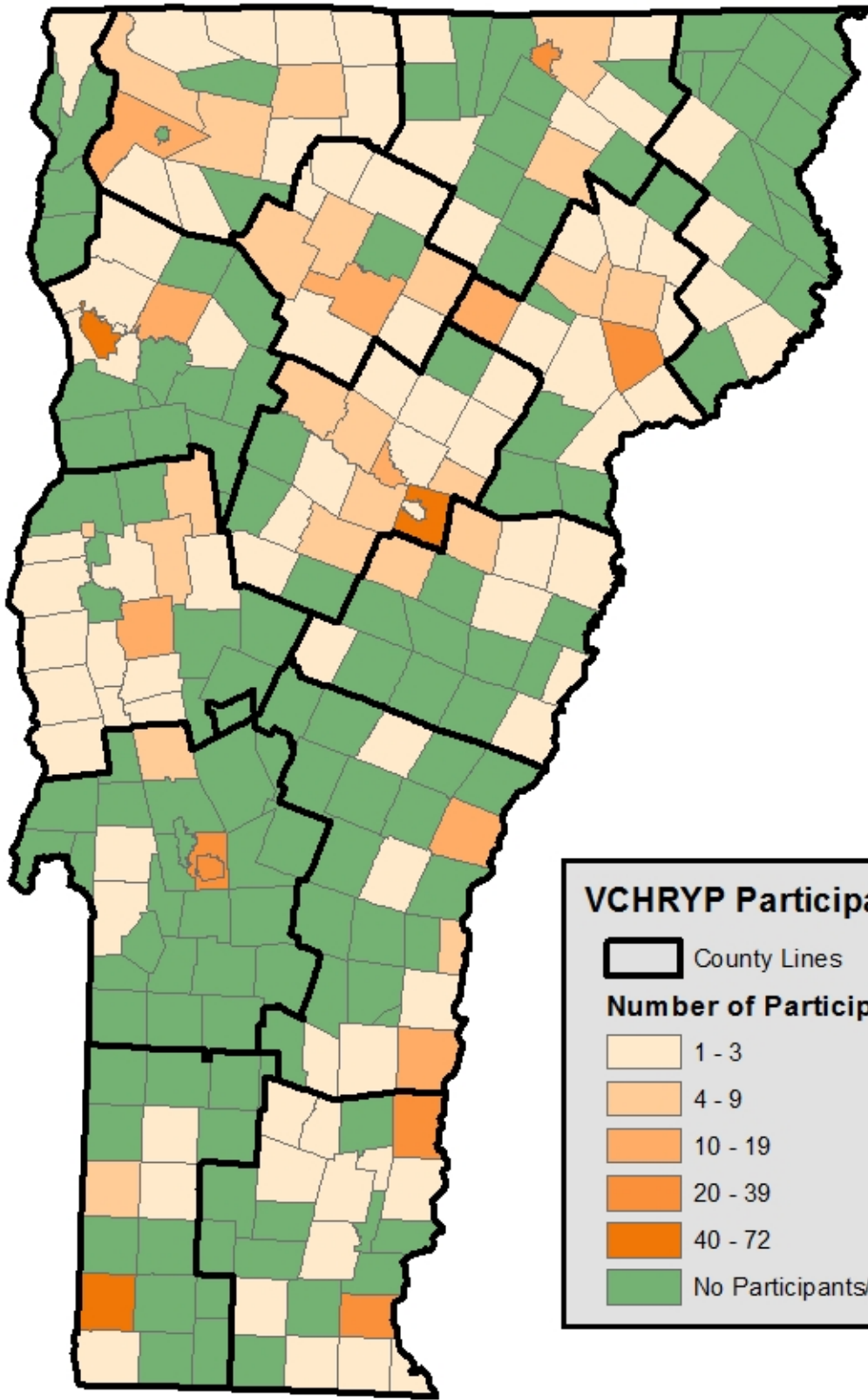


Extent of youth homelessness in Vermont:

- Vermont runaway & homeless youth (RHY) programs serve between 800 - 1,100 youth per year.
- The 2014 Point In Time Count identified 1,556 homeless individuals on the night of January 28, 2014 of which 371 (24%) were youth. (Note: this did not include youth that were couch surfing or experiencing other forms of precarious housing)
- The 2013 Emergency Shelter One Night count conducted by the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity identified 368 individuals staying in ESGP funded shelters, with 97 under the age of 18.

This data is consistent with an estimate of at least 1,000 **known** homeless Vermont youth between the ages of 15-22. However, runaway & homeless youth often avoid systems of care, and the actual number of homeless youth in Vermont is likely substantially higher.



VCHRYP Participants By Town

- County Lines
- Number of Participants by Town
 - 1 - 3
 - 4 - 9
 - 10 - 19
 - 20 - 39
 - 40 - 72
 - No Participants/Data

Common characteristics & high incidence sub-populations:

- Vermont RHY look different from homeless youth in urban areas. In VT, most are intentionally invisible - commonly couch surfing, sleeping in abandoned buildings, and camping out.
- These youth are mostly disconnected from family & community - they have few meaningful and long-lasting relationships with adults and generally tenuous connections to community.
- Most have experienced some type of trauma (eg: exposure to violence, physical or sexual abuse, etc.)
- Most come from families that live in poverty - often intergenerational poverty.
- About half report that conflict with their parent or guardian was the reason they left home, and that their parents told them to leave, or knew they were leaving and didn't care.
- Many have had some type of prior system involvement (eg: juvenile justice, child welfare, some have aged out of foster care). Others have managed to slip through or around systems of care. RHY generally avoid anything they perceive as "a system" and often manage to intentionally avoid child welfare interventions. Others live in unhealthy environments that have not quite met the threshold for child welfare intervention.
- Pregnant/parenting youth have a significantly higher incidence of homelessness.
- LGBTQ youth are also overrepresented among homeless youth - national research suggests that between 20% to 40% of all homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered.

Trends:

- 1) **Number of older homeless youth increasing** - In fy 2009, 68% of youth accessing services were under the age of 18 and most of those were reunified with their families at program exit. In fy 2013, 56% of youth served were between the ages of 18-22, and for most of these youth returning home was not an option. These youth are transitioning to independence on their own, without the benefit of family supports & resources.
- 2) **Need for housing increasing** - The need for emergency shelter *and* long term housing supports has increased over the past 5 years. In fy 2009, VCRHYP sites provided 11,651 of shelter or housing supports and in fy 2013 provided 27,468 nights of shelter or housing supports.
- 3) **Needs & issues becoming more complex** - Youth are presenting with more complex and intense problems. Responding to these needs places an enormous strain on program resources.
- 4) **High correlation to poverty that mirrors national trend of rising youth poverty** - In 2001, the national poverty rate among 18-24 year olds was about 11%. As of 2011, that percentage had doubled with about one in five 18-24 year olds in poverty. Employment is a major challenge for the youth our agencies work with. Only half (48%) leave transitional living programs with employment of 90 days or more, and even those that are able to find employment don't make enough to afford self-sufficiency. A lack of affordable housing compounds the problem of low income and limited employment opportunities.

Youth homelessness requires different strategies from adults:

- Youth have different emotional, social, brain, and physical development needs from adults.
- Youth are often reluctant to seek any kind of help that they think will result in being referred into a “system”. Building trusting relationships is key to engaging youth in services and reconnecting them to community.
- Involving extended families and/or other supportive adults is extremely important, not just to help with the current crisis but to provide permanent connections to caring adults.
- Research shows that individualized and regular case management works with youth. Developing strong helping relationships with youth care workers in a non-clinical environment creates opportunities for transformation. These relationships provide a sense of belonging and connection to community. These relationships also help youth learn to navigate resources, understand their rights & options, facilitate independent living skills acquisition, help youth identify their strengths, provide non-judgemental support (for many youth their first experience with healthy adult relationships), and nurture positive future thinking.
- Federal funds for housing has not been youth-centric (eg: rapid re-housing, permanent housing, etc.). It’s not just about housing, it’s connecting youth to adults, services and community supports. Permanent housing is not a realistic goal when working on housing solutions for youth.

Programs & Services:

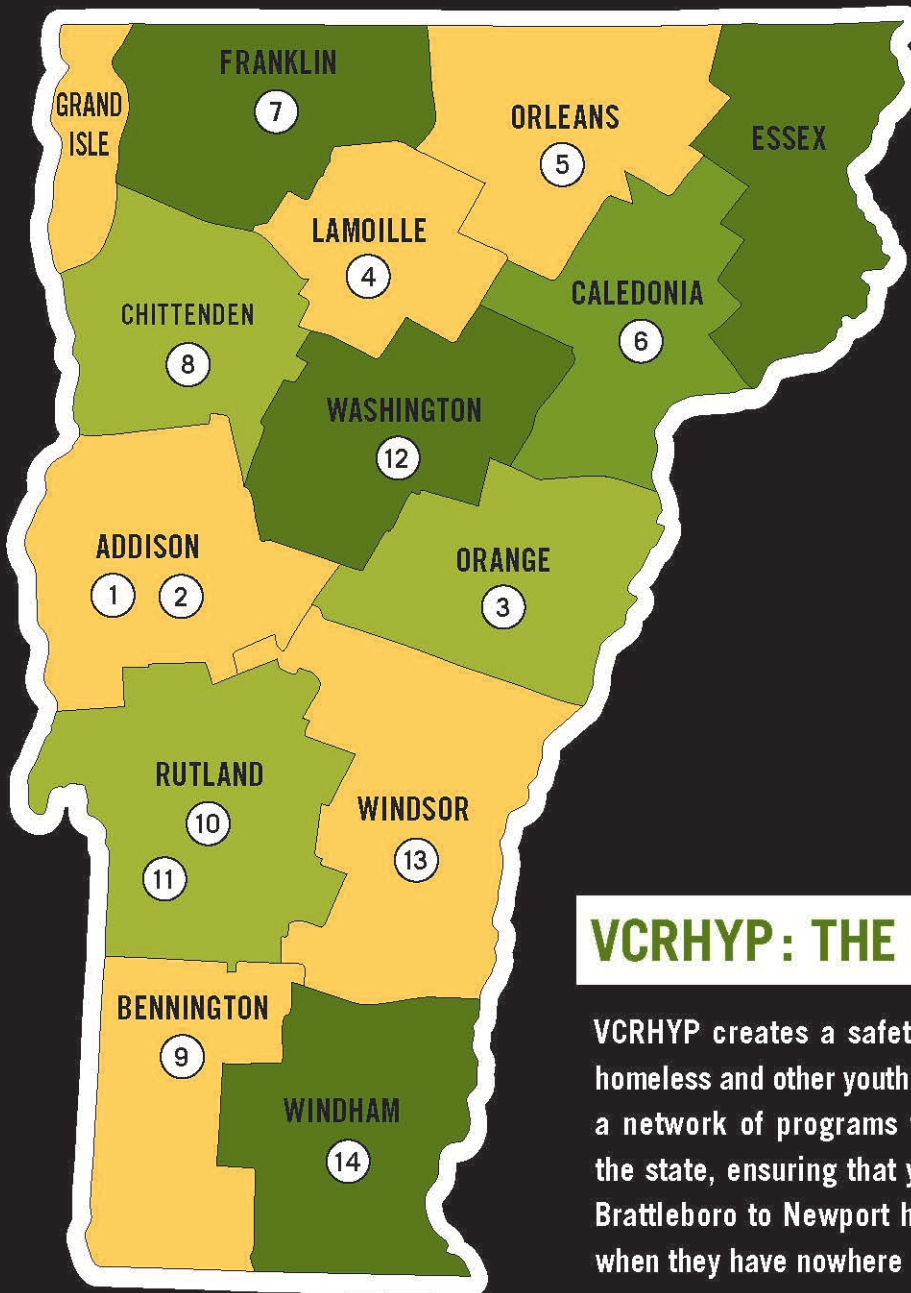
Runaway & homeless youth programs were created in 1974 through the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act. This legislation provides federal funding for community-based programs to offer help to youth outside of the child welfare & juvenile justice systems.

The Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP) was created in 1981, and is currently composed of 14 member agencies that share a blend of federal and state funding to operate two core programs across the state:

- Basic Center Programs primarily serve youth under the age of 18, providing emergency shelter & crisis stabilization with a focus on reunifying those youth with their families.
- Transitional Living Programs are designed for youth ages 16-22 and are designed to support youth transitioning to independence.

VCRHYP programs use a Positive Youth Development approach to focus on four outcome areas:

Safety	92% of youth exiting our programs went to a safe living situation
Well-Being	92% of youth left our programs with a primary care physician
Permanent Connections	82% of youth exit our programs possessing relationships with healthy adults & peers they can rely on for support
Self-Sufficiency	79% of youth left our programs confident accessing community resources



VCRHYP: THE COALITION

VCRHYP creates a safety net for runaway, homeless and other youth in distress through a network of programs that reach across the state, ensuring that young people from Brattleboro to Newport have a place to go when they have nowhere else to turn.

- 1. Addison County Parent Child Center, MIDDLEBURY
- 2. Counseling Services of Addison County, MIDDLEBURY
- 3. Clara Martin Center, RANDOLPH
- 4. Lamoille Family Center, MORRISVILLE
- 5. Northeast Kingdom Community Action, NEWPORT
- 6. Northeast Kingdom Youth Services, ST. JOHNSBURY
- 7. Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, ST. ALBANS
- 8. Spectrum Youth & Family Services, BURLINGTON
- 9. United Counseling Service of Bennington County, BENNINGTON
- 10. Vermont Achievement Center, RUTLAND
- 11. Rutland County Parent Child Center, RUTLAND
- 12. Washington County Youth Service Bureau Boys & Girls Club, MONTEPELIER
- 13. Windsor County Youth Services, LUDLOW
- 14. Youth Services, Inc., BRATTLEBORO

Youth housing models currently used by VCRHYP agencies:

- Youth shelters for crisis housing (currently two: Chittenden County & Windsor County).
- Additional 10 sites use “Community Host Homes” for emergency shelter.
- Addison, Chittenden, Rutland, and Windsor Counties operate congregate living for transition aged youth. Youth in this housing have their own rooms (Single Room Occupancy) with shared kitchen & bathrooms, or occupy a small efficiency unit. The advantage of this type of housing is that services & supports can be provided on site, with a 24 hour staff or resident manager. The disadvantage of this model is that it’s expensive, particularly to sustain staffing.
- “Scattered site apartments” - where youth find a rental unit in the community and the program provides a stipend/subsidy that typically diminishes over time. The advantage to this model is that there are no on site staffing expenses, and youth are able to gain independent living experience with some support. This model works well for youth that are ready for a degree of responsibility and independence. The disadvantage is that youth who are not ready for this level of independence can fail in dramatic fashion and burn bridges with landlords. This model is currently in use in Franklin, Bennington, Windham, Caledonia, Essex, and Washington counties.
- Master leasing by an agency - provides flexibility for moving in and out of units as circumstances change, however, the master leaseholder (agency) assumes a great deal of risk. This model is currently being used in Windham, Washington, and Essex counties.

What are the gaps?

1. Foremost, **limited housing inventory** in Vermont is the fundamental market reality that is driving homelessness. Housing conservation efforts alone are not enough. We need new housing units to address the fundamental market imbalance of demand that way outpaces supply. For rental rates to come down, we simply must build more housing.
2. **Youth employment opportunities** - youth need a sequence of employment exposure and experiences that will help them enter the workforce. Also, disconnected youth need help making connections to employment opportunities. Our youth don't have existing relationships with community members and most good employment opportunities in Vermont don't come by way of formal job postings.
3. **Education** is the clearest road out of poverty. Most of the youth our agencies work with have not been successful in traditional education. Alternative education and vocational training programs are needed for these youth. Also, research is clear that exclusionary discipline policies create a school to prison/homelessness pipeline. We need our schools to bring youth in when they are struggling, not push them out.