

# **National Communication System for Runaway and Homeless Youth Data Collection**

**OMB Information Collection Request  
0970 – 0610**

## **Supporting Statement Part A - Justification**

**March 2023**

Submitted By:  
Family and Youth Services Bureau  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## Summary

### 1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The Family and Youth Services Bureau's (FYSB) Runaway and Homeless Youth Division has a legislative requirement to fund a National Communication System, which is currently operated by the National Runaway Safeline (NRS). The NRS provides information, referral services, crisis intervention, and prevention resources to vulnerable youth and families of youth at risk of running away and/or becoming homeless at no cost. When necessary, the NRS refers runaway and homeless youth to shelters, counseling, medical assistance, and other vital services. The NRS collects information from all contacts with youth and adults connecting with the NRS (i.e., parents, family members, legal guardians, service providers) on a voluntary basis to inform crisis services and develop an annual report on the information collected during calls, chats, emails, and forum posts from young people who reached out to the NRS's crisis services.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), as reauthorized by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L.110-378) through FY 2013 and more recently reauthorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act through FY 2019, mandates the Secretary shall make grants for a national communication system to assist runaway and homeless youth in communicating with their families and with service providers.

The NRS is required to have a system for collecting and analyzing data on calls, emails, chat, texts, and online messages received as well as other information, such as prevention resources, referrals, demographics, and visitors to the NRS website. The NRS must submit monthly and semi-annual reports that includes the following:

- Number of calls received, answered, and missed.
- Number of chats, emails, and texts received; number of chats, emails, and texts answered; and number of chats, emails, and texts that were missed and did not receive a response, in which the users are youth in crisis, runaway youth, and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Number of parents, legal guardians, and service providers contacting the NRS and the type of resources, interventions, and technical support/assistance requested and provided.
- Number and type of prevention materials disseminated to communities, especially to underserved populations.
- Number and type of unique visitors to the NRS' website.
- Information on referrals provided and where youth were referred for services.
- Information on the callers' or users' demographics and where they were located when contacting the NRS.
- Information on the prevention materials developed and disseminated by the NRS.

- Information and analysis of the latest trends and their impact on runaway prevention.

The NRS will use two forms, one form to collect relevant information disclosed during calls, emails, and forum posts, and then a second form to collect information from chats. All data will be provided to FYSB in the aggregate and no personally identifiable information are collected.

## **2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

Information will be collected by the NRS from youth, young adults, and other callers when they connect through emails, chat, texts, and online messages. The NRS uses two forms to collect information from callers. The first form collects information pertaining to what is shared by the caller during calls, emails, and forum posts. The second form collects information from persons who participate in the chats.

All voluntarily reported data will be analyzed by the NRS and will inform an annual report. The annual report will highlight the demographics of those who reached out for support, the nature of the crises experienced by contacts, and the resources provided by the NRS crisis services team. The data will also be provided to FYSB in the aggregate without personally identifiable data to strengthen strategies to increase visibility of the NRS services among youth in crisis, youth experiencing homelessness, and youth who have runaway. The data will also be included in the Biennial Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Report to Congress that is legislatively required.

## **3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction**

The NRS is required to have a system to collect all information from calls, emails, chat, texts, and online messages received from contacts. The NRS system supports the Youth in Crisis form and the Live Chat form and each form is completed by the NRS services team.

## **4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information**

The NRS fulfills the RHYA legislative requirement to fund a National Communication System and is the only entity that collects the information from calls, emails, chat, texts, and online messages received from contacts.

## **5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities**

Not applicable.

## **6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently**

The NRS offers crisis services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to youth and families via the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and at 1800RUNAWAY.org, offering live chat, email, forums, and texting services. Contacts connect with trained staff and volunteers who offer non-judgmental and non-directive support, provide connections to resources, such as shelters and mental health services, and help young people resolve their crises and reach safety. The NRS voluntarily collects information from each contact that is used to inform an annual report, the Biennial RHY Report to Congress, and to better understand types of services needed by youth contacts and support outreach and prevention strategies.

If the NRS collects less information or collects it less frequently, FYSB could not accurately identify critical strategies to support youth experiencing housing instability, homelessness, youth who runaway, and youth in crisis and inform the RHY Report to Congress.

## **7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5**

Does Not Apply

## **8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency**

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection activity. This notice was published on July 6, 2022, Volume 87, Number 128, pages 40246-40247, and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. We did not receive comments.

Efforts to consult includes that NRS regularly reviewing the forms with the Crisis Services Team to ensure they are addressing any concerns or particular needs that may be new or changing (e.g., adding a category for COVID-19 related needs). Additionally, the NRS has included members of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to review their data and data collection system to ensure they are getting their perspective and feedback. The NRS will continue to involve the Crisis Services Team and the YAB in ongoing review processes.

## **9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents**

There is no remuneration, of any kind, for NRS contacts. Participation in data collection is voluntary.

## 10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

The Privacy Act of 1974 provided privacy protection to contacts. The NRS does not collect names from contacts and works to protect and assure information will be kept private.

## 11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

There is some NRS information collected that may be considered sensitive. This information pertains to the demographics of each caller to include age, race, and sex. All information collected from the NRS is voluntary.

This collection of this information is extremely critical for FYSB to ensure the effective delivery of services to youth experiencing homelessness and that services are developmentally appropriate. It is also essential to assess the efficacy of outreach and prevention efforts in reaching youth experiencing homelessness and capture early identification of trends and challenges in the field of RHY.

## 12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

Information Collection Title	Total Number of Respondents	Total Number of Responses Per Respondent	Average Burden Hours Per Response	Total Burden Hours	Annual Burden Hours	Average Hourly Wage	Total Annual Cost
Youth in Crisis Form	47,175	1	.23	10,850	3,617	0	0
NRS Live Chat Form	29,679	1	.65	19,303	6,434	0	0
Estimated Annual Burden Total:					10,051	Estimated Annual Cost Total:	0

The cost to youth respondents was entered as \$0 as these are runaway, street, or homeless youth of which many include minor youth who are being connected to school and older youth who are learning life skills and leaning job skills after being on the street.

The cost to NRS staff was calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) job code for Telephone Operator [Job Code #43-2021]<sup>1</sup> and wage data from May 2019, which is \$18.93 per hour. To account for fringe benefits and overhead the rate was multiplied by two which is \$37.86.

## 13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents and Record Keepers

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bls.gov/oes/currcent/oes\\_stru.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/currcent/oes_stru.htm)

There are no costs to the NRS for capital or start up as the NRS has served as FYSB's National Communication System for over 15 years to help keep youth experiencing crisis, at risk of homelessness or facing unsafe alternatives safe and off the streets. There are no costs to youth experiencing homelessness as respondents.

The NRS does have to pay an annual service/usage fee for their system that includes regular access to their data and key tailored reports set up based on their needs. System service/usage fee includes training, ongoing technical support, software and receipt of any system specific instructional documentation.

#### **14. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government**

The total estimated cost to the Federal government over the next three years is \$4,800,000. The annualized cost to operate the NRS per year is \$1,600,000. These costs cover all aspects of the grant/cooperative agreement to support crisis services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to youth and families via the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and at 1800RUNAWAY.org, offering live chat, email, forum and texting services. Contacts connect with trained staff and volunteers who offer non-judgmental and non-directive support, provide connections to resources, such as shelters and mental health services, and help young people resolve their crises and reach safety.

#### **15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments**

This is a new collection.

#### **16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule**

The NRS will utilize the information collected from the crisis services to inform and enhance their crisis services practices and service delivery, as well as outreach and prevention activities. The collected data are also disseminated on an annual basis to the public to increase awareness and education on issues related to running away incidents and youth homelessness.

The information collected from the crisis services will be published and disseminated to the public as an annual report. The data collected will be also integrated as part of the RHYP Report to Congress by FYSB, as required by Federal law (RHYP Act).

#### **Project Time Schedule (Occurs each FY):**

Office of Management and Budget approval of information collection	March 2023
NRS review data collection system and provide any training to staff working on the crisis services	April 2023
Collection of information from contacts	Ongoing 2023 and 2024
NRS assesses, cleans, and analyze data	May-June 2023
NRS sends data to FYSB	July 2023, July 2024
NRS shares annual report with FYSB	August 2023, August 2024
NRS releases annual crisis services and prevention report	September-October 2023- September-October 2024
FYSB provides NRS data to include in the RHY Report to Congress	Biennial

**17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate**

Not applicable: The OMB expiration date will be displayed at the bottom of the first page of the Youth in Crisis form and the NRS Live Chat form.

**18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.