

Services to Truants and Runaways Program

Resources and Services

The Services to Truants and Runaways program began in fiscal year 1984 as a \$3.9 million line item in the department's budget. Today, the program:

- addresses the needs of runaway and truant youths and their families and diverts the youths from the juvenile justice and child protective services systems;
- determines the number of runaways and truants statewide and examines the need for services; and
- defines the most effective service model and estimates the cost of providing services statewide.

The program is staffed with a program specialist and a clerk. Services are provided through contracts with public and private community-based programs. During fiscal year 1986, the program contracted with 16 agencies located across the state and serving a varied population. Counseling is the primary service provided to youths and their families by the contractor. Emergency shelter is also available to the youths.

Youths and their families are referred to contractors by juvenile probation departments, child protective services units, schools, and law enforcement agencies, and through self-referral. One of the primary goals of the program is to keep families together by providing crisis intervention counseling. Shelter services are considered a temporary solution and are used only in the most volatile or dangerous situations.

Contractors send statistics on each

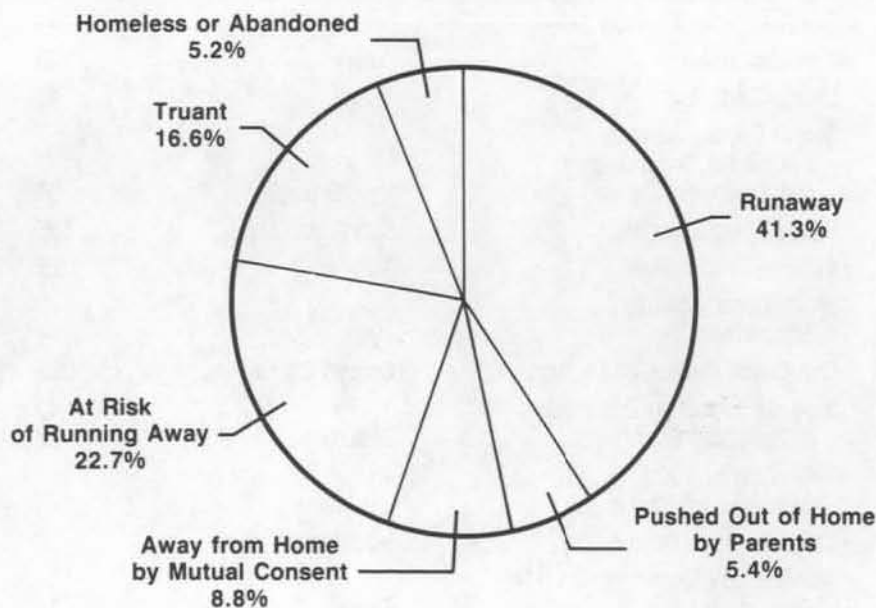
youth to the state office in Austin, where the data is used to study the service delivery system and client population.

Note: See page 30 for the number of youths provided counseling or shelter service by individual providers of Services to Truants and Runaways.

The program's advisory committee gathers information from various

sources around the state, reviews policies, and advises staff on program direction. The committee is composed of private citizens, a youth who has experienced problems with running away, a parent of a runaway child, representatives from advocacy organizations, representatives from other state agencies which serve youth, and three DHS regional employees.

Reasons Youths Receive Services to Truants and Runaways FY 1986



Program Data

During fiscal year 1986, the youths served were almost equally male and female. Fifty-seven percent were Anglo, 13 percent black, and 28 percent Hispanic. The median age was 14.7 years. Forty-six percent of these youths were provided non-residential counseling services, and the remainder were given emergency shelter. As indicated in the pie chart on page 29,

55 percent were runaways, expelled from their homes, or away by mutual consent of the youths and parents. Twenty-three percent were "at risk," and 17 percent were truants. The juvenile justice system referred 44 percent of the youths served in fiscal year 1986. Fifty-five percent were served in urban areas, 38 percent in mid-sized towns, and the rest at agencies in rural areas.

Studies conducted in Texas over the past three years have estimated that as

many as 100,000 households have experienced problems with a runaway youth. The studies include the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs study which estimated in 1984 that some 90,000 Texas households had at least one youth who had run away from home. The DHS 1985 Special Texas Census indicated that more than 100,000 households had experienced the problem. Research in this area continues.

Counseling or Shelter Services Initiated for Youth By Providers of Services to Truants and Runaways FY 1986

Provider	City	Shelter Services	Counseling Only	Total Served
Catholic Family Services	Amarillo	126	95	221
The Bridge Association	Fort Worth	144	18	162
Promise House	Dallas	198	5	203
Middle Earth Inc.	Austin	142	121	263
Comal County Juvenile Residential Supervision and Treatment Center	New Braunfels	51	46	97
Youth Alternatives Inc.	San Antonio	635	245	880
Abilene Girls' Home	Abilene	29	113	142
Smith County Youth Alternatives	Tyler	144	56	200
Gulf Coast Council of La Raza Juvenile Probation Department of Jefferson County	Corpus Christi	282	10	292
Tyler County Youth Development Center	Beaumont	22	173	195
Chimney Rock Center	Woodville	73	0	73
Montgomery County Youth Services Bureau	Houston	58	402	460
Sabine Valley Mental Health Mental Retardation	Conroe	11	179	190
Youth Services of Brazoria County	Longview	7	19	26
Central Texas Youth Services Bureau	Angleton	37	103	140
	Killeen	6	56	62
Total		1,965	1,641	3,606