



Runaway and Homeless Youth

The Oregon Homeless and Runaway Youth Initiative is a collaborative approach to solving a critical social issue. Throughout the state, amazing work is under way to advocate for older children and youth who are struggling to avoid homelessness.

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature allocated funding to the Oregon Commission on Children & Families to be used in a focused manner to expand, enhance or create services for runaway and homeless youth in communities across Oregon with the following specifications:

- Development or improvement of homeless and runaway youth services and supports.
- Creation of or building upon existing partnerships.
- Identification of services and supports to runaway and homeless youth.

Target Population

Runaway and Homeless services target youth ages 11 through 17 who are at high risk of running away, abandonment, family separation, and homelessness. These youth populations are defined in the HB 2202 Report to the Legislature.



Service Areas and Key Strategies

Runaway and Homeless Youth projects funded by the Legislature must demonstrate results in all three of the following areas:

1. **Connectivity to Resources:** Linking runaway and homeless youth to critical supports and services through outreach, referral and case management.
2. **Continuity of Education:** Re-enrolling and re-integrating runaway and homeless youth into an educational setting with the goal of attaining educational milestones such as a GED or high school graduation, and access to higher education or training.
3. **Increased Safety:** Mediation and early intervention resulting in family reunification, safe exits and shelter; safety plans to enable young people to resist or escape harmful situations; improved transitions from service systems; and increased likelihood of long-term shelter.

Underlying Principles of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative

- Oregon lacks a coordinated system of care for runaway and homeless youth, so services for this population vary from community to community. Young people do not always benefit from services and supports coming through “traditional” systems such as child welfare, juvenile justice, health, mental health and addiction, and schools, despite the best efforts of dedicated staff and homeless liaisons.

- A coordinated system in any community should include prevention services, basic services of food, clothing and shelter as well as a transitional living component that assures access to education, health care, job training, aftercare and case management of homeless youth who are in need.
- Services for at-risk runaway and homeless youth should be available to youth that need them.
- There should be a local- and state-level framework ensuring service delivery that is responsive to the needs of each community and reflective of the priorities and planning of that community.
- Responsibility for the care of these youth lies with parents, youth, families, communities and government.
- Community-based service models are most successful when they are collaborative in nature, sustainable, diversely funded, and consistent with national standards and evidence-based practices.



Runaway and Homeless Initiative Rollout Sites 2007-09

Benton County

Program Title: Benton County Partnership
Primary Partner: Jackson Street Youth Shelter
Focus/Program Elements: Service integration, centralization, and coordination through Outreach Worker and Case Manager

Deschutes County

Program Title: Deschutes County Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative
Primary Partner: Cascade Youth & Family Center (JBarJ)
Focus/Program Elements: Loft drop-in and emergency shelter-expansion of transitional housing

Douglas County

Program Title: Douglas County Youth Coalition Drop-in Center Program
Primary Partner: Homeless Youth Coalition
Focus/Program Elements: Drop In-Center w/ advocacy, wrap around, basic needs, connectivity to education, independent living skill development, and counseling

Lane County

Program Title: Rural Lane County Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative
Primary Partner: Looking Glass Youth & Family Services
Focus/Program Elements: Building a rural service delivery model with case managers in each of three rural communities, connectivity between service and shelter providers, McKinney Vento school staff, and ESDs

Lincoln County

Program Title: Lincoln County Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth
Primary Partner: Community Services Consortium and Lincoln County School District
Focus/Program Elements: Drop-In Centers in four community locations and expansion of service coordination, advocacy, and referral with out-stationed youth as workers

Malheur County

Program Title: S.E.A.S.O.N. -- Safety Education Advocacy and Support Network
Primary Partner: Harvest House Ministries
Focus/Program Elements: Outreach to youth

identified as runaway in the county's two largest communities, Ontario and Nyssa, with very short-term and limited long-term shelter and services.

Marion County

Program Title: Marion County Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Continuum
Primary Partners: Northwest Human Services, Mid-Willamette Community Action Agency and Neighbor-to-Neighbor
Focus/Program Elements: Multi-disciplinary access for youth reported as runaways and intensive outreach, case coordination, and family-based interventions for all identified youth

Washington County

Program Title: Project Home Safe
Primary Partners: Boys and Girls Aid Society and First Congregational United Church of Christ
Focus/Program Elements: Connections to resources and continuity of education through outreach, case management, and service coordination, bringing stability to the "front end" of Washington County's RHY Continuum.

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