



CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Runaway Youth as Status Offenders

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Overview

Youth who run away are at increased risk of victimization, involvement in risky sexual activity, substance abuse, and delinquency; therefore, widespread agreement exists that running away should be prevented. When running away is habitual, the justice system may become involved. This brief outlines how the justice system in the District of Columbia intervenes with runaway youth, from how youth become eligible for judicial intervention through case disposition. Next, this brief reviews best practices and identifies models for providing services to runaway and at-risk youth. Specifically, best practices suggest that the judicial system is not an appropriate avenue for intervention because of the detrimental consequences associated with justice system involvement; rather, young people and their families should be provided intensive individual and family services to address the root causes of running away. Finally, the brief provides an overview of the services the District offers runaway youth outside of the justice system consistent with these recommended practices.

Tags: Juvenile Justice, Runaways, Running Away, Status Offenders, Juveniles, Justice System Involvement

Background

National statistics estimate that 14 - 19% of all youth run away at least once before turning 18 years old.¹ Running away puts youth at an increased risk of victimization as well as involvement in risky sexual activity, substance abuse, and delinquency.² When running away is habitual, the justice system may become involved. The juvenile justice system is able to intervene with runaway youth when running away constitutes a “status offense,” which is an action that violates the law solely because the person engaging in it is under the age of majority.

When is Running Away a Status Offense?

In the District of Columbia, a person who commits a status offense (a status offender) is referred to as a child in need of supervision or person in need of supervision (PINS). This term is defined as a child who is -

- (A)(i) subject to compulsory school attendance and habitually truant from school without justification;
- (ii) has committed an offense committable only by children; *or*
- (iii) is habitually disobedient of the reasonable and lawful commands of his parent, guardian, or other custodian and is ungovernable; *and*
- (B) is in need of care or rehabilitation.³

The action of running away is not itself a status offense in the District, thus not all runaways are status offenders or eligible to be status offenders.⁴ Rather, running away can become a status offense when the act amounts to being “habitually disobedient.”⁵ Because the law does not define habitually disobedient, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), in consultation with the Court Social Services Division (CSSD), makes a case-by-case determination of when running away constitutes a status offense based on the needs of the young person, taking into account age, frequency, and duration. Generally, they require at least three documented missing person

¹ Pergamit, Michael R. (2010). “On the Lifetime Prevalence of Running Away From Home.” Urban Institute. Retrieved September 2018, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED510506.pdf>. National Conference of State Legislatures (NCLS). (2016). “Homeless and Runaway Youth.” Retrieved September 2018, from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/homeless-and-runaway-youth.aspx>.

² Youth.gov. (N.d.). “Homelessness and Runaway.” Retrieved September 2018, from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/runaway-and-homeless-youth>.

³ D.C. Code § 16–2301(8) (emphasis added).

⁴ According to the Runway and Homeless Youth Act (P.L. 110-378), a runaway youth is an individual under the age of 18 who absents themselves from their home or legal residence at least overnight without permission of their parents or legal guardians.

⁵ Research literature also includes a subpopulation of runaway and homeless youth “known as ‘throwaway’ (or ‘push outs’) who have been abandoned by their parents or who have been told to leave their households” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018). These youth would not qualify as PINS; rather, they would enter the justice system through the child abuse and neglect system (D.C. Code § 16–2301(9)(A)).

reports before considering someone to be a habitual runaway.⁶ Once OAG and CSSD make the determination that someone meets the requirements of a habitual runaway, the individual may be arrested and filed as a PINS youth.

Police Involvement

Runaway youth may become involved with the police in different contexts as a direct result of their running away. If a runaway is reported as a missing person, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) becomes involved in attempting to locate the individual. A missing person is defined as an “adult or juvenile person missing from his/her lawful place of abode in the District of Columbia for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject’s behavior patterns, or plans or routines.”⁷ Thus, Runaways, can qualify as missing persons; however, not all missing persons are necessarily runaways. Missing persons who are under the age of 18 are investigated by MPD’s Youth and Family Services Division, but, if located, they are not arrested or processed by the police, and this results in no further penetration into the justice system. If a runaway is suspected of being PINS, MPD can seize and refer the youth to be filed as a PINS case.⁸ If a youth runs away from court-ordered placement, MPD will also get involved in locating the individual; at this point, the youth is not considered a missing person; rather, they are considered an absconder, meaning they are a fugitive from justice, and are handled differently by MPD.⁹

Diversion

Once a youth is identified as a habitual runaway, and thus eligible to be prosecuted as a status offender, MPD or OAG, in consultation with CSSD, can elect to offer the youth an opportunity to be diverted into the Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) Diversion Program in lieu of prosecution and further justice system involvement.

- Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) Diversion Program: The ACE Diversion Program is designed for youth who commit status offenses and/or low-level delinquency offenses. The goal of the program is to help youth and their families address the underlying causes of negative behavior, including running away, while minimizing the likelihood of continuing the behavior without acquiring a juvenile record. The ACE Diversion Program connects youth and families to a range of individually tailored support and behavioral health services by assessing the needs of diverted

⁶ District of Columbia Courts. (N.d.). “Status Offender”. Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/family-social-services/status-offender>.

⁷GO-OPS-304.03 (Missing Persons Reports).

⁸ Youth Investigation Division. Division Order 2013, Series 02. Retrieved September 2018, from http://dccouncil.us/files/performance_oversight/Councilletter_attachments.pdf.

⁹ Consistent with the CYJAA 2016, MPD cannot house PINS with delinquent youth (EO-13-030: Clarification Concerning Juvenile Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)).

youth, linking youth and their families to individually tailored services, and monitoring successful program participation.¹⁰ This diversion results in no judicial involvement.

Justice System Involvement

If OAG, in consultation with CSSD, chooses to charge a habitual runaway as a status offender, the youth becomes an alleged PINS, and the Court has the authority to set conditions upon the youth prior to adjudication and disposition, in which case the youth will be placed under CSSD supervision.¹¹ At this point, there are a variety of adjudication or disposition alternatives, including consent decrees,¹² the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program (JBDP),¹³ and the Here Opportunities Prepare you for Excellence (H.O.P.E.) Court, which is a specialized court designed to respond to the needs of youth at increased risk of being sexually exploited. These alternatives are not technically diversion from the justice system as the youth is court-involved, petitioned, and subject to the Court's jurisdiction;¹⁴ however, successful completion results in a dismissal of charges and prevents the youth from having a juvenile record for the offense.

If, by a preponderance of the evidence, a youth is adjudicated to be a status offender, the Court will issue a dispositional order based upon the needs of the youth, as informed by a predisposition report. The order may remain in place until the youth's 18th birthday.¹⁵ The Court will either place the youth under the supervision of CSSD or commit them to the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) where they receive intensive case management and community-based services, up to and including residential placement, designed to support and rehabilitate youth.¹⁶

¹⁰ Department of Human Services, District of Columbia. (N.d. D.). "Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE)". Retrieved September 2018, from <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/alternatives-court-experience-ace-diversion-program>.

¹¹ Pretrial conditions can include ordering a youth to shelter care (a non-secure out-of-home placement); restricting travel, activities, or place of abode; or "any other condition reasonably necessary to assure the appearance of the child at a factfinding hearing or his protection from harm" (D.C. Code § 16-2312).

¹² A consent decree is when the case is resolved by an agreement between the OAG, CSSD, and the youth in which the youth agrees to comply with the conditions of the decree for up to six months (D.C. Code § 16-2314).

¹³ The JBDP program has three tracks: pre-trial, pre-disposition, and disposition. The pre-trial track is a pre-adjudication alternative that does not require the young person to enter a plea. The pre-disposition track requires the young person to enter a plea. Both of these tracks result in a case dismissal. The post-disposition track results in early termination of supervision but the young person has a disposed offense (see D.C. Courts. <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/family-social-services/juvenile-behavioral-diversion-program>).

¹⁴ National Juvenile Defender Center. (N.d.) "Juvenile Court Terminology." Retrieved on September 2017, from <http://njdc.info/juvenile-court-terminology/>.

¹⁵ The CYJAA amended the time on dispositional orders from the youth's 21st birthday to their 18th (D.C. Code § 16-2322).

¹⁶ These services, including residential placement, are also made available to youth awaiting disposition.

How to best serve PINS runaway youth?

When youth become involved in the justice system, best practice recommends prohibiting the placement of youth in secure facilities as incarcerating youth has been shown to have deleterious effects on long-term outcomes.¹⁷ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) outlines three major issue areas with respect to institutionalizing status offenders:

1. For juveniles in general, institutionalization has been found to have no effect on decreasing rates of reoffending and may increase anti-social attitudes and affiliations (such as gang or crew engagement).
2. Youth face reentry barriers; navigating a return to life on the outside often leads to new or additional delinquency and status offending.
3. Detaining a status offender does nothing to address the causes of the behavior, and therefore does not deter repeat behavior.¹⁸

Consistent with best practice, in 1974 the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) prohibited secure detention of status offenders by states that receive federal juvenile justice grants.¹⁹ In the three years following the passage of the JJDPA, the number of status offenders referred to juvenile courts decreased by 21.3% nationwide, and the detention rate of status offenders decreased by 50%.²⁰ Juvenile and family court judges objected to the prohibition of secure detention arguing that it unduly hampered their ability to deal with chronic status offenders, such as runaways.²¹ They argued that “detention could be used as a tool to force chronic status offenders to comply with court orders” and that “detention might be the only option where in-home placement presented a danger to the child and appropriate out-of-home alternatives were unavailable.”²² In response, Congress amended the JJDPA in 1980 to create the Valid Court Order exception (VCO), which allows judges to place status

¹⁷ Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (N.d.). “National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses.” SOS Project. Retrieved September 2018, from <http://www.juvjustice.org/our-work/safety-opportunity-and-success-project/national-standards-care-youth-charged-status>.

¹⁸ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). (2015). “Literature Review: Status Offenders.” Retrieved August 2018, from https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Status_Offenders.pdf.

¹⁹ P.L. 93-415 (1974).

²⁰ OJJDP. (1995.) “Deinstitutionalize Status Offenders: A Record of Progress.” The Journal of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Volume 2, Number 2 (Fall/Wiinter). Retrieved October 2018, from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/jjff95.pdf>.

²¹ While the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) initially supported the VCO, in 2010 they voted in favor of eliminating the VCO exception. (Kelly, John. (2010.) “Judges’ Council Support Elimination of Valid Court Order Exception.” Youth Today. Retrieved October 2018, from <https://youthtoday.org/2010/03/judges-council-support-elimination-of-valid-court-order-exception/>)

²² Bilchik, Shae and Erika Pinheiro. (2010). “What the JJDPA Means for Lawyers Representing Juvenile Status Offenders.” American Bar Association. Retrieved October 2018, from https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/fathers/rjso_chapter1.pdf.

offenders in secure confinement if they violate a valid court order, such as meeting curfew or attending school.²³

Until recently, DC utilized the VCO exception to securely detain status offenders. In 2016 the DC Council passed the Comprehensive Youth Justice Amendment Act (CYJAA), which eliminated the VCO exception by prohibiting placing alleged or disposed PINS in detention unless they are also alleged or found delinquent.²⁴ Currently, in alignment with best practices, DC can no longer securely detain PINS youth. As a result, the courts can no longer use secure detention as a way to prevent youth from absconding from residential treatment or as a penalty for failing to comply with court ordered services. The fundamental issue is how to serve PINS runaway youth who continue running away after becoming justice system involved.

To identify solutions to this question, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) has convened a PINS Absconders and Runaway Youth working group consisting of justice system, health, and human services partners. The group has reviewed initial data on missing youth and youth who abscond and is in the process of identifying proposed solutions for the fiscal year.

Best Practices: Preventing Justice System Involvement

National best practice suggests that the justice system is not an appropriate avenue to address the needs of youth who run away because of the system's detrimental consequences for young people, including increasing their risk of engaging in future delinquent behaviors. Rather, best practice is to address the root causes of running away by providing intensive individual and family services that address young people and their families' needs, thereby avoiding any justice system involvement.²⁵ According to the research literature, "[y]outh most often cite family conflict as the major reason for their homelessness or episodes of running away,"²⁶ and a longitudinal study of middle school and high school youth found that youth with family instability were more likely to run away.²⁷ Additionally, "[o]ne in five runaway or throw-away

²³ OJJDP (2015).

²⁴ DC Law 21-238 (2016).

²⁵ Jafarian, Mahsa and Vidhya Ananthakrishnan. (2017). "Just Kids: When Misbehaving is a Crime." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.vera.org/when-misbehaving-is-a-crime#understanding-adolescence-acting-out-and-calls-for-help>. Coalition for Juvenile Justice (N.d.). "SOS Project." Retrieved September 2018, from <http://www.juvjustice.org/our-work/safety-opportunity-and-success-project/national-standards/section-ii-efforts-avoid-court-2>.

²⁶ Fernandes-Alcanara, Adrienne L. (2018). "Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographic and Programs." *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved September 2018, from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33785.pdf>.

²⁷ Kimberly A. Tyler, Kellie J. Hagewen, and Lisa A. Melander, "Risk Factors for Running Away Among a Sample of Males and Females," *Youth & Society*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2011, pp. 583-608.

youth report being physically or sexually abused at home in the year prior to leaving or fearing abuse upon their return.”²⁸

Consistent with this understanding of the reasons youth run away, the Vera Institute’s²⁹ continuum of care for status offenders emphasizes that “systems must be able to assess youth and family needs, triage cases appropriately, and have an array of service options that range from minimal (such as weekly mentoring check-ins) to more intensive and longer-term (such as in-home family therapy programs).”³⁰ The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) promotes options including early intervention and prevention programs aimed at addressing family problems and financial needs, and independent housing options such as youth housing programs, community-based transitional living programs, and outreach services.

In 2016, Congress reauthorized the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHYP), which funds four grant programs aimed at addressing the needs of runaway and homeless youth. The programs, which are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, promote a “positive youth development approach that ensures a young person a sense of (A) safety and structure; (B) belonging and membership; (C) self-worth and social contribution; (D) independence and control over one’s life; and (E) closeness in interpersonal relationship.”³¹ The specific grant programs authorized are:

- Basic Center Program (BCP): BCP funds grants to help create and strengthen community-based programs that meet the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth under 18 years old by providing up to 21 days of shelter, food, clothing, and medical care; individual, group, and family counseling; crisis intervention, recreation programs, and aftercare services. One of the goals of BCP is to reunite young people with their families or locate appropriate alternative placements.³²
- Maternity Group Home Program (MGH): MGH supports homeless pregnant and/or parenting young people between the ages of 16 and 22 and their dependent children. Services are provided for up to 21 months, and in addition providing housing, grantees

²⁸ Saar, Malika Saada, Rebecca Epstein, Lindsay Rosenthal, and Yasmin Vafa. (2017). “The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls’ Story.” *Georgetown Law School’s Center on Poverty and Inequality*. Retrieved September 2018, from <https://perma.cc/R26S-HE6P>.

²⁹ Since the early 2000s, Vera Institute of Justice has worked with many state and local leaders, practitioners, and policy makers to offer family-focused, community-based support outside of the juvenile justice system. In 2013 Vera (N.d.) created the Status Offense Reform Center to understand and intervene with status offenders and eliminate the use of justice-based responses (“Status Offense Reform Center.” Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.vera.org/projects/status-offense-reform-center>).

³⁰ Jafarian and Ananthakrishnan (2017).

³¹ 34 USC § 10101 et seq; Basic Center Program (34 U.S.C. §§11211-11213), Transitional Living Program (34 U.S.C. §§11221 – 11222), and Street Outreach Program (34 U.S.C. §11261).

³² Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) (N.d. A). “Basic Center Fact Sheet.” Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/bcp-fact-sheet>.

are required to teach parenting skills as well as child development, family budgeting, and health and nutrition.³³

- Transitional Living Program (TLP): TLP provides grants to support long-term residential services to homeless youth ages 16 to 22 and provide services designed to help them transition to self-sufficient living, such as basic life skills building, mental health care, and job attainment services.³⁴
- Street Outreach Program (SOP): SOP focuses on developing relationships between outreach workers and young people that allow them to rebuild connections with caring adults. The goal of this grant program is to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of youth on the streets. The services include street-based education and outreach, access to emergency shelter, survival aid, treatment and counseling, crisis intervention, and follow-up support.³⁵

Currently, two non-profit agencies in the District receive funding under the RHYP: Sasha Bruce and the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC). Sasha Bruce receives grant money under the Basic Center Program and Street Outreach Program. LAYC receives money under the Basic Center, Street Outreach, and Transitional Housing Program. No organization in the District receives funding under the Maternity Group Home Program.

Beyond administering and funding specific programs, states and local governments are moving to establish coordinated, centralized, system-wide efforts that engage multiple stakeholders who are focused on homeless and runaway youth specifically, rather than the larger homeless population. For example:

- Florida Network of Youth and Family Services (Florida Network): Florida Network is a not-for-profit statewide association representing agencies that serve homeless, runaway, and troubled youth ages six and older and their families. They provide a range of coordinating services to agencies across the state including conducting audits for quality improvement, assistance with contract management, data collection and research, advocacy, public education, public policy development, and training and technical assistance.³⁶
- Calcasieu Parish's Multi-Agency Resource Center (M.A.R.C), Louisiana: Established under the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative, the M.A.R.C is a centralized intake point for at-risk, delinquent, and status offending youth and their families to

³³ Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) (N.d. B). "Maternity Group Homes Fact Sheet." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/mgh-fact-sheet>.

³⁴ Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) (N.d. C). "Transitional Living Program Fact Sheet." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/tlp-fact-sheet>.

³⁵ Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) (N.d. D). "Street Outreach Program Fact Sheet." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/sop-fact-sheet>.

³⁶ Florida Network of Youth and Family Services. (N.d. A.). "What We Do." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://floridanetwork.org/about/what-we-do/>.

receive coordinated prevention and intervention services. The M.A.R.C does not offer new programs or services; rather, it provides a single entry point for troubled youth between ages 6 – 17 to be assessed in a timely and comprehensive manner and then linked to the most appropriate community services.³⁷

- Colorado’s Office of Homeless Youth Services (OHYS): In 2002, Colorado created and tasked the OHYS with: identifying and removing barriers to youth getting services; improving the quality of services provided to youth via an Advisory Council on Homeless Youth that coordinates goals between youth service providers and stakeholders; reducing needless expenditures caused by the provision of overlapping services by coordinating systems; and identifying funding resources available to entities by sharing resources as they become available.³⁸
- Washington State’s Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection (OHY): In 2015, the State of Washington established the OHY to coordinate stakeholders, policies, and funding streams in five priority service areas: stable housing; family reconciliation; permanent connections; education and employment; and social and emotional well-being.³⁹

What is the District of Columbia’s Continuum of Care for Runaway Youth?

In March 2017, Mayor Bowser identified six initiatives to address missing youth focused on locating young people reported missing, providing critical resources to better address the issues that cause youth to run away, and supporting young people who may be considering leaving home.⁴⁰ One of the initiatives created the Mayor’s Working Group on Missing and Runaway Youth, which was tasked with analyzing individual cases, analyzing and assessing trends, and managing resource requests. The Working Group facilitated a conversation with youth who had experienced situations of homelessness, being on the streets or running away, and trafficking and exploitation to receive their recommendations on what could help other youth. Paired with Solid Foundations DC: Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness,⁴¹ the District’s

³⁷ Calcasieu Parish, LA. (N.d.) “M.A.R.C. Mission.” Retrieved October 2018, from <https://www.cppj.net/services/juvenile-justice-services/m-a-r-c/m-a-r-c-overview>.

³⁸ California Coalition of Youth. (2018). “A Call to Action: Prevent and End Youth Homelessness in California.” Retrieved September 2018, from <https://calyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/RHY-Hearing-Paper-January-2018.pdf>.

³⁹ Office of Homeless Youth. (N.d.). “State of Washington Department of Commerce.” Retrieved September 2018, from <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/office-of-youth-homelessness/>.

⁴⁰ Executive Office of the Mayor. (2017). “Bowser Administration Announces Six New Initiatives to Address Missing Young People in Washington, DC.” Retrieved November 2018, from <https://mayor.dc.gov/release/bowser-administration-announces-six-new-initiatives-address-missing-young-people-washington>.

⁴¹ District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2017). “Solid Foundations DC: Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness.” Retrieved November 2018, from https://ich.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ich/page_content/attachments/Solid%20Foundations%20DC%20_web%201.5.pdf.

data-driven plan focused on the needs of unaccompanied youth issued in May 2017, these initiatives help shape the District's continuum of care for runaway youth by launching new service and grant programs.

Currently, DC government has multiple programs administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) intended to provide individual and family services to runaway youth prior to justice system involvement, including Parents and Adolescent Support (PASS), Strengthening Teens Enriching Parents (STEP), and Youth Housing Options and Prevention Education (HOPE):

- Parents and Adolescent Support (PASS): PASS, which was started in 2010, is a voluntary program designed to serve DC families of youth who are committing status offenses, including running away, by working cooperatively with families and service providers to provide services prior to child welfare and/or justice system involvement. Youth may be referred to PASS by city agencies, schools, service providers, and concerned family members. Youth in the PASS program receive services including youth and family assessment, intensive care management, therapy, mentoring, and parenting resources.⁴²
- Strengthening Teens Enriching Parents (STEP): Launched in 2017, STEP is a voluntary program designed to provide immediate outreach to runaway youth to assess why the youth is leaving home and, in partnership with the family, implement services, including individual counseling, designed to reduce future instances and increase family stability. The program is administered by the DHS in partnership with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), OAG, CSSD and a network of community-based service providers.⁴³
- Youth Housing Options and Prevention Education (HOPE): Also launched in 2017, HOPE provides direct grants to community organizations that provide services, including housing, street outreach, and drop-in centers, to youth experiencing homelessness. HOPE also coordinates street outreach teams and collaborates with partners to assess and refer youth to services including family counseling and mediation, short-term crisis intervention and counseling, and short-term case management.⁴⁴

While the effectiveness of these programs has not yet been evaluated, DHS is in the process of partnering with the DC Lab and Georgetown University to evaluate parts of the PASS program. At this juncture, STEP and HOPE are too new for their impact to be assessed.

⁴² Department of Human Services, District of Columbia. (N.d. B.). "Parent and Adolescent Support." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://dhs.dc.gov/service/parent-and-adolescent-support-pass>.

⁴³ Department of Human Services, District of Columbia. (N.d. A.). "Strengthening Teens Enriching Parents." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/strengthening-teens-enriching-parents-step>.

⁴⁴ Department of Human Services, District of Columbia. (N.d. C.). "Youth Housing Options and Prevention Education." Retrieved September 2018, from <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/youth-housing-options-and-prevention-education-hope>.

These government projects help fund or work in conjunction with community-based providers that offer services to runaway, homeless, or at-risk youth in the District:

- Sasha Bruce: Sasha Bruce offers a variety of services for homeless and runaway youth.⁴⁵ In partnership with DHS, they have a Family Strengthening Program designed to increase family stability and decrease family conflict by improving runaway behaviors. They run DC's only short-term shelter for youth under the age of 18--Sasha Bruce House, which is open 24-hours a day and serves youth ages 11 – 17. Sasha Bruce House offers on-site services including crisis intervention; individual, group, and family counseling; case management; support for shelter graduates; and temporary respite care. They also operate a drop-in center for homeless youth to rest, shower, and receive education, mental health, and employment services. To address the long-term needs of homeless or runaway youth, Sasha Bruce programs include independent living for 17 – 20 year olds, transitional living for 18 – 21 years olds, transitional housing for homeless families, permanent housing for young families, and Olaiya's Cradle: independent living for homeless young mothers.⁴⁶
- Latin American Youth Center (LAYC): LAYC's Safe Housing program aims to reunite homeless and runaway youth with their families or help them find safe, stable housing. They have a street outreach program that canvasses the streets to find homeless youth. They have transitional living programs that provide youth ages 18 – 21 with shelter, life skills workshops, case management, and group recreation activities.⁴⁷ LAYC also runs a drop-in center where they connect youth looking for shelter to appropriate resources and offer shower, laundry, and kitchen facilities.⁴⁸
- Friendship Place: Friendship Place runs two programs targeted at individuals between the ages of 17 – 24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness: Youth Connect and Before Thirty. Both programs are designed to provide comprehensive case management. Youth Connect is a street outreach engagement service in which specialists canvass areas in DC looking for youth aged 17 – 24 in need of help. The specialists conduct on-the-spot housing assessment and help youth get vital documents and services. Before Thirty is a person-centered program that provides employment and housing services.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Sasha Bruce. (N.d. A.) "Programs." Retrieved October 1, 2018, from <http://www.sashabruce.org/programs/>.

⁴⁶ Sasha Bruce. (N.d. B.) "Safe Homes." Retrieved October 1, 2018, from <http://www.sashabruce.org/programs/safehomes/>.

⁴⁷ Latin American Youth Center. (N.d. A.) "Safe Housing." Retrieved October 2018, from <http://www.layc-dc.org/what-we-do/safe-housing/>.

⁴⁸ Latin American Youth Center. (N.d. B.) "Outreach and Intake." Retrieved October 2018, from <http://www.layc-dc.org/what-we-do/safe-housing/outreach-intake/>.

⁴⁹ Friendship Place. (N.d.) "Youth & Young Adults." Retrieved October 2018, from <https://friendshipplace.org/programs-outreach/youth-young-adults/>.

Conclusion

As the District of Columbia continues to align itself with best practices by diverting youth from the justice system and deinstitutionalizing status offenders, it must identify ways to address the needs of at-risk youth and their families with the goal of reducing instances of running away. Efforts must seek to provide services that address the root causes driving young people to run away and are not dependent on justice system intervention. In recent years, the District has devoted increased resources to providing these comprehensive services to runaway and at-risk youth through DHS with the creation of STEP and HOPE programs in 2017. Moving forward it will be important for the District to assess the effectiveness of current programs, whether they are sufficient to address the needs of young people, or whether they need to be expanded or supplemented. The CJCC's PINS Absconders and Runaway Youth Workgroup is positioned to inform the District's efforts by identifying the current gaps in services and recommending strategies for providing for the needs of runaway youth.