

Appendix G

Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs

Program Summary

DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) services are designed to protect runaway and homeless youth and, whenever possible, reunite them with their families. In cases where reunification is not possible, programs help youth progress from crisis and transitional care to independent living arrangements. Services include Street Outreach, borough-based Drop-in Centers, Crisis Services, and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs. The system connects young people to educational and career opportunities while supporting their social-emotional needs.

DYCD also funds two specialized RHY programs. The Homeless Young Adult (HYA) program provides residential services to young adults aged 21-24. The Unity Works program provides education and workforce development services to RHY and youth at risk of homelessness aged 16-24. Unity Works participants identify as LGBTQI+ and are currently not working or underemployed, not in school, or lack essential employment or literacy skills.

Drop-in Centers

Program Summary

Drop-in Centers are resource centers for the whole borough in which they are located. Staff conduct outreach, provide information, and educate the public about youth homelessness and its causes. They also provide a range of direct services for homeless youth and youth at risk for homelessness aged 24 and under and their families. Services include provision of basic amenities (e.g., food, clean clothing, restrooms), crisis intervention, needs assessment, counseling and case management. Drop-in Centers ensure youth can access shelters or other safe locations, help them procure identification documents, offer workshops on life skills and job readiness, and make referrals to health and mental health services, educational and employment training programs, and other relevant resources.

Case Manager Requirements

- Case managers have at least two years of experience serving at-risk youth including assessments, referrals, and other case management services.
- Case managers have bachelor's degrees and access to case support by a staff member with a master's degree and four years of experience.
- Case managers have extensive experience working with City systems such as public assistance, child welfare, education, and housing.
- Case managers participate in training to increase their capacities to effectively serve RHY in a manner that reflects DYCD's core competencies for youth work professionals.

- Case managers are also trained in topics such as safety and emergency procedures, HIV awareness and education, case records and confidentiality, youth development, child abuse prevention/reporting, suicide prevention, cultural diversity awareness, domestic violence, pregnancy prevention and parenting, issues affecting LGBTQ youth, sexual exploitation, substance abuse, and youth with disabilities.

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- Case managers have appropriate cultural sensitivity to provide services to RHY from any background including LGBTQ and sexually exploited youth.

Case Management Standards

- Each Center provides case management services to at least ten percent of the number of youth required to be served annually.
- For a youth referred for case management, a case file is opened and remains open for a minimum of 90 days. If the youth seeks services at a later date, a new case file is opened.
- Case managers develop an Individual Service Plan (ISP) with each youth referred for case management.
- Case managers explore family related issues, talk to youth (and, if possible, to families) about the potential benefits of renewing or strengthening family bonds, and seek opportunities to foster closer family connections.

Crisis Shelters/Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Programs

Program Summary

Crisis Shelters are voluntary residential programs, certified by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) for youth aged 16-20 years. They provide emergency shelter and services with the primary goal of reuniting youth with their families, or, if that is not possible, finding them appropriate longer-term placements. A homeless youth may be referred to a Crisis Shelter by a DYCD-funded Drop-in Center or Street Outreach program or seek services independently. Youth aged 16-17 years receive priority for placement and services. Crisis Shelters house youth for up to 60 days with possible extensions up to 120 days.

TILs are voluntary residential programs that offer transitional housing placements for youth aged 16 to 20 years and in some cases their dependent children. Residents live in a certified cooperative housing setting that allows them maximum responsibility for their daily lives while providing access to onsite counseling and support services. The primary purpose is to equip residents with the social, emotional, and life skills needed to live independently and advance their educational and career goals. Resident youth receive services for up to 24 months.

The Homeless Young Adult (HYA) program provides both Crisis and TIL services to young adults aged 21-24 years.

Case Manager Requirements

- One full-time case manager/counselor is required.
- The case manager/counselor has, at minimum, a bachelor's degree.

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- If neither the onsite supervisor nor the case manager/counselor has a master's degree, he/she would be supported by another staff member in the organization with a master's degree in social work or related field.
- The case manager/counselor has the necessary cultural sensitivity to effectively serve RHY from any background, especially LGBTQ and sexually exploited youth, and has completed training required by RHY regulations.

Case Management Standards

- The case manager provides individual and group counseling and family counseling if necessary to address the needs of youth.
- Case management includes the following components: (1) holistic assessment and development of an Individualized Service Plan (ISP); (2) support and ongoing monitoring of the ISP, working with the participant to meet identified goals; (3) regular review of the ISP with youth to assess progress and make necessary revisions.
- Crisis Shelter staff complete the assessment and develop the ISP within 48 hours of admission. The ISP is reviewed with the youth at least weekly.
- TILs complete the assessment and develop the ISP within 30 days of admission. The ISP is reviewed with youth at least every 60 days.
- Case management/counseling sessions seek opportunities to address family issues and reasons for conflict. Unless inappropriate due to a history of abuse or violence, the case manager adopts strategies to promote family reunification or improve family relationships, including building relationships with wider kinship groups and significant, nonrelated caring adults.
- The case manager helps youth identify appropriate housing placements prior to discharge.
- The case manager obtains written consent from the youth before disclosing any information or discussing recommendations for services with other agencies.
- Case management services are continued for at least 30 days following discharge from a Crisis Shelter and for at least 90 days following discharge from a TIL.

Unity Works

Program Summary

The Unity Works program serves runaway and homeless youth (RHY) and youth at risk for homelessness aged 16-24 years, including youth with disabilities, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, intersex, or other sexual/gender minority (LGBTQI+). Participant youth are

currently not working or underemployed, not in school, or lack essential employment or literacy skills. Unity Works prepares participants for entry-level employment in a career pathway of their choice through a continuum of education and employment services. Those services include literacy instruction, HSE preparation, work-readiness training, paid work experience, industry-recognized credentials, and placement in employment, advanced training, or postsecondary education. Participants also receive comprehensive support services tailored to their needs.

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Case Manager (Navigator) Requirements

- Navigators function as case managers.
- The navigator has a bachelor's degree in social work, counseling, education, or a related field.
- The navigator has a minimum of three years of experience within the last five years providing case management and workforce preparation services to RHY and LGBTQI+ youth.
- The navigator has a minimum of three years of trauma-informed counseling, experience managing caseloads of 20 or more participants, and successful experience creating and maintaining strong working relationships with other organizations for referral, case conferencing, and sharing resources.

Case Management Standards

- At enrollment either the navigator or mental health counselor conducts a comprehensive assessment and works with each participant to develop an Individual Service Plan (ISP).
- Each youth is assigned to a navigator who meets regularly with each participant at a mutually agreed frequency.
- Ideally, each youth works with the same navigator throughout all components of the program.
- The navigator connects participants to services, reassesses and revises the ISPs, and helps with securing participant placements.
- The navigator's responsibilities include case conferencing among program staff and staff of other agencies providing services to the participants, including staff at RHY facilities where youth are living.
- The navigator provides post-exit follow-up services for a period of one year.