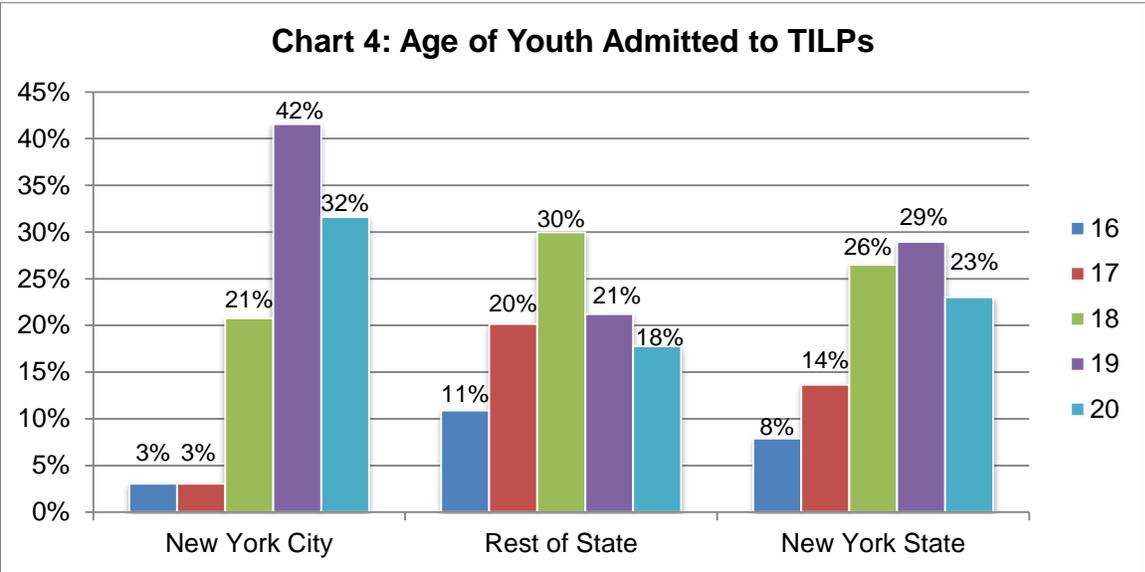


Age

Youth served in crisis shelter programs in New York City are significantly older than their peers in the rest of the state. No youth under the age of 14 were reported using any of the crisis shelters in NYC, and less than 1% identified as younger than 16. The age range in ROS is more evenly distributed with the largest single group identified as 18 years old. The age range of youth in TILPs mildly reflects the demographic trends of the youth utilizing crisis shelters in NYC and ROS.



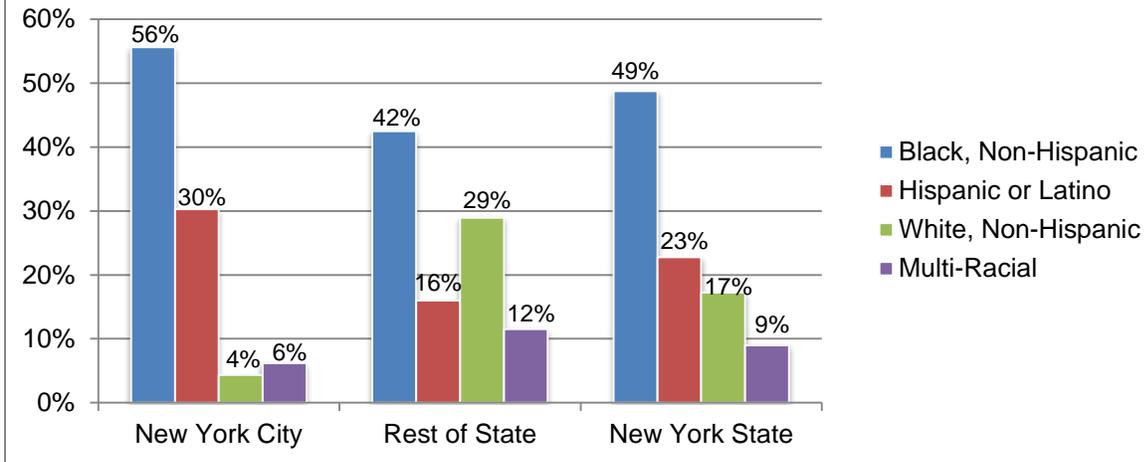
Note: less than 1% of New York City respondents identified age 14 to 15 and none identified 13 and younger.



Race/Ethnicity

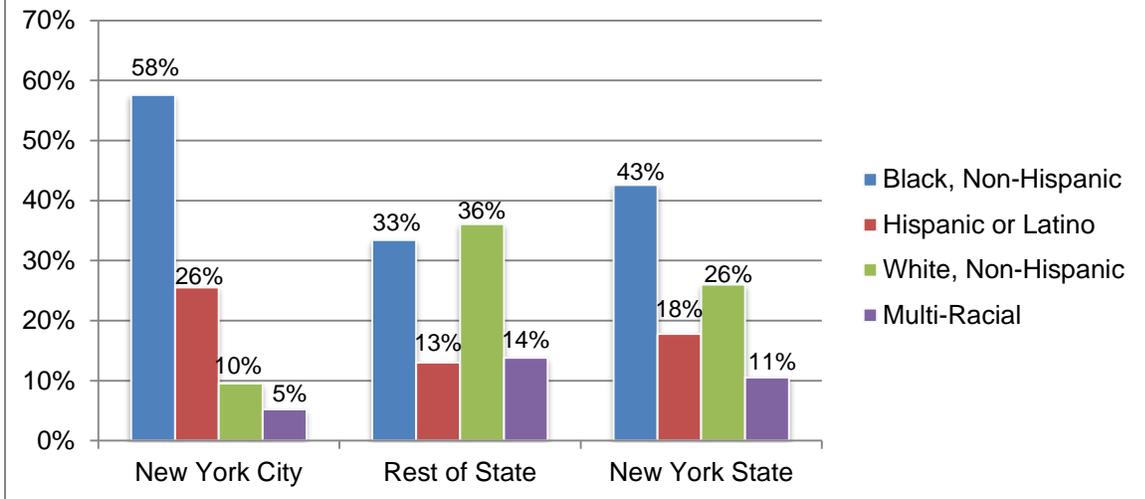
Nearly half (49%) of youth statewide who reported utilizing crisis shelter programs statewide were Black, Non-Hispanic. The White, Non-Hispanic population represented only four percent in New York City but comprised 29% in the rest of the state. However, Black youth represented a lower percentage in both NYC and ROS in TILPs, and Hispanic youth similarly were slightly less represented as White, Non-Hispanic youth increased in representation (see chart 6).

Chart 5: Race/Ethnicity of Youth Admitted to Crisis Shelters



Note: Less than 1% in each category identified as Asian, Native American/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Less than 2% in each category identified as Unknown/Non-Disclosed.

Chart 6: Race/Ethnicity of Youth Admitted to TILPS

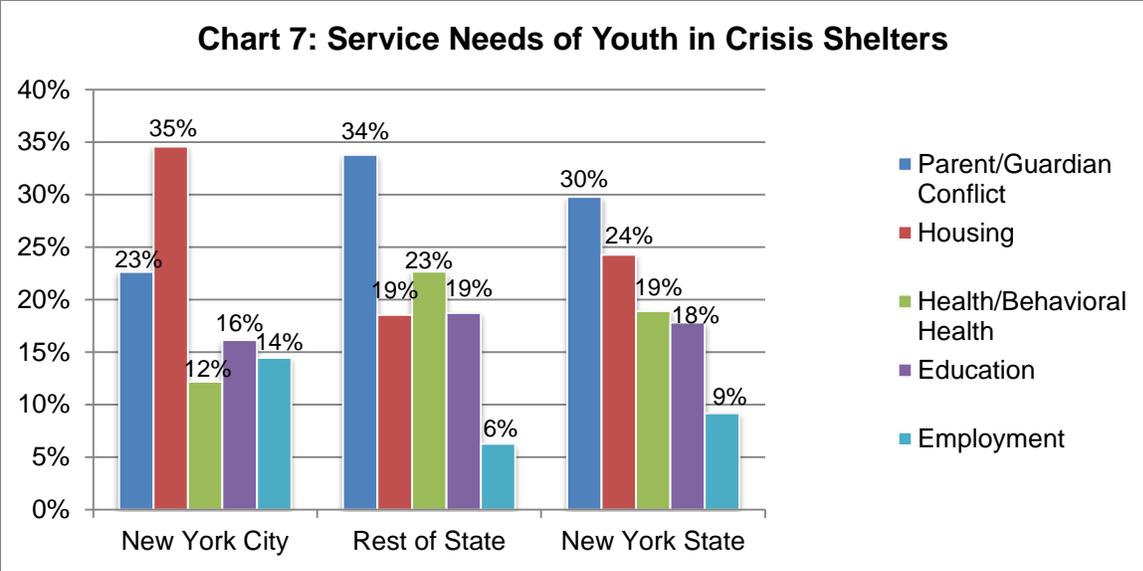


Note: Less than 2% in each category identified as Asian. Less than 1% in each category identified as Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Unknown/ Non-Disclosed.

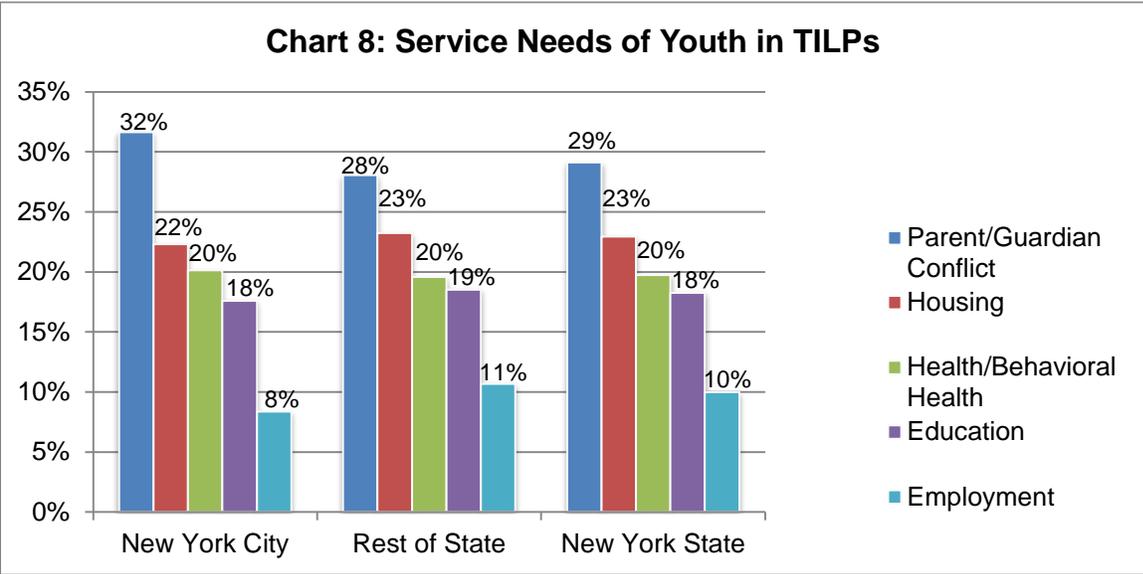
Problems and Service Needs

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 RHY residential programs.

The majority of youth in crisis shelter programs in New York City identified housing issues as the top service need, while the majority in the rest of the state identified parental issues. As Chart 7 indicates, youth in ROS report parental conflict as a primary service need in higher numbers than youth in NYC, and NYC youth report employment needs more than two times as often as youth in the rest of New York State.



In TILPs, the majority of youth in both New York City and the rest of the state identified parental issues as the most predominant service need. Youth who are in TILPs are more similar across the state than youth who are utilizing 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 youth in residential care were:

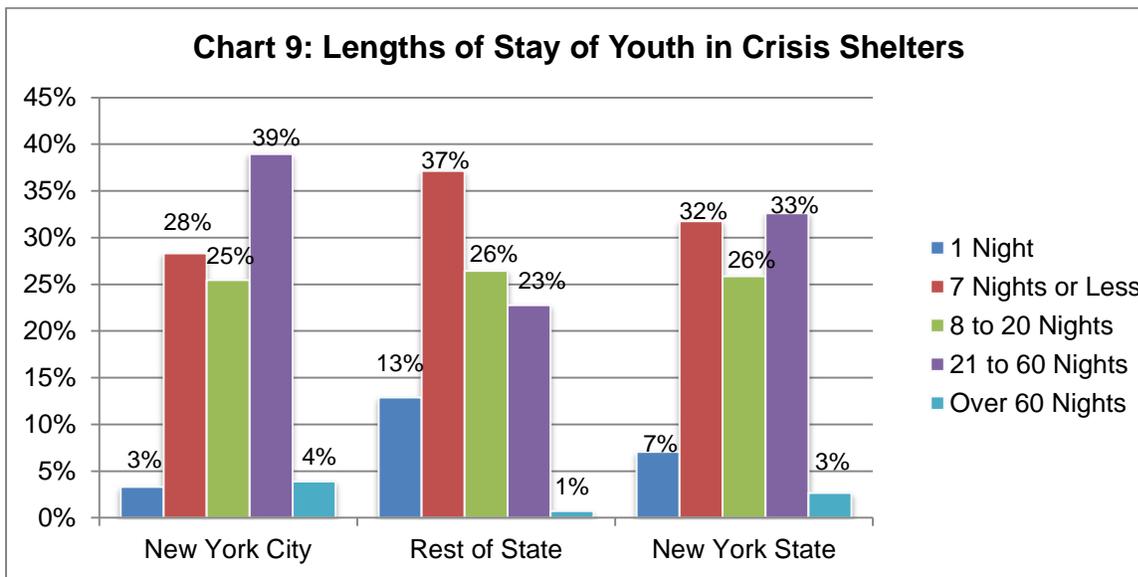
- Basic Needs (e.g., food, clothing, hygiene)
- Case Management
- Counseling/Mental Health Supports
- Health care
- Education Services
- Independent Living Skills

- Employment Skills
- Alternative Housing

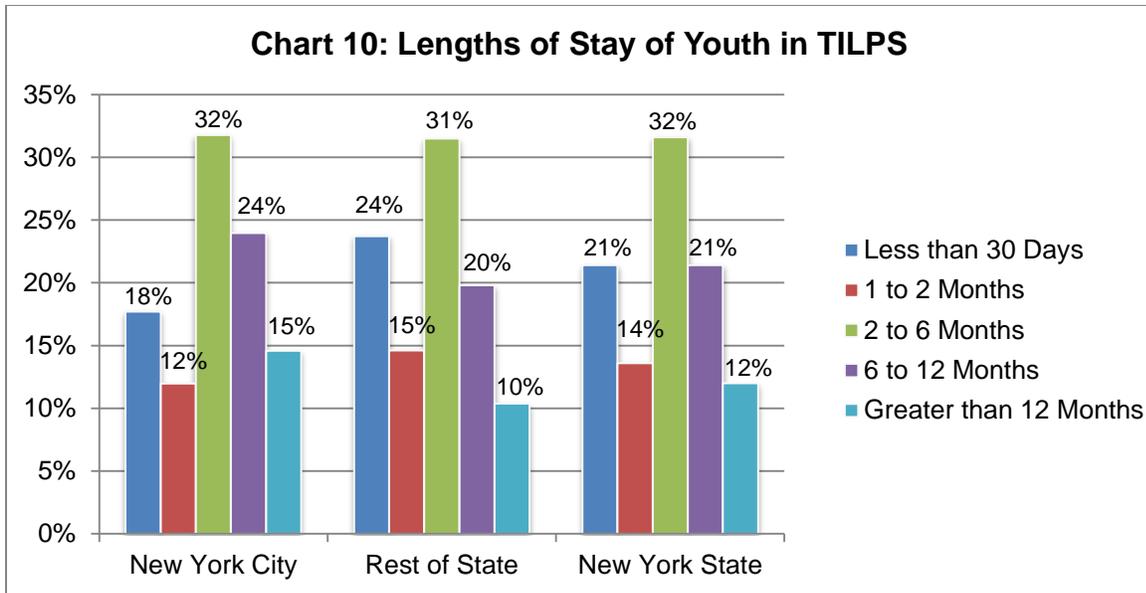
These services were provided either directly by the residential program or through a network of referrals available to that program and youth in the program.

Length of Stay in Residential Programs and Living Situation at Exit

The majority of youth in crisis shelter programs in New York City had a consecutive stay of 21 to 60 nights, while the majority in the rest of the state had a stay of seven nights or less. Overall, youth in NYC appear to have stayed in crisis shelter programs longer than their peers in the rest of the state. These numbers reflect the consecutive nights that youth spent in the programs.



In TILPs statewide, the majority of youth had a consecutive length of stay of two to six months. Because youth can reside in TILPs for up to 18 months, the youth who had a consecutive stay of greater than 12 months could have entered into the programs in 2012, 2013 or 2014. At exit, the majority were either living independently, with a relative or friend, or with a parent/guardian.



In 2014, there were **6,763** departures from crisis shelter programs and **500** 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, (p. 13) *Living Situation of Youth Departing from Crisis Shelters*, a significantly higher proportion of youth who exited from crisis shelter programs in ROS returned to their families than in NYC, while 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 have left RHY residential programs.

Chart 11: Living Situation of Youth Departing from Crisis Shelters

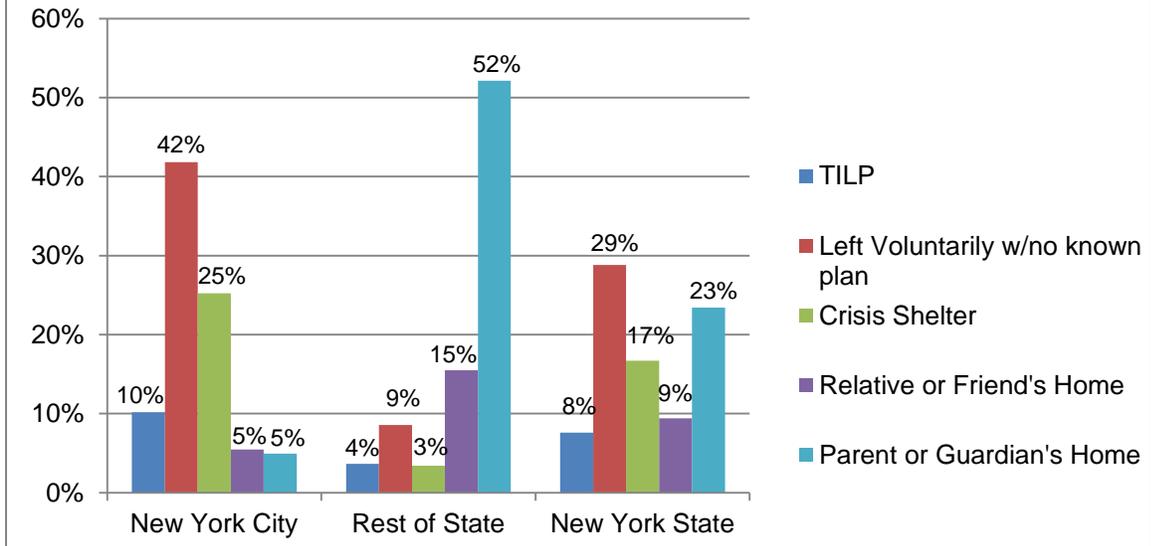


Chart 12: Living Situation of Youth Departing from TILPS



Runaway and Homeless Youth Identified but Not Served

In 2014, there were 1,674 instances⁷ when a youth was turned away from a crisis shelter or transitional independent living program due to no available space; 1,526 of those instances were reported by crisis shelter programs and 148 were reported by transitional independent living support programs.

⁷ Due to the inability to de-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 agency (as opposed to 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 a program received services from another program.

Crisis Shelter Capacity

In NYC, four agencies operated 10 crisis shelters within the five boroughs. All four agencies reported at least one night in 2014 in which its shelters were full, with a range of 70 to 360 nights full across all agencies. There were 1,438 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, 17 agencies operated 17 crisis shelters, and of those, nine reported at least one night in which they were full, with a range of one to 157 nights full. There were 88 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, eight agencies operated 16 TILP programs within the five boroughs. The data was not broken down by individual shelters, but by agencies. All eight agencies reported at least one night in 2014 in which the shelters were full, with 152 to 362 nights full across all agencies. There were 106 instances where a youth was turned away from a TILP in NYC due to lack of capacity.

In ROS, 17 agencies operated 42 TILP programs, and of those, 13 reported at least one night in which they were full, with a range of 12 to 365 nights full. There were 42 instances in which a youth was turned away from a TILP in ROS due to lack of capacity.

Non-Residential Program Services

Local hotlines throughout the state provide prevention and early intervention services for youth and families. In 2014, 12 programs statewide had hotlines that fielded more than **13,000** calls, **2,500** of which were made by adults on behalf of youth. The two most prevalent concerns were related to conflicts with parent(s) or parental figures and homelessness.

Other non-residential services for runaway and homeless youth include case management, street outreach, runaway prevention in schools, drop-in centers, 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.

Implications for the Future

This report provides an overview of the young people using the shelter and transitional housing programs in New York State, and some of the issues that they face in navigating their way to stable housing and improved life situations. The data raise some important questions about the youth accessing services, and whether there are barriers to more equitable access across all points of contact in the system for young men, youth of color and for younger youth in NYC, or if there are specific issues that are contributing to the over- or under-representation of youth across the state. These are questions that will have to be explored with the programs and local governments in order to improve services in the future.

Going forward, OCFS will require certified programs to collect and report data on the sexual orientation and gender identity of youth, and will seek improved reporting on youth who have experienced sexual or labor exploitation. Additionally, OCFS will make strategic changes to reporting from non-residential support services. As OCFS and programs build a stronger picture of the youth and young adults who use RHY services, special programs for target populations can be identified and supported.

OCFS continues to provide support and oversight to the RHY system, and works to continuously improve the outcomes of our most vulnerable children and youth.

By working with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Advisory Committee and other stakeholders, OCFS continues to identify needed improvements at the regulatory, policy and program levels statewide, and identifies improved data collection strategies that will help programs, localities and OCFS create a more robust picture of demographics, service needs and outcomes of the critical work in the field.

Appendix 1: Programs by Region at Year End 2014

Counties by Region	Program Type	# of programs	# of beds
Albany Region Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	4	43
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	8	48
Albany Region Subtotals		12	91
Buffalo Region Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	3	37
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	6	38
Buffalo Region Subtotals		9	75
Rochester Region Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	5	27
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	0	0
Rochester Region Subtotals		5	27
New York City Region Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	10	412
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	16	145
New York City Subtotals		26	557
Spring Valley Region Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	8	79
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	6	65
Spring Valley Subtotals		14	144
Syracuse Region Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence, Tioga, Tompkins	Crisis Shelter/Interim Family Home	6	25
	Transitional Independent Living Support Program	14	78
Syracuse Region Subtotals		20	103
Statewide Total		86	997

Appendix 2: Agencies with Certified Programs in 2014

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

