

# Take Action Toolkit

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## In-District Advocacy to Prevent and End Youth and Young Family Homelessness



NATIONAL NETWORK  
 *for* **YOUTH**

collaborate • advocate • transform

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# Overview

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## About the National Network for Youth



The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is the nation's leading network of young leaders and youth homelessness providers. NN4Y envisions a world where every young person has a safe place to call home, with multiple opportunities to achieve their fullest potential. Together with our partners, youth homelessness providers, and young people with lived expertise of homelessness, NN4Y transforms systems through centering youth, policy advocacy, and supporting communities.

To learn more, visit [www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org).

## Messaging Guide

To support your advocacy efforts, we've created a [Messaging Guide](#) with customizable resources to help you spread the word about preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Inside, you'll find:

- Graphics for social media and slide decks.
- Effective messaging blurbs that can be used interchangeably in your emails, newsletters, and conversations.
- Sample posts for social media.

We want to get the word out as much as possible. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us directly at [nn4youth@nn4youth.org](mailto:nn4youth@nn4youth.org) if you would like to partner with us to promote these strategies!

[Messaging Guide](#)



# You Have Power. Join Us in Advocacy.

You have power. Whether you are a young person with lived expertise of homelessness, a service provider, a homeless liaison, or an ally, you can and should influence how policies that affect young people are created and implemented. You have the ability to speak directly with your Members of Congress about the issues affecting the youth, young adults, and young families in your community.

You are a constituent of two U.S. Senators and one U.S. House Representative. Engaging and building relationships with them can drive real policy change. While national organizations like the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) play a crucial role in coordinating messaging across states, local service providers and community members have the most influence on legislators, educating and persuading them about the importance of effective solutions to prevent and end youth homelessness. Building strong, intentional relationships with Members of Congress, both in the Senate and the House, is the foundation of effective advocacy.

**This toolkit shares research-backed strategies to help service providers, young people with lived experience, and community members work together to influence federal policy, right from their own states and districts.**

Take action using this and [other NN4Y resources](#) to prevent and end youth homelessness today.

## Youth Homelessness Explained

Every year in the United States, 4.2 million young people and young families ages 12 to 25 experience homelessness in urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities. One in five of those young people ages 18 to 25 have experienced trafficking as well as homelessness. The experience of trafficking at a young age, just as with homelessness, can significantly increase an individual's likelihood of experiencing severe mental health challenges, substance use disorder, and chronic homelessness as an adult. The fight to prevent and end youth homelessness and trafficking is crucial to getting young people on a path to safety and future stability, and to the fight to end chronic adult homelessness.

Youth-specific programs are a lifeline to young people in need. They connect them to education, employment, health care, and teach young people to attain self-sufficiency. However, most communities have minimal access to the life-changing programs and services that help youth and young families exit homelessness for good. Too often, this is due to a significant lack of federal and state investment in programs for young people. This is where our advocacy begins.



## What is In-District Advocacy?

U.S. Senators and House Representatives divide their time between working at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. and working in their state or district. In-district advocacy is engaging with your legislators when they are in their home districts and states. This type of advocacy is a powerful way to build relationships with legislators, educate them on key issues, and influence their positions on legislation.

By advocating in your home districts, you, the constituent, can provide real-world context to policy issues, making them more tangible for legislators and increasing the likelihood of meaningful political action.

In-district advocacy can take many forms. In this toolkit, we will focus on two strategies that are easy to carry out and highly impactful.

### Two Key Strategies



#### **Meet with legislators and their staff at their local offices.**

- Increase the likelihood that you will get face-to-face time with your legislators.
- Build or strengthen relationships with legislators and their staff.
- Educate legislators and their staff on local needs and solutions related to youth homelessness and trafficking.
- Request specific policy actions to improve prevention and response efforts.



#### **Host a site visit to show the impact of programs and services firsthand.**

- Bring youth programs to life in a way that statistics and talking points cannot.
- Help legislators connect complex federal policy to real-world impact in their communities.
- Offer a deeper understanding of youth homelessness and the services available in their districts or states.
- Strengthen relationships with legislators and their staff through shared experiences and open dialogue.

# Research-Based Advocacy and Engagement Strategies

The [Congressional Management Foundation](#) identifies three key ways to effectively influence legislators: engaging their heart, engaging their mind, and highlighting the political ramifications of the issue. When preparing to speak with your legislators and their staff, include elements from each of these three strategies. Some people are more persuaded by some of these strategies than others—as you build a relationship and get to know your legislators and their teams, you will learn what is most effective in communicating with them.

## 1. Engage the Heart

Personal stories and experiences create emotional connections. Consider what emotions—hope, urgency, empathy, frustration with systemic barriers, or inspiration—could drive a legislator to take action on the federal policies that help youth and young families experiencing homelessness.



**Example:** Our maternity group home had the privilege of serving a young woman who experienced homelessness with her baby. This young woman struggled for a long time to find a program to help her and her daughter, since she did not meet the more narrow definition of homelessness. She never gave up wanting to do everything she could to help her baby and give her a safe and stable childhood, but she was turned away at every step, until she found us. We were able to connect her to employment, child care, and an apartment for her and her daughter, and now this young woman is part of our Youth Action Board, helping other young people who are experiencing what she herself went through, and her daughter is excelling in elementary school.

## 2. Engage the Mind

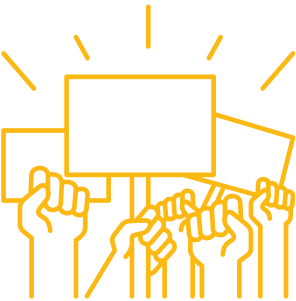
Legislators need facts and solutions, not just an explanation of the problem. Provide state- and/or district-level data as well as stories of real-world impacts that drive the data points home. To be persuasive, make sure your information is clear, succinct, and highlights the urgency of the issue. Persuasive factual information includes how many people are affected, what the long- and short-term effects are, how much the program costs to operate, and the program's effectiveness.



**Example:** In Utah, approximately 39,983 young adults ages 18 to 25 and 6,962 youth ages 13 to 17 experience homelessness over a 12-month period. Our program receives \$250,000 a year in federal funding and we are able to accommodate six youth each for 21 days. Annually, 90% of the youth we serve are successfully reunified with their family and attend school regularly. But there are many, many more young people in need of our services. Our waitlist is consistently at around 80 youth. Increasing federal funding for this program would allow us to serve 25% more youth per year.

### 3. Consider Political Health

Show legislators what's at stake politically. What are the potential short- and long-term outcomes of action and inaction? What will it mean for the legislator's constituents and community? How does addressing this issue help the legislator achieve their personal and political goals, and/or their party's political goals? (Keeping in mind that it's best to avoid saying things like, "You may get voted out if you don't do this.")



**Example:** We were so thrilled to hear your speech about how addressing chronic homelessness in our community is one of your top priorities. Preventing and ending youth homelessness is critical in this endeavour. Around 25% of adults experiencing chronic homelessness first experienced homelessness as a minor, and an additional 25% first experienced homelessness between the ages of 18 to 24. Helping young people exit homelessness sets them up for future success, and gets them off the path towards chronic homelessness. If you support increased investments in youth programs, we can ensure that our young people are connected to employment and stable housing, which will help us achieve our shared goal of ending chronic homelessness.

### The Ask

Effective advocacy starts with a clear and compelling ask. This is the specific action you want your legislators to take that advances solutions to prevent and end youth homelessness. When engaging with your legislators, you should be direct, concise, and solutions-focused—this means having a clear ask (or a few asks) and ensuring that your talking points are related to and in support of your ask.

- **Be Specific.** Outline exactly what you want legislators to do (e.g., cosponsor legislation, increase funding for a program, protect a program from elimination).
- **Connect the Dots.** Explain how the ask will impact young people experiencing homelessness and why it matters in the legislator's district or state.

# Two Key Strategies for In-District Advocacy

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When it comes to in-district advocacy, two key strategies are local meetings and site visits with your legislators. Both begin with the same essential first steps: identifying who your legislators are and planning a date when they'll be back in their home district. The following sections provide step-by-step instructions to help you successfully organize and carry out these advocacy efforts.

## Identify Your Legislators and Their Offices

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To identify your legislators, enter your home, program, or school address into [NN4Y's Legislator Lookup tool](#). This will show you who your one U.S. House Representative and two U.S. Senators are.

**\*\*** Your program or school may be located in more than one U.S. House District. Reach out to them all!

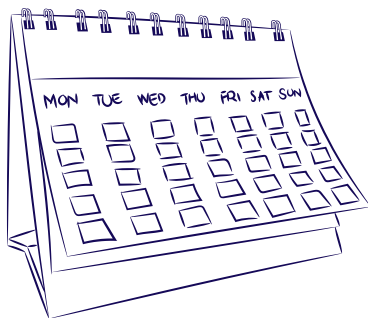
Once you have identified your legislators, go to their websites to find out where their local offices are and the contact information for those offices. Senators may have multiple offices throughout the state, so start with reaching out to the office(s) closest to you.

## Plan a Date

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Use the House and Senate's legislative calendars to find out when your legislators will be back in their district or state (sometimes called "state work period" or "in-district work period"). The House and Senate have slightly different schedules, so be sure to review the correct calendar. Select a date that gives you at least three weeks in advance to prepare—legislators are very busy!

According to the [2025 Combined Congressional Calendar](#), both the Senate and House are back in their districts and states for these weeks in 2025.



- April 14, 2025
- April 21, 2025
- May 26, 2025
- June 20, 2025
- August 4 - 29, 2025
- September 22, 2025
- November 10, 2025



# 1. Local Meetings

Meeting your legislators when they are in their home district or state is a powerful advocacy tool. Local meetings allow you to:

- Increase the likelihood that you will get face-to-face time with your legislators.
- Build or strengthen relationships with legislators and their staff.
- Educate legislators and their staff on local needs and solutions related to youth homelessness and trafficking.
- Request specific policy actions to improve prevention and response efforts.

## 1a. Schedule the Meeting

If you have an existing staff contact in the legislator's office, reach out to them to let them know that you would like to schedule an in-district meeting with your legislator. If you do not have an existing staff contact, call the legislator's district office (not their D.C. office) and ask to speak with the scheduler to plan an in-district meeting.

In order to schedule the meeting, staff will need to know:

- What dates and times work for you.
- How long the meeting will be (30 minutes is typical).
- What you want to talk about (be as specific as you can).
- Who will be attending the meeting.

**Be sure to ask specifically for the legislator to attend this meeting.** If you don't ask specifically, they will send staff only. If you're only able to secure a meeting with staff, that's okay—it's important to build a relationship with them, too.

## 1b. Prepare for Your Meeting

Determine who will participate.

- **Assemble a team** who will join you for this meeting and who can effectively communicate the issue and its impact. This team should include program staff and young people and families with lived experience of homelessness. You don't have to limit your team to one organization—invite other providers, homeless liaisons, Youth Action Board members, and anyone else who works to prevent and end youth homelessness in your community. A show of strength and unity is very impactful.
  - You can bring a large-size group of people to your meeting to show support for the issue, but try to limit the number of speakers to four or five.

### Do your research.

- **Learn about your legislator's priorities.** Knowing more about your legislator and what they care about is going to help you tailor your talking points and be more persuasive. Answer these questions:
  - What issues does your legislator care about?
  - What do they talk about in interviews, in the media, or on their website?
  - Is there something in their background that has to do with the issue you want to talk to them about?
  - What bills have they introduced, what bills have they cosponsored (signed on to support), and what bills have they voted for or against? This information can be found on their websites or on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).
- **Find out what committees your legislator is assigned to.** Committees are official legislative bodies within the House and Senate that review, amend, and advance bills.
  - If your legislator sits on a committee that oversees the issue area you want to talk about, then they have even more power to influence the policy decisions that affect it.
  - If your legislator doesn't sit on a committee relevant to your issue, that's okay—they can still support the issue through cosponsorship, public support, and more.
  - You can find committee assignments on your legislator's website, or [here for the Senate](#) and [here for the House](#). Refer to Appendix D for important committees to youth homelessness.
- **Find out what caucuses your legislator is a part of.** Caucuses are unofficial groups of legislators with shared interests or goals who work together to influence legislation and policy. Some are more organized and strategic, like the Blue Dog Coalition, the Problem Solvers Caucus, the Foster Youth Caucus, the Caucus on Homelessness, or the Freedom Caucus. Some are more social and fun, like the Sneaker Caucus.
  - Caucuses are more prevalent in the House than in the Senate. Knowing what caucuses your legislator is a part of is another good way to get to know their priorities.
- **Utilize NN4Y's research and data** (Appendices A, B, and C) to support your arguments.

### Plan your talking points.

- Decide what your ask(s) is. This will help you develop a clear, cohesive message and know what data and stories you should share to support your advocacy ask.
- \*\* If your meeting team is only homeless liaisons, skip the specific ask while still making sure your talking points are cohesive. If you have non-liaisons in your group, they can make the ask.
- Prepare local and/or state data on youth homelessness, your program, and any other data that supports your ask or the topic of your meeting.
  - Prepare stories to share that help the legislator and their staff understand the human impact on the data you're sharing with them.
  - Use NN4Y's [template agenda](#) to structure your meeting. We have additional resources on scheduling legislative meetings on our [Become an Advocate page](#), and additional resources to prepare for meetings in Appendices A, B, and C.

## 1c. Conduct Your Meeting

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### During the meeting

- Be sure everyone knows where they are going and how to get into the location. Arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- Be prepared to start the meeting and lead the conversation. The legislator and their staff are there to listen to you.
- Bring handouts with statistics, program details, and youth stories to leave behind. Handouts shouldn't be longer than two pages.
- Establish a rapport with the legislator and their staff to foster ongoing engagement. Did you go to the same high school? The same church? Did you grow up in the same neighborhood? These personal connections go a long way.
- Leave time at the end of your meeting for questions and final thoughts.
- If you can, conclude your meeting with a clear ask, such as cosponsoring specific legislation or increasing funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth programs.

### After the Meeting

- **Send a thank-you email**, referencing key discussion points. NN4Y has a [template here](#).
- Share any materials that were provided during the meeting in a digital format, as well as any additional information that may have been requested during the meeting.
- Invite them to visit your program or school to see the impact of your work firsthand.
- Engage with them on social media by making a post about the meeting and tagging them in it or commenting on one of their posts to publicly acknowledge their support.

## 2. Site Visits

Inviting legislators to visit your organization allows them to see your work firsthand. Site visits allow you to:

- Bring youth programs to life in a way that statistics and talking points cannot.
- Help legislators connect complex federal policy to real-world impact in their communities.
- Offer a deeper understanding of youth homelessness and the services available in their districts or states.
- Strengthen relationships with legislators and their staff through shared experiences and open dialogue.

### 2a. Extend an Invitation

If you have an existing staff contact in the legislator's office, reach out to them to let them know that you would like to schedule a site visit with your legislator. If you do not have an existing staff contact, call the legislator's district office (not their D.C. office) and ask to speak with the scheduler to plan a site visit.

\*\* It's okay to invite multiple legislators and staff to one joint site visit.

In order to schedule the visit, staff will need to know:

- Where the visit will take place.
- What dates and times work for you.
- How long the visit will be (one hour is typical).
- What you want to talk about (be as specific as you can).
- Who will be attending the visit.

**Be sure to ask specifically for the legislator to attend this visit.** If you don't ask specifically, they will send staff only. If you're only able to secure a visit with staff, that's okay—it's important to build a relationship with them, too.

### 2b. Plan the Site Visit

First, follow the steps under *1b. Prepare for Your Meeting*: “Determine Who Will Participate” and “Do Your Research.”

Then, you'll want to develop a structured agenda and tour route for the site visit. During your visit, make sure you include the following:

- **Introduction to the issue of youth homelessness** in your community and the work that you do. Be detailed! Remember that most people are very unaware of what the work to support children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness looks like, and your legislators and their staff are there to learn firsthand.
- **Information from a variety of staff members.** Have a wide array of staff participate in the site visit—anyone from the President of your program to the frontline staff. It’s important for legislators to learn about all the aspects of your work as they make the connection between the complex legislation they’re inundated with in D.C. and what’s actually happening on the ground.
- **Experiences from young people.** It’s invaluable for legislators to hear from the youth and families whose lives are impacted by homelessness, providers, homeless liaisons, and other community resources. This helps them understand why the work is so important.
- **Time for questions and discussion.** You will be sharing a lot of new information with your legislators. Be sure you have time for someone to answer questions.

Make sure the staff and young people who are participating in your site visit are prepared in their talking points, the agenda, and the route! You want the visit to go smoothly logistically so that the legislator and their staff can focus on the issue you’re discussing.

## 2c. Conduct the Site Visit (and Make it an Experience!)

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Go slowly enough that the legislator and their staff can take everything in and ask questions. Have them take into account the small details—for example, consider how you will engage the senses:

- **Sight:** Display donated items (backpacks, clothing, toiletries) to illustrate the youths’ needs.
- **Sound:** Allow your guests to listen to youth sharing their experiences.
- **Touch:** Provide tangible experiences, such as sitting in a cold room with empty beds or handling essential items like blankets.

## 2d. Follow Up After the Site Visit

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- **Send a thank-you email** with key takeaways and any photos taken during the visit.
- Attach digital copies of any resources shared during the visit, as well as any additional information that may have been requested during the visit.
- Engage with your legislators on social media by making a post about the meeting and tagging them in it, or commenting on one of their posts to publicly acknowledge their support.
- Coordinate with NN4Y to share insights and outcomes from your meeting.



# Conclusion

Advocacy is a powerful tool for shaping policies that impact youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. By engaging your legislators through local meetings, town halls, site visits, and media, you can drive meaningful change at the federal, state, and local level.



**No one else has your unique perspective and experience. Your voice matters.**

**Join NN4Y in advocating for policies that ensure every young person has a safe place to call home!**

End **Youth** Homelessness.

End **Young Adult** Homelessness.

End **Young Parent Family** Homelessness.



# Appendix A: Additional Resources

## Helpful Links

- [NN4Y's Federal Policy Priorities](#)
- [NN4Y's Become an Advocate page](#)
- [NN4Y and American Bar Association's Model Legislation to Provide Housing and Services to Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)
- [Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count](#)
- [Loyola University and Covenant House: Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth](#)
- [The Opportunity Agenda's Communications Toolkit](#)
- [The Writing Cooperative's Writing Op-Eds](#)
- [Physicians for a National Health Program's Op-Ed resource](#)
- [National Human Services Assembly's Reframing in Communications resource](#)
- [Congressional Management Foundation's Perceptions and Use of Social Media on Capitol Hill](#)

## Sample Emails

### 1. Request for an In-District Meeting

**Subject:** Request for an In-District Meeting with **[Legislator's Name]**

Dear **[Scheduler's Name]**,

My name is **[Your Name]**, and I am **[Your Role]** at **[Your Organization]**. Our organization provides essential services to youth experiencing homelessness in **[District/State]**. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with **[Legislator's Name]** while they are in district to discuss the critical need for **[Your Ask, e.g., "investment in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program"]**.

Could we schedule a meeting during the upcoming recess? We would love to share insights from our work and discuss ways **[Legislator's Name]** can support these programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Best,

**[Your Name]**

**[Your Contact Information]**

**[Your Organization]**

## 2. Invitation for a Site Visit

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**Subject:** Invitation: Visit **[Organization Name]** and Meet Youth in Your District

Dear **[Scheduler's Name]**,

My name is **[Your Name]**, and I am **[Your Role]** at **[Your Organization]**. I am writing to invite **[Legislator's Name]** to visit **[Your Organization]**, which is a vital program for youth experiencing homelessness in **[City/District]**. We provide **[brief overview of services]**, and we would love for **[Legislator's Name]** to meet the young people whose lives are impacted by our program.

A site visit would provide **[Legislator's Name]** with the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of youth homelessness, and to discuss the ways to enhance support for youth experiencing homelessness.

Please let us know a convenient time for this site visit. If **[Legislator's Name]** is unavailable, we would be happy to coordinate a tour for staff.

Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

Best,

**[Your Name]**

**[Your Contact Information]**

**[Your Organization]**

# Appendix B: Data on Youth, Young Adult, and Young Family Homelessness

Your Members of Congress will be most persuaded by and interested in local and state information and data, because they were elected to represent the constituents of your state or district. Always include as much local and state information as you can. The national statistics below can also be used to highlight how the issues in your community are similar to what others face.

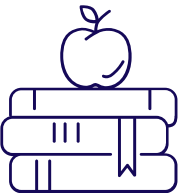
## The Numbers



National estimates show that **4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness on their own** each year. Seven hundred thousand are ages 13 to 17 and 3.5 million are young adults ages 18 to 25.



Of the 18- to 25-year-olds experiencing homelessness, **one in five also experienced trafficking for sex, labor, or both.**



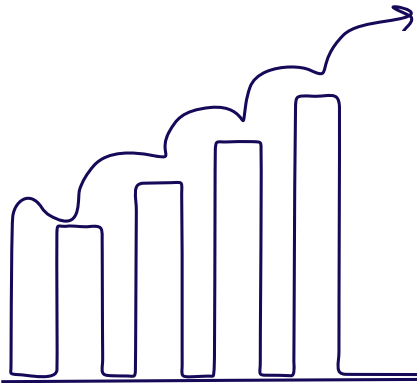
In the 2022-2023 school year, public schools identified **1.4 million students who were experiencing homelessness**, over 451,000 of whom were under the age of three.

## Racial and Social Inequities

Many factors contribute to homelessness among young people, but research shows that specific subpopulations of youth and young adults face a higher risk for homelessness:

- **Black youth** face an 83% increased risk over their white peers.
- **Hispanic youth** face a 33% increased risk over their white peers.
- **LGBTQ+ youth** face a 120% increased risk in comparison to non-LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Young, unmarried parents** are twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to their non-parenting peers.
- **Youth without a high school diploma or GED** are four and a half times more likely to experience homelessness than peers who completed high school.
- **Youth whose parents or caregivers have died** face an increased risk for homelessness.
- **Youth involved in the foster care, juvenile justice, or criminal justice systems** are more likely to experience homelessness.

## Connection to Chronic Homelessness



- Numerous studies have found that childhood and adolescent experiences can have a significant impact on an individual's likelihood to experience homelessness as an adult.
  - These factors include unstable housing during childhood, running away as an adolescent, and dropping out of school.
- Cities across the country have conducted in-depth surveys of their homeless constituents and have found that many of their chronically homeless adult populations first experienced homelessness as a young person.
  - Overall, **between 20 to 25% of chronically homeless adults first experienced homelessness as a minor**, and 24 to 26% first experienced homelessness between the ages of 18 to 24.
- Knowing this, it becomes clear that increasing investments in housing and supportive services that target young people under age 25 are necessary (and most practical) to reduce chronic homelessness among adults.

## Long-Term Economic Effects

Research has found that the social cost of youth homelessness, which includes associated costs such as lost earnings, lost tax payments, public crime expenditures, victim costs, welfare support programs, excess tax burden, and public housing support, is an estimated \$26,433 per year, per individual, and \$869,647 over the lifetime of that individual.



- If we apply the annual social cost per youth of \$26,433 to the 4.2 million youth who experience homelessness every year, the taxpayer burden is over \$111 billion per year.
- Over the lifetime of those 4.2 million youth, the economic burden of youth homelessness and its related social costs is over \$3.6 trillion.



# Appendix C: Key Federal Programs and Legislation

## Programs

### Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

RHYA funds community-based youth homelessness providers to prevent and end youth, young adult, and young family homelessness. RHYA provides three primary grants directly to providers: the Basic Center Program, which provides short-term crisis housing for minors with an emphasis on family reunification; the Transitional Living Program and Maternity Group Homes, which provide longer-term housing and supportive services for youth up to age 22, with an emphasis on education, employment, and self-sufficiency; and the Street Outreach Program, which helps providers connect with young people to prevent them from being sexually abused or trafficked, and to refer young people to housing and essential services.

[Learn more about RHYA.](#)

#### RHYA Quick Talking Points

- RHYA funds community-based programs that provide housing and supportive services to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.
- RHYA programs help prevent and address human trafficking, as 1 in 5 youth experiencing homelessness have also experienced trafficking.
- Over 90% of youth served by an RHYA program exit to a safe and stable living situation.
- Due to underfunding, RHYA programs only serve about 1% of the youth population in need.
- **Ask:** Support increased funding for RHYA to expand services for youth experiencing homelessness.

### McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY)

EHCY removes barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success of PreK-12 children and youth experiencing homelessness. This targeted assistance enables children and youth experiencing homelessness to complete their education, enabling them to break the cycle of generational poverty and homelessness. Not every community has a shelter or housing program available for young people experiencing homelessness, but every young person experiencing homelessness has a legal right to attend school, receive transportation to and from school, free school meals, and more.

[Learn more about EHCY.](#)

## EHCY Quick Talking Points

- The McKinney-Vento Act's EHCY program is the only federal initiative ensuring homeless students can enroll, attend, and succeed in school.
- Only 1 in 5 school districts currently receive EHCY funding.
- A recent study showed that targeted funding improved attendance and academic outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.
- Lack of a high school degree is the greatest risk factor for youth homelessness; therefore investing in EHCY is also homelessness prevention.
- **Ask:** Support increased funding for the EHCY program to ensure every school can provide critical support to homeless students.

## Legislation

### Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (RHYTPA)

RHYTPA reauthorizes and updates the current RHYA program, ensuring that youth, young adults, and young families have access to short-term and transitional housing along with the supportive services they need to exit homelessness permanently.

[Learn more about RHYTPA.](#)

RHYTPA makes these critical updates to the RHYA program:

- Prioritizes outreach to survivors of sexual abuse, exploitation, and/or trafficking to connect them to supportive services.
- Requires staff training on human trafficking, trauma, sexual abuse, and assault.
- Extends the allowable length of stay in Basic Center Programs from 21 to 30 days (or longer as state law allows).
- Adds a new Preventative Services Program that can award RHYA grantees an additional \$75,000 to provide services to prevent young people in their community from experiencing homelessness.
- Increases authorized appropriations levels to \$319.5 million annually.
- Extends Transitional Living Program services to survivors of sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.
- Ensures youth are assisted in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Requires comprehensive nondiscriminatory practices across all RHYA-funded programs.
- Increases the eligible age for Transitional Living Program services from 22 to 25 years old, with service provision for 22 to 25 years olds at the discretion of the RHYA provider, and still prioritizing youth under 22 years old.
- Clarifies that providers can have more than 20 beds in a building if the building houses multiple, separate programs.

#### RHYTPA Ask

Have your legislator cosponsor RHYTPA and support its passage through Congress.

### **Homeless Children and Youth Act (HCYA)**

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HCYA aligns federal definitions of homelessness to ensure that children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness can access all the services they need.

[Learn more about HCYA.](#)

Children, youth, and families experience homelessness in a dynamic way, frequently moving between couch surfing, sleeping in a car or motel, and other potentially dangerous situations. However, they are often excluded from receiving housing and supportive services through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) due to HUD's narrow definition of homelessness. HUD's definition of homelessness does not align with other agencies' definition, creating a fragmented system of care. HCYA will align federal definitions and remove barriers between systems that should be working together.

#### HCYA Ask

Have your legislator cosponsor HCYA and support its passage through Congress.

### **Housing for Homeless Students Act (HHSA)**

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HHSA allows full-time college students who have experienced homelessness before the age of 26 live in low-income housing funded by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

[Learn more about HHSA.](#)

Too often, young people must choose between stable housing or attending college full-time. Due to an eligibility limitation for the LIHTC program, full-time college students are not eligible for LIHTC rental housing. Full-time student exceptions are made for certain student groups, including former foster youth, but full-time students who are or have experienced homelessness are not exempt. HHSA is no-cost legislation that will simply add students who have experienced homelessness before the age of 26 to the existing list of LIHTC full-time student exceptions.

#### HHSA Ask

Have your legislator cosponsor HHSA and support its passage through Congress.

# Appendix D: Key Congressional Committees

## U.S. Senate

Committee Name	Jurisdiction
Committee on the Judiciary	Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs	Homeless Children and Youth Act
Committee on Finance	Housing for Homeless Students Act
Committee on Appropriations: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee	Funding for RHYA and EHCY
Committee on Appropriations: Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee	Funding for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (Continuum of Care)

## U.S. House of Representatives

Committee Name	Jurisdiction
Committee on Education and Workforce	Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act
Committee on Financial Services	Homeless Children and Youth Act
Committee on Ways and Means	Housing for Homeless Students Act
Committee on Appropriations: Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies Subcommittee	Funding for RHYA and EHCY
Committee on Appropriations: Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee	Funding for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (Continuum of Care)