

When was the licensing category for “runaway and homeless youth shelters” established?

In 2013, AB 346 (Mark Stone) established “runaway and homeless youth shelters” (RHYS) as a new subcategory of group home under the Community Care Facilities Act.¹ RHYS require licensure by the Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).² At the time of passage, it was estimated there were approximately 40 emergency youth shelters operating in California. A number of these shelters operated under group home licenses, but the fit between the requirements for non-voluntary, longer-term group home placements, and the voluntary, temporary care provided by emergency youth shelters created barriers and complications for providers.

How many RHYS, as defined by AB 1235, are there in California, and where are they located?

As of April 18, 2019, there were 11 licensed RHYS located in California, with a total capacity of 146 youth.³ CDSS also reports 10 group homes that have not converted to the facility category of RHYS, but serve runaway and/or homeless youth.⁴ Other facilities, too, may be providing similar services, despite not being licensed as RHYS. The 11 licensed RHYS are as follows:

Licensed RHYS in California	Capacity	Location
Bill Wilson Center	20 beds	Santa Clara
CSP Inc. Youth Shelters	24 beds	Huntington Beach
Diamond Youth Shelter	20 beds	San Bruno
Dreamcatcher Youth Shelter	24 beds	Oakland
Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission	20 beds	Fresno
Genesis House	6 beds	Vallejo
Huckleberry Youth Programs - Huckleberry House	6 beds	San Francisco
Hutton House	8 beds	Modesto
Laurel House	6 beds	Orange County
Social Advocates for Youth - Ripley Shelter	6 beds	Santa Rosa
Wind Youth Services	6 beds	Sacramento

¹ California Legislative Information, "AB-346 Runaway and homeless youth shelters." October 2, 2013. Retrieved from: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB346

² Department of Social Services, "Facility Types." 2019. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Childrens-Residential/Resources-for-Providers/Facility-Information>

³ Department of Social Services, "Download Data: 24 Hour Residential Care for Children." April 18, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://secure.dss.ca.gov/CareFacilitySearch/DownloadData>

⁴ Hunt, Daphne. "Assembly Bill Policy Committee Analysis: AB 1235." Page 6. April 8, 2019. Retrieved from: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billAnalysisClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1235#

How many runaway and homeless youth are served by the 11 licensed RHYS annually?

An estimated 1,400 youth are served by California’s 11 homeless youth shelters annually.⁵

Licensed RHYS provide emergency housing for youth who run away from foster care. How many foster youth, age 11 to 17, are on runaway status at any given point in time in California and how has that changed in the last five years?

On average, 782 foster youth age 11 to 17 have been on runaway status as of January 1st over the last five years.⁶ For these youth, RHYS provide shelter and safety on a short-term basis.

As of January 1st	Youth on Runaway Status (Age 11-17)
2014	775
2015	810
2016	792
2017	767
2018	768
2019	705

How long do youth stay in licensed RHYS? What percentage of youth who receive services remain in shelter beyond 21 days?

Below is a breakdown of how long 206 youth served by the Bill Wilson Center stayed in their RHYS in 2018. Currently, there is not data available for all 11 providers.

Bill Wilson Center ⁷ January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018	
Length of Stay	Percent of Youth
1 day	23%
2-7 days	29%
8-14 days	14%
15-21 days	9%
> 21 days	25%

⁵ Estimate developed based on the service level of the Bill Wilson Center and extrapolated to the remaining RHYS.

⁶ California Child Welfare Indicators Project, "Point in Time/In Care." Retrieved from: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/PIT.aspx

⁷ Bill Wilson Center, "Safety Net Shelter Referral Snap Shots." April 2019.

What are the ages of youth who received services from licensed RHYS? How long do they remain in the shelter on average?

Bill Wilson Center ⁸ January 1, 2018 - April 16, 2019			
Age of Youth	Number of Youth	Total Bed Days	Average Length of Stay (Days)
11	1	8	8.0
12	5	33	6.6
13	19	192	10.1
14	35	460	13.1
15	60	1315	21.9
16	51	1286	25.2
17	65	1236	19.0
Total	236	4530	19.2

Why is it necessary to expand the definition of “short term” to 90 days from 21 days?

Twenty-one days is insufficient to meet the complex needs for approximately one in four youth who received services from licensed RHYS. Additional time is required to reunite youth with families, locate relatives for safe, stable housing, or find safe alternatives. On any given night in California, RHYS are discharging youth after 21 nights and then readmitting them after 24-hours as a new client to stay compliant with the regulations.

A 90-day service period allows for much-needed stability and interventions that more adequately meet the needs of homeless and runaway youth. For example, if a young person enters the RHYS from homelessness, but their family system is still without permanency, the 90-day window provides much-needed stability and allows for more time to secure permanent housing for the young person with their entire family.

Why was the time limit originally set at 21 days?

Federal funding from the RHYA allows youth to stay in “safe and appropriate shelter... not to exceed 21 days.”⁹ In 2013, that time limit carried over into California law as a result of AB 346.¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ "Public Law 110-378," 110th Congress. October 8, 2008. Retrieved from: <http://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/110/378.pdf>

¹⁰ California Legislative Information, 2013.

What services are licensed RHYS required to provide?

CCLD is charged with licensing and regulating a variety of community care facilities, defined in the California Health and Safety Code as “any facility, place, or building that is maintained and operated to provide nonmedical residential care, day treatment, adult day care, or foster family agency services for children, adults, or children and adults, including, but not limited to, the physically handicapped, mentally impaired, incompetent persons, and abused or neglected children”.¹¹

Community care facilities include an array of programs and settings, such as foster family agencies, foster family homes, adult day programs, social rehabilitation facilities, transitional shelters, group homes, and RHYS.

RHYS are defined as “a group home for up to 25 youths, licensed by CCLD to operate a program providing voluntary, short-term, shelter and personal services to runaway or homeless youth ages 12 to 17 or 18 if they are completing high school or its equivalent.”¹²

Some examples of services provided at youth homelessness prevention centers include individual and family therapy, recreational activities and skills groups, family-style meals, substance abuse programming, and academic support.

AB 1235 would expand populations that may be served by licensed RHYS to include youth at-risk of homeless, youth exhibiting status offender behavior, and runaway youth. Why is it necessary to add these additional populations?

Expanding the populations eligible for services at RHYS decreases the risk of any housing insecure youth experiencing violence or trafficking while unhoused. Youth may be coming from homeless families; under these circumstances, shelters need more than 21 days to find housing for the entire family. By including “youth experiencing status offender behavior,” this bill seeks to reduce the number of youth who are unable to live stably with their parent or at their foster placement from entering the criminal justice system; instead, services provided to these youth seek to find a stable and safe housing placement, via family reunification work or other means.

How is “at-risk of homelessness” defined by AB 1235?

In AB 1235, a youth at risk of homelessness is defined as a youth 12 to 17 years old, or 18 if the youth is completing high school or its equivalent, to whom one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- Identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ).
- Financial stress, including, but not limited to, stress due to their own or family loss of income, low income, gambling, or change of family circumstances.

¹¹ California Legislative Information, "Health and Safety Code 1502." January 1, 2018. Retrieved from: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=1502

¹² Department of Social Services, 2019.

- Housing affordability stress and housing crises, including, but not limited to, pending evictions or foreclosures of the current home, or rental or mortgage arrears.
- Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, including, but not limited to, accommodations that are unsafe, unsuitable, or overcrowded.
- Loss of previous housing accommodation.
- Relationship or family breakdown.
- Child abuse, neglect, or living in an environment where children are at risk of child abuse or neglect.
- Sexual abuse.
- Domestic or family violence.
- Nonfamily violence.
- Mental health issues and other health problems.
- Problematic alcohol, drug, or substance use.
- Employment difficulties and unemployment.
- Problematic gambling.
- Transitions from custodial and care arrangements, including, but not limited to, out-of-home care, independent living arrangements for children under 18 years of age, or health and mental health care facilities or programs.
- Discrimination, including, but not limited to, racial discrimination.
- Disengagement with school or other education and training.
- Involvement in, or exposure to, criminal activities.
- Antisocial behavior.
- Lack of family or community support.
- Staying in boarding housing for 12 weeks or more without line 24 security of tenure.

Is there a minimum staffing ratio or a maximum number of youth who can be served by licensed RHYS?

Yes, the RHYS must maintain a ratio of one staff person to every eight youth. A volunteer may be counted as a staff person if the volunteer has satisfied the same training requirements as a paid staff member, and a paid staff member is present during the time the volunteer is on duty.

What information is required to be provided to CDSS on a monthly basis?

RHYS are required to report the following to CDSS every month:

1. Total number of youth served per month;
2. Age of each youth served;
3. Length of stay of each youth served; and,
4. Number of times a youth accesses the center and services at the center.

Can a licensed runaway and homeless youth shelter serve as a foster care placement?

No, a runaway and homeless youth shelter is not an eligible placement option pursuant to Sections 319, 361.2, 450, and 727 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.¹³

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¹³ Welfare & Institutions Code § 319, 361.2, 450, and 727