Orientation Manual for Member Agencies and New Employees

VCRHYP

VERMONT COALITION
OF RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1981, the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP) is a coalition of 10 service providers working together to guarantee the existence of a statewide safety net for runway and homeless youth. VCRHYP is a nationally recognized best-practice service delivery model that ensures access to services for youth throughout the entire state rater than just those in a small number of towns, cities, or locales.

VCRHYP's Vision Statement:
Vermont youth have safe places to stay and supports as they build permanent connections and skills for long-term stability and well-being.

VCRHYP's Mission Statement:
VCRHYP ensures the existence of a statewide network of local services for Vermont youth who are disconnected from their families, experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of becoming homeless.

Our Coalition Commitment:
Our goal is to ensure that youth have access to the support services they need to be safe and stable. To accomplish this, the Coalition works to:
- Ensure continued funding for crucial youth services in an uncertain economic climate;
- Collaborate with state and local partners to align and inform services;
- Advocate for youth needs with State and Federal policy makers;
- Foster a learning community among member agencies to develop and disseminate best practices for youth-care work;
- Educate our communities about the issues at-risk youth face; and
- Create opportunities for youth voices to be heard.

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VCRHYP BASICS

1.1   Administrative Team

The VCRHYP administrative team provides key supports that free member agencies to focus on the work of delivering essential programs serving Vermont youth and families.

What the team does:
- Secures funding to ensure services are available in communities across Vermont.
- Provides technical assistance and support to member agencies on a variety of topics including best-practice service provision, data management, program planning, federal and state funding compliance, and cross-system collaboration.
- Coordinates with State and Federal partners to enhance availability and efficacy of youth services to meet the needs of Vermont youth and their families.
- Monitors benchmarks and outcomes to assess progress and measure successes.

Who is on the team, how to contact them, and some of the things they focus on:
- **Bethany Pombar**: Director
  (802) 229-9151 x 248, bpombar@vcrhyp.org
  Areas of focus: federal grant management; regional and national collaboration; Youth Thrive implementation; adolescent development; VCRHYP Board and program leadership support; Vermont's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program coordination

- **Ari Kisler**: Assistant Director
  (802) 229-9151 x 232, akisler@vcrhyp.org
  Areas of focus: federal grant management; HMIS database management and data entry for member agencies; Best Practices Committee support; coordinated entry and collaborations with housing partners; grantee meetings and trainings; administrative supports

1.2   Member Agencies

VCRHYP has 10 member agencies that provide services to youth statewide:

VCRHYP: THE COALITION

① Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, ST. ALBANS

② Northeast Kingdom Community Action, NEWPORT

③ Spectrum Youth & Family Services, BURLINGTON

④ Lamoille Family Center, MORRISVILLE

⑤ Northeast Kingdom Youth Sevices, ST. JOHNSBURY

⑥ Washington County Youth Service Bureau, MONTPELIER

⑦ Addison County Parent/Child Center, MIDDLEBURY

⑧ Windsor County Youth Services, LUDLOW

⑨ United Counseling Service of Bennington County, BENNINGTON

⑩ Youth Services Inc., BRATTLEBORO
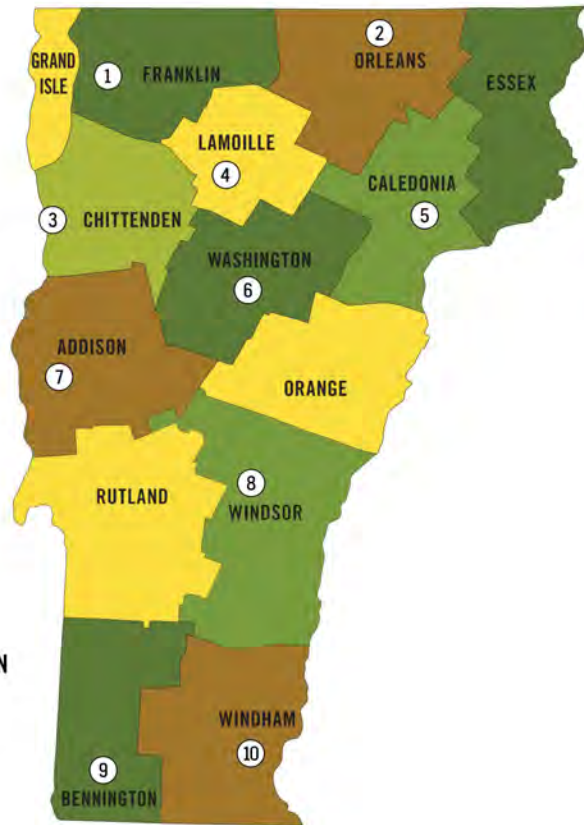
Each member agency of the Coalition is an independent, non-profit agency that provides a variety of services to their community in addition to supporting the mission of VCRHYP. Member agencies work together under the VCRHYP umbrella to leverage collective resources and strengthen our practices to support youth statewide.

Notes: Washington County Youth Service Bureau (WCYSB) provides VCRHYP with fiscal management, oversight, and administrative supports, and members of the VCRHYP administrative team are considered employees of WCYSB. NCSS, although located in Franklin County, also provides VCRHYP services to Grand Isle County. Essex County is served by both NEKCA and NEKYS.

1.3   Target Populations

*The **target populations** served by VCRHYP programs are:*

- **Runaway youth** – Defined as youth under age 18 who have left home without permission or as a result of family homelessness.

- **Homeless youth** – Defined as youth ages 12 through 21 (at intake) who lack a fixed and safe place to sleep at night.

- **At-risk youth** – Defined as youth ages 12 through 21 (at intake) who may be at risk of becoming homeless, running away, and/ or becoming involved with the justice or child welfare systems. This includes transition age youth that are precariously housed.

- **Pregnant and/or parenting youth** – Defined as youth ages 12 through 21 (at intake) who are experiencing problems as listed under runaway and homeless youth with the added stresses of parenting.

- **Families** – Defined as families of runaway, homeless and at-risk youth, and pregnant and parenting youth.

1.4 Core Outcomes and Services

Each member agency delivers core services to youth and families that work towards attainment of four key outcomes.

Outcome areas:
- **Stable housing** – Youth feel safe, supported and protected and have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

- **Well-being** – Youth experience enriching educational experiences, access to physical and mental healthcare, social connections and improved family functioning that contribute to a youth's ability to care for themselves and promote independent living skills.

- **Education/ employment** – Youth are supported in building skills and connecting to resources necessary to access and sustain a positive future through education, employment and personal enrichment.

- **Permanent connections** – Youth have healthy relationships with self-identified family (biological or not), and long-term ongoing connections with supportive adults, mentors, friends and other significant people.

For an overview of performance measures used to assess outcome areas see section 1.8.

Core services:
Each member agency is responsible for providing all of the following core services to their service region; participation by youth and families in services is voluntary:

- **Emergency crisis response** – A 24-hour/7-day response system for youth in crisis to access services. On-call counselors go to police stations, hospitals, and other sites as necessary to respond to crisis. Young people can access emergency, temporary shelter through the agency's crisis line.

- **Shelter** – Emergency, short-term (up to 21 days) shelter for youth under 18 and/or longer-term transitional shelter for youth up to age 21 (at intake).

- **Intensive crisis services** – Agencies provide crisis stabilization services to youth or families within a 48-hour period.

- **Assessment** – Case managers meet with youth and families to assess immediate and long-term goals, identify health and safety issues affecting the youth & family, create an individual Plan of Care, and make referrals to additional supports & services as needed.

- **Individual & family counseling** – Once the presenting crisis is stabilized, agencies provide counselors to meet regularly with youth to implement the Plan of Care. These contacts may last from 1 to 2 hours (depending on need) and are conducted in a variety of locations, depending on the needs of the youth and family.

- **Group counseling** – If identified as needed in the youth's Plan of Care and offered by the agency, group counseling sessions are provided.

- **Home visits** – Case managers will visit youth and their families at their home or where they are staying, at school, or other locations in the community that work best for the youth and family.

- **Care coordination** – Coordination is provided to support youth with school staff, courts, doctors, and a variety of other service providers as needed.

- **Family preservation supports** – Services include mediation, conflict resolution, and family counseling to prevent escalation of crisis that may lead to youth running away, a youth entering DCF custody or to support a family who may be experiencing State system involvement.

- **Health supports** – Agencies counsel youth around the importance of preventative health care and promote healthy activities; they help youth understand adverse outcomes associated with high risk behaviors; and they provide support and assist youth to obtain access to health care services, including but not limited to assistance with enrolling/re-enrolling in Medicaid; identifying a primary care physician; accompanying youth to doctor's appointments; obtaining psychological assessments, medications, and referrals to treatment.

1.5   Funding Sources

VCRHYP manages three grants from the [Family & Youth Services Bureau](#) (FYSB): one Basic Center Program (BCP) grant, which supports 10 member agencies, and two Transitional Living Program (TLP) grants, which support 8 member agencies. FYSB is part of the United States' Administration for Children & Families and is often referred to as our "federal funder."

Presently, our BCP grant is on a 3-year cycle (FY17-FY19) and our TLP grants are on 5-year cycles (FY18-FY22). The VCRHYP administrative team provides our federal funder with bi-annual performance reports and continuation applications on behalf of member agencies. Each program comes with its own requirements and expectations. VCRHYP works with staff at member agencies to ensure funding compliance and to support programs in reaching their performance measures.

The following chart shows which member agencies receive funding for which programs:

Agency	Basic Center Program (FY17-FY19)	Transitional Living Program West (FY18-FY22)	Transitional Living Program East (FY18-FY22)
Addison Country Parent Child Center	X	X	
Lamoille Family Center	X		
Northeast Kingdom Community Action	X		X
Northeast Kingdom Youth Services	X		X
Northwestern Counseling and Support Services	X	X	
Spectrum Youth & Family Services	X		
United Counseling Services	X	X	
Washington County Youth Service Bureau	X		X
Windsor County Youth Services	X	X	
Youth Services, Inc.	X		X

1.6   Basic Center Programs

Basic Center Programs (BCP) help youth reunify with their families (if they have left) and/ or help families stabilize so that youth can safely remain at home. These programs provide support through the provision of the core services outlined in *section 1.4*. All agencies providing Basic Center Programs are required to have emergency shelter options available at all times (*information about emergency shelter models can be found in section 2.5*).

Eligibility for Basic Center Programs:
- Youth must be between the ages of 12 and 17
- Youth must not be eligible for residential support from the Department for Children and Families foster care or juvenile justice systems
- If under the age of 18, youth must have permission from a parent/ guardian to participate in services
- Youth must have runaway, be homeless, be at risk of becoming homeless, or be at risk of separating from their family
- Youth and their families must be working towards reunification/ stabilization

Additional requirements for Basic Center Programs:[1]
- Programs must be able to provide safe and appropriate emergency shelter for up to 21 days (if needed) and/ or individual, family, and group counseling, as appropriate[2]
- Programs can also provide street-based services, home-based services, drug abuse education and prevention services, and testing for sexually transmitted diseases (at the request of the youth) as long as the youth being served meets the above eligibility

A flowchart is included in the Appendix and can be used to help you determine if youth are eligible for BCP or not. The VCRHYP administrative team is also available to assist with making these determinations.

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[1] RHYTTAC Tip Sheet: Eligibility for RHY Programs
[2] Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, 2008, Part A, Services Provided

1.7   Transitional Living Programs

Transitional Living Programs (TLP) are designed to support youth during their transition to living on their own. These programs provide support through the provision of the core services outlined in *section 1.4*.

Eligibility for Transitional Living Programs:
- Youth must be at least 16 years old, but not yet 22 years old at time of intake
- Youth must be homeless, as defined by FYSB: "*youth for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and for whom there are no other safe alternative living arrangements*"
- Youth must not be eligible for residential support from a state or federal program, such as the child protective system or justice system
- If under the age of 18, youth must have permission from a parent/ guardian to participate in services
- Youth must be working towards independent living

Additional requirements for Transitional Living Programs: [3]
- Youth must be provided with transitional shelter either owned or rented by your agency (*more information about transitional shelter models can be found in section 2.5*) and counseling services in basic life skills (including money management, budgeting, consumer education, use of credit, interpersonal skill building, educational advancement, job attainment skills, mental/physical health care, and parenting skills, as appropriate).[4]
- Transitional shelter and services can be provided to a youth in TLP for a continuous period not to exceed 540 days (18 months). In exceptional circumstances, transitional shelter and services can be provided for up to 635 days (21 months). If a youth enters the program before they are 18 years old, they may continue to be served continuously until their 18th birthday, even if that means they are served for longer than 635 days. If a youth enters transitional shelter and services before their 22nd birthday, they are eligible to receive the full 540 days, even if that means they turn 22 while being served.[5]

A flowchart is included in the Appendix and can be used to help you determine if youth are eligible for TLP or not. The VCRHYP administrative team is also available to assist with making these determinations.

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[3] RHYTTAC Tip Sheet: Eligibility for RHY Programs
[4] Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, 2008, Part B, Eligibility
[5] RHYTTAC Tip Sheet: Eligibility for RHY Programs

1.8   Performance Measures

A variety of performance measures are used to assess how well member agencies are supporting outcomes in stable housing, well-being, employment/ education, and permanent connections. Information about performance measure attainment is provided quarterly by the VCRHYP administrative team to staff at all member agencies using data collected in the Homeless Management Information System *(learn more about this database in [section 3.1](#)).*

Basic Center Program performance measures:
Member agencies receiving Basic Center Program funds are striving to meet the following performance measure targets:
- Program contributes to VCRHYP serving 300 youth Coalition-wide per year
- Program contributes to VCRHYP offering emergency shelter or brokered housing support to 150 youth Coalition-wide per year
- Program contributes to VCRHYP receiving 200 referrals from community partners Coalition-wide per year
- Program contributes to VCRHYP making 250 referrals to partnering community service providers Coalition-wide per year
- 90% of youth receive screening for sexual exploitation and trafficking
- 90% of youth identified as victims of exploitation choose to receive specialized services/ health care and 95% report a sense of increased safety
- 90% of youth exit to safe locations
- 80% of youth consider their exit destination to be safe
- 70% of youth achieve family reunification at exit
- 75% of exiting youth had an annual check-up with a doctor within the last year
- 90% of exiting youth have health insurance
- 75% of exiting youth report their mental health is excellent, very good, or good
- 90% of exiting youth are attending school regularly or have received their diploma
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive adult connections outside of the program
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive peer connections outside of the program
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive community connections outside of the program
- 50% of youth receive aftercare services for up to 3 months after exit and 70% of those youth report feeling secure, safe, and stable in housing
- 90% of youth who received at least 1 week of shelter, exited to a safe location, and were contacted 3 months after exit report still being in a safe living situation
- 33% of youth receive contact from program staff 6 months after exit

Transitional Living Program performance measures:

Member agencies receiving Transitional Living Program funds are striving to meet the following performance measure:

- Program contributes to VCRHYP providing transitional shelter and services to 130 youth Coalition-wide per year
- 100% of youth are assessed with evidence-based tools within 30 days of intake
- 100% of youth receive screening for human trafficking and sexual exploitation
- 100% of youth receive basic life skills resources and counseling services
- 80% of youth receive educational or employment support services
- 85% of youth achieve one or more educational or vocational goal by exit
- 75% of youth receive referrals to other community services
- 100% of youth have a Transitional Living Plan at exit
- 90% of youth exit to safe and stable destinations
- 80% of youth consider their exit destinations to be safe
- 75% of exiting youth had an annual check-up with a doctor within the last year
- 90% of exiting youth have health insurance
- 75% of exiting youth report their mental health status is excellent, very good, or good
- 75% of exiting youth are employed or looking for work at exit
- 66% of youth are attending school or have a high school diploma/GED at exit
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive adult connections outside of the program
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive peer connections outside of the program
- 80% of exiting youth have permanent positive community connections outside of the program
- Youth report an increased sense of health (general, dental, and mental) at exit in comparison to at entry
- 75% of youth receive aftercare services for at least 3 months after exit and 75% of those youth report remaining stably housed
- 50% of youth receive contact from program staff 6 months after exit and 70% of those youth report remaining stably housed
- 33% of youth receive contact from program staff 12 months after exit and 60% of those youth report remaining stably housed

1.9   Required Training

Service providers at VCRHYP member agencies are required to be trained in a variety of topics related to working with youth. Your agency may provide some or all of this training internally or you may choose to attend trainings provided by other organizations. VCRHYP also provides training on some of the required topics *(see section 1.10),* as well as encouraging the use of web-based training opportunities.

Mandated Reporter training:
Any staff member working directly with clients in a VCRHYP program is a mandated reporter in the state of Vermont.[6] As a mandated reporter, you are legally obligated to make a report to DCF's Family Services Division within 24 hours if you reasonably suspect child abuse or neglect.[7] An online training is available to ensure that you understand your responsibility as a mandated reporter and the dynamics of child abuse and neglect. A certificate of completion is provided when you have taken the training and should be kept in your personnel file at your agency.

FYSB required trainings:
FYSB requires that those staff working in BCPs or TLPs be trained in the following: [8]

- Core Competencies of Youth Workers *(see section 2.3)*
- Positive Youth Development
- Trauma Informed Care
- Harm Reduction
- Community Resources for Well-Being & Self-Sufficiency
- Safe & Ethical Practices
- Understanding the Diversity & Culture of Life on the Street
- Evidence-Informed Practices
- Street Outreach Intervention
- Assessment & Case Management
- Human Trafficking Prevention & Intervention *(req. for TLP only)*
- Worker Safety *(req. for TLP only)*

The national Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC)'s e-learning section provides training on many of the above topics. If you are struggling to find training on a required topic or want additional training, please let the VCRHYP administrative team know so we can help connect you to resources.

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[6] Mandated Reporters in Vermont, VT AHS, Department for Children and Families
[7] Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect, VT AHS, Department for Children and Families
[8] list generated from the funding opportunity announcements for VCRHYP's current BCP & TLP grants

1.10   Coalition Meetings & Trainings

VCRHYP hosts a variety of meetings and trainings throughout the year for staff of its member agencies. These gatherings serve multiple purposes and are part of the strength of the statewide coalition model. They provide opportunities for information sharing, best practice development, networking connections with peers doing similar work in different regions, and for the VCRHYP administrative staff to learn from members and get valuable feedback on important processes, procedures, etc.

Meetings take place either virtually or in person in the central Vermont area. Participation from each member agency at all meetings is highly encouraged to ensure your agency doesn't miss critical updates and information; participation in Grantee Meetings is required.

Best Practices Committee meetings:
The Best Practices Committee was formed to bring member agency staff together on a more consistent basis to develop and share best practices for working with the runaway and homeless youth population. The Committee is open to participation from all member agencies and is mostly made up of direct service staff members who have boots-on-the-ground experience. Meetings are held throughout the year and often include peer learning/ peer presentation component that provides space to share and learn from one another, as well as presentations from community partners and trainers. The Committee often works together to address systems challenges and develop tools and policy to guide service delivery. While not required, it is highly encouraged that member agencies have at least one staff member on the Committee who can regularly attend meetings. VCRHYP suggests that agencies that have both a Basic Center Program and a Transitional Living Program, have a staff member working in each program attend.

VCRHYP Board meetings:
The VCRHYP Board is comprised of the Executive Directors, or proxy, from each member agency. The Board monitors policy alignment and financial management as well as providing guidance on VCRHYP initiatives. Board members also provide information on issues important to agency leadership and support a strong base for coalition sustainability. Meetings are held every month, alternating between brief phone meetings and longer, in-person meetings, which are held once a quarter. Board meetings are open to the public and anyone can attend.

Grantee meetings:
Throughout the year, VCRHYP holds federally required grantee meetings. Member agencies are required to send at least one staff member to each appropriate grantee meeting. Grantee meetings are open to all VCRHYP member agency staff, regardless of which program they work in. Outside experts are usually brought in to grantee meetings to provide specialized training. Examples of past trainings include:
- Walking on Eggshells: Supporting Youth who Experience Domestic Violence
- Adolescent Brain Development for Transition-Aged Youth: Impacts on Services
- Creating Healthy and Clear Lines in the Sand: Boundaries Training
- WholeSomeBodies: A Healthy Sexuality Curriculum for Adults who Have or Work with Youth
- Combatting Compassion Fatigue: Managing Secondary Stress
- Trauma Informed Best Practices Toward Effective Interventions with Transitional Age Youth

Note: *The VCRHYP administrative team expects Best Practices Committee members, VCRHYP Board representatives, and those attending grantee meetings to share information with each other and others in their programs. It is important that you know what your agency's internal practices for information sharing are and how you can participate in them.*

Other VCRHYP training opportunities and events:
VCRHYP will occasionally have additional training opportunities or events for member agency staff. Sometimes these are developed by and for VCRHYP members and sometimes VCRHYP partners with other organizations for development. One example is VCRHYP's annual Legislative Advocacy Day. For this event, VCRHYP hosts a day of learning and sharing in the Statehouse which includes a training for youth and youth care workers on the legislative process and opportunities for youth and member agency staff to talk with their local representatives. This event happens between January and April.

An annual schedule of meetings and VCRHYP events can be requested by emailing Ari Kisler at akisler@vcrhyp.org.

1.11   State and Federal Advocacy and Collaboration

One of the roles of the VCRHYP administrative team is to advocate for youth and youth-serving agencies at the state and national levels and collaborate with partners to enhance and sustain the service array available to youth we serve. Through this work, we ensure that comprehensive and effective resources and supports are available to youth and that member agencies are working in conditions that are favorable to their success. The VCRHYP administrative team is a member of a number of statewide and national bodies helping to define and direct this work.

Here are many of the statewide and national groups/committees VCRHYP has been or is currently involved with:

- Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness
- Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
- Vermont Council on Homelessness
- Family Services Division Stakeholder Committee
- DCF Trafficking Workgroup
- Children's Justice Act Task Force
- Youth and Young Adult Employment Task Force
- Youth Thrive Statewide Implementation Team
- Poverty and Opportunity Training Forum Planning Committee
- Housing Opportunity Program Advisory Group
- Working with Youth Conference Planning Committee
- National RHY Conference Planning Committee
- National Safe Place Advisory Board
- MANY Membership National Policy Committee
- Vermont HMIS Advisory Board

Updates from these partners are often shared at the Coalition meetings listed in section 1.10. If you have questions about any of these groups or would also like to participate, please contact VCRHYP's Director, Bethany Pombar, at bpombar@vcrhyp.org.

1.12 VCRHYP Memberships

VCRHYP pays annual membership dues to a variety of state and national networks as part of our work. Through these memberships, VCRHYP agencies have the opportunity to participate in trainings, attend conferences, or access resources specifically for members of these organizations (often times at a reduced cost).

*Here is a summary of **VCRHYP's memberships** that you can take advantage of:*

- [Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness](#) – The mission of the Coalition is to end homelessness in Vermont through sharing information, developing resources, providing a forum for decision-making and to promote decent, safe, fair, affordable shelter for all.

- [Youth Collaboratory](#) – Youth Collaboratory (formerly known as MANY) is the only national network of its kind that engages stakeholders across sectors to strengthen outcomes for youth and young adults at highest risk for victimization and/or delinquency. Focus areas include employment & education, mentoring, strengthening circles of support, youth homelessness, and violence & exploitation.

- [Voices for Vermont's Children](#) – Voices for Vermont's Children's mission is to promote public policy that enhances the lives of children and youth in Vermont. They address the full spectrum of child, youth and family issues – from childcare and access to health care coverage for children and youth to juvenile justice and child welfare.

- [Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition](#) – The Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition is committed to ensuring all Vermonters have decent, safe and affordable housing. With over 80 members, they represent most of Vermont's non-profit affordable housing developers, community land trusts, housing and homeless advocacy groups, public housing authorities, regional planners, funders, state agencies, and others.

- [National Network for Youth](#) – The mission of the National Network is to mobilize the collective power and expertise of our national community to influence public policy and strengthen effective responses to youth homelessness. National Network for Youth envisions a future in which all young people have a safe place to call home.

1.13   Further Reading & Resources

Here are a variety of resources you may find helpful; many of them appeared as footnotes throughout the section.

- VCRHYP's [staff page](#)
- Vermont's Agency of Human Services' [Mandated Reporters website](#)
- FYSB's [Basic Center Program Fact Sheet](#)
- FYSB's [Transitional Living Program Fact Sheet](#)
- RHYTTAC's [Tip Sheet: Eligibility for RHY Programs](#)
- [Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Authorizing Legislation](#)
- FYSB's [Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)

SERVICE THEORY

2.1 VCRHYP's Service Theory Philosophy

VCRHYP's philosophy focuses on enhancing resiliency in youth while working towards outcomes related to stable housing, permanent connections, education/ employment, and social and emotional well-being. These outcomes are achieved using a variety of service theory approaches and frameworks. Below is a brief overview of each. We encourage you to look further into each and talk within your agency about how they are implemented in day-to-day work with youth, policies and procedures, and how you communicate these goals with youth and community partners.

Youth Thrive:
Youth Thrive is a research-informed model that combines that most current science about adolescent brain development, trauma, resilience, and the importance of social connections into one framework to ensure young people in our care thrive as evidenced by:
- Physical and emotional health
- Success in school and workplace
- Ability to form and sustain caring, committed relationships
- Hopefulness and optimism
- Compassion and curiosity
- Service to community, school, or society

Youth care workers who are trained in the Youth Thrive framework work with youth to accomplish these goals through building protective and promotive factors.

Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors are:
- **Youth Resilience**[9] – Managing stress and functioning well when faced with stressors, challenges or adversity. The outcome is personal growth and positive change
- **Social Connections**[10] – Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community and a force greater than oneself that promote a sense of trust, belonging and feeling that they matter

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[9] Youth Resilience, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Protective & Promotive Factors
[10] Social Connections, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Protective & Promotive Factors

- **Knowledge of Adolescent Development**[11] – Understanding one's behavior and stage of maturation in the context of the unique aspects of adolescent development (e.g., brain development, the impact of trauma); services that are developmentally and contextually appropriate (e.g., positive youth development strategies)
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need**[12] – Understanding the importance of asking for help and advocating for oneself; receiving quality services designed to preserve youth's dignity, providing opportunities for skill development and promoting healthy development (e.g., strengths-based, trauma informed practice)
- **Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence**[13] – Acquiring skills and attitudes that are essential for forming an independent identity and having a productive, responsible and satisfying adulthood (e.g., self-regulation, executive functioning and character strengths)

Positive Youth Development:

[Positive Youth Development](#) (PYD) approach is supported by a growing body of research on families, schools, and neighborhoods as a cutting-edge approach for enhancing adolescent development, and for helping youth reach their full potential. This approach recognizes that all adolescents have strengths and that children and youth will develop in positive ways when these strengths are aligned with resources for healthy development in the various settings in which adolescents live and interact. Research indicates that the more exposure that adolescents have to positive resources and experiences— and where synergy between multiple settings can be established—the more likely it is that they will develop positively.[14]

The "5 Cs" of Positive Youth Development are:

- **Competence** – Positive view of one's actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational. Social competence refers to interpersonal skills (such as conflict resolution). Cognitive competence refers to cognitive abilities (e.g., decision making). Academic competence refers to school performance as shown, in part, by school grades, attendance, and test scores. Health competence involves using nutrition, exercise, and rest to keep oneself fit. Vocational competence involves work habits and explorations of career choices.

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[11] [Knowledge of Adolescent Development](#), Center for the Study of Social Policy, Protective & Promotive Factors
[12] [Concrete Support in Times of Need](#), Center for the Study of Social Policy, Protective & Promotive Factors
[13] [Cognitive & Social-Emotional Competence In Youth](#), Center for the Study of Social Policy, Protective & Promotive Factors
[14] [Ways to Promote the Positive Development of Children and Youth](#) Nicole Zarrett, Ph.D. and Richard M. Lerner, Ph.D

- **Confidence** – An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy
- **Connection** – Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship
- **Character** – Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity
- **Caring/Compassion** – A sense of sympathy and empathy for others

Positive Youth Development favors leadership and skill-building opportunities under the guidance of caring adults. It looks at youth as assets to be developed and gives them the means to build successful futures.

Harm-reduction:
Harm-reduction methods support youth by helping them think through choices they might make, recognize harmful situations, and think about how they can reduce the risks that are consequences of their choices. Harm-reduction takes the place of abstinence-only policies and procedures. It is non-coercive, non-judgmental and meets youth where they are. The focus is on well-being rather than compliance. Harm-reduction accepts that youth may choose risky and/or illegal behaviors and works to minimize the harm rather than condemn the youth.

Examples of harm-reduction procedures include:
- Distributing sleeping bags and warm clothing to youth who choose not to enter shelter
- Providing condoms, information about STD/HIV prevention and treatment, and supports for communicating sexual boundaries to youth who are engaging in risky sexual behaviors
- Working with youth to understand their choices about alcohol or drug use and supporting them in making safer choices rather than kicking them out of a program

Trauma-informed care:
Ensuring that care is trauma-informed requires youth care workers to recognize the impacts that traumatic experiences can have on youth, as well as how that trauma may present (such as through feelings of shame, guilt, rage, isolation, or disconnection). Trauma-informed care works to give youth power, choices and control over their own bodies, lives and environment wherever possible. VCRHYP member agencies tailor their services and interventions to each individual's needs and include strategies for building social supports and relationship building. Youth

care workers should be regularly trained to recognize the presences of trauma symptoms and to consider the unknown history of each youth during interactions, in addition to the known trauma points and triggers. Once a trusting relationship has been built with the youth, youth care workers can help the youth:

- Understand and frame their prior experiences
- Build resilience and positive beliefs about the future
- Address developmental strengths and deficits related to trauma and continue to develop along a health trajectory
- Transform maladaptive coping methods into healthy and productive strategies
- Develop protective factors, such as a sense of belonging and personal value

2.2   VCRHYP's Commitment to Youth Engagement

VCRHYP is committed to supporting authentic youth engagement within our local agencies through training, networking, and resource support, as well as at the statewide level by creating opportunities for youth voice to be incorporated into planning and policy development within the committees of our various statewide partners. Our vision is to bring youth engagement to the forefront of all planning and development efforts and to be a model of successful and authentic youth engagement for our partners around the state and nationally.

We encourage each member agency to develop meaningful opportunities for youth engagement. Some members have already established Youth Advisory Boards or have Peer Outreach Workers on staff. Other examples of youth engagement work happening within VCRHYP include connecting youth to leadership opportunities in their region, helping youth plan and implement trainings and events, and connecting youth to meaningful community service opportunities.

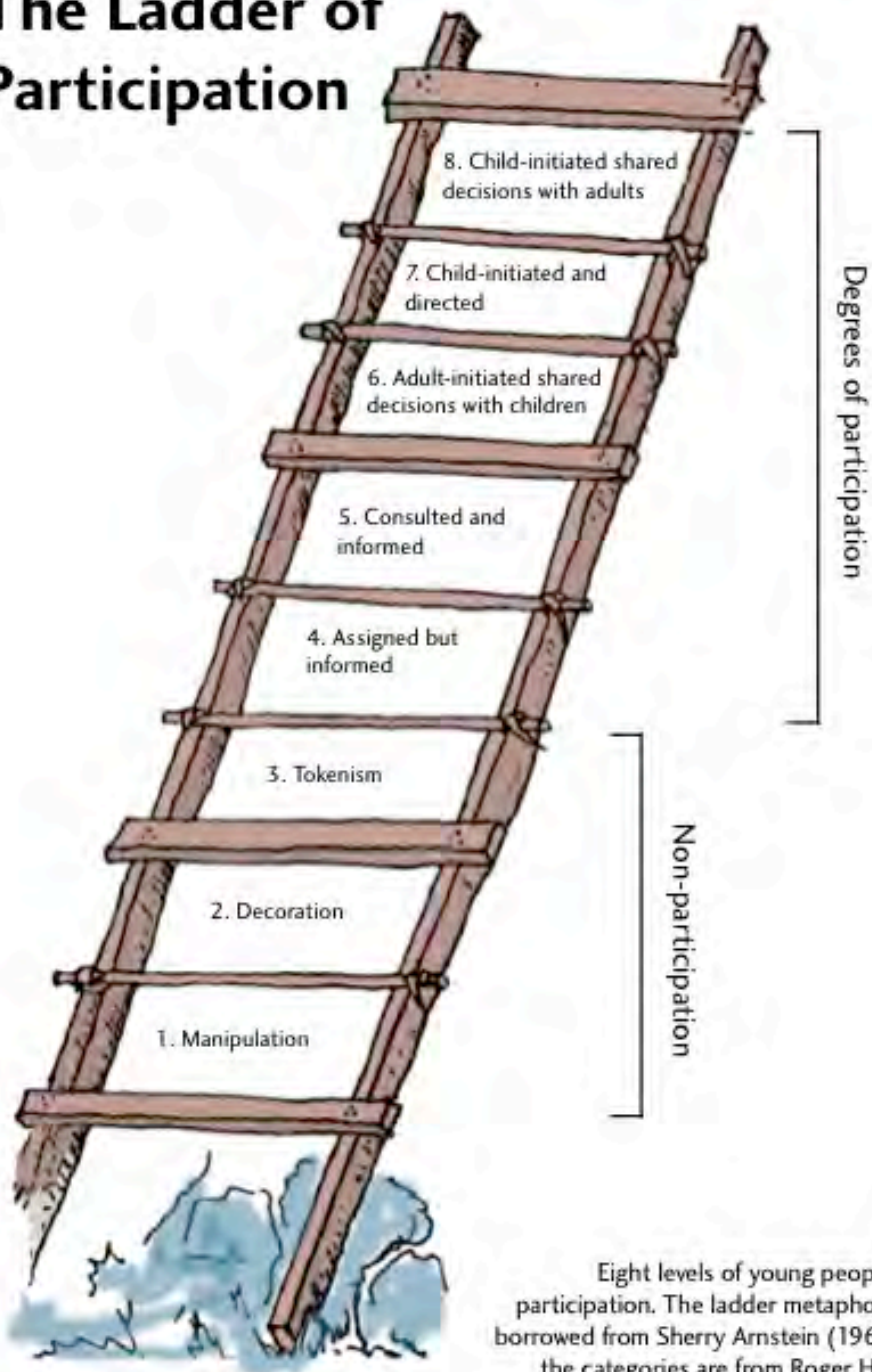*Some youth engagement definitions to keep in mind:*

- **Youth voice** – The individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of an organization or community
- **Authentic youth engagement** – When youth are included in program design, planning, and implementation in a way that meets their developmental needs, values them as equals to adults, fully supports them to participate through training and logistical support, and compensates them for their time.
- **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** – A group of at least 3 youth members, ages 12-24, who currently or formally receive/d services from the agency and are included in the decision making of program/policy design within the agency. YABs that follow the principles of Authentic Youth Engagement also emphasize leadership training, professional development, and compensate members for their time.

For more information and support on youth engagement initiatives, contact the VCRHYP administrative team.

On the next few pages you will find the following resources on youth engagement:
- The Ladder of Participation
- Rubric for The Ladder of Youth Engagement
- The Hidden Rules of Working with Youth

The Ladder of Participation

8. Child-initiated shared decisions with adults

7. Child-initiated and directed

6. Adult-initiated shared decisions with children

5. Consulted and informed

4. Assigned but informed

3. Tokenism

2. Decoration

1. Manipulation

Degrees of participation

Non-participation

Eight levels of young people's participation. The ladder metaphor is borrowed from Sherry Arnstein (1969); the categories are from Roger Hart.

The following rubric breaks down what can be expected at the various stages of the Ladder of Youth Engagement.

	THE WAYS YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED	CHALLENGE	REWARD
AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT	**8. Youth/Adult Equity.** All youth, young adults, and older adults are recognized for their impact and ownership of the outcomes.	This is an exceptional relationship in communities that requires conscious commitment by all participants. Deliberately addresses barriers and constantly ensures shared outcomes.	Creates structures that establish and support safe, supportive, effective, and sustainable environments for engagement, and ultimately recreates the climate and culture of organizations and communities.
	7. Youth-Driven Action. Only youth have positions of authority. Adults have secondary roles to support young people	Young people may operate in a vacuum, often without the recognition of their impact on the larger community. Activities driven by youth and young adults may not be seen by older adults with deserved validity.	Developing complete ownership in communities allows young people to effectively drive community engagement. Young people experience the outcomes of their direct actions on themselves, their peers, and the larger community.
	6. Youth/Adult Equality. There is a 50/50 split of responsibilities, authority, obligation and commitment.	There isn't recognition for the specific developmental needs or representation opportunities for young people. Without receiving that recognition, young people may loose interest and become disengaged.	Young people can substantially transform adults' opinions, ideas, and actions.
PARTIAL ENGAGEMENT	**5. Youth-Consulted.** Adults actively consult young people while they're involved.	Young people have only the authority that older adults grant them, and their engagement is subject to external approval.	Young people can substantially transform adults' opinions, ideas, and actions.
	4. Youth-Informed. Young people inform adults.	Adults do not have to let young people impact their decisions.	Young people may influence adult-driven decisions or activities.
NON-ENGAGEMENT	**3. Tokenism.** Adults assign young people only token roles.	Youth and young adults are used inconsequentially by adults to reinforce the perception that young people are engaged.	Validates youth and young adults attending events without requiring effort beyond that.
	2. Decoration. Adult use young people to decorate their activities.	The presence of young people is treated as all that is necessary without reinforcing active engagement.	Attendance by youth and young adults is a tangible outcome that may demonstrate consideration for engaging young people.
	1. Manipulation. Adults manipulate young people.	Young people are forced to attend without regard to their interest.	Adults experience involving young people and gain rationale for continuing activities.

The Hidden Rules of Working with Youth

Brought to you by the young leaders of the Youth Development Program

Get to know us one-on-one

Learn how we like to interact with people

Meet us in places where we feel comfortable

Make our plans **with** us, not for us!

Our files can't tell you who we are – we're much better at doing it ourselves

Use communication methods that we're comfortable with (*cough* texting)

Be understanding of our schedules and help us plan meetings around them

Be a model of reliability and timeliness - Call us back and be on time!

Treat us like a partner – then we can work together

Ask and listen instead of assuming

Give us space if that's what we're asking for

Be positive when you talk or write about us

Be yourself around us! Have a little fun!

Be honest with us, **Period.**

Help us find new opportunities to push ourselves and grow

RESPECT ★ COMMUNICATION ★ RELIABILITY ★ TRUST

2.3   Core Competencies for Youth Care Workers

The Administration of Children and Families (ACF) published their [final rule](#) on Runaway and Homeless Youth programs in December of 2016. The rule identified six domain areas that youth care workers should be able to demonstrate competency in. ACF expects that all staff members who work directly with youth will receive training sufficient to meet all six competencies.

ACF's six core competencies:

1. **Professionalism** – including, but not limited to, consistent and reliable job performance and awareness and use of professional ethics to guide practice
2. **Applied positive youth development approach** – including, but not limited to, skills to develop a positive youth development plan and identifying the clients strengths in order to best apply a positive youth development framework
3. **Cultural and human diversity** – including, but not limited to, gaining knowledge and skills to meet the needs of clients of a different race, ethnicity, nationality, religion/spirituality, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation
4. **Applied human development** – including, but not limited to, understanding the developmental needs of those at risk and with special needs
5. **Relationship and communication** – including, but not limited to, working with clients in a collaborative manner
6. **Developmental practice methods** – including, but not limited to, utilizing methods focused on genuine relationships, health and safety, and intervention planning

2.4   Outreach

VCRHYP member agencies are required to perform outreach to ensure that community partners and youth and their families know what services are available and how to access them. Outreach is an ongoing practice and should be tailored to meet the specific needs of the communities in which your agency operates.

Outreach to youth:
Outreach, as defined in ACF's final rule,[15] means:
- Finding runaway, homeless, and street youth, or youth at risk of running away or becoming homeless, who might not use services due to lack of awareness or active avoidance;
- Providing information to them about services and benefits; and
- Encouraging the use of appropriate services.

Direct outreach to youth can be accomplished through published materials (brochures, posters, etc.), other forms of advertisements (audio and visual), the use of social media, and a physical presence in places frequented by youth (drop-in centers, schools, etc.). Member agencies should regularly evaluate their youth outreach strategies to determine if they are effective and make adjustments, if necessary.

Outreach to community partners:
Ensuring strong and ongoing working relationships with community partners is vital to the health of all VCRHYP programs. Member agencies, as well as staff working specifically in VCRHYP programs, are responsible for engaging with key community partners.

All VCRHYP programs must have active working relationships with the following community partners:
- Local Family Services Division district office
- Local McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons
- Local Youth Development Program

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[15] Runaway and Homeless Youth: A Rule by the Children and Families Administration

Additionally, it is *highly recommended* that VCRHYP programs have active working relationships with the following types of community programs/service providers in their local areas:

- Mental health care providers – such as a [designated mental health agency](#)
- Physical health care providers – such as a [federally qualified health center](#)
- Family planning and support for pregnant & parenting youth – such as [Planned Parenthood](#) or a [Parent Child Center](#)
- Substance abuse assessment and treatment providers – such as a [substance use disorder counselor/program](#)
- Employment information, job readiness, and support services – such as a Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) [Career Resource Center](#), a Vocational Rehabilitation [office](#) or school [Transition Counselor](#), a Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR) [office](#), an Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN) [provider](#), a Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) [office](#), or a Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) program
- Housing coordination and support services – such as a [Continuum of Care](#), a [Community Action Agency](#), or a [community shelter](#)
- Juvenile justice system and law enforcement – such as a Balanced & Restorative Justice (BARJ) [district office](#), a Vermont Court Diversion [program](#), a [Community Justice Center](#), or your local police department
- Domestic & sexual violence supports and human trafficking intervention services – such as a Vermont Network [organization](#)
- Economic supports – such as an Economic Services Division (ESD) [district office](#)
- Educational supports – such as a Vermont Agency of Education [local service provider](#) or [career and technical education provider](#), a school's [Vermont Student Assistance Corporation](#) (VSAC) counselor, or your local schools
- Multicultural organizations – such as organizations/programs providing support and services to youth minority populations

Each time a new federal grant application is submitted by VCRHYP, member agencies complete a Community Service Linkages Memorandum of Understanding. This document can be a helpful tool in determining which community partners your agency is already connected with. Copies of your agency's most recent Community Service Linkages Memorandum of Understanding document can be requested by emailing Ari Kisler at akisler@vcrhyp.org.

2.5   Shelter Models

There are many ways to provide emergency or transitional shelter to youth in VCRHYP programs. Shelter is a core service that all member agencies must provide; the models that work best for your program will depend on the needs of your population, your funding sources, and other community-specific factors.

Residential shelter:

The residential model can be used for either emergency or transitional shelter. This model is sometimes referred to as "congregate care" because it provides shelter to youth in a setting shared with other youth. Residential shelters may be set up either with shared bedrooms and shared common areas (kitchen, bathroom, etc.) or private bedrooms and shared common areas (kitchen, bathroom, etc.). Single Room Occupancies (SROs) are considered residential shelter if there are any shared common areas for youth living there (e.g. SROs with private bathrooms, but shared kitchens).

The following rules apply to all of VCRHYP's residential shelters:
- An emergency preparedness plan must be in place
- Required to be licensed as a [Commissioner Designated Shelter](#) (CDS) or a [Residential Treatment Program](#) (RTP) if providing shelter to youth under the age of 18
    - **Note**: parenting youth over the age of 18 may be sheltered in non-licensed residential shelters with their own children
- Youth under the age of 18 can be housed for a **maximum** of 21 consecutive nights, with the following exception:
    - Youth who are emancipated (and therefore considered to be their own legal guardian) are not restricted to the 21-night maximum

Host home:

The host home model can be used for either emergency or transitional shelter and provides home-like, non-institutional environments located in the community.[16] Agencies are responsible for the recruitment, training, and maintenance of their host homes (including determining the rate at which providers will be paid). Any member agency with a Basic Center Program that does not have a residential shelter must have at least one host home available to youth under the age of 18.

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[16] [Ending Youth Homelessness: Promising Program Models guidebook](#), HUD Exchange

The following rules apply to all of VCRHYP's host homes:
- The following background checks are required for all adults residing in a host home:[17] state or tribal criminal history records, including fingerprint checks; Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history records, including fingerprint checks; child abuse and neglect state registry check; sex offender registry check; and any other checks required under state or tribal law
- An emergency preparedness plan must be in place
- Required to be licensed as a [Commissioner Designated Shelter](#) if providing shelter to youth <u>under the age of 18</u>
  - **Note**: parenting youth over the age of 18 may be sheltered in non-licensed host homes with their own children
- Youth <u>under the age of 18</u> can be housed for a **maximum** of 21 consecutive nights, with the following exception:
  - Youth who are emancipated (and therefore considered to be their own legal guardian) are not restricted to the 21-night maximum

Brokered housing:

The brokered housing model is frequently used for youth who do not want to enter a residential shelter or use a host home. Shelter is considered to be brokered housing if an agency assists a youth in setting up or maintaining a place to stay with someone other than their legal guardian. Brokered housing can be with extended family members or non-related adults that the youth identifies as being safe and supportive. Brokered housing does not meet a Basic Center Program's requirement to have a residential shelter or host home available to youth under the age of 18, but it can be used to supplement these shelter options.

The following rules apply to all of VCRHYP's brokered housing:
- Written permission from a legal guardian must be obtained before setting up brokered housing for a youth <u>under the age of 18</u>
- Brokered housing is <u>not</u> federally-recognized as BCP shelter, so youth in this type of housing would be considered to be receiving prevention services rather than shelter services
- Brokered housing does not qualify as transitional shelter for youth in Transitional Living Programs, as the housing is not rented or owned by an agency

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[17] [Runaway and Homeless Youth: A Rule by the Children and Families Administration](#)

Master-leased/ agency-owned apartments:

Whether located at a variety of locations (sometimes called "scattered site apartments") or all in one building, master-leased/ agency-owned apartments can be used for transitional shelter in the Transitional Living Program. In order to qualify for this housing model, the agency must hold the lease for an apartment or own the unit/ building it is located in. Apartments must be fully contained, meaning that they are private and have their own kitchen and bathroom facilities. Studio apartments (without a separate bedroom) are allowable. All member agencies that receive federal TLP funds must have master-leased or agency-owned apartments if they do <u>not</u> have a residential shelter/ host home that can be used to provide transitional shelter.

The following rules apply to all of VCRHYP's master-leased/ agency-owned apartments:
- An emergency preparedness plan must be in place for <u>each</u> location

2.6   Aftercare

Aftercare, designed to ensure a youth's ongoing safety after they leave a VCRHYP program, offers continuity and supportive follow-up to youth and their family.[18] Staff members follow up with youth and/ or families whose cases have closed, to ensure they are still doing well, offer additional information/ resources/ referrals, provide ongoing connections to the agency, and remind them that they may re-engage with the program if they need too.

Best practices:
Best practice is to start planning for aftercare with clients from the start of services. An Aftercare Plan (*discussed more in [section 3.3]*) is one way that service providers can engage in this conversation and VCRHYP suggests beginning to create an Aftercare Plan with each youth as close to intake as is possible. Often times, youth or families disengage before all of their program goals are met and before you may consider their case closed. If you have had conversations about aftercare with the client early in your work with them, they will know that they can re-engage with services anytime they need to, even if they didn't complete their work with you before. They will also know what other resources might be available to them if they want to seek help elsewhere. As a client's case comes to a close, revisit and update, if necessary, the Aftercare Plan with them and ensure they have a copy of the plan you created together.

Aftercare can be a really creative way to offer ongoing connections to youth and even develop youth leadership opportunities. Here are some examples of what aftercare can look like, besides a follow-up call or sending a letter:
- Inviting a youth to an ongoing peer support group
- Youth participating in a Youth Advisory Board for your agency
- Inviting youth and families to help with outreach activities, like tabling at the local farmers market
- Holding an alumni potluck dinner biannually and inviting former program participants
- Inviting youth to come in and help stuff envelopes for a giving campaign, and offering them a stipend to help
- Holding a community service day where you spruce up a local park and inviting families and youth who have worked with your agency

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[18] Runaway and Homeless Youth: A Rule by the Children and Families Administration

Tracking aftercare:
Collecting certain data on aftercare is required by FYSB for both Basic Center Programs and Transitional Living Programs. Required data collection and timelines are different for each program and may change with each new round of FYSB funding. Data is tracked by each member agency and then submitted to VCRHYP for entry into HMIS *(learn more about this process in [section 3.1](#)).*

Basic Center Program aftercare tracking requirements:
Aftercare data must be collected and submitted to VCRHYP 1 month, 3 months, and 6 months after a youth exits from either BCP Prevention or BCP Shelter. Youth care workers should plan on reaching out to youth and their families, if appropriate, at each of these intervals to determine if:
- o the youth is living with their family
- o the youth reports feeling secure, safe, and stable in their housing
- o the youth reports having one or more supportive relationships with an adult
- o the youth and/ or their family is in need of aftercare services

This data is collected on the Aftercare Contact Report *(see [section 3.3](#) for more information)* and is used by VCRHYP to report on performance measures to FYSB. If a youth re-enters a Basic Center Program while they are still within the window for aftercare, youth care workers are no longer required to collect and report data to VCRHYP. Aftercare tracking will be required to begin again when the youth exits the program in the future.

Transitional Living Program aftercare tracking requirements:
Aftercare data must be collected and submitted to VCRHYP 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months after a youth exits from TLP. A minimum of two contacts within the first 3 months from a youth's exit is required. Youth care workers should plan on reaching out to youth at each of these intervals to determine if:
- o the youth reports being stable housed
- o the youth is in need of aftercare services

This data is collected on the Aftercare Contact Report *(see [section 3.3](#) for more information)* and is used by VCRHYP to report on performance measures to FYSB. If a youth re-enters a Transitional Living Program while they are still within the window for aftercare, youth care workers are no longer required to collect and report data to VCRHYP. Aftercare tracking will be required to begin again when the youth exits the program in the future.

2.7   Further Reading & Resources

Here are a variety of resources you may find helpful; some of them appeared as hyperlinks throughout the section.

- Center for the Study of Social Policy's [Youth Thrive page](#)
- Child Trends' Research-to-Results Brief on [Ways to Promote the Positive Development of Children and Youth](#)
- RHYTTAC's [Tip Sheet: Harm Reduction in RHY Programs](#)
- FYSB's [RHYIssues@aGlance: What is Harm Reduction for Youth?](#)
- RHYTTAC's [Adopting a Trauma Informed Care Model resource guide](#)
- ACF's [Runaway and Homeless Youth: Final Rule](#)
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's [Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change](#)
- Vermont Agency of Human Services' [Department for Children and Families page](#)
- Vermont Agency of Education's [Homeless Education page](#)
- U.S. Education Department's [McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Notice](#)
- Vermont [Youth Development Program page](#)
- Vermont Department for Children and Families' [Licensing Regulations for Commissioner-Designated Shelter Programs in Vermont](#)
- Vermont Department for Children and Families' [Licensing Regulations for Residential Treatment Programs in Vermont](#)
- HUD Exchange's [Ending Youth Homelessness: Promising Program Models guidebook](#)

PROCEDURES

3.1   Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

All VCRHYP member agencies are required to collect and record data for clients in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). VCRHYP uses this database to collect all of the information needed to report to our federal funder. In order to ease the data entry burden for direct service providers, VCRHYP does centralized data entry into the system on behalf of member agencies. This means that member agencies will not need to use HMIS directly, but will be responsible for gathering data from clients and working with VCRHYP to keep that information up-to-date in the system.

*Here is a summary of how the **centralized data entry process** works:*
- Service provider meets with a client and completes forms with them *(see section 3.3 for more information about VCRHYP's forms)*
- Service provider scans forms and sends them to VCRHYP's Assistant Director, using VCRHYP's encrypted email service, VIRTRU *(see section 3.2 for more information about VIRTRU)*
- VCRHYP's Assistant Director uses the forms to open, update, or close the client in HMIS
- If the VCRHYP Assistant Director needs to follow up with the service provider about missing or unclear information, they will communicate through email using a Follow-Up Request Form
  - The service provider is responsible for responding to Follow-Up Requests in a timely manner
- Once information has been successfully entered into HMIS, VCRHYP's Assistant Director will let the service provider know (and will provide them with the client's HMIS ID number if this was a client who was just opened in the system)
- Service providers are responsible for collecting data from their clients when necessary *(see section 3.3 for more information about when data needs to be collected and which forms to use)*
- Occasionally, VCRHYP's Assistant Director will be focused on database clean up and will use these opportunities to contact service providers about particular clients who need updated data, who should have been closed out of the system, etc.

HMIS Provider Types:
VCRHYP enters data into HMIS under three different provider types, as required by FYSB. It is important that all staff members who are completing paperwork and sending it to VCRHYP understands these provider types and which youth should be in HMIS under each type.

- **BCP Shelter** – Youth must be open in this HMIS provider type if they meet the eligibility for BCP (*discussed in [section 1.6](#)*) and are being sheltered in an agency's residential shelter or a host home (*discussed in [section 2.5](#)*). A youth can only be open in this provider type for up to 21 nights; afterwards they must be switched to a different provider type if you are continuing to work with them.

- **BCP Prevention** – Youth must be open in this HMIS provider type if they meet the eligibility for BCP funds (*discussed in [section 1.6](#)*) and are not being sheltered in an agency's residential shelter or a host home. Youth who are being sheltered in brokered housing and who meet the eligibility for BCP funds must be open in this provider type (*discussed in [section 2.5](#)*).

- **TLP** – Youth must be open in this HMIS provider type if they meet the eligibility for TLP (*discussed in [section 1.7](#)*) and are being provided transitional shelter in an agency's residential shelter, a host home, or a master-leased/ agency-owned apartment (*discussed in [section 2.5](#)*). A youth can only be open in this provider type up to the maximum time allowable with federal TLP *funds (discussed in [section 1.7](#)).*

The VCRHYP administrative team is available to help you make provider type determinations, if needed. The HMIS Provider Type Flowchart (included in the Appendix) is also available to help guide you through this process.

3.2   VIRTRU Email Encryption

VCRHYP uses an email encryption service called VIRTRU to protect confidential client information. Some member agencies have their own email encryption services, but many do not. With VIRTRU, staff at member agencies can encrypt their emails that contain confidential information when they are communicating with VCRHYP. In order to do so, staff members need to <u>reply</u> to an encrypted email sent to them by VCRHYP. When an encrypted email is received, staff members will need to verify that they are the intended recipients by following the on-screen prompts. Once that is done on a device (such as a phone, laptop, etc.) they will not need to do it again. Now staff members will have the ability to reply within that encrypted email thread and encrypt their own email.

Client data for entry into HMIS should **<u>ALWAYS</u>** be sent in an encrypted email, either using VIRTRU or your agency's own program. Staff members who need to encrypt data can always contact its recipient at VCRHYP and ask that they initiate an encrypted email thread so that the data can be sent as an encrypted reply.

3.3   VCRHYP Forms

Member agencies all have their own paperwork and client file systems, but certain VCRHYP forms are required to be used as well. VCRHYP created these forms to support our centralized data entry process and it is expected that service providers use them. A full VCRHYP Paperwork Manual *(included in the Appendix)* goes into further detail about each form and explains when they each should or shouldn't be used. The most recent version of all forms can be found in the [Resources and Assistance](#) section of our website by clicking on "For Member Agencies."

*Here is a quick overview of the **VCRHYP forms:***

- **Intake Assessment** – to be completed when a client first enters a program or if they return to a program after more than a month has passed since they exited; this form collects all the information required to open the youth in HMIS, along with additional questions that VCRHYP, along with our member agencies, have identified as important to ask

- **Plan of Care** – to be completed within 30 business days of intake and every 6 months the youth is in the program; VCRHYP does not require that member agencies use the VCRHYP Plan of Care template, but it is a requirement that all youth have an active Plan of Care on file *(more information about the requirements for a Plan of Care can be found in [section 3.4](#))*

- **Resiliency Assessment** – to be completed as part of Plan of Care development to inform strengths, barriers, and goals; this form must be kept in the youth's file, either in hard copy or electronically, so that it can be reviewed by the VCRHYP administrative team during site visits

- **Quarterly Update** – to be completed once a quarter to report on changes in data, new service connections, brokered housing, and education/ employment status; this form collects all information required to update the youth in HMIS

- **Exit Assessment** – to be completed when a client is exiting a program; this form collects all the information required to close a youth in HMIS

- **Project Reentry form** – to be completed in place of an Intake Assessment if a youth is reentering a program they exited from less than one month before

- **Project Switch form** – to be completed in place of an Exit Assessment and Intake Assessment if a youth is moving from one HMIS provider type to another (e.g. moving from BCP Prevention to BCP Shelter)
  - o **Note**: A full Exit Assessment and Intake Assessment must be completed instead of a Project Switch form if a youth is moving from a BCP Prevention/ BCP Shelter provider type to a TLP provider type or vice versa. This is because different data elements are important for the two programs and completing a full Intake Assessment ensures we have the necessary data for our reports. A new Plan of Care should be done in this case too, as the goals of the youth will most likely have changed.

- **Aftercare Plan** – to be completed when a client is exiting services; VCRHYP does not require that member agencies use the VCRHYP Aftercare Plan template, but it is a requirement that an Aftercare Plan is completed with all youth, when possible *(see section 2.6 for information on best practices)*

- **Aftercare Contact Report** – to be completed at pre-determined intervals after a client is no longer being served in BCP or TLP *(see section 2.6 for more information)*; this form will be sent to the service provider when it is required, along with instructions; this form collects the information we are required to report to our federal funders regarding aftercare contacts

3.4   Plan of Care Development

A Plan of Care (POC), sometimes called a treatment or service plan, is defined by [ACF's final rule](#) as a written plan of action based on the assessment of client needs and strengths and engaging in joint problem solving with the client. It identifies problems, sets goals, and describes a strategy for achieving those goals. To the extent possible, the plan should incorporate the use of trauma informed, evidence-based, or evidence-informed interventions. As appropriate, the plan should address both physical and mental safety issues.

Plan of Care requirements:
- All youth served in Basic Center Programs or Transitional Living Programs must have an individualized POC developed within 30 days of intake.
- POCs should be updated every six months a youth remains in the program.
- POCs must be signed by a licensed practitioner, the direct service provider, and the youth. If appropriate, legal guardians should sign the POC as well.
- Each POC must contain a goal related to stable housing.
  - POCs for youth in BCPs must contain a goal related to family reunification/ stabilization or relationship management.
  - POCs for youth in TLPs must contain a goal related to independent living.
- POCs for youth in TLPs must also contain a goal related to education or employment.
- POCs should address risks identified through the VCRHYP Resiliency Assessment and other assessments your agency utilizes.
- POCs should build on a youth's strengths and include what access to internal and external resources the youth has that can help with goal achievement. It is expected that the youth help develop their own goals and indicators of progress (action steps) with support from their service provider.
- POC goals should be created following the SMART objective framework *(see infographic on the next page). You can also learn more about the SMART objective framework and access practice tools [here](#).*

Setting SMART Goals

S Specific → You goal should be as specific as possible and answer the questions: **What** is your goal? **How** often or how much? **Where** will it take place?

M Measurable → **How** will you measure your goal? Measurement will give you **specific feedback** and hold you accountable.

A Attainable → Goals should push you, but it is important that they are **achievable**. Are your goals attainable?

R Realistic → Is your **goal and timeframe realistic** for the goal you have established?

T Timely → Do you have a **timeframe** listed in your SMART goal? This helps you be **accountable** and helps in **motivation**.

3.5   Reporting Requirements

Member agencies are required to periodically submit information to VCRHYP so that we can report to our funder. Much of the information we need we can get from HMIS, but there are still certain things we need from service providers.

FYSB BCP and TLP biannual reports:
Federal grant reports are due every April 15th and October 15th from each member agency. VCRHYP compiles the information and submits Progress Performance Reports to FYSB. VCHRYP will ensure that agencies have the reporting form on an annual basis. It is also vital that all HMIS data is up-to-date through March (for our April report) and September (for our October report) at that time. Reminders will be sent to programs, but if you are the person in charge of reporting, we recommend you block out a few hours each April and October to complete those reports.

Point-in-Time Count reports:
Service providers who offer emergency shelter or transitional housing are required to provide information on the utilization of those beds once a year as part of the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. The PIT Count is conducted nationwide and takes place in the month of January (learn more about it [here](#)). Since the data needed to participate in the PIT Count is pulled from the HMIS database, VCRHYP reports on behalf of each of its member agencies. However, each member agency must work with VCRHYP to ensure that the information contained in the report is accurate. VCRHYP's Assistant Director will reach out to all member agencies ahead of the PIT Count to provide instructions.

3.6   Site Visits

VCRHYP completes site visits at each member agency once a year. The administrative team reviews a collection of client files to check for program eligibility, necessary file documentation for grant compliance, evidence of VCRHYP's service theory *(see [section 2.1](#))*, and up-to-date data in HMIS. These site visits provide ongoing opportunities for the administrative team to provide technical assistance and training to sites.

What to expect before the visit:
Site visits will be scheduled well in advance to ensure that all necessary staff members are available. Shortly before VCRHYP's visit date, member agencies will receive a list of HMIS client ID numbers for the files and the date range that will be reviewed.

What to expect on the day of the visit:
On the day of the review, the administrative team will be on location and will need access to the specified client files. They will need a quiet workspace to complete the review, as well as access to the Internet. If client files are stored electronically, they will need access to that system, as well as some basic information about how to navigate it. It is helpful to have a variety of program staff available for questions. Program staff and leadership must be available for an entry and debrief meeting with VCRHYP immediately following the file review.

What to expect after the visit:
Member agencies will receive a written report on the results of the visit, along with information about next steps, if they are required. The report will include a summary of the files reviewed, notes about file documentation, and information about the site's level of grant compliance. Sites will be found to be in full compliance, in compliance with follow-up needed, or not in compliance. If not in compliance, corrective action will be required and discussed.