



VERMONT COALITION
OF RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS

Basic Center Program - Request for Proposals

The Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP) seeks proposals from public and/or nonprofit entities to act as a subcontractor for our Basic Center Program (BCP) in the Rutland County area for FFY21 and FFY22. Funding passed to the selected subcontractor has been awarded to VCRHYP by the Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) of the Administration for Children & Families under the Department for Health and Human Services. The selected subcontractor will be eligible to continue subcontracting with VCRHYP beyond FFY22 provided they are in good standing and VCRHYP receives sufficient funding levels from FYSB in future grant cycles.

Note: VCRHYP is also [seeking proposals for our Transitional Living Program](#) in the Rutland County area and encourage interested applicants to apply for both projects.

Brief project description: Project supports runaway and homeless youth, 12-17 years old, with short-term emergency shelter, counseling, case management, and home-based prevention services to assist them in reunifying with family or achieving stability in other safe living arrangements.

Annual funding availability: \$13,255

Annual match requirement: \$1,774

Annual service targets:

- *Emergency shelter, counseling, case management, and aftercare services:* 4 youth
- *Prevention services (including counseling and case management):* 2 youth

Applicants should review the project overview contained in this document and then complete the following:

- Basic Center Program Application
- BCP Budget & Justification Worksheet

Questions about the application process or requests for technical assistance in developing your application should be directed to Bethany Pombar at bpombar@vcrhyp.org

Bidder's meetings will be held on June 17, 2:00-3:00pm and July 8, 10:00-11:00am. Contact Bpombar@vcrhyp.org to register.

Completed applications and budget worksheets are due to the grant review team, via Ari Kisler (akisler@vcrhyp.org), by 4pm on July 31, 2020. Selected proposals will be notified by September 1, 2020.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT GOAL & VISION

Goal: Help runaway and homeless youth, ages 12-17, establish healthy and stable relationships with their family or identify safe, alternative living arrangements.

Vision: Establish or strengthen community-based programs that meet the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth, 12-17 years old, and their families.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Youth are eligible to be served by the project if they:

- are under the age of 18; and
- are not in the legal custody of the child welfare/juvenile justice system; and
- have run away¹, been pushed out of the home, or are otherwise homeless²; or
- have threatened to run away or are at risk of being pushed out of the home; and
- have no safe alternative living arrangement.

Projects must clearly document a youth's eligibility for the program, including documenting how it was determined that the youth was at risk of being pushed out of the home, running away, or becoming homeless. Documentation may include referral forms, intake paperwork, and/or contact notes.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Consistent with the statutory mandates set forth in the [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act](#) (RHYA), the regulatory requirements set forth in the [RHY Rule](#), and in alignment with [VCRHYP's Program Standards](#), BCP projects provide the following components:

1) Emergency Shelter: Projects provide youth with temporary, emergency shelter for up to (but not exceeding) 21 days, in accordance with VT licensing laws.

Annual target: 4 youth

Shelter models: Shelter is provided through beds located in congregate care shelters or host homes.

- Congregate care shelter: A shelter type, not family home, that combines living quarters and restroom facilities with centralized dining services shared living

¹ Defined as: An individual who is less than 18 years of age and who absents themselves from home or place of legal residence without the permission of a parent or legal guardian.

² Defined as: An individual for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

spaces, and access to social and recreational activities.

- Congregate care shelters must accommodate no fewer than 4 and not more than 20 youth under the age of 18 in a single structure.
- Host home: A family or single adult home or domicile, other than that of a parent or permanent legal guardian, that provides shelter to youth.
 - When recruiting host home providers, projects must:
 - Conduct in-depth interviews with candidates
 - Check personal references
 - Conduct required background checks (see pgs. 7-8 for list of requirements)
 - Inspect homes to ensure living space is adequate, clean, and safe

Requirements for shelter:

- Shelter services are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through a publicly available telephone number.
 - *Note: An answering service may be used. A recorded message is not sufficient.*
- Projects must maintain a [Commissioner-Designated Shelter \(CDS\) license](#) through the Vermont Department for Children and Families (*please note: CDS regulations are in the process of being updated*). VCRHYP will help connect selected applicants to this process.
- Shelter cannot be used for the purpose of providing respite care.
 - Respite care is defined as providing parents and other caregivers with short-term child care services that offer temporary relief. It is not considered respite care if a youth is forced to leave their residence and has no safe alternative living arrangement.
- Staff immediately notify a youth's parent, guardian, or custodian that the youth has entered shelter. If immediate contact is not possible, notification is made within 24 hours of the youth's shelter entry.
 - If it determined that it is not in the best interest of the youth to contact the parent, guardian, or custodian, if a BCP is unable to locate them, or if the youth refuses to disclose that contact information, the agency must: inform another adult identified by the youth that the youth has entered shelter, inform DCF, and document why it is not in the youth's best interest or why the agency is unable to contact the parent/guardian/custodian.
- Transportation to the shelter is available, as needed by youth, and barriers to entry are low enough that it is easily accessible by youth.

- Staff are prepared and trained to interact with runaway, homeless, and street youth, and youth in crisis and youth victims of human trafficking (sex and labor), and other type of victimization (i.e., sexual assault, sexual and physical abuse).
 - Shelter services and other referrals for trafficked youth should be carefully identified by the appropriate staff.

- An exit plan for each youth is developed within 3 days of their entry into shelter and includes:
 - Options for where the youth will live at exit from shelter
 - Information about the youth's support network
 - The best way for staff to reach youth after they have exited
 - How staff will support youth through aftercare contacts and follow-up services (see pg. 5 for more on aftercare)

- Projects ensure youth have safe and appropriate exits when leaving shelter.
 - Safe and appropriate exits are exits to: the private residence of a parent, guardian, another adult relative, or another adult that has the youth's best interest in mind and can provide a stable arrangement; another residential program if the youth's transition is consistent with the youth's needs; independent living if consistent with the youth's needs and abilities.
 - Safe and appropriate exits are NOT exits to: the street or place not meant for habitation; a locked correctional institute or detention center if the youth became involved in activities that lead to this exit after entering the project; another residential program if the youth's transition is inconsistent with youth's needs; an unknown or unspecified other living situation.

2) Counseling: Projects provide youth in shelter with individual, family, and group counseling, as appropriate. Counseling is defined as the provision of guidance, support, advice, and referrals for services including, but not limited to, mental health services.

Annual target: 4 youth

Requirements for counseling:

- Any treatment or referral to treatment that aims to change someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is prohibited.

3) Case Management: Projects identify the needs of youth in shelter and, as appropriate, arrange, coordinate, monitor, evaluate, and advocate for a package of services to meet those needs.

Annual target: 4 youth

Requirements for case management:

- Projects implement standardized methods to assess eligibility and the services required to meet the immediate needs of youth.
 - Screening tools should be evidence-based or evidence-informed and able to identify the unique needs of runaway and homeless youth, such as: physical health, potential victimization, behavioral health, connection to family, safety, access to resources, issue of neglect or abuse, and other risk and protective factors.
 - Screening should guide identification, assistance, and referrals for the delivery of appropriate services.

- Case managers develop, with every youth receiving services, a written service plan based on assessed needs and the youth's input. Case managers engage in joint problem solving with the youth and family (as appropriate) to identify problems, set goals, and describe a strategy for achieving those goals.
 - Initial plans are developed within 3 days of a youth's entry into shelter.
 - Plans should address stable housing, education or employment, permanent connections, and social and emotional wellbeing needs.
 - To the extent possible, the plan should incorporate the use of trauma-informed, evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions.

- Case managers meet with youth at least weekly and document these meetings in case notes.

- Projects have a suitable referral, plan based on an assessment of needs, to ensure youth have access to additional services outside of the program while being served and after program exit.
 - Service linkages should include, but are not limited to: social services, law enforcement, educational services, vocational training and employment training services, welfare, legal services, anti-trafficking agencies, health care programs (including health insurance options), affordable child care, and child education programs.
 - Projects screen all youth for human trafficking and sexual exploitation while they are in the program.

- Projects provide harm reduction services that aim to reduce adverse health, social, and economic consequences of high-risk behaviors to include reducing the risk of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, assault, or substance use.

4) Aftercare Services: Projects provide additional services beyond the period of a youth's shelter stay that offer continuous and supportive follow-up, including: encouraging youth (and families, as appropriate) to follow up on referrals to other

services; making additional referrals, as needed; assessing if stable housing is still in place; gathering data and feedback about each youth's progress; reassuring youth that additional supporting are available from the program for as long as they are eligible.

Annual target: 4 youth

Requirements for aftercare services:

- Services are provided for at least 3 months after a youth exits shelter.
- Staff contact providers referrals were made to (if consent is provided by the youth and their legal guardian) in order to ensure that needed services have been provided.

5) Prevention Services: Projects provide services to youth and/or their families for the express purposes of preventing youth from running away or otherwise becoming homeless. Services include: individual, family, or group counseling (as described above); case management (as described above); diversion from emergency shelter; and assistance finding and/or maintaining safe housing.

Annual target: 2 youth

Requirements for prevention services:

- Services are provided prior to a shelter stay and/or after at least 3 months of aftercare services have been provided to a youth who accessed shelter.
- Staff provide services in the residences of families, to the extent practicable.
- Written service plans should be developed within 30 business days of the youth entering services and updated at least every 6 months the youth is in the program.
- Project ensures caseloads remain sufficiently low to allow for intensive (5-20 hours per week) involvement with each family receiving home-based services.

6) Outreach: Projects perform outreach to locate runaway and homeless youth under the age of 18 and to coordinate activities with other organizations serving the same or similar client populations.

Requirements for outreach:

- Projects conduct continual, intense, individualized engagement with runaway, homeless, and street-youth under the age of 18.
- Projects develop an outreach plan detailing where staff locate youth, including

the general areas and locations where youth congregate, and how face-to-face contact with youth will occur.

- Projects inform the community about available services through social media, public service announcements, formal and informal presentations, and collaboration with other organizations.
- Projects develop and distribute materials providing information about services.
- Projects coordinate with their local CoC to ensure that eligible youth in need of emergency shelter are quickly connected to BCP.

7) Gateway Services: When necessary and appropriate to facilitate the delivery of required shelter and services, projects provide basic need items and services, including: food, drink, clothing, personal safety information, transportation, and hygiene products.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Consistent with the statutory mandates set forth in the [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act](#) (RHYA), the regulatory requirements set forth in the [RHY Rule](#), and in alignment with [VCRHYP's Program Standards](#), BCP projects ensure the following requirements are met:

- 1) Crisis Line:** Projects (or the agency they are a part of) must have a 24-hour/7-day a week crisis line to ensure youth have immediate access to shelter and services.
- Crisis lines can be maintained through on-call schedules, utilization of answering services, or MOUs with other community partners as approved by VCRHYP.
 - Case managers and those assigned to crisis coverage responds to crisis calls immediately and non-crisis calls within 24 hours.
 - In non-crisis situations, case managers schedule initial meetings at times and locations convenient for the youth.
 - When youth need immediate shelter, staff arrange transportation to a shelter bed (managed by the agency or elsewhere in the community) or host home. If immediate shelter is unavailable, staff work with youth and their families to identify an alternative short-term option through their social networks and/ or coordinate with DCF and law enforcement to ensure the youth's safety needs are met.

2) Background Checks: Projects must ensure required background checks are completed on all employees, contractors, volunteers, and consultants who have regular

and unsupervised private contact with youth, as well as on all adults residing in or operating host homes. Required background checks include:

- State or tribal criminal history records, including fingerprint checks
- Sex offender registry check
- FBI criminal history records, including fingerprint checks
- Child abuse and neglect registry check
- As appropriate to job functions, verification of educational credentials, employment experiences, driving records (for those who will transport youth), and professional licensing records

3) Emergency Preparedness Plans: Projects must have a plan for routine preventative maintenance of facilities, as well as preparedness, response, and recovery efforts for each location (including host homes).

- The plan should contain:
 - A list and location of all emergency equipment located at each location
 - Evacuation plans for each location, which designates the site of an alternative location
 - Strategies for addressing security, food, medical supplies, and notification of the youth's legal guardian, as appropriate.
 - Instructions regarding the process of informing program leadership and the VCRHYP administrative team when an evacuation or disaster occurs
 - Instructions for completing an incident report
- For projects that use host homes, plans also include:
 - Information on emergency/ first aid equipment that must be available at each area housing youth
 - Communication plans to contact the BCP case manager in the event of an emergency
 - Site-specific evacuation plans
- Youth and host home providers review emergency plans and the location of emergency equipment upon assuming residence.
- BCP case managers check equipment to ensure proper working order on a regular basis

4) Staff Training: Projects must ensure that all paid and volunteer workers are trained on the Core Competencies of Youth Workers necessary to carry out the objectives and activities of the project.

- The Core Competencies of Youth Workers are: professionalism, applied positive youth development approach, cultural and human diversity, applied human development, relationship and communication, development practice methods.

- Training topics shall include, but are not limited to: positive youth development, trauma-informed care, evidence-informed practices, street outreach intervention, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, harm reduction, assessment and case management, worker safety, understanding the diversity and culture of life on the street, safe and ethical practices, and community resources for well-being and self-sufficiency.
 - Host home providers should, at a minimum, be trained on substance abuse, trauma-informed care, positive youth development and setting/maintaining personal boundaries.
- Procedures must be established for the training of project staff in all confidentiality requirements.

5) Staff Supervision: Projects provide adequate supervision of all staff.

- Projects have written procedures regarding employee supervision and annual evaluations.
- Case supervisors review current cases and individual service plans on a monthly basis to ensure quality/ coordinated services.
- Projects must have safety protocols for workers.

6) Governance and Fiscal Controls: Organizations must have a governance structure, fiscal control measures, and accountability procedures.

7) Confidentiality: Projects may not disclose records maintained on individual youth without the consent of the youth and parent or legal guardian, with the exception of disclosing records to a government agency involved in the disposition of criminal charges and disclosing de-identified records to an agency for compiling statistical records.

- Projects must ensure that all confidential, sensitive information and records will be properly handled and safeguarded.
- Youth served by a BCP project shall have the right to review their records, to correct a record or file a statement of disagreement, and to be apprised of the individuals who have reviewed their records.

8) Technical assistance, monitoring, and training: Projects agree to receive and participate in technical assistance, monitoring, and training as recommended by VCRHYP and federal staff.

- BCP staff attend statewide grantee meetings hosted by VCRHYP.
- New BCP staff are connected with VCRHYP for orientation and training.

9) Child welfare collaboration: Projects should have an agreement or referral protocol in place with their local DCF district office that clarifies roles and responsibilities and defines the provision of services at the time youth enter shelter.

- Projects develop and implement a written policy for addressing youth who have run away from foster care placement or correctional institutions, in accordance with federal, state, or local laws or regulations that apply to these situations.
- Projects also take steps to ensure that youth who are or should be under the legal jurisdiction of the juvenile justice or child welfare systems obtain and receive services from those systems until such time as they are released.
 - *Note: Projects may serve youth connected with the child welfare/juvenile justice system, so long as those youth are not in the legal custody of those systems and otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for BCPs.*

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Projects operate in alignment with the following service philosophies:

- **Positive Youth Development:** Projects use and integrate into their operations the principles of positive youth development, including healthy messages, safe and structured places, adult role models, skill development, and opportunities to serve others.
- **Trauma-Informed:** Projects design activities in such a way that prevents re-traumatization. Services respond to behavioral problems as maladaptive coping mechanisms in order to help a youth reframe their life narrative from one of victim to resilient survivor by creating a low anxiety atmosphere characterized by high levels of trust.
- **Evidence-Informed Practices:** Projects incorporate practices with evidence of effectiveness.
- **Social Support and Relationship Capacity Building:** Projects include strategies for helping youth build protective factors such as connections with schools, employment, health care, legal services, appropriate family members, and other caring adults.
- **Understanding Experiences:** Projects address how youth frame what has happened to them in the past and help youth positively shape their beliefs about the future.
- **Developmentally Appropriate:** Projects are attuned to the developmental impact of negative experiences
- **Coping Strategies:** Projects help youth transform maladaptive coping methods into healthier, more productive strategies.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE & REPORTING

VCRHYP tracks project performance through HMIS data and biannual programmatic reports. Projects are required to participate in VCRHYP's centralized data entry process, which consists of case managers completing BCP-specific paperwork and submitting it to VCRHYP for entry into HMIS on the project's behalf. Projects are also required to participate in site monitoring visits by VCRHYP and FYSB.

Core Outcome Areas

Through the provision of temporary, emergency shelter and services, indicators of improvements include, but are not limited to:

1. **Social and Emotional Well-being:** Youth will connect to system of care providers to assist with physical health, substance abuse, mental health, personal safety (e.g., identify potential trafficking situations), and sexual risk behaviors they may face.
2. **Permanent Connections:** Youth will experience ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other social networks.
3. **Education or Employment:** Youth will connect to school or vocational training programs, or improve interviewing skills, job attainment skills, and/or obtain employment.
4. **Safe and Stable Housing:** Youth will transition to safe and stable housing to include moving in with family, when appropriate, or other permanent supportive housing.

Annual Objectives

- 4 youth access safe emergency shelter and are provided with individual, family, and/or group counseling and case management services
- 2 youth receive prevention services to divert them from shelter
- 100% of youth served have their immediate needs met and are screened and assessed to inform their individualized service plan
- 100% of youth served are supported in achieving core outcomes in safe and stable housing, education and employment, permanent connections, and social and emotional well-being
- 100% of youth sheltered are provided with aftercare services for up to 3 months after exit

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Target
Safe and Stable Housing	
Youth leaving BCP shelter will exit to a safe and stable destination.	90%
Youth receiving prevention services will be diverted from entering an emergency shelter and will exit to another safe and stable destination.	85%
Youth leaving shelter are reunited with their family.	60%
Education and Employment	
Youth leaving shelter are attending school, have graduated high school, or have obtained a GED.	60%
Youth leaving shelter are employed or looking for work.	20%
Permanent Connections	
Youth leaving shelter identify at least one supportive adult in their life, outside of BCP staff, to whom they can go for advice or emotional support.	80%
Social and Emotional Well-being	
The average composite score of general health, mental health, and dental health status will be better at exit from BCP shelter than at entry.	100%

Reporting

Projects are required to submit the following reports to VCRHYP on a bi-annual basis in April and October:

- **Financial Report:** Includes an account of the money received from VCRHYP during the reporting period and how it was allocated by the project, an account of the amount and origin of funds used to meet the project's required match, and any remaining unspent funds.
- **Program Implementation Report:** Includes a narrative report on the project's accomplishments, barriers, and future plans.

Site Monitoring

VCRHYP conducts an in-depth site monitoring visit with each project at least once per grant cycle. Additionally, VCRHYP conducts annual performance measure reviews and may require under-performing sites to develop a corrective action plan or participate in additional training/ technical assistance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information about VCRHYP and BCP can be found through the following links:

- [VCRHYP Orientation Manual for Member Agencies and New Employees](#)
- [FYSB Basic Center Program Fact Sheet](#)