MISSING, EXPLOITED AND RUNAWAY YOUTH; STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 29, 2003

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MISSING, EXPLOITED AND RUNAWAY

YOUTH; STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION,

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:06 p.m. In Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Peter Hoekstra [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Hoekstra, Gingrey, Burns, Hinojosa and Ryan.

Staff Present: Kevin Frank, Professional Staff Member; Parker Hamilton, Communications Coordinator; Whitney Rhoades, Professional Staff Member; Deborah L. Samantar, Committee Clerk/Intern Coordinator; Holli Traud, Legislative Assistant; Tylease Fitzgerald, Minority Staff Assistant; Denise Forte, Minority Legislative Associate/Education; Ricardo Martinez, Minority Legislative Associate/Education.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETE HOEKSTRA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Hoekstra. A quorum being present, the Subcommittee on Select Education will come to order.

We are meeting today to hear testimony on Missing, Exploited and Runaway Youth: Strengthening the System.

Under committee rule 12(b), opening statements are limited to the chairman and ranking minority member of the subcommittee. If other members have statements, they may be included in the hearing record.

With that, I ask unanimous consent for the hearing record to remain open 14 days to allow members' statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted in the official hearing record. Without objection, so ordered.

I would like to welcome each of you to the hearing on Missing, Exploited and Runaway Youth: Strengthening the System. The purpose of today's hearing is to continue our information-gathering efforts to learn how programs under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Missing Children's Assistance Act are currently operating in preparation for the upcoming reauthorization of these two acts.

The Missing Children's Assistance Act addresses the needs of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children. The program was created to coordinate and support various federal missing children's programs through the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and includes the authorization for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. As the nation's resource center and clearinghouse for information on missing and exploited children, the center provides assistance to families and law enforcement agencies in locating and recovering missing and exploited children, both nationally and internationally. The center does not investigate abducted, runaway and sexually exploited youth cases but receives leads and disseminates them to various investigative law enforcement units.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act supports three grant programs to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. These grants are awarded to local public and private organizations to establish and operate community-based shelters that are outside of the law enforcement, juvenile justice, child welfare and mental health systems.

Through the Basic Center Program, financial assistance is provided to establish or strengthen community-based programs that provide youth with emergency short-term shelter, food, clothing, counseling and referrals for health care. The Basic Centers seek to reunite young people with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements.

The Transitional Living Program, TLP, provides grants to public and private organizations to support projects that provide longer-term residential services. TLPs assist older homeless youth in developing skills and resources to promote their independence and prevent further dependency on social services. These activities include counseling in basic life skills, interpersonal skills, educational advancement, job attainment skills, and physical and mental health care. The TLP includes maternity group homes, which provide a range of coordinated services such as childcare, education, job training, counseling and advice on parenting, child development and other life skills.

The Education and Prevention Services to Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless and Street Youth Program, also known as the Street Outreach Program, funds local young service providers that conduct street-based outreach and education and offer emergency shelter and related services to young people who have been, or are at risk of being, sexually abused or exploited.

As was done in 1999 through the Missing, Exploited and Runaway Children Protection Act, our desire is to strengthen these programs in order to address the unique needs of these at-risk children. We must continue to support the center and its efforts to locate and recover missing

children and help prevent child abductions and sexual exploitation. Additionally, we wish to ensure the protection of runaway and homeless youth by keeping them off the streets, away from criminal activities and out of desperate circumstances. These services and activities help a particularly vulnerable population, and today's hearing will shed light on the program's successes as well as avenues for improvement.

I would like to thank each of the witnesses for appearing before the subcommittee today. I look forward to hearing your testimony and the perspective each of you brings to this discussion about the safety and well being of our nation's children.

With that, I will yield to the ranking minority member of the subcommittee, Mr. Hinojosa, for his opening statement.

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETE HOEKSTRA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, DC – SEE APPENDIX A

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MINORITY MEMBER, RUBEN HINOJOSA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Hinojosa. Thank you.

First, I would like to thank Chairman Pete Hoekstra for holding this hearing today.

I want to welcome each and every one of you who will be participating in this hearing.

As a society, we have a special obligation to protect runaway and homeless youth. Since 1974, the programs authorized under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act has provided an essential safety net for these most vulnerable young people.

There are three basic programs under the Act: The Basic Program provides grants to community-based organizations to support emergency shelters for runaway and homeless youth; The Transitional Living Program provides resources to support longer-term residential placements in the development of life skills to promote the successful transition to adulthood and independent living; and The Street Outreach Program funds street-based outreach and education to homeless and runaway youth who have been sexually abused or who are at risk of sexual abuse.

It is hard to imagine another set of federal programs that has the same life-changing or, better said, life-saving impact for the individuals served at such a small cost to the federal government.

Overall, the programs under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act were funded at less than $90 million for fiscal year 2003, barely a blip on the federal budget radar screen. Basic Center grants averaged over $117,000 in fiscal year 2001; Transitional Living Program grants averaged $195,000, and the average street outreach grant award was 94,000.

Second, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the witnesses who will be presenting testimony today. It is an impressive panel, and I commend the chairman for bringing all of them together.

I am looking forward to hearing Mr. Allen, the President of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children update us on the Center's activities and share with us some recommendations for this reauthorization.

I am also eager to hear from Mai Fernandez of the Latin American Youth Center, who will tell us about the services they provide to homeless Latino youth here in the nation's capital. I am particularly interested in learning more about how the center has developed programs and services tailored to the culture and linguistic needs of the Latino community.

Finally, we all have a lot to learn from Michael Hughes, a direct beneficiary of these programs who was once homeless but is now working toward independent living and a college degree.

Thank you for being with us today, and I am looking forward to your testimony.

Chairman Hoekstra. Thank you, Mr. Hinojosa.

I have a deal for you, a colleague of mine on our side of the aisle who would like to make an opening statement. I don't know if Mr. Ryan would like to make an opening statement or not. Is it all right if we let those two members make a statement if they would like to?

Mr. Hinojosa. You got a deal.

Chairman Hoekstra. Thanks.

Mr. Gingery.

Mr. Gingrey. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

My opening statement is going to be very brief, so hopefully Mr. Ryan will not be long-winded.

But, of course, the chairman and the ranking member have already stated it very well. I think much of what our President describes as his vision of compassionate conservatism and if we look at a $2.24 trillion fiscal year 2004 budget, all of the money spent on various and sundry programs, clearly a program like this to reach out and pull back youngsters who in most cases, through no fault of their own, are on the verge of being lost forever to society and to their families,

I think that this is a perfect example of where we need to reach out and help those who cannot, because of circumstances, really pull themselves up by the bootstraps, so to speak.

So I just want to thank the members of the panel that are with us this afternoon. I look forward to hearing from you in regard to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which, of course, we were dealing with a couple of weeks ago and then these three programs: the Basic Center Program, the Traditional Living Program and, last but not least, the Street Outreach Program. So thank you for being here, and we look forward to your testimony.

Chairman Hoekstra. Mr. Ryan.

Mr. Ryan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't know why you didn't let me go first, though. I don't want to have a committee where there is no controversy here, so I will be upset about not being called on first.

Thank you very much and thank you to the witnesses, especially the young gentleman here who is going to share with us his story. I have personally done a lot of work trying to get young people involved in the politics through high schools and colleges, and it has really been a focus of mine since I have started in this line of work. I just want to let you know how appreciative I am personally that you would take the opportunity to come here and share your story, and I am sure it is not easy for you, and to help us fully understand this issue and the issues that young people face today. Because it is a much different world than it was 30 or 40 years ago. So I look forward to your comments and thank you very much for having the courage to come up here and share it with us.

Chairman Hoekstra. Thank you, Mr. Ryan.

Let me introduce the witnesses. We have Mr. Ernie Allen. Mr. Allen is the President and Chief Executive Officer, as well as a co-founder, of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Previously, Mr. Allen served as the Chief Administrative Officer of Jefferson County, Kentucky; the Director of Public Health and Safety for the City of Louisville; and the Director of the Louisville-Jefferson County Crime Commission.

Mr. Allen, welcome and thank you for being here.

We have Ms. Maria Christina Mai Fernandez. Ms. Fernandez is the Managing Director of the Latin American Youth Center, one of the District of Columbia's youth and family development organizations. Before joining the Latin American Youth Center, Ms. Fernandez was an associate with a local law firm, worked in the Office of Justice Programs at the United States Department of Justice, and served as a prosecutor with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. Welcome.

Our third witness today is Mr. Michael Hughes. Mr. Hughes is a 19-year-old formerly homeless youth. After learning of the Covenant House, Washington, he obtained a place to live, a part-time job and began attending college. Currently, Mr. Hughes is a freshman at the University of the District of Columbia and hopes to gain full-time employment with the Washington DC

Firefighter/Emergency Medical Services Cadet Program. Welcome.

I think it probably will be a little bit informal today. We will have these little lights on in front of you. You may have testified before. But the green light says you have plenty of time, the yellow light says you are running out, and the red light says you are out of time. But I have a weak gavel, and we are very interested in what you have to say, so kind of take what you need and if you get to the red light, don't just stop. But take it as a cue that you are getting closer to the end than the beginning.

Chairman Hoekstra. With that, Mr. Allen you can begin.

STATEMENT OF ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Mr. Allen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am honored to be here today; and, Mr. Chairman, I have submitted formal written testimony. With your permission, I will just briefly summarize.

You asked that I report to you on the work and the progress of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children per the mandates of the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984. Since 1984, the center, working in partnership with the United States Department of Justice through the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, has addressed those mandates of the statute. I would like to just briefly highlight them.

Congress asked in 1984 that there be established a national missing children's hotline. The center has managed and operated that hotline on a 24-hour basis. We have handled nearly 1.8 million phone calls, calls for service. We handle photo distribution and missing child cases. We have built a network of private sector photo partners to disseminate missing child photos across America and around the world. The purpose of that photo distribution is to generate leads regarding the whereabouts of missing children.

We maintain, also, under the provisions of the act a case management system, a staff that works directly with the law enforcement investigators across the country to locate and return those children. We have created an imaging unit through private sector support that attempts to keep long-term cases alive through age progressions of long term missing children. We are doing facial reconstructs of unidentified deceased children from marked photos and from skeletal remains.

Let me interject we have identified actually recovered 370 children so far who have been missing more than two years through the use of technology.

Overall, the center has worked nearly 90,000 cases with the United States Department of Justice. There are a series of criteria set for which cases that we formerly intake and work. We work the most serious cases, and 73,000 of those children have been returned to their families. So

we think it is a system that is working.

But, in addition to that, to the mandates specifically of the 1984 Act, Congress has asked us to undertake a number of other activities; and our role and our mission has expanded. For example, in 1995, the State Department asked the center to assume lead responsibility in cases under the Hague Convention on international child abduction; and so we have dealt with those cases in which children are abducted from other countries and brought to the United States.

In 1998, Congress asked us to become, in effect, the 911 for the Internet. So we created a CyberTipline that is handling leads on line regarding child pornography, on-line enticement of children, child molestation and have handled 120,000 leads resulting in hundreds of successful arrests and prosecutions.

A year later, Congress, in legislation called the Protection of Children From Sexual Predators Act, mandated Internet service providers to report child pornography on their sites to law enforcement and asked if the center would handle that role. So we are now receiving the mandatory reports from AOL, MSN, Yahoo and all of the thousands of others of ISPs regarding child pornography on their sites.

We are proud of the fact that the center has a very close working relationship with the Department of Justice and Federal law enforcement. In fact, five federal law enforcement agencies now actually assign personnel to work out of the center, including the FBI, the Customs Service, ATF, the Postal Inspections Service and the United States Secret Service.

But Congress has asked us to do some other things as well. Most recently, we were asked to develop an animated on-line interactive Internet safety resource for Boys and Girls Clubs of America for 3,000 Boys and Girls Clubs.

Mr. Hinojosa, you will be pleased to know that we focus grouped and developed that resource in a Boys and Girls Club in McAllen, Texas, as well as on an Indian reservation in New Mexico and a public housing project in Richmond, Virginia. So we have been at the forefront in trying to keep kids safe on-line.

We are proud of the fact that, since 1984, it was really the vision of Congress that the center should not be another public agency but it should represent a public-private partnership. So, in many ways, the private sector has played a key role in making what we do work.

Our photo distribution system, 500 private sector photo partners, including Wal-Mart stores and Advo and television stations, none of which costs the taxpayers a dime, a CyberTipline that we built at the mandate of Congress was done purely through private sector support from Sun Microsystems and Computer Associates. Our growth network that we are building has similarly been done through private sector support and database companies, including ChoicePoint and Cyzent, give us access to their databases to track missing children and bring them home.

I know the red light is on.

I have made a number of recommendations, some of which are technical, in my testimony. Let me just briefly mention one that I think is particularly key to this committee.

Somewhat immodestly, I suppose, I think we have done a great job in responding to the kinds of crises that thousands of American children find themselves facing. Eight hundred thousand children a year, according to the latest Justice Department data, are reported missing. However, where I don't think we have done enough is in the area of preventing the victimization of children in the first place.

In 1999, we worked closely with Chairman Castle when he chaired the oversight committee for our center in its previous structure on bringing together experts including the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse and the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Attorneys General and many others to look at what we are teaching our children, how we are educating children and families to help them avoid abduction and exploitation. There are a lot of things happening in America in schools and in homes and in young-serving organizations. It is our sense that we need to do more; and we would be honored to work, Mr. Chairman, with you and the committee to explore how we can do a better job on the front end, do as good a job as I think America is doing today in responding to these crises when they happen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA – SEE APPENDIX B

Chairman Hoekstra. Thank you.

Ms. Fernandez.

STATEMENT OF MAI FERNANDEZ, MANAGING DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. Fernandez. Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Mr. Hinojosa, and members of the committee. I am Mai Fernandez. I am the Managing Director of the Latin American Youth Center. It is a great honor to be before you today.

On a very personal note, Mr. Hinojosa, I used to work on the Select Committee on Hunger that was at that point chaired by the late Congressman Mickey Leland from Texas. I worked on issues of Latino homelessness then. So it is a great honor to be testifying before this subcommittee today.

By way of background, the Latin American Youth Center was founded in 1968 and was incorporated in 1974 as a 501(c) 3 for the purpose of serving at-risk immigrants Latino youth.

Since we opened our doors, the agency has grown from a small grassroots recreation center primarily for Latino young to a nationally recognized, community-based, multicultural youth and family development organization. Our mission is to support youth and families in their determination to live, work and study with dignity, hope and joy.

The Latin American Youth Center is organized into three program divisions: the Education Division, which keeps kids that are in school in school and prepares them for college; our Social Services Division that works with the youth and their families in order to keep them in healthy life-styles; and our Works Skills Division that works with youth who have dropped out of school in order to get them trained for a job and to receive a GED.

Under our Social Service Division, the Latin American Youth Center has a housing team. Through the housing team services the Latin American Youth Center provides transitional and long-term housing and support services to approximately 60 children and youth ages 0 through 21. These children and youth are abused, neglected, runaways and/or homeless. We provide these services through a network of programs, including our Street Outreach Program, the Basic Center Host Home Program, the Transitional Living Program and the District of Columbia's Foster Care Program.

We came about running these programs out of necessity. About 15 years ago we were seeing a growing number of Latino boys and Latina teen mothers and their babies that did not have stable homes. In the case of the boys, many of them were trying to fit into the American culture that often clashed with the Latin cultures of their families. So, consequently, many of them either ran away or they were thrown out of their homes. In the case of the teen mothers, many of them were also turned away from their families and found themselves in the precarious situation of having babies and no place to live.

The District of Columbia abuse and neglect system should have found foster homes for these children. However, at that time the district had no licensed foster homes with parents that spoke Spanish. Moreover, the foster families that existed did not receive cultural competency training that would allow Latino youth to feel more comfortable in their home. Consequently, few, if any, Latino youth were ever placed in the D.C. foster care system.

In order to get these youth off the streets, we turned to the federal government. In 1992, we received our first Transitional Living Program grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. With private funds we were able to buy a small town house in the District. The HHS grant funds provided us with the programmatic dollars needed to house 10 boys in the home for up to 18 months. Shortly after we received that award, we received a Basic Center grant to house teen mothers and their babies in the homes of local families. With these funds we were able to hire full-time staff and also pay small stipends to Latino families in the district that were willing to take in these young women and their babies.

We then received a Street Outreach Program that allowed us to hire outreach workers to go out into the street into areas in the district where youth hang out and actually pick up kids and bring them into a shelter for up to two weeks.

Youth in each one of these programs receive case management services, which ensure that the youth are in school, in a GED program, have an after school job, and receive health care. Additionally, all our staff is bilingual so the youth can easily communicate their needs and have their needs met. Additionally, traditional Latino food is often cooked for the youth and both typical American and Latin American holidays are celebrated in the programs. The program counselors work vigilantly to reunite the young with their families. However, while a youth is with us we want him or her to feel comfortable and to be in a place where he or she can prosper.

I should also note that for years the Latin American Youth Center became a licensed foster care provider for the district. Our goal is to train Latino families in the Washington metropolitan area to become foster families. Now our foster care program works in conjunction with our program funded by the federal government. This ensures that no youth or child falls through the cracks and that they will receive care and all be placed in safe and good shelter.

With regard to improving the programs, there are a few suggestions that I would make.

First, the Basic Center grant only allows us to house a young girl and her baby for up to two weeks. As you can imagine, it is very, very little progress can be made in two weeks in trying to reunite a teen mom with her family or to try to find her stable housing. At a minimum, I would suggest that you extend the length of stay for the Basic Center grant to six months.

Secondly, it is very difficult to hire professional bilingual staff. Applicants that speak Spanish that are qualified to do the job often go to better-paying jobs. Programs that provide services to language minority youth should be provided with extra funds to hire and retain qualified bilingual staff.

Third, local abuse and neglect systems often do not have the capacity to handle Spanish-speaking clients, social workers are not bilingual, and Spanish-speaking foster care families do not exist in the jurisdiction. The federal government should provide incentives to local jurisdictions to hire bilingual staff and create language and culturally competent programs.

Lastly, I am making a personal plea for the Latin American Youth Center. Last year, we raised private funds to create a state-of-the-art facility for our boys' Transitional Living Program. The home is beautiful. You would be proud to have your own kids live in it.

The same year we reapplied to HHS for Transitional Living Program funds to staff and operate the home. Despite that our proposal was ranked and placed in the category for funding for the first time in 10 years, we did not receive the TLP funding because so many other organizations had applied around the country.

The Latin American Youth Center refused to close down the program because the effects of the closure would have made 10 boys homeless. This decision, however, has placed us in a very difficult financial situation. We are currently reapplying for funds to pay for the services for next fiscal year. My suggestion, however, is that preference being given to programs that have a history of operation. Not only do we have a track record of success, but also we can be mentors to newer

programs.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today. I would also like to invite you to visit our housing programs and see them in action. The Latin American Youth Center is a 15-minute cab ride from Capitol Hill, and we welcome and treat our guests very well.

Muchas gracias.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MAI FERNANDEZ, MANAGING DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER, WASHINGTON, DC – SEE APPENDIX C

Chairman Hoekstra. Thank you very much. Maybe Mr. Hinojosa and other subcommittee members that are interested might have the opportunity to visit. We may take you up on that offer. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hughes.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL HUGHES, COVENANT HOUSE YOUTH, COVENANT HOUSE WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Hughes. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee.

I am here to urge you to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act because it supports Covenant House Washington and other organizations that help youth. My name is Michael Hughes, Jr.; and I am a 19-year-old formerly homeless youth. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I was asked to leave my home when I reached the age of 18. I was completely unprepared to live on my own. Consequently, I was homeless for a year and during that time. I slept on park benches and in cars and at bus stops. Occasionally, I slept on the floors of friends' homes. I could never stay with friends for very long, though, because their housing was overcrowded and there was no room for me.

Life on the street is really hard. I worried constantly about where I would sleep each night, if I would get enough to eat, or if anyone would try to harm me or take the few possessions that I had. To deal with the stress, I used alcohol and drugs. I often felt depressed and hopeless about the future.

Although I did not know it at the time, my life was about to change dramatically. One day someone slipped me the number to Covenant House. They told me that Covenant House helped homeless youth. Once I called Covenant House, they responded quickly. They fed me and gave me a clean and safe place to sleep for the night. The following morning I met with Miss Sherry Williams, who is my Service Manager. Miss Williams helped me stabilize my emotions and feel a sense of security that I hadn't felt in a long time. She also placed me in the Crisis Center. The Crisis Center provided a safe and stable place to stay for a short period of time. While there, I

found a part-time job there and enrolled in college.

Ms. Williams, who is in the audience today, is a great source of support and encouragement to me. She is more than just a Service Manager, she is like family.

Several months later, I applied for and was accepted into the Transitional Living Program. The living program is an 18-month supervised residential program. But it is more than just a place to live. The program gives me tools that I would need to live independently and be a self-sufficient adult. I get training in budgeting, balancing a checkbook, finding an apartment and applying for a job. The Transitional Living Program allows me to work on my education, learn practical skills for living, and learn to work better with peers and others. I have a roommate in the Transitional Living Program, and we help each other stay focused on our goals. When I complete the Transitional Living Program, I am confident that I will be ready to make the transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The Transitional Living Program has been the bridge that I need to safely begin this journey.

Although I learned of Covenant House through word of mouth, they work very hard to make sure that youth in need know about the services that they provide. Covenant House operates a Street Outreach Program. The program operates two vans throughout the city. The vans are out 16 hours each day from 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. They also go where youth go: recreation centers, bus stations, corner stores and go-go's, just to name a few. The outreach staff provides youth with information, referrals and services or sometimes just a hug or words of encouragement. Youth are not always ready to come to Covenant House, but outreach is steadily present. It is there when youth are ready to make a change in their lives.

Through Covenant House, I have had the opportunity to do things I would never have believed possible just a year ago. Last week, I served as the master of ceremonies for the dedication ceremony of our new Community Service Center. I introduced such dignitaries as D.C. Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, Mayor Anthony A. Williams and my Ward 8 Council Member Sandy Allen.

I am majoring in biology at the University of the District of Columbia, and I am on track to graduate in four years. Additionally, I am seeking full-time employment with Washington D.C.'s Firefighter/EMS Cadet Program.

Because of Covenant House, I have a future. It is one of the few programs that I know of that supports older youth. There are a lot of youth out there just like me. All they need is a helping hand.

Thank you for holding this hearing today and taking the time to listen to what I have to say. Thank you.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL HUGHES, COVENANT HOUSE YOUTH, COVENANT HOUSE WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON, DC—SEE APPENDIX D

Chairman Hoekstra. Did you want to introduce Ms. Williams?

Mr. Hughes. Sure. She is right here, my Service Manager.

Chairman Hoekstra. Thank you, nice to you as well, Ms. Williams; and, Mr. Hughes, thanks for being here. What happens now, Mr. Hughes? How long do you stay in the Transitional Living Program?

Mr. Hughes. It is an 18-month program. You can stay up to 18 months.

Chairman Hoekstra. You have been in how long?

Mr. Hughes. I am going on my fifth month.

Chairman Hoekstra. So you can stay as long as somewhere in your sophomore year of college.

Mr. Hughes. I just finished my freshman year.

Chairman Hoekstra. So maybe when you are done with your sophomore year.

Mr. Hughes. Yes, sophomore.

Chairman Hoekstra. How are you doing in school?

Mr. Hughes. Great, 3.0 plus.

Chairman Hoekstra. Congratulations. Do you think you will stay there for the full year?

Mr. Hughes. Basically, it is until you are prepared to leave, you know. If I obtain my full-time employment I might not have to, you know, stay longer. I can open up a slot for another youth.

Chairman Hoekstra. But it is going to be hard to be full-time employed and a full-time student.

Mr. Hughes. I will have to leave school and start going to school at nighttime.

Chairman Hoekstra. That is the option that you have, potentially.

Mr. Hughes. Yes.

Chairman Hoekstra. All right. Ms. Fernandez, you talked about two weeks to six months. Why do you think Congress put in the two-week requirement up front, and what are the unintended consequences? Why did we do two weeks the first time? Do you know why?

Ms. Fernandez. I am not sure if I understand why. I will give a guess.

The Street Outreach Program is also an emergency housing program, lets a youth stays for 2 weeks until we can stabilize the youth. In a situation like that, when you are picking a kid off the street, trying to see what exactly his problems are and then trying to get them into either temporary or permanent housing, 2 weeks is a good time. Basic Center, I assume, was maybe also look for an emergency kind of situation.

But what we found is, the way we have been using the moneys to help teen moms and their babies, it just takes a lot longer in those kinds of situations, because you are not going to find a foster care family that wants to take in a mom and a baby. It is hard because we can find employment for the moms, but then that takes some time in order to get employment for her, to be able to have her own housing. In order to find them another program also takes probably more than two weeks. So we need at least six months to sort of stabilize this young woman's life.

Chairman Hoekstra. Okay. What percentage of your funding was federal funding?

Ms. Fernandez. Well, the TLP program was $200,000.

Chairman Hoekstra. That is the grant you received?

Ms. Fernandez. That was the grant we received. We received in private funds for our overall housing programs about another $100,000 that we receive every year from Freddie Mac. But the rest of our housing we have, our housing programs are all either federally or district funded.

Chairman Hoekstra. So not getting the grant is a big deal.

Ms. Fernandez. It is a huge deal.

Chairman Hoekstra. So it is not like it is part or 10 or 15 percent of your budget. It is a big part.

Ms. Fernandez. It is a big chunk of our housing budget. Yes, it is.

Chairman Hoekstra. I also appreciate the comments on bilingual. It appears that a number of different places where we go we just don't have enough people that are learning multiple languages, as we become a more diverse society.

Ms. Fernandez. If I could add, it is not just having English speakers learning Spanish. It is really trying to recruit from Spanish communities to become lawyers, social workers, teachers; and I don't think that we do a good enough job of providing incentives for people in Spanish-speaking communities to become professionals that will then come back into the community and help.

Chairman Hoekstra. I appreciate the input. We will take both of those and any other recommendations that you have into account as we go through and work on this legislation.

Mr. Allen, you talked about working together to take a look at the front end. Can you explain that a little bit more to me? What should we do to make that happen?

Mr. Allen. Well, one of the things I think we suggest is that there really be a concerted effort to deliver consistent messages, to train law enforcement crime prevention officers, to train school administrators.

One of the things that we did with this committee four years ago is create guidelines and disseminate them to 28,000 elementary school principals through the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the school counselors. The problem is, in schools across America; overwhelmingly what kids are getting is 30 minutes a year in health class is of stranger danger. Don't talk to strangers. It is good information, but it is grossly incomplete.

The reality is that, in the vast majority of these cases, the perpetrators are not strangers in the eye and the mind of the child. And our view is that prevention works. I think we need something like a DARE type initiative, just using that as a model, addressing this issue and basic education, personal safety education to empower kids, to teach kids that they have the right to say no, to deal with the kinds of challenges that they are going to face.

In our judgment, these kinds of messages work whether we are talking about prevention of abduction or a range of other things, from peer pressure over drugs, to bullies, to gangs. It is essentially about empowering kids and building self-esteem and self-confidence and making sure that the kinds of messages that ought to be out there are being delivered and they are being delivered in a consistent, systematic way.

Chairman Hoekstra. Mr. Hinojosa.

Mr. Hinojosa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Allen, you are right. I served on the McAllen Boys and Girls Club for 10 years, from 1984 to 1994, and saw the growth of the Boys and Girls Club go from about 1,000 children to nearly 5,000 during that 10-year period. So I was very pleased that you continue to work with our Boys and Girls Club there.

The first question to you, Mr. Allen. First, I notice in your testimony that you make recommendation for a national training initiative using a standardized training curriculum. Could you discuss what the key features of such a curriculum would be and how it would address the needs of the limited-English-proficient children and their families?

Mr. Allen. All this education needs to be bilingual. We have disseminated 28 million free publications both to professionals, law enforcement and social services professionals as well as to families and kids. All of those publications are available in English and Spanish. So the messages clearly have to be culturally sensitive and in the languages that people are using.

When we worked with this committee before on developing the guidelines, we went to the research. There is not a lot of research in the area of prevention and, frankly, a little controversy about whether prevention actually works. But what we learned from that research is that if prevention is going to be effective, it needs to be grade and age appropriate. You can't teach the same messages to kindergartners that you do to high school kids. It needs not to be scary. You

can't frighten kids into doing safe things and changing behavior patterns. It needs to be positive, and it needs to be based around that concept of self-confidence and self-esteem.

We think there are models out there. There are some great programs that are being delivered. Our view from the beginning has been that we should not promote a single program but what we should promote are basic concepts so that whether a school district or a Boys and Girls Club or a mom and dad at home decide they want to buy a commercial product or they want to produce their own or they just want to have standard materials that we at the National Center and our partners at the Office of Juvenile Justice can provide that have that consistent information so that we are sure we have done everything we possibly can so when a child encounters the kind of challenges they are going to they have the information and knowledge to stay safe.

Mr. Hinojosa. Children that are bilingual love to watch programs in English and Spanish. Would you elaborate how would you work with Univision, the Spanish language network, as well as any other network that broadcasts to the non-English-speaking community?

Mr. Allen. Yes. Well, Mr. Hinojosa, we are already. Univision and Telemundo have been great partners of ours. And primarily, after the fact, we do profiles, for example, a child in Houston last year was abducted, 13-year-old named Laura Ayala, got very little national media attention during all the frenzy about the other cases. Univision was our partner in helping to create visibility around that case.

So the Spanish language networks have been great friends and partners in helping us get information out, targeted to Spanish-speaking communities about missing child cases and have done occasional features on basic information and education to stay safe. Media is our primary vehicle. We would like to do a lot more of it. We have established relationships with them. I think they would be great partners in trying to do the kind of effort I am suggesting.

Mr. Hinojosa. Absolutely. They are great at getting coverage out to the Latino community.

Ms. Fernandez, I couldn't help but listen carefully to your ending comments about the importance of recruiting Hispanic professionals that are bilingual and trained professionals. Tell us what your recommendations are to increase those numbers that have access to higher education. What are the recommendations and how can we increase the access to postgraduate studies?

Ms. Fernandez. I think it is through scholarship, if you tie it to some community service at the back end. If you get the money from Congress or from the United States, then you need to put in two years worth of service back into the community, three years of service back into the community. Then you have a constant stream of highly qualified bilingual professionals.

Because it is difficult recruiting. In order to get bilingual social workers, [many] will tell you it is difficult. Once we find one, we try to hold on to them as best we can. But when there are other competitive salaries out there, for example our social workers get stolen by Fairfax County all the time because they are able to pay a little bit more. So it is a constant battle.

Mr. Hinojosa. My time has run out. Mr. Chairman, maybe in the next round I can have the privilege of visiting a little bit with Michael Hughes. But I will yield at this time.

Chairman Hoekstra. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Gingrey.

Mr. Gingrey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Any one of the panelists could respond to this, maybe each and every one of you. In regard to, I guess, the Basic Center program where you have youngsters who have run away from bad situations in their home environment and you work with them and these programs and maybe even through the Transitional Living Program, when you do get them back to their families, what is the percentage and do you keep statistics on that to find out how successful you are? Of course, obviously, you are not treating that family from whence they came, or maybe you are. Maybe you could describe that to us a little bit.

Ms. Fernandez. We are in a lucky situation. We have a whole division that works with families, and that funding isn't tied to the Basic Center grants. So in a situation that we have a young woman and a baby who get kicked out of their house for one reason or another, we work with them and stabilize them; and, at the same time, we will work with the mom, the dad, anybody else in the family, a grandmother, in order to figure out what the tensions were that caused the young girl to be thrown out of the family.

But I think that we are in an extraordinary situation in that we have multiple programs from different funding sources that all work together to ensure that both youth and family get the services that they need. But I think that we are unique that that way.

To answer your question about how many of those reunited stay united, I can't give you specific details. I do know that when we have the opportunity to work with the family, chances are that we can get a reunification.

Mr. Hughes. With Covenant House, I know that when you come into Covenant House you are assigned to a specific person, your service manager. They are more than just service managers. It is more like they give you more one-on-one type of contact.

I know in my situation, for instance, Covenant House provided me with a service manager, but not only a Service Manager. They have professional counseling, you know, so they don't really go to the people, the homeless youth homes, but what they can do is talk to the youth and find out exactly what the problem was. Like my problem, they helped me out to suppress some of the anger that I was feeling at the time and get the youth prepared to go to their homes them selves and be more emotionally stable to go to their homes.

So I think in reunification of the families they will start with the person that ran away and make sure they are stable enough to go home and help the situation if possible.

Mr. Gingrey. Of course, that is what I was trying to get at like the situation, Mr. Hughes, that you described to us. Of course, now you are five months into the Transitional Living Program; and, as the chairman was saying, when you finish your time there, the 18 months, and you have to move out, you are, of course, still in college and you are wanting to get that degree, but you have to somehow come up with the rent and food money. You are almost kind of forced into seeking full-time employment when really you know and we all know that it would be better if you were able to stay in school and get that better-paying job a couple of years later if there was some way that you could do that. I would encourage you to work with the school in regard to Pell Grants and things like that.

But, again, I keep thinking about these homes from which people like yourself leave, probably for very good reason and maybe in some instances your own safety. But I would hope that the programs that we are sponsoring would work with the facts and other social service organizations and to try and transition you and others that have been faced with this situation back into, hopefully, a safe home environment where you would have that kind of financial support and a place to lay your head at night and to be clothed and fed by your family situation.

Chairman Hoekstra. Mr. Ryan.

Mr. Ryan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the testimony. I have a couple questions here and maybe a comment.

First, Mr. Allen, I am glad I was listening to your testimony and thinking about how you would try to educate these young kids on the fact that it is not a stranger, that it is actually someone close, and how do you that and what a skill it must be to be able to do that in a way that these kids don't go home and are afraid of their own parents. So I am glad you commented on that.

But the question I have relates to when you discussed having different organizations represented within your organization with the customs, and can you talk a little bit about how you coordinate and how these different organizations coordinate? Because it sounds to me that it may be a good model for us as we get into our Homeland Security Department and how we try to integrate many of these different departments to work together. Yours may be a model. So if could you walk us through how these different representatives work together.

Mr. Allen. Mr. Ryan, we think it is exciting; and we think in many ways it is unusual. And it has sort of evolved. Much of it has happened because of the fact that there is a division of jurisdictional responsibility.

But, for example, in the late 1990s the FBI director decided that it was important, based on the fact that the center was now taking leads regarding serious federal crimes, particularly related to the Internet, so the FBI has assigned an agent and three analysts who work out of our center.

The Customs Service, which has primarily responsibility in the area of child pornography, has assigned an agent and an analyst.

The United States Secret Service, because it has an array of resources and people out there in the field that can help, as well as forensics has assigned an agent and three analysts.

The Postal Inspection Service, because of their role in child pornography, has assigned a postal inspector.

We even have an ATM agent. Each of them works for their agencies. They don't report to us. But we put them together.

For example, when the CyberTipline needs come in regarding child pornography or on-line enticement of a child, our analysts access the content, triage the content, and those agencies are all linked with us via server. There is a grid, a matrix, on the reporting form; so the FBI will say, yes, we think this is a serious matter that is appropriate for our agents to follow. They check the box on the form, which then says to the other agencies they can focus on other cases and vice versa.

So it is informal. It is information sharing by putting everybody in the same facility. Nobody leaves his or her ultimate jurisdiction or responsibility at the door, but it is a way that I think has effective life force. It has introduced communication and information sharing and a real collaborative approach. We think it is working, and we think it is a great model to use in addressing other kinds of problems.

Mr. Ryan. Is it as informal as, hey, keep a look out for X, Y or Z between the agents?

Mr. Allen. Absolutely. The ongoing communication between the agents and they are there in the same building at the same time and talk to each other personally, and in addition there is a reporting process. So the FBI and all of these leads that they get through the CyberTipline basically will report, we are referring these to the field, we are referring these to our innocent images division that specifically follows up on this, these we are not going to take action on. Therefore, there is a record between those agencies in terms of who is doing what.

I think it has done two things. I think it has minimized duplication; and, secondly, I think it has maximized the likelihood that there is going to be serious follow-up on all of these cases because somebody is owning them, somebody is accepting responsibility for them. Our role in all of this is a sort of broker/facilitator, analyst. We are trying to build cases for them.

Mr. Ryan. Thank you very much for your explanation and really for your leadership in that. Because that sounds like a real model can be used.

One comment, Mr. Chairman, regarding Michael Hughes' story, I think not only is an example of the courage that I think it takes for a young man to be able to lift himself up out of this situation that he was in, but I think as we start discussing over the next few months about where our budget priorities are going to be, we are talking about student aid and child nutrition and all of the priorities that will be debated over the next few months. It is so important for us to realize that here is a young guy who was homeless and now is going to college. I don't know why you are majoring in biology, but that is a whole other story.

But our obligation here is to make sure that young men like Michael Hughes have access to student loans and that when he gets out of school and has access to help himself, lift himself up and continue to do that. I believe it is our obligation to do as much as we can to help him to make sure that the programs that he is going to access and a lot of young men and women around the country like him are going to need access. I am worried that some of those programs are going to be up on the chopping block.

I think it is a responsibility of us here to make sure that you do have access to that. So thank you for your story. I hope that we all remember you when we are debating the budget.

Thank you.

Chairman Hoekstra. Thanks. Just to follow up on Mr. Ryan's comments, Michael, how many of your friends are out on the street still?

Mr. Hughes. Can you repeat the question?

Chairman Hoekstra. How many young men that you met while you were homeless are still homeless out on the street?

Mr. Hughes. There are quite a few of them. A lot of my friends that are out on the street really don't want to come to Covenant House because they are more caught up in the street life and they are enjoying it. And though I was there for a brief moment, I didn't like what I was seeing. So I made sure that I pulled myself away from it as far as possible.

I mean, I am still in the inner city, but when you come into the community service center it is a whole another world. You have a sense of security when you leave and go out on the street view to prepare yourself. But when you come in, you feel better.

Most of my friends are still out on the street doing negative things. I see them quite often, but I try to stay away from it because if I get too close to it I might be tempted to go back.

Chairman Hoekstra. So there is something that holds them out there.

Mr. Hughes. Yes, there is.

Chairman Hoekstra. How many of them would like the opportunity that you have had, that there is not room?

Mr. Hughes. I talked to a gentleman about two days ago who was interested in coming into the TLP, and I gave him a card from Covenant House. He is actually today; he is supposed to be coming in and taken into Covenant House.

There are many youth out there that want to come into Covenant House and there is a limited amount of space. I know with the Transitional Living Program it is several steps that you have to take in order to be accepted into the program, and it is a competition to get into the

program. Several programs that we as youth know about in D.C. about three organizations that we know and we try to apply to all of them and hope that we get in one, but the space is very limited. I mean, I don't know exactly offhand, but I can think about maybe 20 or 30 slots they might have for TLP, and that is in a city of millions of people. It is tough, and I think they need to have more openings and more spaces for youth that want to come into TLP and hopefully they can be accepted into TLP.

Chairman Hoekstra. Ms. Fernandez, do you turn folks away?

Ms. Fernandez. Yes.

Chairman Hoekstra. Where do you send them?

Ms. Fernandez. Sometimes we call Covenant House. Sasha Bruce is one of our other partners. We try to, as much as possible, either try to get into the foster care system or one of our programs.

But there are times when we have had requests. We have a young man who is 16 years old, and there is just no bed to be found. So we just either have to wait or we try to do something with the youth. We try to not leave them on the street if they want a space. But we can't offer every youth that wants to come into the 18-month program a slot. We always have a waiting list.

Chairman Hoekstra. Okay. Mr. Allen, you must have some kind of profile saying if a runaway or missing youth fits a certain kind of profile, we want local and State organizations to notify us and get that into the National Data Bank. Do you have any kind of statistics as to how many of those people that figure profile actually end in your database?

Mr. Allen. Really, no. There are some new data from the Justice Department that estimated roughly 1.7 million runaway and homeless youth every year based on national survey research, of which roughly only about 20 percent, as I recall, I think about 340, 000 to 350,000 are actually reported as missing.

Obviously, one of the great challenges with this problem is that we have used the data for years. They are probably pretty old. However, kids who do spend substantial amounts of time on the street, clearly there is a very high likelihood that those kids are going to become involved in drugs or prostitution or theft or become victims in some way. Just as Mike told you, if you are on the street long enough, it is a pretty threatening place. So this is a huge problem.

And the challenge that we see, because we only see a small piece of the runaway problem, we are basically searching for those runaways who are reported missing by their parents, and then the Justice Department sets specific criteria for our involvement regarding endangerment. So if a child, for example, or if a kid has some medical dependency or life-threatening medical situation or is in the company of someone considered to be a threat or is very young, we would get involved and search for that runaway as we would for any other missing child.

In the vast majority of cases, we get many calls from our hotline from runaways themselves who want to come off the streets. What we do is have a direct connect with the National Runaway

Switchboard in Chicago. Our hotline is primarily established to take leads regarding missing, most of the calls coming from parents or average citizens. The National Runaway Switchboard is handling calls from runaways themselves who are looking for help. So we try to make sure that we get those referrals to the appropriate place.

But I think the real soft data is on how many of those kids then go on to other problems.

Chairman Hoekstra. Mr. Hinojosa.

Mr. Hinojosa. I wish to exercise personal privilege and acknowledge the presence of Harry Wilson, the Commissioner of the Family Youth Services Bureau, on behalf of our committee and staff. We want to say thank you for sharing up-to-date information through your bureau on the work that we are doing on this issue. Thank you for being here.

My questions, maybe a statement and question to Michael Hughes, is that, having heard your personal experience, I admire your resilience. I am sure that you serve, as a source of inspiration to other young men and women, and it seems to me that for many homeless youth the first step to accepting help from an organization is establishing trust. How did the Covenant House earn your trust?

Mr. Hughes. Quite simply, in my case, Covenant House established trust with me on the first day that I contacted Covenant House. It was a Saturday, and I talked to a gentleman on the phone who asked me if I had a place to stay. I didn't have a place to stay, but I told him on the telephone that I had a place to stay. I guess out of pride I told him that I had a place to stay.

I made an appointment to come up to Covenant House's service center that following Monday. The Monday that I came to Covenant House to tell them about the circumstances that I was in, and basic intake, intake into the program, which is the application process to make sure that you have no warrants out for your arrest, you have to get a police clearance in the District of Columbia; I think the most impressive thing to me and the thing that made me trust Covenant House was I was immediately placed into the shelter.

Most places that I called turned me away or said we don't serve anyone that is older than 18. So I was left with basically nowhere to go. And Covenant House immediately put me into shelter immediately helped me start establishing myself. And everything that I stand for they helped me.

Mr. Hinojosa. I understand. It is clear to me that you have come a long way. Could you tell us a little bit more about how the Covenant House helped you get ready for college?

Mr. Hughes. I had graduated from high school and was going into the military, and I changed my mind for reasons of my own. But Covenant House got me ready. I wasn't going to college. I never thought of college anytime, and they helped me think more of the education part because it is hard to get a good job out here.

Mr. Hughes. When you are placed out on the streets and you know you have to work this minimum wage job, which is very hard, they make you think. Would you want to do this for the

rest of your life? Would you want to work at McDonalds, excuse me for naming places, but would you want to work for McDonalds for the rest of your life?

I told myself, no, I would not want to work at McDonalds for the rest of my life. So they said the first step in getting a great job is education, and I thought about it, and I realized what they were saying is the truth. Education is the number one key. That alone made me change my whole mindset and want to go to college.

They helped me with the whole application process. The application fee was waived in my case. The Covenant House had education specialists. They go to universities and get the application fees waived and other fees waived. So I had my application put in, the fee was waived, and I was accepted.

Mr. Hinojosa. So when you say they waived the fee, is it a scholarship where you don't have to pay any kind of monetary fees to attend college?

Mr. Hughes. No, sir. It was just the application fee. I received financial aid through the government to pay for all of my college for the year.

Mr. Hinojosa. I see. Well, thank you. It has been a pleasure listening to you, and we certainly hope that you will be able to continue on this good path that you are on.

Mr. Hughes. Thank you.

Mr. Hinojosa. Mr. Allen, in your testimony you said that you were not requesting additional funding at this time, but you said that more funding may be necessary as you begin implementing new requirements. Have you done some analysis on the additional workload and what the potential costs would be?

Mr. Allen. No. Mr. Hinojosa, this is a brand new situation.

The point I was trying to make is, over the past several years the Congress has asked us to undertake a number of new functions and activities beyond the original mandate in the Missing Children's Assistance Act. The most recent was during the conference committee on the Protect Act conferees created a compromised version of a national background screening effort for youth serving organizations. So built into the Protect Act is a pilot, a test, for three national organizations: the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Mentoring Partnership and the National Youth Council; and in that legislation Congress asked if the National Center would, in effect, be the hub of that effort and if we would make the decision for those organizations, sort of a fitness decision. After the FBI does the fingerprint screens, if we would make the determination of whether the person is qualified or not qualified.

Again, the conferees from the conference meeting, staff of one of the conferees, called and said, will the center do that? I said, yes, we would be glad to do that, but clearly there are a lot of details that have to be determined. There are issues like what are the standards for fitness and how many people will it take for us to do that and, frankly, issues like liability. You know, if we are

going to undertake that kind of function, I wanted to make sure that there is some sort of hold harmless or immunity. If we make a decision based on a certain range of criminal history and it turns out to be wrong, in many ways acting as a kind of de facto public agency, it creates some vulnerability.

So that is my point. The current organization, we are very happy with. We are doing the things that Congress has asked us to do. We are not asking for another nickel, but if the background screening activity ends up costing more, I don't want to divert resources from our core mission and our core mandate from you to have to spend a huge amount of money doing that.

Secondly, there could be other things in the future, which Congress says we would like for you to do this or the other. So my suggestion was that in the out-years beyond the current authorization year of 2005 the committee consider a higher appropriations ceiling to give us some flexibility in going to the appropriations committee on that. But we are not asking for additional funds.

Mr. Hinojosa. Finally, Ms. Fernandez, I listened attentively to your recommendation that possibly access to Pell Grants and student loans be made available to students to be able to access higher education and postgraduate studies and not having to pay till after they finish school and hopefully put in three years of service to forgive all or part of those loans after putting in three years in this service. What would be the incentive for someone to go work for your organization when, if you get a college degree, you would probably make more money working for possibly public and private entities that pay much more than you can?

Ms. Fernandez. Well, first of all, if you were willing to forgive a loan, that is a huge incentive.

When I graduated from law school, I came out with a hundred thousand dollars worth in loans. I am still looking for someone to forgive those. So I think that loan forgiveness is a huge incentive to go work in the community.

Second of all, many times people talk about trying to help social justice or to help move forward an issue in society. I think when you sit down and you work with the homeless youth and you really can see the difference that your job makes and that somebody is going to go to college and somebody is safe and somebody is off of drugs, that is a huge reason to go and work in a front-line organization.

And, lastly, we are a ton of fun. If you come visit us, it is a really warm, nice place to be. We have made a huge effort not just to have our kids want to be there but for our staff to want to be there. That is part of our mission, is to create environments where people want to come, and they want to work, and it doesn't feel really like a sacrifice, but it feels like a joy.

Mr. Hinojosa. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Hoekstra. I think that is what they say about Congress every once in a while, don't they, that we are a ton of fun as well.

Mr. Gingrey.

Mr. Gingrey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to make sure that I am connecting all the dots here, and Mr. Allen, regarding what your mission is and what you do with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and what Ms. Fernandez does with the Latin American Youth Center and other similar organizations, tell us how you coordinate your activities.

As an example, Ms. Fernandez, someone comes to the Latin American Youth Center, do you then check with Mr. Allen, with the National Center for Missing Children to find out that, you know, a parent could say, well, thank God, I will be on the next plane. We have been praying, and our prayers are answered. Our child is found. Or some other parent says, well, that juvenile delinquent has run away from home five times, and we are throwing in the towel and giving up, so do with him or her what you can.

How are you coordinating to make sure that you are getting the ones back that really need to go back and then working intensely with those who really do not have an opportunity to go back to their family situation?

Mr. Allen. If I can go first, historically, I think, in all candor, there has been a little bit of tension between what the center has done and sort of the runaway and homeless youth community, constructive tension. But over the issue there has always been concern about bringing law enforcement into too many of these runaway-type cases. Our primary constituency is law enforcement and its parents. Our primary mandate from the center is to find missing kids, to work with law enforcement, to bring them back to their families.

Now, the vast majority of the 1.6 million or whatever number you use of runaway and homeless youth involve kids who have not been reported missing and, frankly, nobody is looking for. So that is an issue. That is one of the reasons why our mandate from Congress and our current criteria from the Justice Department is to focus on mobilizing law enforcement to locate and return only those runaways who can be classified as endangered based on one of the series of criteria.

Now, we have worked very, very closely with the runaway community, as I mentioned earlier. We link with the National Runaway Switchboard. In cases in which there is some question about the vulnerability of a runaway and where there is law enforcement involvement, we will certainly and do routinely refer cases to the runaway shelter community and to agencies like Ms. Fernandez, but I would say by and large we do get referrals in the other direction. We do get agencies that call us to say, is there a report on this runaway, is anybody looking? But in the vast majority of cases I think the overwhelming problem that the runaway and homeless youth community is trying to address, frankly, are kids that nobody is looking for.

Mr. Gingrey. Thank you. I would think it would almost be routine for centers like Ms. Fernandez's Center that they would just almost routinely check with the National Center for Missing Children to see if someone was looking for them.

Mr. Allen. We would welcome it.

Ms. Fernandez. My background is a little different than a lot of people who have run social service organizations. I was a former prosecutor in Manhattan. There my background was law enforcement. When I came to the center, one of the first things I tried to do was sort of bridge the problems between social service organizations and law enforcement. To be quite frank, the police thought that we were harboring fugitives. Not the truth. And our social workers thought that the devil incarnate was a police officer. So it took quite a bit of coming together for both the people on the social service end and the police office to sort of understand what each one does. We currently have a really good relationship with the Metropolitan Police Department. They understand that we are there to help, and my staff regularly says, where are the police? So that has been progress.

I don't think that I would turn to Mr. Allen's organization intuitively as the first step I would take. I would call 911. That is what you do when you are in a panic. We have had situations where kids have been missing and the police have come to us with pictures saying, have you seen them? Or if a parent tells us, they can't find their kid, we call 911. They are the first respondent; a police officer is just the first person that you are going to call.

Chairman Hoekstra. I don't think there are any more questions. I appreciate the panel being here today. It was very informative, very helpful. We really appreciate it.

There is no further business. The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX A -- WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETE HOEKSTRA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, DC

Hearing of the Subcommittee on Select Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce
House of Representatives

"Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Youth: Strengthening the System"

Opening Statement of Chairman Pete Hoekstra (R-MI)
April 29, 2003

Good afternoon. I would like to welcome each of you to our hearing on "Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Youth: Strengthening the System."

The purpose of today's hearing is to continue our information gathering efforts to learn how programs under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Missing Children's Assistance Act are currently operating in preparation for the upcoming reauthorization of these two Acts.

The Missing Children's Assistance Act addresses the needs of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children. The program was created to coordinate and support various federal missing children's programs through the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and includes the authorization for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. As the nation's resource center and clearinghouse for information on missing and exploited children, the Center provides assistance to families and law enforcement agencies in locating and recovering missing and exploited children, both nationally and internationally. The Center does not investigate abducted, runaway and sexually exploited youth cases, but receives leads and disseminates them to various investigative law enforcement units.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act supports three grant programs to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. These grants are awarded to local public and private organizations to establish and operate community-based shelters that are outside of the law enforcement, juvenile justice, child welfare and mental health systems.

- Through the Basic Center Program, financial assistance is provided to establish or strengthen community-based programs that provide youth with emergency short-term shelter, food, clothing, counseling and referrals for health care. The Basic Centers seek to reunite young people with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements.

- The Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides grants to public and private organizations to support projects that provide longer-term residential services. TLPs assist older homeless youth in developing skills and resources to promote their independence and to prevent future dependency on social services. These activities include counseling in basic life skills, interpersonal skills, educational advancement, job attainment skills and physical and mental health care. The TLP includes maternity group homes, which provide a range of coordinated services to teen mothers, including

childcare, education, job training, counseling and advice on parenting, child development and other life skills.

- The Education and Prevention Services To Reduce Sexual Abuse of Runaway, Homeless, and Street Youth Program, also known as the Street Outreach Program, funds local youth service providers that conduct street-based outreach and education and offer emergency shelter and related services to young people who have been, or are at risk of being, sexually abused or exploited.

As was done in 1999 through the Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act, our desire is to strengthen these programs in order to address the unique needs of these at-risk children. We must continue to support the Center and its efforts to locate and recover missing children and help prevent child abductions and sexual exploitation. Additionally, we wish to ensure the protection of runaway and homeless youth by keeping them off the streets, away from criminal activities and out of desperate circumstances. These services and activities help a particularly vulnerable population and today's hearing will shed light on program successes as well as avenues for improvement.

I would like to thank each of our distinguished witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today – I look forward to hearing your testimony and the perspective that each of you brings to this discussion about the safety and well being of our nation's children. At this time, I would yield to my colleague from Texas, Mr. Hinojosa, for any opening statement he may have.

APPENDIX B -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

TESTIMONY OF

ERNEST E. ALLEN
President & Chief Executive Officer

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

On

Missing, Exploited and Runaway Youth:
Strengthening the System

For the

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Select Education

April 29, 2003

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, as President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), I am honored to report to you on the work and progress of NCMEC per the mandates of the Missing Children's Assistance Act.

NCMEC is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1984, and serves as the official national resource center and clearinghouse as mandated by the Missing Children's Assistance Act. In the 1984 Act, Congress directed the U.S. Department of Justice to designate such a center, and NCMEC has performed that role in partnership with the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) continuously since 1984. However, in 1999 Congress passed the Missing, Exploited and Runaway Protection Act of 1999, officially codifying, authorizing and mandating NCMEC in that role under law. The 1999 legislation was authored and sponsored by a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Mr. Castle of Delaware.

NCMEC's overarching mission is to assist law enforcement across America in the search for missing children and to work to prevent child victimization. Under the statute, NCMEC is charged with operating a national 24-hour toll-free telephone line for reporting information regarding missing children; coordinating public and private programs to locate, recover, or reunite missing children with their families; disseminating information nationally relating to model programs, services and legislation that benefit missing and exploited children; providing technical assistance and training to federal, state and local law enforcement in locating and recovering missing children, both nationally and internationally; and generally promoting awareness about the issues surrounding child abduction and child exploitation. *See generally*, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5771-

5780. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to this Subcommittee for your long-standing leadership and support for the work of NCMEC. Since 1984, per your mandate and with your support, NCMEC has been proud to serve as America's national resource center and clearinghouse for missing and exploited children. Working in partnership with OJJDP, we are working with law enforcement to find missing children as never before, and are making great strides in the prevention of child victimization. Let me provide a few brief highlights:

- **RECOVERIES OF MISSING CHILDREN** - While our primary role is technical assistance for law enforcement, as it is a local police officer somewhere in America who is actually recovering the child, we are very proud and encouraged about the dramatic growth in recovery rate. Today more missing children are coming home safely than ever before. America is better prepared. There is a national network in place. Law enforcement is responding more swiftly and professionally than ever before.

Working in concert with the Justice Department, NCMEC focuses on the most serious cases in which the child is at greatest risk. On cases meeting DOJ-approved criteria, we have worked with law enforcement on 89,599 cases, and played a role in the recovery of 73,351 children. Yet, most importantly, the recovery rate in those cases has climbed from 62% in 1990 to 93.9% today.

- **CALLS FOR SERVICE** – Since 1984, NCMEC has handled 1,741,981 calls for service, currently averaging more than 600 calls per day.
- **THE WORLD WIDE WEB** -- On January 31, 1997, we launched our new website, **www.missingkids.com**. The use of the web has enabled us to transmit

images and information regarding missing children instantly across America and around the world. The response has been overwhelming. On February 1, 1997, we received 3,000 "hits." Today, we receive 3.4 million "hits" every day, and are linked with hundreds of other sites using Java applets to provide real-time images of breaking cases of missing children.

-- To demonstrate its application in a real-world sense, a police officer in Puerto Rico searched our website, identified a possible match, and then worked with one of our case managers to identify and recover a child abducted as an infant from her home seven years prior.

- **INTERNATIONAL** -- NCMEC is now playing a key role in international child abduction cases as the State Department's representative on in-coming cases under the Hague Convention. Since September 1995, we have handled 3,143 cases under the Hague Convention, resulting in the return of 2,211 children. We are also using the worldwide web to build a network to distribute images worldwide in partnership with INTERPOL.
- **JIMMY RYCE LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING CENTER** – Thanks to the support of Congress, in April 1997 we opened our training center. Each month NCMEC brings in police chiefs and sheriffs for a policy seminar on missing and exploited child investigations. In addition, we are also training state and federal prosecutors, police unit commanders, school resource officers, and many others. Already, 2,299 police chiefs and sheriffs have completed our CEO training, and 611 prosecutors have completed the new prosecutor's course.

- **PUBLICATIONS** – NCMEC has designed, written, edited and published many collaterals and publications for law enforcement, other child serving professionals, and the general public. Since 1984, NCMEC has disseminated 28,762,912 free publications.
- **NCIC "CA" Flag** – We are particularly proud of our partnership with the FBI. In February 1997 the FBI Director created a new NCIC child abduction ("CA") flag to provide NCMEC immediate notification in the most serious cases. Time is the enemy in the search for a missing child. The Justice Department found that in 74% of child abduction/homicides, the child is dead within the first three hours. NCMEC operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and is receiving instant notifications from across America. We believe that receiving this information rapidly is a key reason that NCMEC is experiencing its highest recovery rates in history.
- **PHOTO DISTRIBUTION** – A central aspect of our mandate is photo distribution. NCMEC is actively distributing photos of missing children via a wide array of resources, including franked envelopes of members of Congress. Nearly 500 public and private sector companies and organizations are assisting, at no cost to NCMEC or taxpayers. Included in these committed private sector partners are ADVO, the Connecticut-based marketing company whose "Have You Seen Me? flyers" go into 85 million homes per week in the U.S.. This incredible company has been providing this service at no cost for eighteen years, and most importantly, 1 in every 7 of the children featured is recovered as a direct result of the ADVO card.

But there are many others. Six years ago, Wal-Mart became a strong supporter of this effort. Wal-Mart created its Missing Children's Network, partnering with NCMEC to create bulletin boards with photos of missing children in all of their 3,000+ Wal-Marts and Sam's Clubs. Eighty-four children are home safely today as a direct result of the Wal-Mart bulletin boards.

- NCMEC also works closely with the media. For example, WABC television in New York City has run missing children photos on every newscast every day for the past five years, with many children found as a direct result. Further, Univision, the Spanish language network runs regular missing child features, leading to the recovery of many children.
- **THE AMBER PLAN** – Having been asked by the Texas-based creators of the Amber Plan, the innovative concept to utilize the Emergency Alert System to mobilize communities in the most serious cases of child abduction, to spearhead the effort to take it nationwide, in 2001 NCMEC launched a national campaign to bring Amber to every community. Joined by the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Association of Attorneys General, law enforcement leaders and the U.S. Department of Justice, our goal was to get every community to implement a system of issuing Amber Alerts in the most serious child abduction cases. During 2002 particularly with the dramatic recovery of two teenage girls from Lancaster, California thanks to the Amber Plan, Amber interest and awareness exploded. From just 27 plans a year ago, today the total has grown 90 plans, 40 of them statewide, with 64 children's lives saved as a direct result. NCMEC provides services to law enforcement, prosecutors, direct-service providers, courts, legislators, educators, researchers, families, and victims across the U.S. and around the world. The Center is electronically linked with missing children's clearinghouses in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, INTERPOL, and others. The Center's internet website is linked with hundreds of other websites

around the world to provide real-time images of breaking cases involving missing and exploited children. There is much more.

- **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION** – While NCMEC's primary focus is and has been missing children, NCMEC has also been a key leader in the fight against child sexual exploitation. Particularly as technology has evolved and provided those who sexually exploit children more sophisticated and insidious tools to prey on our most vulnerable citizens, the challenges of protecting our children have increased in complexity and numbers. The mission and resources of NCMEC have responded to this challenge.
- In June 1987, Congress gave NCMEC the responsibility for operating the National Child Pornography Tipline, a toll-free telephone number through which individuals can report leads regarding allegations of child sexual exploitation. To date, NCMEC has received and processed almost 14,000 such leads.
- On January 31, 1997, in response to the increasing prevalence of child sexual victimization, NCMEC officially opened the Exploited Child Unit (ECU). ECU is responsible for receipt, processing, initial analysis and referral to law enforcement of all such information. As technology continued to advance and the use of computers became more prevalent, Congress recognized the need to provide online access to NCMEC's services.
- On March 9, 1998 NCMEC launched the CyberTipline initiative, www.cybertipline.com, to serve as the national online clearinghouse for investigative leads and tips concerning child pornography, child sexual molestation, child sex tourism, child prostitution, and enticement of children for

sexual acts. NCMEC thus became "the 911 of the Internet." 42 U.S.C. § 5771(11). To date, NCMEC and the ECU have received and processed more than 121,000 leads through the CyberTipline.

- In October 1998, Congress passed the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act (PCSPA) that amended, among numerous federal statutes, the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990. A new statute enacted as a part of the PCSPA was 42 U.S.C. § 13032, which requires providers of electronic communication services or remote computing services to file a report to the CyberTipline when they obtain knowledge from which a violation of certain child pornography offenses is apparent. To facilitate this new role, NCMEC opened CyberTipline II in February 2001. This initiative provides a mechanism separate from the public reporting mechanism through which electronic communication service providers are required to file their reports under the Act. In response to this latest mandate from Congress, NCMEC anticipates 7,000 to 10,000 reports per week. Obviously, NCMEC's interest in the legal definition of child pornography is substantial and significant by virtue of its various and unique responsibilities mandated under federal law.

Issues and Recommendations: In recent years, Congress has asked NCMEC to undertake a number of new challenges and responsibilities beyond its core functions. We have welcomed them and believe that NCMEC is well suited to undertake these kinds of tasks. Further, we believe these undertakings to be an integral element of our mandate to serve as the national resource center and clearinghouse on missing and exploited children.

For example, NCMEC was asked to develop and implement a program to enhance basic law enforcement technology in responding to missing child cases. NCMEC created LOCATER, a hardware-software package enabling police to create high-quality color posters for local distribution when a child disappears as well as disseminate that information online to other departments, the media and NCMEC. NCMEC has already placed LOCATER systems in more than 2,000 police departments. In the aftermath of the Columbine tragedy, Congress asked NCMEC to develop special training for school resource officers and other school officials in addressing the problem of school violence. Those highly successful training sessions are underway and receiving positive responses from across the country. When Boys & Girls Clubs of America launched its effort to create tech centers in all of its clubs, Congress asked that NCMEC develop the state-of-the-art Internet safety resource to ensure that this new technology resource could be used safely. Thus, NetSmartz was born and is now reaching beyond Boys & Girls Clubs to other youth organizations, schools, and the general public. On April 10, 2003 Congress passed the PROTECT Act, and NCMEC's challenges and responsibilities grew once again. Let me raise several issues for the Subcommittee's consideration and suggest some possible recommendations:

1. **Appropriations Level** – We are not asking Congress for more money. In recent years, NCMEC has received a core appropriation to support its work under the Missing Children's Act, an appropriation for the Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center, an appropriation from Treasury/Postal Appropriations through the U.S. Secret Service primarily to address and support our efforts in the field of child sexual exploitation, and additional

earmarks to support special programs like NetSmartz, LOCATER, School Resource Officer training, etc.

We are very grateful and enthusiastic about the action of the Congress in the PROTECT Act to raise NCMEC's appropriations authorization ceiling. While such action will not necessarily increase the amount of appropriations NCMEC receives, it gives us the opportunity to consolidate some of the current separate appropriations and maintain and properly manage the current ongoing programs.

Where we do have some concern is in our ability to manage potential new challenges. For example, at this point we do not know how costly or complicated the national background screening pilot project will be that was approved in the PROTECT Act.

Thus, we ask the Subcommittee's consideration for increases in the appropriations authorization ceiling for those years beyond 2005, the current end year for our authorization.

2. Pilot Program for National Criminal History Background Checks and Feasibility Study -- Section 108 of the PROTECT Act establishes a pilot program for national criminal history background checks for individuals working or volunteering with children. Based on the information acquired from state

and/or federal background checks, NCMEC will be responsible for making determinations as to whether an applicant's criminal record renders him or her unfit to provide care or supervision for children. The determination is made according to criteria jointly established by NCMEC, Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), the National Mentoring Partnership (NMP), and the National Council of Youth Services (NCYS). NCMEC is then responsible for conveying its determination to the organization requesting the background check.

NCMEC is currently beginning discussions with the FBI to develop an appropriate process for handling this mandate, including identifying appropriate guidelines for the determinations; designating a person(s) who will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, archiving and acting on background screening information; and approving an operational model for implementing NCMEC's role.

NCMEC must also undertake a liability assessment for designating "fitness determinations", whether NCMEC finds a person fit for working with children and a subsequent crime against a child is committed by that person or NCMEC finds a person unfit and that person initiates formal legal proceedings against NCMEC. We must also prepare for possible NCMEC appearances in the due process appeal rights of applicants to testify, create fitness determination forms with appropriate language, identify privacy issues and concerns both in the notification process and in archiving fitness determination records.

Recommendations:

- NCMEC should seek good faith immunity from decisions rendered by NCMEC in this process. Such legal theories as loss of business opportunity, negligent or intentional infliction of emotional distress, slander, libel, defamation of character or reputation, negligent approval of a sexual predator or failure to develop adequate protocols to screen applicants should be considered immunity topics for this legislation. Exclusive jurisdiction in federal court would also be a consideration.

  In the recent PROTECT Act, Congress provided NCMEC with civil immunity related to slander, libel, defamation, etc., protecting NCMEC in its quasi-governmental role in handling reports from the public which it forwards to the appropriate law enforcement agency. That provision should be examined closely by the Subcommittee to determine if adequate protection is provided in view of NCMEC's newly mandated role in background screening.

  Similarly, for the "beta test," our intent is to attempt to undertake this task within existing appropriation levels. However, it is very possible that we will learn that this project will require additional resources and funding.

2. **Suzanne's Law** – Section 204 of the PROTECT Act provides that each

federal, state, and local law-enforcement agency must now enter each case of a missing child under the age of 21 reported to the agency in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). Previously, entry into NCIC was only required if the missing child was under the age of 18. NCMEC fully understands the intent of the legislation and the legitimate concern about the victimization of young adults under existing law. Further, Congress has acted to begin support for a missing adult clearinghouse. Nonetheless, there are near-term implications for NCMEC.

Implications -- Raising the age of a child, for NCIC purposes, from 18 to 21will most likely result in an increased workload for several NCMEC divisions, including the Hotline and the Missing Children's Division because of the additional numbers included in the 18-20 year old demographic.

The National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990, section 3702(3)(c) requires NCMEC to exchange information and provide technical assistance in missing children cases. Obviously by raising the number of "children" we will have in the system places significant operational demands and budgetary shortfalls on NCMEC.

This section of the PROTECT Act is in conflict with other statutes and authorization legislation affecting NCMEC in that children are defined as under the age of 18 in all other instances. Eventually, the law must decide

across the board whether NCMEC will be responsible in all its programs for under 18 children or under 21 "children." If the answer is the latter, the demands on NCMEC resources could be substantial.

Further, there are privacy issues relating to the 18-21 demographic. In every other aspect of life these individuals are considered adults (with the possible exception of buying/consuming alcohol in some jurisdictions) and enjoy the same expectation of privacy as other adults. Some people do not want to be found when they are "missing."

"Grey Area Teens" are another challenge in this area of the law. Many states emancipate children at the age of 16 (some even younger) and this effectively ties the hands of law enforcement intervention.

Recommendations -- Depending on how significant the increase in workload is for the affected NCMEC divisions, more staff may have to be hired. The authorized budget for NCMEC from Congress must increase proportionately to the increased demands imposed by this section if NCMEC is to maintain its level of service to the under 18 missing and exploited children. Privacy concerns must be addressed and implemented in the NCMEC protocol for this age group. Legislative immunity for violations of rights to privacy may be required.

3. **Limitation on Liability** – As noted above in Section 305 of the PROTECT Act, Congress provides as follows: "NCMEC officers, employees, and agent are not liable for damages in civil actions for defamation, libel, or slander arising from any communication or action by NCMEC to a clearinghouse, hotline, or complaint intake or forwarding program, or in connection with any activity that is wholly or partially covered by the United States and is undertaken in cooperation with, or at the direction of, a federal law-enforcement agency."

   Implications -- The limitation on liability was drafted with the idea that it would cover NCMEC's liabilities as described in the language; however, due to the placement of the language in the AMBER Alert subtitle, some have suggested that there is danger that a court may interpret the limitation on liability as being relevant only to actions stemming from the AMBER Alert. Many of NCMEC's activities address the sexual exploitation of children as set forth above. To that end, this section fails to provide immunity from criminal prosecution of NCMEC employees who work in good faith with evidence of child pornography, victim identification, and other evidence of sexual exploitation of children. NCMEC efforts could be even more efficient with good faith immunity protection in this area.

Recommendations:

- The placement of the liability section within the PROTECT Act should be reconsidered in light of the possibility that a court may misinterpret the scope of the protection intended by Congress. We recommend that the protection at least be reiterated in subsequent authorizing legislation, and that the Subcommittee consider the scope of immunity protection.

4. **Prevention** -- The media referred to 2002 as "the Year of the Missing Child." The stories of children like Danielle Van Dam, Samantha Runnion, Elizabeth Smart, Erica Pratt and others unleashed unprecedented fear among parents everywhere, who ask, "how safe is my child?"

   The primary focus of NCMEC and Congress in the past two decades has been reactive; i.e., rapid response to child abductions, building a network so that we can mobilize every possible resource, improved reporting, improved technology, etc. Yet, in our judgment more can be done in preventing these crimes.

   There are an array of excellent programs and resources available to the American public. But we believe that more can be done. For generations, society has attempted to prevent crimes against children through basic messages like "don't talk to strangers." Unfortunately, we now know that such messages alone are not enough.

Are traditional child safety messages effective, accurate, and complete? Do they warn children about real threats to their safety? Do they unduly frighten children and families? Today, there is widespread controversy regarding the effectiveness of educational programs seeking to prevent child victimization. In 1998 the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children convened an Educational Standards Task Force to examine the state of prevention education in the United States, focusing upon what works and what does not. We worked with Congressman Castle on this process.

While virtually every school and every community conducts some sort of child safety education, the Task Force concluded that most are inadequate, and that few offer the kind of positive, comprehensive, research-based, grade-and-age-appropriate curricula and education that is necessary. Thus, NCMEC promulgated personal safety education guidelines and encouraged their implementation. The guidelines have been endorsed by organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Federation of Teachers, American School Counselor Association, Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, National Association of Attorneys General, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Children's Alliance (formerly the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers), National Education Association, and the National PTA.

We believe it is time to launch a national effort to reach out to every state and ensure that the best information is being provided to children and families. Our central message to families is that you do not have to live in fear, but you do need to be alert, cautious, and prepared. The key to child safety is communication. The child's best weapon against victimization is his or her head, ability to think, and preparation to respond to certain situations. We will ensure that the child safety messages and instruction are meaningful, accurate and give children the skills and knowledge to stay safe.

Lastly, I'd like to note that we are pleased that the PROTECT Act included a section that would authorize Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding for Sex Offender Apprehension Programs in states that have a sex offender registry and have laws that make it a crime for failure to notify authorities of any change in address information.

Recommendation:

- NCMEC proposes a comprehensive national training initiative conducted in every state to teach the latest and best information available regarding child personal safety and prevention. The target audience would be the nation's crime prevention officers and school administrators. Such training would be provided in cooperation with the National Sheriff's Association, the International

Association of Chiefs of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police. NCMEC and OJJDP will develop a standardized training curriculum for delivery nationwide.

- Regarding the SOAP program, I'd recommend Congress consider appropriating funds in targeted cities for implementation of SOAP programs. NCMEC could build a training program for law enforcement officers nationwide on developing and implementing this successful program. Recidivism rates are high within the sex offender community and keeping an eye on them in the general population under a SOAP model in targeted communities would be an effective prevention strategy.

Mr. Chairman, we are deeply grateful for the Subcommittee's leadership and support, and as always, stand ready to work with you and your committee to bring more missing children home and keep every child safe.

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: ERNEST E. ALLEN

	Yes	No
1. Will you be representing a federal, State, or local government entity? (If the answer is yes please contact the committee).		✓

2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 2000:

None

	Yes	No
3. Will you be representing an entity other than a government entity?	✓	

4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you will be representing:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

5. Please list any offices or elected positions held and/or briefly describe your representational capacity with each of the entities you listed in response to question 4:

President & Chief Executive Officer

6. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received by the entities you listed in response to question 4 since October 1, 2000, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:

See attached

	Yes	No
7. Are there parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities you disclosed in response to question number 4 that you will not be representing? If so, please list:		✓

Signature: Ernest E. Allen Date: April 28, 2003

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Schedule of Awards

Agency	CFDA Number and description	Agreement Number	Amount
Awards in 2001			
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Clearinghouse	98-MC-CX-K002	11,120,410
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Training	98-MC-CX-K002	2,300,000
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Reunification	98-MC-CX-K002	100,000
Department of Justice	16.543 Law Enforcement Technology	2000-MC-CX-K020	4,989,000
Department of Justice	16-543 Boys & Girls Clubs subcontract	2001-LD-BX-K002	2,350,000
Secret Service	20X1408 Exploited Child Unit	GA97-0001	1,629,407
Secret Service	20X1408 Exploited Child Unit	GA97-0001	370,593
Customs Service	21.999 Project ALERT and Pornography Tipline	TC-01-011G	300,000
South Carolina Public Safety	16.575 VOCA	IV01092	41,400
			23,200,810
Awards in 2002			
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Clearinghouse	98-MC-CX-K002	13,550,000
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Clearinghouse	98-MC-CX-K002	500,000
Department of Justice	16.543 Law Enforcement Technology	2000-MC-CX-K020	5,000,000
Department of Justice	16.543 School Resource Officer Training	2000-MC-CX-K021	5,993,400
Department of Justice	16-543 Boys & Girls Clubs subcontract	2001-LD-BX-K002	1,444,350
Secret Service	20X1408 Exploited Child Unit	GA97-0001	3,009,000
Customs Service	21.999 Project ALERT and Pornography Tipline	TC-01-011G	300,172
South Carolina Public Safety	16.575 VOCA	IV02068	45,689
			29,842,611
Awards in 2003			
Department of Justice	16.543 Missing Children's Clearinghouse	98-MC-CX-K002	14,902,500
			14,902,500

APPENDIX C -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MAI FERNANDEZ, MANAGING DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER, WASHINGTON, DC

Testimony of Mai Fernandez
Managing Director of the Latin American Youth Center
Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce

Good afternoon Chairman Hoekstra and Ranking Member Hinojosa. I am Mai Fernandez, the Managing Director of the Latin American Youth Center. It is a great honor to be before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. It is even a greater honor to be able to give you some of our history with regard to helping runaway and homeless youth in the District of Columbia and how the Federal programs assisting these youth can be strengthened.

By way of background, the Latin American Youth Center was founded in 1968 and was incorporated as a non-profit 501(c) 3 in 1974 for the purpose of serving "at risk" immigrant Latino youth. Since we opened our doors, the agency has grown from a small grassroots recreation center primarily for Latino youth, to a nationally recognized, community-based, multicultural youth and family development organization. Our mission, is to support youth and families in their determination to live, work and study with dignity, hope and joy.

The Latin American Youth Center is organized into three program divisions: the Education Division – that works to keep youth that are in school, in school and to prepare them for college; the Social Services Division that ensures that youth live healthy life styles and live in safe homes; and the Works Skills Division preparing youth that have dropped out of school, to receive a GED and obtain a job.

Under our Social Service Division, the Latin American Youth Center has a housing team. Through the housing team's services the Latin American Youth Center provides transitional and long-term housing and support services to approximately 60 children and youth ages 0 to 21. These children and youth are abused, neglected, runaways and/or homeless. We provide these services through a network of programs, including: Street Outreach Program; The Basic Center Host Home Program; the Transitional Living Program; and the District of Columbia Foster Care Program.

We came about running these groups of program out of necessity. About 15 years ago we were seeing a growing number of Latino boys and Latina Teen mothers and their babies that did not have stable homes. In the case of the boys, many of them were trying to fit into the American Culture that often clashed with the Latin culture of their families. Consequently, many of them either ran away from their parent's homes or were thrown out of them. In the case of the teen mothers, many of them were also turned away from their families and found themselves in the precarious situation of having a baby and no place to live.

The District of Columbia abuse and neglect system should have found foster homes for these children. However, at that time, the District had no licensed foster homes where the parents spoke Spanish. Moreover, the foster families that existed did not receive cultural competency training that would allow a Latino youth to feel more comfortable in the home. Consequently, few, if any Latino youth were ever placed in the D.C. foster care system.

In order to get these youth off the streets, we turned to the Federal Government. In 1992 we received our first Transitional Living Program grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. With private funds we were able to buy a town house in the District. The HHS grant

funds provided us with the programmatic dollars needed to house 10 boys in the home for up to 18 months at a time. Shortly after, we were awarded a Basic Center grant to house teen mothers and their babies in the homes of local families. With these funds we were able to hire staff to supervise the girls and pay local Latino families to house the girls and their babies. In addition, about five years ago we were awarded a Street Outreach Program grant that allowed us to hire street outreach workers that pick youth off up the street and provide them with emergency shelter and assistance.

In all our housing program, the youth receive case management. In other words, there is staff assigned to each youth to ensure that the youth is in school or in a GED program; he or she has a job and he or she has access to health care. Additionally, all our staff are bilingual so the youth can easily communicate their needs and have their needs met. Additionally, traditional Latino food is often cooked for the youth and both typical American and Latin American holidays are celebrated in the programs. Program counselors work vigilantly to reunite the youth with their families. However, while a youth is with us we want him or her to feel comfortable and to be in place where he/she can prosper.

I should also note, that four years ago the LAYC became a licensed foster care provider for the District of Columbia. Our goal is to train Latino families in the Washington metropolitan area to become foster families. Now our foster care program works in conjunction with our program funded by the Federal Government. This ensures that no youth or child falls through the cracks and that they will receive the care and love the need a crucial moment in their lives.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today. I would also like to invite you to come visit us and see our housing programs in action. The Latin American Youth Center is a 15 minute cab ride from Capitol Hill and we always give a warm welcome to our visitors.

Muchas Gracias.

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name:		
1. Will you be representing a federal, State, or local government entity? (If the answer is yes please contact the committee).	Yes	No
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 2000: HUD – Youth Build HHS – Basic Center, TLP, SOP, SAMSHA DOL – Youth opperdenities		
3. Will you be representing an entity other than a government entity?	Yes	No ✓
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you will be representing: Latin American Youth Center		
5. Please list any offices or elected positions held and/or briefly describe your representational capacity with each of the entities you listed in response to question 4: I am the Managing Director of the Latin American Youth Center		
6. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received by the entities you listed in response to question 4 since October 1, 2000, including the source and amount of each grant or contract: HUD – Youthbuild – 450,000 HHS – Basic Center 60,000; TLP 200,000; Samsha 350,000 DOL – Youth Opperdenities 680,000		
7. Are there parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities you disclosed in response to question number 4 that you will not be representing? If so, please list:	Yes	No ✓

Signature: _____ Date: 4/29/03

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

APPENDIX D -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL HUGHES, COVENANT HOUSE YOUTH, COVENANT HOUSE WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON, DC

Statement on the Reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act by Michael Hughes, Jr.,

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Select Education
U.S. House of Representatives
April 29, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee. I am here to urge you to reauthorize The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act because it supports Covenant House Washington and other organizations that help youth. My name is Michael Hughes Jr. and I am a 19 year-old formerly homeless youth. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I was asked to leave my home when I reached the age of 18. I was completely unprepared to live on my own. Consequently, I was homeless for a year. During that time, I slept on park benches and at bus stops. Occasionally, I slept on the floors of friends' homes. I could never stay for very long though because their housing was over-crowded and there was no room for an additional person. Life on the street is really hard. I worried constantly about where I would sleep each night, if I would get enough to eat, or if anyone will try to harm me or take my possessions. To deal with the stress, I used alcohol and drugs. I often felt depressed and hopeless about the future.

Although I did not know it at the time, my life was about to change dramatically. One day, someone slipped me the number to Covenant House. They told me that Covenant House helped homeless youth. Once I called Covenant House, they responded quickly. The following morning I met with Miss Sherrie Williams, who is my Service Manager. Miss Williams helped me stabilize my emotions and feel a sense of security

that I had not felt for a long time. Miss Williams, who is in the audience today, is a great source of support and encouragement to me. She is more than just my Service Manager; she is an extension of family.

The Crisis Center provided a safe and stable place to live for a short period of time. They fed me and gave me a clean and safe place to sleep. The staff helped me to find a job at Foot Action USA and to establish my priorities. After several months, I applied for, and was accepted into the Transitional Living Program

As I mentioned before, I am now living in the Transitional Living Program. It is an 18-month supervised residential program. But it is more than just a place to live. It also gives me the tools I need to live independently and be a self-sufficient adult. I get training in budgeting, balancing a checkbook, finding an apartment and applying for a job. The Transitional Living Program allows me to work on my education, learn practical skills for living and learn to work better with peers and others. I have a roommate and we help each other to stay focused on our goals. When the Transitional Living Program ends, I am confident that I will be ready to make the transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The Transitional Living Program has been the bridge that I need to safely begin this journey.

Although I learned of Covenant House through word of mouth, they work very hard to make sure youth in need know about the services they provide. Covenant House operates a street outreach program. The program operates two vans throughout the city. The vans are out 16 hours each day from 9:00 am to 1:00 am. They also go where youth go: recreation centers, bus stations, corner stores and go-go's, just to name a few. The outreach staff extends their arms to youth with information, referrals and services, or

sometimes just a hug or word of encouragement. Youth are not always ready to come to Covenant House, but Outreach is steadily present when youth are ready to make a change in their lives.

Through Covenant House, I have had the opportunity to do things I would have never believed possible just a year ago. Last week I served as the Master of Ceremonies for the dedication ceremony of our new Community Service Center. I introduced such dignitaries as D.C. Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, Mayor Anthony Williams and my Ward 8 Council Member Sandy Allen. I am majoring in biology at the University of the District of Columbia. I am on track to graduate in four years. Additionally, I am seeking full-time employment with Washington DC's Firefighter/EMS Cadet Program.

Because of Covenant House I have a future. It is one of the few programs that I know of that supports older youth. There are a lot of youth out there just like me. All they need is a helping hand. Thank you for holding this hearing today and taking the time to listen to what I have to say. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name:

1. Will you be representing a federal, State, or local government entity? (If the answer is yes please contact the committee).	Yes	(No)
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 2000: None.		
3. Will you be representing an entity other than a government entity?	(Yes)	No
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you will be representing: Covenant House Washington		
5. Please list any offices or elected positions held and/or briefly describe your representational capacity with each of the entities you listed in response to question 4: None.		
6. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received by the entities you listed in response to question 4 since October 1, 2000, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:		

Department of Health & Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Runaway & Homeless Youth Services (RHYS)

Street Outreach Grant awards since October 1, 2000	= $100,000 per year/ 4 years (2- 3 year applications) ($600,000)
Transitional Living Program Grant awards since October 1, 2000	= $200,000 per year/ 5 years ($1,000,000)
Total amount received to-date as of 4/28/03	$600,000

7. Are there parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities you disclosed in response to question number 4 that you will not be representing? If so, please list:	Yes	(No)

Signature: M Hughes Jr. Date: 4/28/03

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

APPENDIX E--SURVEY OF HOMELESS YOUTH IN MINNESOTA CONDUCTED BY THE WILDER RESEARCH CENTER, SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY REPRESENTATIVE BETTY MCCOLLUM, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, WASHINGTON, DC

Homeless youth in Minnesota

Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter

SEPTEMBER 2001

Homeless youth in Minnesota

Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter

September 2001

Wilder Research Center
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-647-4600
www.wilder.org/research

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Acknowledgments

The fourth statewide survey of persons without permanent shelter benefited from the help of many contributors. Funding was provided by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; the Minnesota Department of Human Services; the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning; the Minnesota Department of Economic Security; the Minnesota Department of Health; the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs; Minnesota Veterans Home Board; the Family Housing Fund; the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund; and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Michael Dahl of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless encouraged service providers and volunteers to participate. Sue Watlov Philips, acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, provided a review of relevant policy issues and concerns on both the state and national level.

Pat Leary and Vicki Farden from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning helped identify sites throughout the state where homeless people could be found. They and Becky Couvrette provided historical data from the Department's quarterly shelter counts.

Housing Finance Commissioner Kit Hadley, as well as staff member Denise Rogers, helped bring state and local agencies together to collaborate on the study.

Suzanne Guttsen, Carolee Kelley, and Dave Schultz from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Sheila Brunelle and Pam Rienstatler from the Minnesota Department of Health consulted on health and human service questions.

In addition to those named above, many others helped with the design of the survey and the identification of respondents, including: Alcenya Ajayi, Michelle Basham, Angie Bernhard, Cheryl Byers, Jan Delage, Mary Ulland Evans, Dennis Forsberg, Joan Gardner Goodno, Tom Gray, Cassandra Hancock, Marcy Harris, Ginger Hope, Leona Humphrey, Rachael Kincaid, Judson Kenyon, Jenny Larson, Pacyinz Lyfoung, Edward McBrayer, Rhonda McCall, Ron Mortenson, Lucille Paden, Susan Phillips, Luan Quaal, Katherine Rosebear, Tom Sawyer, Irene Silber, Karen Trondson, Rich Wayman, Mary Weeks, and Patrick Wood. Special thanks are due to those who provided help in conducting youth outreach efforts including many of those named above.

Members of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and individuals from many other agencies and voluntary associations served as site leaders, coordinators and interviewers for our survey effort. The statewide training leaders include: Shirley J. Anderson, Jill Bengston, Julie Caraway, Steve Gallager, Ken Hall, Cassandra Hancock, Bonnie Hertel,

Marcy Jensen, Rachael Kincaid, Betty Jo Koltes, Diane Long, Laura Martell Kelly, Laura McLain, Ann McGill, Nell Murphy, and John Redding.

Many Wilder Research Center staff members contributed to the success of the project. Cheryl Bourgeois assisted in the coordination of agencies. Doug Frost, Nicole Leicht, and Sara Nichols coded and prepared the survey forms for data entry. Phil Cooper and Bryan Lloyd coordinated data entry and analysis. The data entry staff included Linda Houle, Jodi Schoon and Mary Lou Tillman. Marilyn Conrad and Louann Graham prepared this document. Heather Johnson provided helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this report. Many other WRC staff provided assistance and served as site leaders and interviewers.

The Minnesota Satellite Technology Center provided the facilities and staff for our statewide training efforts. Minnesota Technical Colleges provided training space and additional technical support throughout the state including sites in: Bemidji, Brainerd, Brooklyn Park, Duluth, East Grand Forks, Fergus Falls, Grand Rapids, Mankato, Marshall, Moorhead, Rochester, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Virginia, and Willmar.

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the nearly 500 youth and young adult study respondents who answered questions and described their personal experiences in shelters, transitional programs, drop-in centers, on the streets and in other locations. Our report is dedicated to them.

Volunteers

Jose Acuna
Angie Ahlbrecht
Mike Bryant
Cheryl Byers
Kelisa Callaway
Vanessa Cannon
Eric Chamberlin
Elizabeth Christenson
George Coleman
Diane Collier
Angie Dahlager
Skye Davis
Darren Dearring
Ewen Diering
Jen Fairbourne
Leo Flaschberger
Scott Foundry
Jessica Gove
Patrick Grundmeier
Cassie Hamilton
Kathy Hamilton
Garron Haubner
Kim Hauge
Geri Hickerson
Kirsten Huus
Maggie Johnson
Catherine Kelley
Rachel Kincaid
Lisa Krimri
Katie Kunz
Raymond LaCroix
Adeleine Larson
Tonya Lee
LeAnn Littlewolf
Lindsey Mader
Jennifer Martin
Shannon Mattson
Mary Jo Meuleners
Malinda Miller
Mary Mitchell
Sheila Moriarty
Ryan Murphy
Anna Myer
Kate Navaro
Alex Nelson
Claudia Nicolosi
Meghan Olson
Alison Otte
Kristina Peterson
Yolanda Pindegayosh
MaCherie M. Placide
Natalie Plumley
Jenny Pringle
Alajha Proffit
John Redding
Janelle Reich
Gary Russell
Dan Saad
Connita Sayles
Deanna Shellito
Jonna Shelomith
Grete Sievers
Brian Smith
V. J. Smith
Amy Snyder
Matt Tennant
Marney Thomas
Karen Trondson
Lam Truong
Rich Wayman
Sandra Weise

Preface to the 2001 report

Homeless youth age 17 and younger are perhaps the least visible portion of the homeless population. They are less likely than homeless adults to stay in shelters and more likely to stay with friends and in places not intended for habitation. School counselors and social workers often know of homeless youth in their schools, but seldom know where they spend each night and how frequently their arrangements change. Compared to services for homeless adults and families, there are fewer shelters for homeless youth and fewer legal provisions to provide services to them. Further complicating the picture of youth homelessness is the fact that many youth service providers report also serving a significant number of young adults between the ages of 18 and 20. Consequently, it is more difficult in our youth survey to be certain that study results reflect true changes in the population rather than variation in the numbers and characteristics of those youth who can be found on a certain night in October. Nonetheless, our comparisons to other studies, including those previously conducted in Minnesota, give us some measure of confidence that the information presented here is a valid representation of homelessness among youth in our state.

On October 26, 2000, volunteers interviewed 98 males and 111 females under the age of 18 who were living on their own. In addition, interviews were conducted with 99 males and 186 females aged 18 to 20. As in 1997, many of those under 18 were youth of color. Approximately two-thirds had experienced some type of out-of-home placement and, as in past studies, homeless youth were much more likely than youth in the general population to report that they had been abused or neglected. Homeless youth have more experience with illegal drugs and alcohol than their peers, are less likely to attend school, and are more likely to attempt suicide.

Although not identical, data from interviews with homeless young adults support the observations of service providers regarding the similarity of homeless youth and young adults. In order to make this year's study more useful, we have provided comparisons (unweighted) between these two age groups throughout the text and tables.

Perhaps most distressing this year is the fact that nearly one out of ten adults (persons 18 and older) living in shelters report that they were homeless as children. This means that we are seeing a second generation of homelessness. The information is consistent enough to convince researchers that homeless young adults are often continuing patterns that first emerged in childhood and continue into the early adult years.

Related research shows us that the future prospects of young people who begin life under these conditions are very risky. A recent report from the Kids Mobility Project[1] showed that frequent moves are associated with poor school performance and that students who attend less than 85 percent of their school days lose ground academically. Most importantly, residential instability most adversely affects those youth with multiple risk factors.

The purpose of this report is to provoke dialogue on the subject of youth homelessness and to help readers understand the connection between youth and young adult experiences. The volunteers who made this study possible represent the front lines in providing needed services. Nonetheless, their efforts are often hampered by the lack of adequate resources, too few housing options for minors, and a general lack of understanding by the public regarding the origins and significance of youth homelessness in Minnesota. It is clearly time to open a window to the lives of homeless youth, and we hope this study can help to do that.

[1] Kids Mobility Project. (1998, March). *A report from the Kids Mobility Project.* Minneapolis: Author.

Summary

On October 26, 2000, trained volunteers conducted interviews throughout Minnesota with 209 homeless youth (age 10 to 17) who were unaccompanied by adults. The study design, based on similar surveys of homeless youth conducted by Wilder Research Center in 1991, 1994, and 1997, involved working with a network of service providers, shelters, and agency staff to identify potential respondents. The purpose of the study is to provide a current description of the characteristics and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. It is a snapshot of youth homelessness during a single day in the last quarter of 2000.

Additional interviews were conducted with 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) 18, 19, and 20 years of age who were homeless on the same date (October 26, 2000). Information on both the 209 unaccompanied youth and 285 young adults are included in the data tables of this report.

Information on young adults in this report is also included in the companion report on homeless adults and their children. Unlike in the adult report, however, information on those age 18-20 in this report is not statistically weighted, so the numbers in the two reports do not match. This report uses the *actual* number of interviewed young adults. It should be noted that *weighted* numbers are used in the adult report to better reflect the entire sheltered adult population. The reader is cautioned not to add the figures on young adults in the two reports, since that would result in double-counting.

This study defines homelessness with the same criteria used by the United States Congress in allocating resources through the McKinney Act (P.L. 100-77, sec 103(2)(1), 101 stat. 485 [1987]).

> The term "homeless" or "homeless individual" includes an individual who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless youth are defined as follows:

> Youth who currently have no parental, substitute, foster or institutional home to which they can safely go. They are unaccompanied by an adult and have spent at least one night either in a formal emergency shelter, improvised shelter, doubled-up, or on the street.[2]

Youth and young adults who meet the criteria were asked to participate in a 30-minute personal interview to answer questions about family background, housing history, physical and mental health, experiences while being homeless, school and employment status, service use, and related needs. A total of 98 males and 111 females age 17 and younger were interviewed in locations throughout Minnesota, including shelters, youth transitional housing programs, drop-in sites, health clinics, and schools, as well as in non-shelter locations. A total of 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) age 18 to 20 were interviewed in battered women's shelters, emergency shelters, transitional housing, and in non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota.

In addition, this report draws from other youth-related research to provide relevant and useful comparisons to the Minnesota homeless youth sample.

Key findings

Number of homeless youth

- On any given night in Minnesota, an estimated 660 unaccompanied youth (persons 17 or younger) are without permanent shelter.
- Over the course of one year, an estimated 10,000 Minnesota unaccompanied youth (persons 17 or younger) experience at least one episode of homelessness.

Who is homeless?

- Slightly over half (51%) of homeless youth and about two-fifths of homeless young adults (42%) grew up in a single-parent household.
- Homeless youth are much more likely than youth in the general population to be persons of color. For example, whereas only 8 percent of all youth in the Twin Cities metro area are African American, 44 percent of *homeless* youth in the Twin Cities area are African American. Likewise, whereas 2 percent of all youth in greater

[2] Components of this definition are described in Kryder-Coe, J., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Homeless children and youth* (pp. 34-35). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Minnesota are American Indian, 32 percent of *homeless* greater Minnesota youth are American Indian.

- On average, the 2000 study shows that homeless youth began living on their own around age 13. This is slightly younger than the age reported in previous studies. Young adults surveyed in 2000 began living on their own between age 15 and 16.

- Nearly one-third of homeless youth (29%) have been homeless for less than one month. In contrast, only 9 percent of homeless young adults have been homeless less than one month.

- Two-thirds of all homeless youth (67%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Close to half of homeless youth (46%) have spent at least one night in a detention center, and 41 percent have spent some time in foster care. One in ten homeless youth (13%) have lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility.

- Over half of youth who have experienced each of these placements report having been in the placement within the last two years.

- Over three-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (62%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. About two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (38%) have spent at least one night in a detention center, 34 percent have lived in a foster home, 30 percent in a group home, and 20 percent have lived in a residential program for people with behavioral or mental health problems. About one-fifth of homeless young adults (19%) have lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility.

- Conflict with parents is the most common reason for youth to be homeless (39%). This is also true for 27 percent of the homeless young adults surveyed.

- The main reasons youth report for not returning home are: an adult in the household won't tolerate their being around (50%), alcohol or drug use by a parent or other household member (30%), adults don't attend to the youth's basic needs (30%), not enough space for everyone in the household to live (27%), and danger of physical or sexual abuse (25%).

- Forty-one percent of girls (age 10-17) report having been sexually mistreated as a child or youth, as do 40 percent of young women 18-20 years of age. Homeless boys (10-17) and young men (18-20) report somewhat lower rates of sexual abuse (14% and 28% respectively).

- Sixty-seven percent of the homeless youth report that they could return home if they wished to do so. This is the same proportion as in 1997, but higher than the 45 percent of youth in 1994 who felt they could return home if they wished to do so. In 2000, 57 percent of the homeless young adults report that they could return home.

- Youth who don't think they will ever live with their family again most often cite better communication as the issue that would have to change for them to live with their family again.

- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely to have been incarcerated than homeless youth in the Twin Cities area (56% vs. 31%). The same is true for homeless young adults (44% vs. 35%).

- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely than homeless youth in the Twin Cities area to have lived in a foster home (49% vs. 29%). Young adults in greater Minnesota are only slightly more likely to have lived in a foster home (35% vs. 32%).

- Homeless youth cite several reasons for having had difficulty getting or keeping housing. These include: their age, lack of housing they can afford, lack of local rental history, the cost of application fees, and a criminal background. Homeless young adults cite similar reasons, with the addition of credit problems.

- Youth and young adults mention the following people most often as having helped them find the services they need: a friend, a shelter staff person, a social worker, a youth worker, or an outreach worker.

- Homeless youth who stay with friends or on the street are more likely than those in shelters and transitional programs:
  - To be female (59% vs. 49%).
  - To have left home at a later age (average of 13.7 years vs. 12.9 years).
  - To be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (14% vs. 8%).
  - To feel unsafe in their current housing situation (17% vs. 3%).
  - To have homeless relatives (37% vs. 27%).

- Those who stay in shelters and transitional housing programs are more likely than those who stay with friends or on the street:
  - To be attending school this year (81% vs. 71%).
  - To have higher average monthly income ($312 vs. $260).

Pregnancy and parenting

- Girls who are homeless are about seven times more likely than girls (ages 13-18) in the general population to report that they have had at least one pregnancy (29% vs. 4%).
- Eight percent of homeless youth have at least one child (5% of the males and 10% of the females). Among the homeless young adults, 25 percent of males and 55 percent of females have at least one child.
- Of the homeless youth who have children, 60 percent (none of the males and 90% of the females) have their children with them in temporary housing. Of the homeless young adults, 71 percent (13% of the males and 83% of the females) have their children with them in temporary housing.

Education, employment, and income

- The percentage of homeless youth enrolled in secondary schools increased from 52 percent in 1994, to 73 percent in 1997 and 2000. Among homeless young adults in 2000, 37 percent are currently enrolled in an educational program.
- One-fourth of homeless youth (25%) receive income from steady employment. The other primary sources of income for homeless youth are support from parents or other relatives. Among the homeless young adults, 26 percent have income from steady employment.
- Twenty-seven percent of homeless youth have a job (5% have a full-time job). Thirty-nine percent of homeless young adults have a job (23% have a full-time job).
- Youth report that other than housing, their main needs are: a job, school, money or budgeting assistance, food/food stamps, clothing, and getting their family together. Young adults report their main needs other than housing are: a job, transportation, money or budgeting assistance, school or training, and clothing.

Public assistance and service use

- Five percent of homeless youth receive income from MFIP and 8 percent from General Assistance. Twenty-eight percent of homeless young adults receive income from MFIP and 6 percent from General Assistance.
- Sixteen percent of all homeless youth report that they need help applying for services. About one-fourth of homeless young adults (24%) report that they need help applying for services.

Health and well-being

- The percentage of youth who feel they need to see a medical professional about a physical health problem has decreased from 31 percent in 1994, to 19 percent in 1997, to 14 percent in 2000. Over one-fourth of homeless young adults (27%) report that they need to see a medical professional about a physical health problem.

- About one-third (31%) of the homeless youth have recently (in the past two years) been told by a doctor or nurse that they have a serious mental health problem. This is an increase from 23 percent in 1997. An equal number of homeless young adults (31%) have recently been told by a doctor or nurse that they have a serious mental health problem.

- One in five of the homeless youth (19%) have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. This is the same proportion as in 1997. Fewer than half of these youth (43%) consider themselves to be chemically dependent. Ten percent of homeless young adults have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. Most of these young adults (72%) consider themselves to be chemically dependent.

- Eleven percent of homeless youth have been told within the last two years that they have both a serious mental health problem and an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. This represents a slight increase over the 9 percent reported in 1997. Six percent of homeless young adults report having been told within the last two years that they have both a serious mental health problem and an alcohol or drug abuse disorder.

- In 2000, about half of all homeless youth (46%) report drug or alcohol problems within their immediate family, compared to over two-thirds of homeless youth (71%) in 1997. In 2000, 41 percent of homeless young adults report drug or alcohol problems within their immediate family.

- Compared to the general population of 12- to 16-year-olds, youth experiencing homelessness are over three times more likely to report that they have been sexually abused (28% vs. 9%) or physically abused (47% vs. 13%) in the past. For homeless young adults, 44 percent report that they have been physically abused, and 36 percent report that they have been sexually abused.

- Twin Cities area homeless youth are less likely to report having been in a violent relationship in the past 12 months than are homeless youth in greater Minnesota (20% vs. 28%). Just over one-third of homeless young adults in both the Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota (36% and 38% respectively) report having been in a violent relationship in the past 12 months.

- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are less likely than those in the Twin Cities area to report having left their last housing because of abuse (13% vs. 23%). The same is true among homeless young adults (16% vs. 20%).

- Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota to report having been physically assaulted since becoming homeless (19% vs. 15%). The same pattern is seen for homeless young adults (25% vs. 17%).

Introduction

This report is intended as a resource for planners, policy-makers, service providers and others who are interested in addressing the problems associated with youth homelessness. The study is a companion piece to a comprehensive statewide report on homeless adults and their children, also available from Wilder Research Center.[3] The information in this report comes from a survey of 209 youth age 10 to 17 and 285 young adults age 18, 19, and 20 who were homeless in Minnesota on October 26, 2000. Detailed data tables are presented for all questions asked of youth respondents in the survey.

The purpose of this report is to provide detailed descriptive information about the characteristics of youth who are homeless in our state, the problems they confront in finding and maintaining safe sleeping quarters, and the services they use to survive each day. While these figures do not represent a complete count of homeless youth in Minnesota, they do provide a detailed profile of current youth homelessness in our state.

Background

The study was commissioned by the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness in order to provide information for statewide planning efforts to reduce homelessness. State funding was provided by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning; Minnesota Department of Economic Security; Minnesota Department of Health; Minnesota Department of Human Services; Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs; and Minnesota Veterans Home Board.

Additional financial support came from the Family Housing Fund; the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund; and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. This private agency funding enabled researchers to conduct volunteer training, reimburse study respondents for their participation, and publish this report. Agency representatives from state and local government, Wilder Research Center, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, and other nonprofit groups met during the spring and summer of 2000 to finalize survey instruments and research methods. Statewide training was conducted in conjunction with the Minnesota Satellite Technology Center and Minnesota Technical Colleges. Survey dates were set by the planning group and temporary housing program sites were

[3] Wilder Research Center. (2001, August). *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota.* Saint Paul, MN: Author. Includes information from four sources: a statewide population count of all persons residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing programs on October 26, 2000; a statewide survey of a sample of persons living in these facilities on October 26, 2000; a survey of homeless adults found in non-shelter locations on October 26, 2000; and a survey of persons using Community Assistance Programs and Community Action Council housing assistance services during October 2000.

identified by staff of Wilder Research Center and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning.

In 1991, a Roundtable for Youth Without Permanent Shelter identified a need for information on homeless youth in Minnesota. Participants from the roundtable worked with Wilder Research Center to help conduct the first Minnesota survey of homeless youth in 1991. In 1994, many of the roundtable participants, representatives from several state agencies, and a few elected officials served on a Homeless Youth Advisory Committee and helped identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites for the second statewide survey of homeless youth.

In 1997 and 2000, an advisory committee of youth advocates, outreach workers, representatives from state agencies, and elected officials helped revise the survey instrument and identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites where homeless youth could be found throughout the state.

Methods

Agency staff, youth workers, and other trained volunteers conducted interviews with 209 youth (98 males and 111 females) between the ages of 10 and 17 who were homeless on October 26, 2000. Interviews were also conducted with 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) age 18, 19, and 20 years who were homeless on October 26, 2000. Information on the 209 unaccompanied youth and 285 young adults is included in the data tables beginning on page 49.

This study defines homelessness with the same criteria used by the United States Congress in allocating resources through the McKinney Act (P.L. 100-77, sec 103(2)(1), 101 stat. 485 [1987]).

> The term "homeless" or "homeless individual" includes an individual who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless youth are defined as follows:

> Youth who currently have no parental, substitute, foster or institutional home to which they can safely go. They are unaccompanied by an adult and have spent at least one night either in a formal emergency shelter, improvised shelter, doubled-up, or on the street.[4]

In all, 122 unaccompanied homeless youth were interviewed in shelters and 87 homeless youth were interviewed in non-shelter locations including drop-in centers, health clinics, schools, and on the streets. Interviews were completed with 93 homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and 116 youth in greater Minnesota. (Research sites are listed in the Appendix.)

Not a survey of all homeless youth

This purposive sample of 209 unaccompanied homeless youth represents only a portion of all youth who were homeless in Minnesota on October 26, 2000. In our study, only limited attempts were made to identify and interview those who were not known to youth-serving agencies. It was not feasible to cover the state for homeless youth in non-shelter locations. In addition, only limited attempts were made to identify youth doubled-up with friends on that night. Consequently, this study describes primarily those homeless youth who are connected in some way to service providers and are not necessarily representative of all youth experiencing homelessness on the date of the survey.

Estimating the number of homeless youth

To estimate the number of youth who are living "doubled-up" (temporarily staying with friends), we multiply the number of sheltered homeless youth by 2.7. This method is based on a 1989 U.S. General Accounting Office report[5], which found that there were 2.7 times as many children and youth in doubled-up situations as in emergency shelters. Using this method, the following table shows estimates of the total number of sheltered and "doubled-up" youth for 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000. The count of sheltered youth is from a statewide population count, or census, of all unaccompanied youth residing in youth emergency shelters, youth transitional housing, or other temporary housing program in Minnesota on the night of October 26, 2000. This count was reported to Wilder Research Center by service providers in conjunction with the homeless survey.

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[4] Components of this definition are described in Kryder-Coe, J., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Homeless children and youth* (pp. 34-35). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

[5] U.S. General Accounting Office. (1989). *Children and youths: About 68,000 homeless and 186,000 in shared housing at any given time.* Washington, DC: Author.

Estimated number of youth without permanent shelter in Minnesota on a single night in October 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000

Count or estimate		Number
1991 ESTIMATE		
Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	124
Estimate	"Doubled-up" youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	335
Total		459
1994 ESTIMATE		
Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	132
Estimate	"Doubled-up" youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	356
Total		488
1997 ESTIMATE		
Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	199
Estimate	"Doubled-up" youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	537
Total		736
2000 ESTIMATE		
Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	179
Estimate	"Doubled-up" youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	483
Total		662

The most recent estimate is that approximately 662 unaccompanied youth were homeless in Minnesota *on any given night* in 2000. This should be regarded as a conservative estimate, since the number could be substantially higher if large numbers of youth avoid services and seek shelter in places not intended for habitation.

It is also possible to estimate the total number of youth who experience at least one episode of homelessness *over the course of a year*. The following estimate is based on a national study of homeless youth conducted by the Research Triangle Institute in 1992.

Research Triangle Institute found that 2.8 percent of a national sample of currently housed youth (12-17) had spent at least one night in the last 12 months unaccompanied by a parent or guardian in one of the following places: outside, in a public place, in an adult or youth shelter, with a stranger, in an abandoned building, or in a subway. If we apply this finding to the Minnesota population age 12-17 (numbering 350,250 in 1990; figures from the 2000 Census are not available as of this writing) we estimate that approximately 9,807 youth have spent at least one night without regular or permanent shelter in the last 12 months.

Key questions

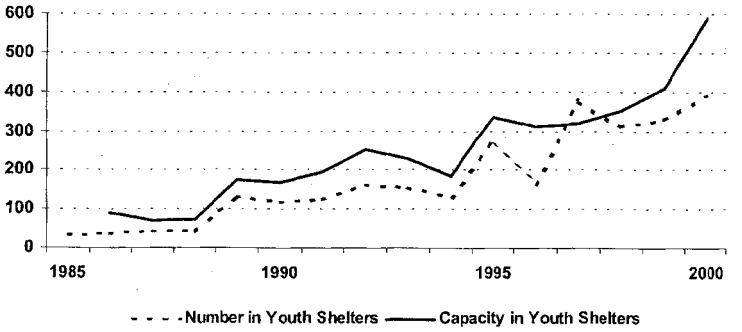
Does the study show an increasing number of homeless youth in Minnesota?

Since the first statewide survey of homelessness in 1991, the number of interviews with unaccompanied youth (under 18 years of age) has increased steadily. Eighty-one youth were interviewed in 1991, 114 in 1994, 165 in 1997, and 209 in 2000.

The increase in the number of interviews with homeless youth reflects increased efforts to recruit volunteers to interview youth, as well as the increased involvement of youth workers and youth-serving agencies in identifying homeless youth. We cannot accurately determine whether the number of homeless youth currently living in Minnesota is substantially larger than the number identified in previous surveys.

Nonetheless, an examination of quarterly counts of youth using temporary housing programs in Minnesota shows a considerable increase in utilization over the past 15 years. The Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (and previously, the Minnesota Department of Economic Security) conducts these quarterly shelter counts. The following graph shows the number of youth in shelters and transitional housing programs from 1985 to 2000.

Shelter capacity and total number of youth sheltered, 1985-2000



Source: *Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning.*

As the graph shows, the number of youth using temporary housing programs in Minnesota increased from 35 in 1985 to 393 in 2000 according to the shelter counts done by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning for the specified day in November of each year. The number nearly tripled in the six years from 1994 to 2000.

The trends for capacity and utilization are not identical. Nonetheless, increases in the number of youth using temporary housing programs generally parallel the increases in shelter capacity. This suggests that the availability of shelter beds is linked with shelter use. We do not know, however, the extent to which the increased need for services prompted the creation of new facilities (increased capacity) or the increased availability of shelter beds prompted more youth to use shelters. One time period in particular, 1988-89, appears to show rapid growth in both the number of homeless youth and the availability of services for youth. In 1989, three youth shelters provided data for the first time to the Minnesota Department of Economic Security (which at that time was conducting the quarterly shelter counts). These figures account for most of the increase in reported capacity during this time period.

Are homeless youth different from youth who are housed?

Overall, homeless youth report more *difficult life experiences* than youth who are housed. Homeless youth report experiencing abuse, alcohol or drug treatment, and pregnancy more often than youth who are housed (see the section titled "Comparison of homeless youth to general youth population").

Information from the Minnesota Student Survey (1998) shows that homeless youth, in comparison to youth in the general population, are:

- Three to four times more likely to have been physically or sexually abused.
- Three times more likely to smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.
- Four times more likely to have been hit by a date or intimate partner.
- Five times more likely to have been treated for drug or alcohol problems.
- (For girls only) 13 times more likely to have been pregnant at least once.

Do homeless youth in the Twin Cities area differ from those in greater Minnesota?

Most homeless youth in greater Minnesota are Caucasian (60%) or American Indian (32%). Homeless youth in the Twin Cities area are mostly African American (44%), Caucasian (29%), Native African (8%), Hispanic (8%), or American Indian (5%).

Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota:

- To report they can't return home because there isn't enough space for everyone in the household to live (29% vs. 12% in greater Minnesota), and because of the danger of physical abuse (27% vs. 19%).
- To have relatives who are homeless (38% vs. 26%).
- To have traded sex for shelter or other basic needs (23% vs. 9%).
- To have a higher monthly income (average $325 vs. $253).

In contrast, greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely:

- To report living in a foster home in the past (50% vs. 30%).
- To have been incarcerated (57% vs. 32%).
- To report the place they stayed last night was reasonably safe (97% vs. 84%).
- To have been homeless for less than one month (47% vs. 10%).
- To believe that they will live with their families again (72% vs. 29%).

Do homeless youth who are staying with friends or on the street differ from those staying in shelters and transitional housing programs?

The survey included interviews with 87 homeless youth staying temporarily with friends or on the street and 122 staying in emergency and transitional housing programs.

Those staying with friends or on the street are more likely than those in shelters and transitional programs:

- To be female (59% vs. 49%).
- To have left home at a later age (average of 13.7 years vs. 12.9 years).

- To be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (14% vs. 8%).
- To feel unsafe in their current housing situation (17% vs. 3%).
- To have other homeless relatives (37% vs. 27%).

Those in shelters and transitional housing programs are more likely than those staying with friends or on the street:

- To be attending school this year (81% vs. 71%).
- To have higher monthly income (average of $312 vs. $260).

Has Minnesota's homeless youth population changed during the last decade?

Four studies have been conducted with Minnesota's homeless youth population during the last decade, in 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000. These studies provide a number of useful comparisons. However, the reader should keep in mind that youth transitional housing did not exist prior to 1995, which may account for some of the changes over time. The demographic characteristics of homeless youth have changed little over the last decade. The average age has remained about 16. The race/ethnicity of homeless youth is mostly Caucasian, African American, or American Indian, with a notable increase in the percentage of American Indians over the last decade. There are somewhat more females than males.

Demographics of homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Average age	16.0	16.0	15.6	15.7
Female	49%	61%	54%	53%
Race				
Caucasian	57%	41%	41%	46%
African American or Native African[a]	20%	32%	29%	25%
American Indian	11%	10%	15%	20%

Note: (a) In 1991, 1994, and 1997, the response category was African American. In 2000, response categories included both African American and Native African.

In the past decade, a consistent proportion of homeless youth (over one-third) reported having been in foster care, and 10 to 20 percent reported having been in alcohol or drug treatment facilities. However, the percentage of youth who had been in a detention center has increased over the past decade.

History of institutionalization among homeless youth, 1991-2000

Have you ever lived in:	1991	1994	1997	2000
Foster care	38%	36%	38%	41%
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	15%	10%	19%	13%
Detention center or correctional facility	31%	34%	36%	46%

In the last decade, nearly half of homeless youth consistently reported having been physically abused, and 10 to 20 percent considered themselves chemically dependent. From 1991 to 1997 approximately one-third had had a sexual relationship which ended in pregnancy; this decreased to one-fifth in 2000. Another decrease was in the proportion of homeless youth who had children, which was approximately 17 percent from 1991 through 1997, compared to 8 percent in 2000.

Life experiences of homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Physically abused	47%	54%	42%	47%
Consider self chemically dependent	10%	19%	15%	13%
Have children	16%	18%	17%	8%
Sexual relationship that resulted in pregnancy	32%	33%	31%	21%

In the past decade, the percentage of youth reporting steady employment as their main source of income increased notably, and the percentage who said their parents provided their main source of income decreased somewhat.

Main source of income for homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Steady employment	16%	15%	26%	25%
Parents	24%	13%	16%	18%
Temporary work	16%	4%	6%	7%
Other relatives or friends	14%	12%	14%	12%

Does Minnesota attract homeless youth?

Although some homeless youth may be drawn here because of Minnesota's reputation as a safe environment with many social services, most of the homeless youth we interviewed are long-term residents of Minnesota. Eighty-five percent have lived in Minnesota for more than two years. Over the last decade, a consistent three-fourths of the youth interviewed said they grew up in Minnesota (74% in 1991, 75% in 1994, 70% in 1997, and 72% in 2000). Twin Cities area youth are more likely to report that they grew up outside of Minnesota (38%) than are youth in greater Minnesota (20%).

What is the profile of youth who use government assistance programs?

Many studies indicate that homeless youth who use services may have different characteristics from those who do not. Many reasons have been suggested for why youth do not use services. Some homeless youth may not be aware of services, and some may refuse services for a variety of reasons, including fear. Greenblatt and Robertson (1993) state:

> Runaways shun authority, fearing either being sent back to a detention center or to the family from which they separated. Social services for this population are scarce and often inadequate.[6]

Greenblatt, M., & Robertson, M. (1993). Life-styles, adaptive strategies, and sexual behaviors of homeless adolescents. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry, 44* (12), 1177-1183.

The Stanford Studies of Homeless Families, Children and Youth (1991)[7] found that 52 percent of their sample "chose to remain on the streets and not use any social services." They also found that youth who chose not to use services were much worse off than youth who used services. Increased understanding of the similarities and differences between homeless youth who use services and those who do not is important for planning services for this population.

The following table compares the characteristics of homeless youth in our study who are receiving government assistance[8] with those who are not.

Comparing homeless youth who do and do not use government assistance

	Receiving services (N=70)	Not receiving services (N=130)
Place you stayed last night was safe	94%	89%
Less than one month without regular place to live	18%	34%
On Section 8 waiting list	16%	4%
Lived with parents in last regular housing	58%	73%
Previously homeless	46%	42%
Employed	36%	24%
Consider self chemically dependent	17%	11%
Physically abused as child or youth	48%	47%
Median income	$273	$150
Attacked or beaten since homeless	16%	17%
Ever been told how to engage in sexual activities for money	37%	34%
Consider self heterosexual	81%	85%
Sources of income:		
Parents	37%	40%
Sale of personal belongings	7%	21%
Asking for money on the streets	7%	24%
Prior placements:		
Foster care	49%	34%
Group home	32%	22%

[7] Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children and Youth. (1991). *The stanford studies of homeless families, children and youth.* Stanford, CA: Author.

[8] Governmental assistance is defined as any one of the following: MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), GA (General Assistance), SSI (Social Security Income), MA (Medical Assistance), or GAMC (General Assistance Medical Care).

The table shows that youth who are receiving government services are *more likely* than those who are not receiving government services to:

- Be on the waiting list for Section 8 housing.
- Not have lived with parents in their last housing.
- Be currently employed.
- Have more income.
- Have lived in foster care or a group home.
- Have stayed in a safe place the previous night.
- Have been homeless prior to their current episode of homelessness.

Youth who are receiving government services are *less likely* than those who are not receiving government services to have received income from the sale of personal belongings or asking for money on the streets.

Descriptive summary

In this section of the report, unaccompanied youth results are presented in the left column and young adult results are presented in the right column.

Demographics

Fifty-three percent of the unaccompanied homeless youth surveyed are female, and 47 percent are male. The youth range in age from 10 to 17. The average age is 15.7. Fifty-five percent of youth are persons of color.

Sixty-five percent of the homeless young adults are female and 35 percent are male. The young adults are 18, 19, or 20 years old. The average age is 18.8. Sixty-three percent of the young adults are persons of color.

The table below shows the racial/ethnic background of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and greater Minnesota, compared to the 2000 U.S. Census racial/ethnic background of youth under age 18. Homeless youth and homeless young adults are more likely than the youth population as a whole to be persons of color. Only 11 percent of the overall Minnesota youth population are persons of color, compared to 54 percent of homeless youth and 63 percent of homeless young adults.

Comparison of U.S. Census to homeless youth and young adult population

	Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Mixed race or other	Hispanic origin [a]
Minnesota youth age 17 and under (Census 2000[b])	86%	5%	2%	4%	3%	5%
2000 Twin Cities homeless youth sample (age 17 or less)	29%	44%	5%	-	22%	8%
2000 greater Minnesota homeless youth sample (age 17 and under)	60%	1%	32%	1%	6%	5%

Notes: *(a) Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.*
(b) Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2001

Sexual orientation

Eighty-five percent of the homeless youth identify themselves as heterosexual. Five percent identify themselves as bisexual, 5 percent as gay or lesbian, and 4 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation. Two persons identify as transgender.

Eighty-three percent of homeless young adults in our sample identify themselves as heterosexual. Nine percent identify themselves as bisexual, 6 percent as gay or lesbian, and 2 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation. One person identifies as transgender.

Family of origin

About one-half (51%) of the youth grew up in a single parent family, and slightly over one-third (34%) grew up in a two-parent family. The remainder (16%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, blended families, with other relatives, or in multiple household arrangements.

Slightly over two-fifths of homeless young adults (42%) grew up in a single-parent family. About the same percent (42%) grew up in a two-parent family. The remainder (18%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, blended families, with other relatives, or in multiple household arrangements.

Marital status

Only one of the unaccompanied youth (1%) is married.

Only one of the young adults (1%) is married. Two percent are separated and two percent are divorced.

Place of origin

Area where respondent grew up

Seven of 10 homeless youth (72%) have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 20 states and three continents. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (21%). Of the 58 homeless youth who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often identified as Illinois (21%), California (12%), or Wisconsin (10%). Four homeless youth report that they grew up in Africa, one in Mexico, and one in Europe.

Sixty-three percent of the homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 25 states and three continents. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (26%). Of the 104 homeless young adults who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often identified as Illinois (33%), Wisconsin (13%), or California (7%). Four homeless young adults report that they grew up in Africa, one in Canada, two in Central America, and one in South America.

Length of time in Minnesota

Fifteen percent of the homeless youth have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Over half (58%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years. Homeless youth are more likely to be long-term residents than homeless adults (58% of youth vs. 49% of adults have resided in Minnesota for 11 or more years).

Approximately three-fourths of the homeless youth (77%) who are recent residents (two years or less) have never previously lived in Minnesota. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were to be with friends or family (53%) or for better opportunities (19%). About two-thirds of new residents (68%) lived with friends or family and about one-fifth (19%) stayed in shelters when they first arrived in Minnesota.

Twenty-five percent of homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Over half of all homeless young adults (51%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years. Homeless young adults are more likely to be longer-term residents than homeless adults (55% of young adults vs. 49% of adults have resided in Minnesota for 11 or more years).

Approximately one-third of the homeless young adults (37%) who are recent residents (two years or less) have never previously lived in Minnesota. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were to be with friends or family (69%) or for better opportunities (46%). About two-thirds of new residents (67%) lived with friends or family and about one-fourth (23%) stayed in shelters when they first arrived in Minnesota.

Prior use of residential services

Placement history

The following table indicates the percentage of female and male unaccompanied youth who have some history of residential service.

Previous placement in residential service (unaccompanied youth)

Have you ever lived in:	Males	Females	Total
Foster care	45%	36%	40%
Drug or alcohol treatment	11%	14%	13%
Corrections facility	51%	40%	45%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	1%	1%	1%
Halfway house	9%	6%	8%
Residential treatment center	16%	27%	22%
Orphanage	1%	1%	1%
Group home	22%	30%	27%
Indian school	2%	6%	3%
Any of the above	68%	65%	67%

Homeless youth have a high rate of residential service use. About two-thirds of homeless youth (65% of the females and 68% of the males) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Foster care, correctional programs and group homes are the most common types of placements for youth in our sample. Twenty-six youth had left a detention center in the last year. Nineteen had left foster care, and 16 had left a group home in the last year. Among youth who had recently left a detention center or group home, 56 percent reported that they had a stable place to live when they left the facility. Two-thirds of youth who had left foster care had a stable place to live when they left foster care.

The following table indicates the percentage of female and male young adults who have had some type of residential service history.

Previous placement in residential service (young adults)

	Males	Females	Total
Foster care	47%	27%	33%
Drug or alcohol treatment	25%	15%	18%
Corrections facility	58%	27%	38%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	3%	-	1%
Halfway house	11%	6%	8%
Residential treatment center	26%	15%	19%
Orphanage	2%	3%	3%
Group home	42%	23%	30%
Indian school	5%	2%	3%
Any of the above	78%	54%	62%

Homeless young adults have a high rate of residential service history. About three-fourths of males (78%) and over half of females (54%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Correctional programs, foster care, and group homes are the most common types of placements for the homeless young adults in our sample.

Twenty-six young adults had left a detention center in the last year. Fifteen left a group home, and eight left foster care. Most young adults who had left a group home or foster care had a stable place to live when they left the placement (92% and 86%, respectively). Forty-two percent of those who left a detention center had a stable place to live.

Education and job training

Education

Close to three-fourths of the homeless youth (73%) are enrolled in school. Of these students, about two-thirds (62%) attended school on the day of the survey and one-third (38%) did not. The three main reasons given by those who are enrolled but did not attend school that day are: 1) they were scheduled to start back to school soon, 2) there was no school that day, and 3) they had an appointment. Of those homeless youth currently not enrolled, most (24%) said that a lack of permanent housing was the main reason they were not enrolled.

Two-fifths of the young adults (42%) have completed high school or passed their GED. Five percent have completed some post-high school education. Slightly over one-third of the homeless young adults surveyed (37%) are currently enrolled in school. Of these students, about half (47%) attended school on the day of the survey. The two main reasons given by those who are enrolled but did not attend school that day are: 1) there was no school that day, and 2) they were scheduled to start back to school soon. Of those homeless young adults currently not enrolled, most (59%) have graduated from high school. Other reasons given for not attending school included: currently working (14%), no money to attend school (13%), no permanent address (12%), and no interest in attending school (11%).

Job training

Forty-five homeless youth (22%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: computer training, certified nurses training, and mechanical trade training. Seventy-eight percent of those with job training have completed their training. Over half (55%) of homeless youth with job training are employed in jobs using that training.

Ninety-six homeless young adults (34%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: certified nurses training, building trade training, computer training, child development/child care training, and mechanical trade training. Two-thirds of those (67%) with job training have completed their training. Over half (57%) of homeless young adults with job training are employed in jobs using that training.

Employment and income

Employment

One-fourth of the homeless youth (27%) are currently employed. Five percent have full-time jobs and 22 percent have part-time jobs. Of those with jobs, 86% earn less than $8.00 an hour. Fifty percent have held the job for three months or more. Twenty-three percent of homeless youth have never been employed. One-third of homeless youth (33%) have been unemployed for less than six months, 5 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 5 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. The main barriers to employment, according to respondents, include: age (18%), lack of transportation (13%), and lack of identification needed for employment.

Two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (39%) are currently employed. Twenty-three percent have full-time jobs and 14 percent have part-time jobs. Slightly over half of those employed (53%) earn less than $8.00 per hour. Forty percent have held the job for three months or more. Seven percent of homeless young adults have never been employed. One-third of homeless young adults (36%) have been unemployed for less than six months, 8 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 6 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. The main barriers to employment, according to respondents, are: lack of transportation (27%), lack of child care (18%), lack of education (12%), and lack of housing (12%).

Income

We asked homeless youth to name their single primary source of income in the previous month. The most common sources include: short-term or steady employment (24%), parents (13%), friends or relatives (9%), General Assistance (4%), sale of personal belongings (4%), asking for money on the streets (3%) and MFIP (3%). The median total monthly income is $230 for homeless male youth and $334 for homeless females. Ten percent report no current income, while 10 percent report income of more than $500 per month.

The main sources of income for homeless young adult respondents include: short-term or steady employment (32%), MFIP (21%), parents (6%), friends or relatives (6%), and General Assistance (5%). The median total monthly income for young adults is $444 for men and $497 for women. Six percent of homeless young adults report no current income, while 31 percent report income of more than $500 per month.

History of housing and homelessness

Current sleeping arrangements

Homeless youth are found in a number of different temporary living situations. Two-fifths spent the previous night in an emergency shelter (39%). Twenty-one percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family and 17 percent stayed in a transitional housing program. Sixteen percent stayed outdoors and 6 percent spent the last night in some other type of temporary arrangement.

Temporary housing arrangements for homeless youth appear to be less stable than for homeless adults. Forty-seven percent of homeless youth report that their current living arrangement has lasted one week or less. Although most youth have been in their current living situation for one week or less, most have been without regular or permanent housing for much longer. More than half of the youth surveyed (52%) have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. Twenty-one percent have been homeless for more than one year.

Ninety-one percent of homeless youth consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe. The most frequent concerns are theft of personal items (3%) and personal safety (2%).

Almost half of the homeless young adults spent the previous night in a transitional housing program (45%). Twenty percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family, 14 percent stayed in an emergency shelter, and 5 percent stayed in a battered women's shelter. Nine percent stayed outdoors and 7 percent spent the last night in some other type of temporary arrangement.

Twenty-eight percent of homeless young adults report that their current living arrangement has lasted only one week or less. Although most young adults have been in their current living situation for one week or less, most have been without regular or permanent housing for much longer. Close to two-thirds of the young adults (63%) have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. One-third (33%) have been homeless for more than one year.

Ninety-four percent of homeless young adults consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe. The most frequent concerns are not knowing the other people staying there (2%), fear of violence (1%), and concern for personal safety (1%).

Assessment of current housing needs

Homeless youth have housing needs similar to those of homeless young adults. One-third of the youth (33%) report that they cannot afford to pay any amount for rent. Forty-four percent say they could pay $200 or more per month for rent. On average, male homeless youth can afford to pay $152 per month and female homeless youth can afford to pay $205, including rent and utilities. Most homeless youth (74%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, yet close to one-fourth (26%) need two or more bedrooms. Eight percent of the youth are on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 4.1 months.

Sixteen percent of the young adults surveyed report that they could not afford to pay any amount for rent. Three-fourths of the homeless young adults report that they could pay $200 or more per month for rent. On average, homeless young men can afford $254 per month and homeless young women can afford $321, including rent and utilities. Most homeless young adults (59%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, yet close to two-fifths (41%) need two or more bedrooms. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents are on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 4.9 months.

Housing history

Most of the homeless youth (71%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (56%). Only 4 percent of youth lived alone in their last housing. The main reasons they cite for leaving their last housing include relationship problems (51%), parents' drinking and drug use (21%), and fleeing abuse (17%).

Forty-two percent of the homeless youth in our sample have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. The most common reasons for difficulty getting or keeping housing include the youth's age (37%), no housing they can afford (33%), no local rental history (23%), and the cost of application fees (17%).

The majority of homeless young adults (76%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (37%). The main reasons for leaving their last housing include relationship problems (44%), eviction (27%), and inability to afford the rent (21%).

Forty-seven percent of the homeless young adults have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. The most common reasons for difficulty getting or keeping housing are a lack of housing they can afford (52%), their age (46%), lack of local rental history (42%), the cost of application fees (31%), and credit problems (27%).

Most homeless youth originally left home around age 13. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (33%), wanting to be on their own (13%), drug or alcohol use by parent (10%), and unspecified abuse (10%). Two-thirds of the homeless youth (65%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could do so. However, only about half of the homeless youth respondents (54%) believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned changes that would be needed in order to return home: improved relationships with parents (17%) and the ending of parental drug or alcohol use (9%). About one-third of homeless youth (31%) indicate that they have relatives who have been homeless.

Most homeless young adults originally left home around age 15. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (24%), wanting to be on their own (23%), kicked out (unspecified) (12%), and unspecified abuse (11%). Half of the homeless young adults surveyed (50%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could. Yet only about one-fourth of the homeless young adults (21%) believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned changes that would be needed in order to return home: improved relationships with parents (21%), parents would need a bigger house (11%), and the respondent would have to want to go back (10%). Over one-third of the homeless young adults (37%) say they have relatives who have been homeless.

Service use

Homeless youth used many different services in the month prior to the survey. Thirty-one percent used Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, 33 percent used drop-in centers, 33 percent used outreach services, 19 percent used transportation services, and 19 percent used hot meal programs. Out of all services used by youth, those considered most helpful are drop-in centers, outreach services, and Medical Assistance. Of the youth who used Food Stamps, the average amount received in October 2000 was $91 for males and $152 for females.

Of homeless young adults, 53 percent used Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, 37 percent used Food Stamps, 34 percent used drop-in centers, 33 percent used outreach services, 29 percent used clothing shelves, 28 percent used transportation services, and 25 percent used job assistance services. The services considered most helpful by these young adults are Medical Assistance, drop-in centers, Food Stamps, outreach services, and housing assistance. Of those who used Food Stamps, the average amount received in October 2000 was $122 for males and $204 for females.

Health care

Physical health

Fourteen percent of the homeless youth report that they need to see a doctor about a current health problem. About one-quarter of the respondents (22%) report that they have encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barrier cited is lack of insurance. Nonetheless, 31 percent of the homeless youth are receiving health benefits through Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 4 percent use the MinnesotaCare health plan. One-fourth of the homeless youth (23%) have had problems with their teeth or gums during the previous year. Twenty-two percent are not taking medication they should be taking. One-third of the youth (33%) have received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (40% vs. 27%).

Twenty-six percent of the homeless young adults report that they need to see a doctor about a current health problem. About one-third (30%) report that they have encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barriers cited are lack of money and lack of insurance. Nonetheless, 53 percent of the homeless young adults are receiving health benefits through Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 5 percent use the MinnesotaCare health plan. One-third of the homeless young adults (31%) have had problems with teeth or gums during the previous year. One-fourth (24%) of those surveyed are not taking medication they should be taking. Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (44%) have received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (50% vs. 35%).

Mental health

Thirty-one percent of the homeless youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Twenty-one percent are diagnosed with major depression, 14 percent with alcohol abuse disorder, and 16 percent with drug abuse disorder. Nine percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder). One-fifth (20%) have received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of those receiving outpatient mental health care, 85 percent received treatment in the previous two years. About two-fifths of the homeless youth (39%) have considered suicide, and one-fourth (26%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, 46 percent report seeking help for depression.

Thirty-one percent of homeless young adults in our sample have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Twenty-one percent are diagnosed with major depression, 8 percent with alcohol abuse disorder, and 8 percent with drug abuse disorder. Six percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder). One-fifth (22%) have received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of the homeless young adults who have received outpatient mental health care, 67 percent received treatment in the previous two years. Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults (46%) have considered suicide and over one-fourth (29%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, 51 percent report seeking help for depression.

Sex-related health issues

About one-fourth (21%) of the homeless youth report they have had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (29% of the females and 11% of the males). Forty percent of homeless youth report that they use or need birth control. Only 5 percent of those who report a need for birth control indicate that they have not been able to get what they needed. The vast majority of youth (94%) state that they have learned about safer sex practices and 90 percent indicate that they use safer sex practices sometimes or almost always. Eight percent of respondents report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months.

About two-thirds (63%) of young adults report having had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (74% of the females and 42% of the males). Forty-two percent of homeless youth report that they use or need birth control. Only 4 percent of those who report a need for birth control indicate that they have not been able to get what they need. The vast majority of young adults in our sample (94%) state that they have learned about safer sex practices and 88 percent indicated that they use safer sex practices sometimes or almost always. Eleven percent of respondents report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months.

Chemical dependency

Substance abuse in the family of origin is often mentioned by youth as a reason for leaving home. Over two-fifths of the homeless youth (46%) report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol. Familial substance abuse is more likely to be reported by youth in greater Minnesota than in the Twin Cities area (53% vs. 39%). Of those who report familial substance abuse, more than four-fifths (85%) indicate that at least one parent has a problem with drugs or alcohol.

Many of the youth used chemical substances during the previous week. More than half (61%) smoked cigarettes, more than one-fourth (30%) used marijuana, one-fourth (26%) used alcohol, and 11 percent used prescription-strength painkillers.

Although 19 percent of youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder, only 13 percent of homeless youth consider themselves chemically dependent. Males are slightly more likely than females to report chemical dependency (14% vs. 12%). Sixteen percent of the youth have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program and 13 percent have had inpatient treatment. Twelve percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Among homeless young adults, 40 percent report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol. Familial substance abuse is more likely to be reported by young adults in greater Minnesota than in the Twin Cities area (45% vs. 37%). Of those who report familial substance abuse, more than four-fifths (83%) indicate that at least one parent has a problem with drugs or alcohol

Many of the young adults used substances during the previous week. Three-fourths (75%) smoked cigarettes, over one-fourth (29%) used alcohol, over one-fourth (28%) used marijuana, and 18 percent used prescription-strength painkillers.

Ten percent of homeless young adults have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. However, 13 percent of all homeless young adults consider themselves chemically dependent. Males are more likely than females to report chemical dependency (21% vs. 8%). Thirteen percent of the young adults have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program and 19 percent have had inpatient treatment. Seventeen percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Physical and sexual abuse

Nearly half of the homeless youth surveyed (47%) have been physically abused and more than one-fourth (28%) have been sexually abused. Fifty-three percent of females, compared to 40 percent of males, report physical abuse; and 41 percent of females, compared to 14 percent of males, report sexual abuse. Close to one-third of females (30%), compared to 16 percent of males, report that they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. One-fifth of the youth (20%) report that they have stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options. Sixteen percent of homeless youth have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless.

When asked if they had been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food or other things, seven percent of homeless youth said yes (about 2% of males and 12% of females). Similarly, about one-third of the homeless youth (34%) report that they have been told how to make money in the sex industry. Fifty-eight percent of homeless female youth in the Twin Cities area, compared to 38 percent in greater Minnesota, have been told that they could make money by dancing, stripping, working in saunas, phone sex, or by dating adults.

Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults (44%) have been physically abused, and more than one-third (36%) have been sexually abused. Males are more likely than females to have a history of physical abuse (50% vs. 41%), and females are more likely to have a history of sexual abuse (40% vs. 28%). Two-fifths of the homeless young adult females (41%), compared to 30 percent of the males, report that they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. One-fifth of the young adults (20%) say they have stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options. Twenty-two percent of homeless young adults have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless.

When asked if they had been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food, or other things, 10 percent of homeless young adults said yes (about 7% of males and 11% of females). More than two-fifths (45%) report that they have been told how to make money in the sex industry. Fifty-nine percent of homeless female young adults in the Twin Cities area, compared to 42 percent in greater Minnesota, have been told that they could make money by dancing, stripping, working in saunas, phone sex, or by dating adults.

Social contacts

The majority of youth (80%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the previous month. Fifteen percent had contact with family members within the past year but not during the past month. Five percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Asked which people helped them find the services they needed, homeless youth most often mentioned friends (62%), shelter staff (46%), social workers (45%), youth workers (44%), and outreach workers (36%).

The majority of young adults (84%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the previous month. Twelve percent had contact with family members within the past year but not during the past month. Four percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Young adults report that the people who have helped them find the services they needed are friends (71%), shelter staff (50%), outreach workers (47%), youth workers (43%), and social workers (40%).

Children

Sixteen of the homeless youth surveyed (8%) are parents (11 females and five males). Of this group, two-thirds are responsible for the care of their children (10 females and one male). Some youth are not involved in the day-to-day care of their children; the other parent is caring for their children. There were 11 children with their parents (homeless youth) on the night of the survey. All of the children were under age 3, and four were infants under age 1.

A number of homeless youth face problems related to caring for their children. Two parents are not receiving child support, although it is court-ordered. Two parents report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. All youth parents were able to get needed medical care for their child during the last 12 months. In the month preceding the survey, no youth parents report that a child had skipped a meal due to lack of money. Half of the youth parents (50%) were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year. Youth identify the main needs of their children as clothing (38%) and food (25%).

Forty-five percent of homeless young adults (128) are parents (103 females and 25 males). Of this group, 80 percent are responsible for the care of their children (92 females and 10 males). Some homeless young adults are not involved in the day-to-day care of their children. For these young adults, a family member, the other parent, a foster care provider, or grandparents are caring for their children. One young adult's child is in adoptive care. There were 117 children who accompanied 102 homeless young adult parents on the night of the survey. All of the parents in our survey had children under age 8, and 28 of their children were infants under age 1.

Some homeless youth parents face problems related to caring for their children. Thirty-six parents (28%) have court-ordered child support, but only 16 of them are receiving child support. Seven parents (9%) report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. Seven parents (9%) report that their child has an emotional or behavioral problem that interferes with their daily activities. Of the three parents who have school-age children, no one reported any school-related problems. Eleven percent were unable to get needed medical care for their child during the last 12 months. In the month preceding the survey, six young adult parents (8%) report that a child had skipped a meal due to lack of money. Over one-third of the parents (38%) were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year. The main needs of children as identified by parents include clothing (31%) and food (29%).

Personal accounts

This report provides a statistical profile of unaccompanied youth who were homeless on October 26, 2000. It describes a population troubled by conflicts with parents, abusive relationships, and for some, a simple desire for freedom from authority. Behind the numbers, however, are the individual stories of each study respondent.

Each of these accounts is drawn from an actual survey interview. The names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents.

- Amanda is a 15-year-old Caucasian youth of Hispanic origin who grew up in northern Minnesota. She grew up in a two-parent blended family. Her parents asked her to leave home because of her drug use and the constant conflicts she had with her parents and step-brother. She does not believe that she could or would ever move back home. Amanda says she has never been institutionalized, but she does feel that she is chemically dependent and reports that her parents have drug and alcohol problems. She has been homeless for about three months. Although she has been approached to work in the sex industry (by an adult), she has not done so. Amanda is currently attending school and works part-time at a fast food restaurant. Her job is her main source of income, bringing in about $400 in October. She has just moved into a youth transitional housing program and sees her main need right now as finishing high school. She reports that both a youth worker and a social worker have helped her in the last year to get services she needed.

- Jeremy is a 16-year-old African American youth who grew up in St. Paul. He has a long history of institutionalization. He has been in a foster home, a drug or alcohol treatment center, a detention center, a residential facility for people with behavioral problems, and a halfway house. Jeremy reports that he left home for the first time when he was 10. He does not know where his parents are currently living, so he does not think he will ever return home. Jeremy has been "couch-hopping" from friend to friend for about six months. He feels that his age and his lack of steady income are the biggest barriers to getting stable housing. At present, he is not enrolled in school but hopes to return when he gets stable housing. He sees his main needs as getting a steady job and returning to school.

- Derek is a 17-year-old American Indian youth who grew up on a reservation in northern Minnesota. Derek has lived in a foster home, a drug or alcohol treatment center, and a group home. He considers himself to be chemically dependent, and has been told that he has an alcohol abuse disorder. He reports being physically abused as a youth. He has one child, who is currently living with the mother. He reports that

he has been unable to find housing because of the high cost of housing and his age. Derek has a GED and is currently working full time doing assembly work in a factory. He could afford to pay about $500 for his own place to live. He does not report any physical health problems. Once he is able to find housing, he hopes to be reunited with his girlfriend and his child.

- Tameka is a 15-year-old African American youth who grew up in Minneapolis. She grew up in a single-parent family and left home because of conflicts with her mother. She has been living with friends for the last two months and is still attending school. She has never held a job and is interested in some type of job training. She says she uses cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana, and feels that she may be chemically dependent, but has not requested or received help for this problem. She has no history of out-of-home placements. Tameka says that a youth outreach worker at the drop-in center has been helpful in getting her the services she needs. The youth worker has helped her set up counseling for her and her mother. She is hopeful that she can work out some of the problems with her mother and be able to return home sometime in the future. She feels her main needs are to complete high school and resolve the conflicts with her mother.

- Ashley is a 19-year-old Caucasian youth who grew up in Illinois. She has lived in Minnesota for less than two years and reports that she came to Minnesota to be with other family members. She and her two children are currently living in a transitional housing program. Ashley completed her GED and works full time as a nursing assistant, earning between $8 and $10 per hour. She reports being both physically and sexually abused as a child. She says she has been diagnosed as manic-depressive in the last two years but has never been institutionalized. Ashley has lived in an abusive relationship in the last 12 months because she did not have any other housing options available. She reports that the main reasons she has been unable to find her own housing are the lack of affordable housing and her lack of local rental history. She needs a three-bedroom apartment and could pay $600 per month for rent and utilities. She sees her main needs right now to be a better-paying job and a means of transportation.

- David is an 18-year-old youth of mixed racial background who grew up in a single-parent family in Minneapolis. He has been in out-of-home placement settings since he was 11. He has lived in a foster care home, a correctional facility, a drug or alcohol treatment facility, and a group home. He reports being sexually mistreated as a child, and says the abuse stopped after being reported. He does not think he will ever live with his family again. David identifies himself as bisexual. For the last three months he has lived in a transitional housing program. David has completed his GED. He is not employed and sees his criminal record and lack of job skills as his

biggest barriers to employment. Currently he has no source of income. He reports that he has been sexual with someone in order to get shelter, clothing, food, or other things. He also reports that he has made money in the sex industry. David has been physically beaten since he has been without housing and has sought medical care as a result of his injuries. He does not consider himself to be chemically dependent, although he reports using marijuana and crack cocaine within the previous week. He reports that his main need right now is getting a job.

Comparison of homeless youth to the general youth population

In this section, we compare the homeless youth interviewed for this study (age 17 and under) to a sample of youth in the general population, as well as to three other populations: youth in alternative schools, youth in residential behavioral treatment facilities, and youth in juvenile correctional facilities.

The first comparison examines data from ninth-graders (ages 14 to 16) who participated in the 1998 Minnesota Student Survey.[9]

As part of the Minnesota Student Survey, youth in alternative schools and learning centers, residential behavioral treatment facilities, and juvenile correctional facilities were also surveyed.[10] Youth between the ages of 12-17 are included in these tables.

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9 More information regarding the Minnesota Student Survey data is available from Patricia Harrison at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 651-296-8574.

10 Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, March). *Minnesota Student Survey 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998: Behavioral trends for Minnesota's youth.* St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, July). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Alternative schools and area learning centers.* St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, July). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Residential behavioral treatment facilities.* St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, September). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Juvenile corrections facilities.* St. Paul, MN: Author.

Comparing the Minnesota student population to the homeless youth survey sample

	Student survey, general population, 1998 (N=49,048)		Student survey, alternative schools, 1998 (N=2,607)		Student survey, residential behavioral treatment population, 1998 (N=366)		Student survey, juvenile corrections population, 1998 (N=964)		Homeless youth survey, 2000 (N=209)	
	Male (N=24,253)	Female (N=24,795)	Male (N=1,240)	Female (N=1,367)	Male (N=199)	Female (N=167)	Male (N=764)	Female (N=200)	Male (N=98)	Female (N=111)
Live with single parents[a]	18%	17%	41%	39%	39%	29%	49%	39%	56%	46%
Ran away from home in last year	11%	13%	28%	34%	44%	70%	38%	67%	-	-
Cigarette use[b]	22%	19%	74%	73%	55%	58%	63%	77%	55%	68%
Treated for drug or alcohol problem	5%	3%	25%	23%	33%	35%	37%	42%	13%	27%
Ever been hit by date[c]	5%	6%	10%	24%	9%	31%	11%	30%	16%	30%
Ever been pregnant (females)	-	2%	-	34%	-	22%	-	27%	-	29%
Ever gotten someone pregnant (males)	3%	-	13%	-	14%	-	24%	-	11%	-
Ever been physically abused[d]	10%	15%	15%	28%	31%	44%	24%	37%	40%	53%
Ever been sexually abused[e]	4%	10%	5%	27%	12%	38%	10%	38%	14%	41%
Ever attempted suicide	8%	17%	18%	39%	30%	51%	20%	47%	14%	39%

Notes: *a) For the Minnesota Student Survey, the question asked, "Which adults do you live with?" while the homeless youth survey stated, "What type of family did you grow up in?"*

b) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "at least weekly." The homeless youth survey states, "during the past week."

c) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "victim of violence on a date." The homeless youth survey states, "in a relationship with someone who hit you, slapped you or pushed you around or threatened to do so."

d) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "physically abused by adult in the household." The homeless youth survey states, "physically mistreated as a child or youth."

e) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "sexually abused by non-family member." The homeless youth survey states, "sexually mistreated as a child or youth."

Homeless youth are more likely than youth in the general Minnesota student population to have lived in a single parent home, to have attempted suicide, to have been physically or sexually abused, to smoke cigarettes, to have experienced violence in a recent relationship, and to have been pregnant.

Compared to youth surveyed in juvenile corrections and residential behavioral treatment programs, homeless youth report the highest rates of having been physically abused and having lived with a single parent, and homeless girls are the most likely to report having been pregnant.

Youth in alternative schools, residential behavioral treatment, juvenile corrections, and homeless youth report similarly high rates of having been sexually abused and having been abused (or threatened) by a partner.

The incidence of substance abuse disorder (within the last six months) in the general population of youth 9-17 years of age is 2 percent[11]. In the homeless youth sample, the rate of alcohol or drug abuse disorder (diagnosis within the last two years) is 19 percent. Even allowing for the different timeframes (two years versus six months), and the fact that the homeless youth sample includes a high proportion of 16 and 17 year olds, homeless youth interviewed are more likely to have substance abuse disorder than youth in the general population.

[11] Shaffer, D. et. al. (1996). The NIMH Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children Version 2.3 (DISC-2.3): Description, acceptability, prevalence rates and performance in the MECA Study. Methods for the Epidemiology of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders Study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 35 (7), 865-77.*

Comparisons to other studies of homeless youth

Comparing the homeless youth interviewed for this survey with the results of other recent studies of youth homelessness, a number of common characteristics are evident. The comparisons are drawn from the following studies:

United States	1995	Interviews conducted by Research Triangle Institute in fall 1992 with youth residing in 23 shelters nationally, and with youth on the streets in 10 urban areas (two samples).[12]
Minnesota	1997	Interviews conducted by Wilder Research Center with youth in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota on the evening of October 23, 1997.[13]
Iowa	1999	Spring 1999 survey of Iowa service providers who come in contact with homeless and near-homeless children and youth. Providers reported on a total of 487 youth.[14]
Minnesota	2000	Interviews conducted with youth in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota during the evening of October 26, 2000 (this study).

12 Greene, J. M., & Ringwalt, C. (1995). *Youth with runaway, throwaway and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors.* Prepared for Silver Spring, MD: National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

13 Wilder Research Center. (1998). *Minnesota statewide survey of persons without permanent shelter, volume II: Unaccompanied youth.* St. Paul, MN: Author.

14 University of Iowa. (2000). *Iowa's homeless population: 1999 estimates and profile.* Iowa City, IA: Author.

The following table illustrates the demographic profiles and the life experiences of youth described in these varied samples.

Demographic comparison of five homeless youth surveys

	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	MN, 1997 Street & sheltered N=165	IA, 1999 Homeless & near-homeless N=487	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=209
Sample population	Street youth from 10 urban areas	Sheltered youth from 23 shelters nationally	Statewide sheltered and street youth	Survey of youth service providers	Statewide sheltered and street youth
Gender					
Male	61%	39%	45%	50%	47%
Female	39%	61%	54%	48%	53%
Age					
Average age	17.9	16.1	16	12	15.7
Range of ages	12-21	12-21	10-17	5-17	10-17
Race					
African American	28%	41%	29%	13%	21%
Caucasian	46%	32%	41%	77%	46%
American Indian	-	-	15%	0.2%	20%
Latino/Hispanic	18%	20%	-	3%	7%
Asian	-	-	2%	1%	1%
Other	9%	8%	13%	6%	8%
Family type					
Single parent	48%	52%	53%	NA	51%
Placements					
Drug/alcohol treatment	24%	18%	19%	NA	13%
Mental health hospital	-	-	22%	NA	23%
Abuse					
Physical	-	-	42%	NA	47%
Sexual	14%	8%	24% (37% girls, 8% boys)	NA	28% (41% girls, 14% boys)

Demographic comparison of five homeless youth surveys (continued)

	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	MN, 1997 Street & sheltered N=165	IA, 1999 Homeless & near-homeless N=487	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=209
Survival sex					
Engaged in sex for food, money, or shelter	21%	7%	10% girls, 9% boys	NA	21% girls, 8% boys
Children					
Ever been pregnant (girls only)	50%	41%	42%	NA	29%
Have children	-	-	17%	NA	8%
Suicide					
Ever attempted suicide	32%	26%	25%	NA	27%
Violence					
Been assaulted	29%	15%	23% (since homeless)	NA	16% (since homeless)

The table shows that:

- Homeless youth are disproportionately youth of color.
- Between 13 and 24 percent of homeless youth have been in drug or alcohol treatment facilities, compared to 4 percent of the general youth population.
- One-fourth of homeless youth have been admitted to a mental health hospital.
- Homeless youth report high levels (8% to 28%) of past sexual abuse. Research Triangle Institute's national sample reported the lowest levels of sexual abuse. This may be due, in part, to differences in social climate with regard to reporting abuse.
- A high percentage of homeless girls report having been pregnant (29% to 50%).
- One-fourth to one-third of homeless youth report having attempted suicide.
- Fifteen to 29 percent of homeless youth report having been assaulted since becoming homeless.

Comparison of homeless youth to children and youth in residential treatment facilities

In many ways, the experiences of homeless youth parallel those of children who are served in residential treatment programs. In both cases, backgrounds of abuse, alcoholism, and prior institutionalization are common. The table below provides selected comparisons for samples derived from these two populations. Please note that the residential treatment sample includes children of all ages including a few less than 1, while the homeless youth population includes no one under the age of 10.

Demographics and life experiences

	Youth being discharged from residential treatment facilities in 1999[a] (N=409)	2000 homeless youth (age 10-17) (N=209)
Average (mean) age	13.3 years	15.7 years
Gender		
Female	30.1%	53.1%
Male	69.9%	46.9%
Youth of Color	34.1%	55.2%
Victimization[b]		
Physical abuse	54.4%	47.0%
Sexual abuse	47.0%	28.1%
Prior Placement		
Foster care	64.4%	41.0%
Drug or alcohol treatment	11.1%	13.2%
Residential treatment	46.4%	22.5%[c]
Mental health hospital	60.7%	-
Correctional facility	20.5%	46.1%

Notes: *a) Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies: Leaders in quality care for troubled youth. (2000, November). Student Data Reporting System. St. Paul, MN.*

b) Data from residential treatment programs are based on abuse that was either suspected or documented. Homeless youth data are based on self-reported abuse.

c) Residential programs for emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems

The figures shown in the table suggest that many homeless youth have experienced circumstances similar to those of youth treated in residential programs. Homeless youth, however, appear less likely than those in treatment to have been physically or sexually abused. Homeless youth are more likely to be persons of color and are older on average than those in residential treatment facilities.

Institutionalized and homeless youth show similarities in their incidence of out-of-home placements. A substantial percentage of both groups have had prior placements in foster care, mental health hospitals/residential treatment facilities, and correctional facilities. Youth in residential treatment, however, are more likely than homeless youth to have had prior placements in foster care settings and mental health hospitals/ residential treatment facilities. Homeless youth are more likely than youth in placement to have been in correctional facilities.

Data tables for all survey items

Tables in this section report frequency distributions for all questions included in the survey, with breakdowns by geographic area (Twin Cities metro area vs. greater Minnesota[15]), by gender, and by shelter type (youth shelter programs vs. friends/extended family or other arrangements).[16]

Unlike in the *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*, these data are not weighted. (In the companion report, survey data for adults in shelters and other temporary housing programs are weighted to better reflect the actual sheltered population of adults on the day the survey was conducted.)

Note that some tables are conditional and thus only include the responses of youth who answered "yes" to an earlier question. For example, Table 122 reports the number of youth who have considered suicide. This question was asked of everyone. Table 123 reports information about suicide attempts, but this question was only asked of those who had considered suicide. Thus, the percentages reported in Table 123 total 100 percent of those who have considered suicide, not 100 percent of the entire sample.

The tables are organized by question. Within each question, the data tables display the responses for the Twin Cities area for ages 10-17 and 18-20, then for greater Minnesota for ages 10-17 and 18-20. Note also that the "total" column appears in the middle of each table. To the left of the total column, breakdowns are presented by the shelter types of emergency/transitional housing versus friend/family/street/other shelter arrangements (further categorized by gender). To the right of the table totals, the statewide totals are provided for the same age group.

[15] Throughout this report, the "Twin Cities metro area" refers to the seven counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Carver, Scott, Dakota and Washington.

[16] Other housing arrangements include outside, abandoned buildings, temporary paid or exchange arrangements or voucher arrangements.

APPENDIX F— SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD, WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOAN E. OHL, COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, WASHINGTON, DC

Testimony on the Reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

Submitted for the Record
Prepared for Joan E. Ohl, Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
by the
Family and Youth Services Bureau

April 11, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to discuss the importance of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and to express this Administration's commitment to young people, particularly those living in at-risk situations.

As you may know, the Administration for Children and Families, or ACF, under the leadership of Dr. Wade Horn, is committed to supporting all young people in becoming healthy, productive adults. Through the agency's Positive Youth Development initiative, ACF is acknowledging adolescence as a critical lifestage during which young people are faced with new challenges and opportunities and need a high level of support from their families and the community.

The initiative is designed to promote the Positive Youth Development approach to supporting healthy outcomes for young people. One way that we are promoting that approach is by ensuring that there is a focus on youth by every ACF agency. We are assisting each agency in planning creative ways to use ACF funding, within the limits of congressional funding authorization, to support Positive Youth Development. We are working with the ACF agencies to identify opportunities to collaborate on behalf of young people, address gaps in support and services for youth, and share information on resources and best practices to improve young people's access to opportunities.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau, or FYSB, is the lead agency within ACF that focuses on young people and provides national leadership on youth and family issues. As such, FYSB is heading up the ACF Positive Youth Development initiative. FYSB also administers the Federal programs that support runaway and homeless youth. In fiscal year 2002, those programs served more than 685,000 young people. I would like to take a few minutes now to share with you information about that population

The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that more than 1.5 million young people ran away or were thrown out of their homes in 1999. Of those youth, more than one million were in danger of facing risky situations, such as substance dependency, use of hard drugs, sexual or physical abuse, or presence in a place where criminal activity was occurring.

Further, in 1995, FYSB found that disruptive conditions in the home is the principal reason that young people run away. Many of the youth surveyed as part of the study, for example, said that they left home because of abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, or other problems.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorizes three local grant programs, administered by FYSB, that provide these vulnerable young people with services and opportunities to avoid at-risk situations and reunite with their families or move toward independence.

The **Basic Center Program** offers temporary shelter and a continuum of care to runaway and homeless youth, while working to reunite them with their families, when appropriate. The **Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth**, or TLP, provides young people with longer-term residential, educational, and vocational services to promote their independence and prevent future dependency on social services. The **Street Outreach Program** provides street-based education and outreach, as well as referrals to emergency shelters and related services, to young people who are at risk of being sexually abused or exploited.

In an effort to most accurately collect information about the young people served through the three FYSB-funded programs, the Bureau recently redesigned its Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System, or RHYMIS. One of the goals in designing the new system was to increase the proportion of FYSB grantees that submit data. I am proud to report that 98 percent of the grantees reported data in fiscal year 2002. This is a profound difference from the 41 percent rate in years past. It is a credit to the design of the instrument, the training and technical assistance provided by our regional networks and the increased "buy in" from our grantees that helped in the design phase. This new level of monitoring and data collection help the bureau tell the story of these youth and be more accountable for the funding that we receive. As I mentioned, we know that the three FYSB programs together served more than 685,000 young people last year.

I would like to take a few moments to discuss in more detail how the needs and concerns of both runaway youth and their families are met by the important programs authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

Basic Center Program

The Basic Center Program funds local youth agencies that shelter runaway and homeless youth for up to 15 days and provide them with food, clothing, counseling, referrals for health care, recreation, and aftercare services for when they leave the shelters. Above all, as I mentioned, the Basic Centers seek to reunite young people with their families, when appropriate. Our statistics show that approximately 60 percent of youth served by Basic Centers are reunited with their families or guardians. When this is not appropriate or possible, the program locates alternative safe placements with relatives, friends, or foster families.

The fiscal year 2002 appropriation of nearly $43 million funded more than 365 Basic Centers across the country. Grantees receive up to $200,000 per year for 3 years.

Using RHYMIS, we collected important data on the young people served by the Runaway and Homeless Youth programs. We learned that more than 165,000 youth received Basic Center services in 2002 at an approximate cost of only $260 per youth.

- Nearly 75,000 young people stayed at a Basic Center overnight; the remaining young people received brief services and did not enter into the Basic Center Program.

- More than 5,000 young people came to a Basic Center directly off the street.

- Of the young people who were entered into a Basic Center Program, approximately 63 percent, or 46,843 of the runaway and homeless youth at FYSB-funded Basic Centers were under the age of 16. Indeed, given the developmental difference between a 15-year-old and a 21-year-old, and the potential risk of harm to minors housed with young adults, we are proposing to clarify the definition of homeless youth for purposes of the Basic Center Program to cover youth not older than 18 years.

- Diverse groups of youth are served by the Basic Center Program, where 52 percent were Caucasian, 26 percent were African-American, 13 percent were Hispanic, more than 3 percent were Native American, Alaskan Native, or Native Pacific Islander, 1 percent were Asian, and the remaining 5 percent were self-identified as more than one race or did not provide their race.

Transitional Living Program (TLP)

The TLP provides longer-term residential, educational, and vocational services to homeless youth ages 16–21 in order to promote their independence and prevent future dependency on social services. Offered for up to 18 months, these services are designed to help older youth make a successful transition to self-sufficient living.

TLP grantees, which are primarily community-based organizations, provide homeless youth with safe, stable living accommodations such as host family homes, group homes, or "supervised apartments." Young people participating in TLPs also receive a wide range of other services, either directly or by referral, including life-skills training, education, job training, health care, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and legal services.

Data collected during fiscal year 2002 highlight that:

- 4,000 runaway and homeless youth were served by TLPs.

- The youth served by Transitional Living Programs closely reflected the diverse populations served by Basic Center Program.

- Youth in TLPs received help with becoming and staying employed; and nearly half had graduated high school or were attending school regularly at the time they exited the program.

The fiscal year 2002 appropriation of $37.6 million funded approximately 115 Transitional Living Programs nationwide, at up to $200,000 per year for 5 years. The approximate cost per youth was $9,400, which included all services and housing.

Street Outreach Program

Through the Street Outreach Program, FYSB awards grants to nonprofit agencies working to contact and build relationships with street youth, particularly those who have been subjected to sexual abuse or who are at risk of such abuse. Although Street Outreach Programs distribute educational materials and emergency aid to runaway and homeless youth, the ultimate goal of the program is to help them leave the streets. Other critical services include referrals to emergency shelters, crisis intervention, and followup support.

In fiscal year 2002, with an appropriation of $15 million, FYSB funded 139 Street Outreach Programs. These programs reported that they served 517,000 youth and distributed over 400,000 written materials to young people living on the street, providing referrals to job services, housing programs, health care centers, and toll-free hotlines such as the National Runaway Switchboard.

But numbers do not always tell the whole story. I would like to share a couple of other stories that show, on a personal level, how young people's lives can turn around because of the Runaway and Homeless Youth programs.

Wayne, at age 14, was guided to a Basic Center through a Street Outreach Program, also funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau. Wayne's family had been troubled by homelessness and substance abuse, and Wayne was physically abused by a family member. He had not been to school in a year at the time he entered the center. The Basic Center provided him with shelter, helped him enroll in school, and offered other services to address the trauma of his abuse. Wayne moved into a foster home, finished high school, and began providing peer support to other youth in troubled situations.

Shannon entered a TLP at age 16 after she and her sister relocated to the Dallas area and found themselves homeless. She completed the program, which gave her the skills she needed to live on her own. The TLP required her to pay a modest rent, half of which was later returned to her to use in establishing permanent housing. Shannon applied her funds to a downpayment on a home, gained employment at a local hotel, and enrolled at the local community college.

Maternity Group Homes

In addition to the existing three programs authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, we are proposing that the new legislation include authorization for the Maternity Group Homes Program. This program will offer a much-needed, comprehensive array of services designed to promote economic independence for parenting adolescents. Program participants not only will be provided with adult-supervised living arrangements, but also will receive training in parenting, child development, health, nutrition, and other life skills (such as family budgeting and finding employment) that facilitate self-sufficiency.

We are proposing a $10 million appropriation for this new program, which will fund approximately 57 grants at an average amount of $175,000 per program and reach more than 1,000 pregnant or parenting teens.

In addition to the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth programs, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorizes funds for a range of systems designed to support the work of the local programs. The National Runaway Switchboard, for example, provides a toll-free, confidential hotline through which young people in crisis can access counselors and be linked to programs or services in their area. The Switchboard received more than 120,000 calls from young people in crisis in fiscal year 2002.

The Regional Training and Technical Assistance Provider network provides training and technical assistance to local grantee agencies, and the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth serves as a central resource on youth and family issues and disseminates information to grantees and the youth service field. The act also provides support for data collection and performance evaluation through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System and the Monitoring System.

Positive Youth Development

For more than 30 years, FYSB has encouraged its grantee agencies to support young people through the Positive Youth Development approach once their primary needs have been addressed. Young people are provided with structured environments in which staff are available to advise them as they develop the skills needed to move to full independence or return to their families.

As I mentioned, Dr. Horn is committed to supporting young people through the promotion of that approach all across ACF programs and services. In Head Start, for example, we are funding a youth mentoring program which offers older siblings and teenage graduates of Head Start a chance to learn to help young children move toward literacy and fitness. Last year we were able to connect more then 2,000 youth mentors with 170 Head Start Centers across the Nation.

We also are working with State agencies to promote the Positive Youth Development approach. Through its Research and Demonstration program, the Family and Youth Services Bureau is funding 13 States to identify and develop new, or strengthen their existing, youth development strategies. Each State project is promoting partnerships among FYSB grantees and community-based youth service organizations. These partnerships are intended to result in increased focus on, and collaboration for, providing opportunities that support young people's positive development. In one State, for example, the project is designing a public awareness campaign that is designed to promote positive interactions between young people and adults.

I would like to take just a moment to talk about the Positive Youth Development approach. FYSB grantees have found that the most effective way to help young people say "No" to risky activities is by involving them in positive activities that they can engage in and say "Yes" to.

Youth engagement and empowerment are naturally linked to protective factors that will assure safe passage from adolescence to adulthood. The FYSB grantees focus on building young people's assets and providing them with opportunities to learn and grow that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

Today, many in the youth service field agree that we can most effectively and ethically support young people in becoming contributing adults through the Positive Youth Development approach.

The approach identifies the following five factors that allow most young people to build personal assets and be successful:

- Safe places and intentional structure with strong positive expectations.
- Healthy messages about lifestyle and social skills.
- Connections and partnerships with caring adults that foster a sense of belonging.
- Skills development and a sense of competence, or being able to do something well.
- The opportunity for civic engagement, community involvement, and the opportunity to see the world as larger than themselves.

Last year, the nonpartisan National Academy of Sciences released a report on a study that provides further evidence that moving to the Positive Youth Development approach is the best way to increase the likelihood that young people will grow up to be contributing adults. The study found that, in order to develop in a positive direction, youth need help in building their intellectual, psychological, emotional, and physical assets.

The programs authorized through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act are critical to ensuring that young people living in vulnerable situations are provided with opportunities to develop these assets.

In closing, I would like to thank you for focusing on young people and considering how we might make long-term differences in their lives. Secretary Thompson said that while three quarters of American youth are making safe, sensible choices for their lives, the remaining quarter are seriously at risk, but certainly not lost. We need to do everything we can to reach them and help them on the path to success. We either help these young people grow up to be successful adults who will contribute to the wealth of our Nation or through our ignorance they will become tomorrow's burden.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act makes possible local programs across the country that provide important services to meet the immediate and long-term needs of runaway and homeless youth, and their families. It is imperative that we continue to support these programs in providing

young people with the opportunity to be a part of their community, to connect with caring adults, develop life skills, and, most importantly, to achieve a sense of hope for their future.

Thank you for holding today's hearing. We look forward to working with you to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

APPENDIX G—SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD, WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS AND VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA, WASHINGTON, DC

Statement for the Record of the Child Welfare League of America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, and Volunteers of America
before the
Subcommittee on Select Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on "Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Youth: Strengthening the System"

April 29, 2003

As organizations committed to ending and preventing youth homelessness, Child Welfare League of America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, and the Volunteers of America would like to offer our recommendations for the reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

While it is difficult to estimate the number of youth who experience homelessness, evidence suggests that the size of the homeless youth population is substantial and widespread. The U.S. Department of Justice estimated that in 1999, nearly 1.7 million youth had a runaway/throwaway episode.[1] In 1995, the Research Triangle Institute reported a significantly higher number, estimating that 2.8 million youth experience a runaway or homelessness episode over the course of a year.[2]

Youth consistently report family conflict as the primary reason for becoming homeless. Many are compelled to leave their home environments prematurely due to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by others in the home. Across studies of homeless youth, rates of sexual abuse range from 17 to 53 percent, and physical abuse ranges from 40 to 60 percent. [3] Others are forced out of the home due to parental disapproval of the pregnancy, parenting status, sexual orientation, school problems, drug or alcohol use, or other circumstances of their children.

Young people who live on the streets have difficulty meeting their most basic needs. In a study of Hollywood street youth between the ages of 13 and 17, 57 percent reported having spent at least one day in the past month with nothing to eat. Homeless youth have

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[1] Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., Sedlak, A. (2002). *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
[2] Greene, J., Ringwalt, C., Kelly, J., Iachan, R., Cohen, Z. (1995). *Youth with Runaway, Thrownaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors.* Volume I: Final Report. Research Traingle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute.
[3] Robertson, M., and Toro, P. "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy. Fosburg, L. and Dennis, D. (Eds.), *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research.* Washington, DC:

difficulty obtaining medical care, continuing their education, finding clothing and maintaining healthy personal hygiene.[4]

Studies have shown that homeless youth are extremely vulnerable to victimization while living on the streets. In a sample of street youth in Hollywood, 42 percent had been physically assaulted and 13 percent had been sexually assaulted.[5] Street youth are also at an increased risk of sexual exploitation. Some homeless youth find that exchanging sex for basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter or protection, is their only chance for survival.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs are essential in preventing the victimization of homeless youth and ensuring their access to education, employment training, health care, drug and alcohol treatment, and other social services.

The RHYA Basic Center program provides grants to community-based nonprofit and public organizations to support emergency shelter (no greater than 15 days) for youth under age 18. One Basic Center program noteworthy of demonstrating effectiveness is The Council on Rural Service Programs, Inc.'s Gateway Youth Program, which serves Darke and Miami Counties in Western Ohio. Gateway provides emergency shelter to runaway and homeless youth through a "host home" model, in which youth live with a responsible and caring adult or family in their community until they can be reunified with their family or locate a safe, alternative placement. This model is particularly effective in rural areas where youth are spread out and the cost of operating a supervised residential facility is high. The Gateway Youth Program provides individual and family counseling, educational and mentoring programs, support networks for youth and their families, and substance abuse referrals.

The RHYA Transitional Living Program provides grants to community-based nonprofit and public organizations to support longer-term residential needs (up to 18 months), as well as life skills training to youth ages 16-21 who are unable to return home safely. One exemplary transitional living program, which specializes in serving homeless parenting and non-parenting young women, is Every Woman's Place located in Muskegon, Michigan. Every Woman's Place provides an array of housing options through their Transitional Living Program to help prepare youth to live self-sufficiently. Once a young person participates in employment training and an income-savings program while in congregate care, they have the option of moving into an apartment of their own. After graduating from the program, youth can take over the lease and retain stable, permanent housing. Youth are provided access to multiple services including sexual assault counseling, mental health and substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, and employment training.

The RHYA Street Outreach program (a.k.a. the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program or the Runaway Prevention program) provides grants to community-based nonprofit and public

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[4] Greenblat, M. & Robertson, M.J. (1993). Homeless Adolescents: Lifestyle, Survival Strategies and Sexual Behaviors. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 44: 1177-1180.
[5] Ibid.

organizations to support street-based outreach and education to runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been sexually abused or are at risk of sexual abuse. One distinguished Street Outreach program that serves street youth in South Central Texas is CORAZON, a program recognized for its culturally relevant services. CORAZON, a program of Serving Children and Adolescents in Need, prevents sexual abuse and exploitation, substance abuse, and other negative behaviors that young people engage in to survive on the streets. The services of the CORAZON program include street outreach, screening, survival training, assessment, counseling, access to emergency shelter services, psychological testing, and case management and referral.

Recommendations:
To better serve homeless youth and strengthen the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, we recommend that Congress:

1) **Adjust the allocation formula to match current needs of homeless youth**

The current allocation formula for the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and support activities no longer reflects the needs of the homeless youth population, nor the allocations made in the past two appropriations bills. The current formula allows no more than 30 percent of the consolidated account to be used for the Transitional Living Program. The FY 2002 and FY 2003 budgets allocated 45 percent of the consolidated account for TLP and 55 percent for BCP, increasing TLP funding to better meet the need for longer-term residential services.

The Transitional Living Program is designed to help homeless youth make a successful transition to self-sufficient living. Since family reunification is often not a viable option for older homeless youth, transitional living programs are critical in helping young people make a successful transition into adulthood. ***Communities are experiencing an increased need for longer-term services, therefore, we recommend that not less than 45 percent and no more than 55 percent of the consolidated account be used for the Transitional Living Program.***

2) **Extend the period for Transitional Living Program services for youth under eighteen years of age.**

We recommend extending the period for services provided by Transitional Living Programs for youth who have not reached majority age. The current RHYA statute allows TLP's to provide shelter and services to older homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 21 for no more than 540 days, or 18 months. By law, youth who enter TLP's at the age of sixteen are not eligible for services after 540 days, a period that ends months before their eighteenth birthday. Because laws prohibit youth below the age of majority from entering into contracts or leases on their own behalf, we must extend the period for TLP services for youth who have not yet reached majority age to ensure that youth exit TLP's into safe and stable housing.

3) Strengthen federal program coordination

Many runaway and homeless youth grantees are unaware of federal education, workforce development, health services, and public assistance programs that target homeless youth. For example, while the U.S. Department of Labor's youth employment programs include homeless youth as a targeted population, only a handful of Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees are connected to local workforce development sites. Similarly, very few grantees are linked to local school liaisons and state coordinators of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, under the administration of the U.S. Department of Education.

To ensure that homeless youth have access to federally-funded programs and services for which they are eligible, **we recommend strengthening collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services by requiring the Family and Youth Services Bureau to work with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to produce a report on Strategies to End Youth Homelessness within one year of reauthorization.**

4) Improve research and evaluation by calling for A) a study on the intersection between state custodial systems and youth homelessness and B) a national evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth programs.

A. Study on intersection between state custodial systems and youth homelessness.

Young people exiting public custodial care are at heightened risk for future homelessness and housing instability. Many in prolonged state care, including those in contact with the foster care and juvenile justice systems, are neither sufficiently prepared to live independently, nor provided adequate aftercare services that will ensure a stable residential placement following discharge.

Between 20,000 to 25,000 young people emancipate from the foster care system each year without being adopted or returning to families.[6] Studies have shown that homelessness is often an outcome for youth aging out of foster care. A 1991 national study of former foster youth, revealed that 25 percent of the youth were homeless at least one night.[7] Similarly, a 1998 University of Wisconsin study of former foster youth reported that 12 percent had been homeless and 22 percent had lived in four or more places within 12 to 18 months after they were

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[6] Allen, M., and Nixon, R. (July-August 2000) "The Foster Care Independence Act and John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program: New Catalysts for Reform for Young People Aging Out of Foster Care". *Journal of Poverty Law and Policy.*

[7] Westat, Inc. (1991). *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

discharged from care. The Wisconsin study also reported that only 12 percent of young adults received help in obtaining housing. [8]

Youth exiting the juvenile justice system are also at an increased risk of becoming homeless. A survey of 209 unaccompanied youth (age 10-17) who were homeless in Minnesota reported that 46 percent had been in a correctional facility, and of those, 44 percent exited into an unstable housing situation.[9] In a study of 940 youth in runaway shelters in Washington, 28 percent were currently involved with the juvenile justice system.[10]

While the research cited above demonstrates a link between youth homelessness and public custodial care, it is limited in helping us understand the scope of the problem. ***We recommend that Family and Youth Services Bureau commission research on the intersection between youth homelessness and public custodial care within one year of reauthorization.*** The study should examine how youth experiencing homelessness have interacted with public custodial systems and report on the efficacy of existing discharge planning policies and practices preventing homelessness among youth.

B. Evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau last released a national evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs in 1997. The evaluation reported data on short-term educational and employment outcomes, but did not measure short or long-term housing outcomes for youth in either the Basic Center or Transitional Living Programs. Because ending homelessness is a primary goal of programs targeting homeless individuals, it is critical to examine the housing outcomes when assessing homeless programs.

We recommend commissioning a national evaluation of RHYA programs to update information on educational and employment issues and to focus on the long-term housing outcomes (12 to 18 months after exiting program) of youth served by federally funded shelters. There is a paucity of research evidence on best practices around housing strategies for runaway and homeless youth. An investigation on housing as a primary intervention would greatly improve housing assistance and services for homeless youth and help prevent future episodes of homelessness.

The reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provides an opportunity to strengthen Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs and services to better meet the

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[8] Courtney, M.E., and Piliavin, I. (1998) *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 Months After Leaving Out-of-Home Care.* Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin.

[9] Wilder Research Center. Homeless youth in Minnesota: A Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter. Available online: http://wilder.org/research/reports/pdf/homlessyouth9-01.pdf. (Referenced March 1, 2002).

[10] Estes, R.J., and Weiner, N.A. (2001). *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in U.S., Canada, and Mexico.* Available online at: http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/~restes/CSEC.htm.

critical needs of extremely vulnerable youth. The Child Welfare League of America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, and Volunteers of America welcome the opportunity to be of assistance to the Committee as it moves forward in the reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

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