

RYSE 2021 Annual Report

ECOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS LAB
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I MĀNOA



Sarah Combs, MPH
Sarah Rosenbach, MPhil
Caleb Rivera, MACP
Jack Barile, PhD

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Nancy Marker for her help in preparing this report and her steadfast dedication to the project. The authors would also like to thank RYSE staff for their collaboration over the past three years for their commitment to understanding and capturing the experiences of RYSE youth. Most importantly, the authors would like to thank all of the RYSE youth who completed the intake survey, exit survey, and Direct Cash Transfer Program follow-up. Their experiences and insights are paramount to understanding, confronting, and ending youth homelessness on O'ahu.



Suggested citation: Combs, S., Rosenbach, S., Rivera, C., & Barile, J. (2022). RYSE 2021 Annual Report. Prepared for Residential Youth Services and Empowerment and the State of Hawai'i.



Introduction

Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE) opened its doors in June 2018 as Hawai'i's first comprehensive housing and drop-in center for youth up to age 24, located in Kailua, Hawai'i. RYSE is a response to a gap in services on O'ahu for homeless, street identified, and unaccompanied youth. Youth served by RYSE are eligible for adult services, however, the RYSE philosophy addresses specific needs of young adults.

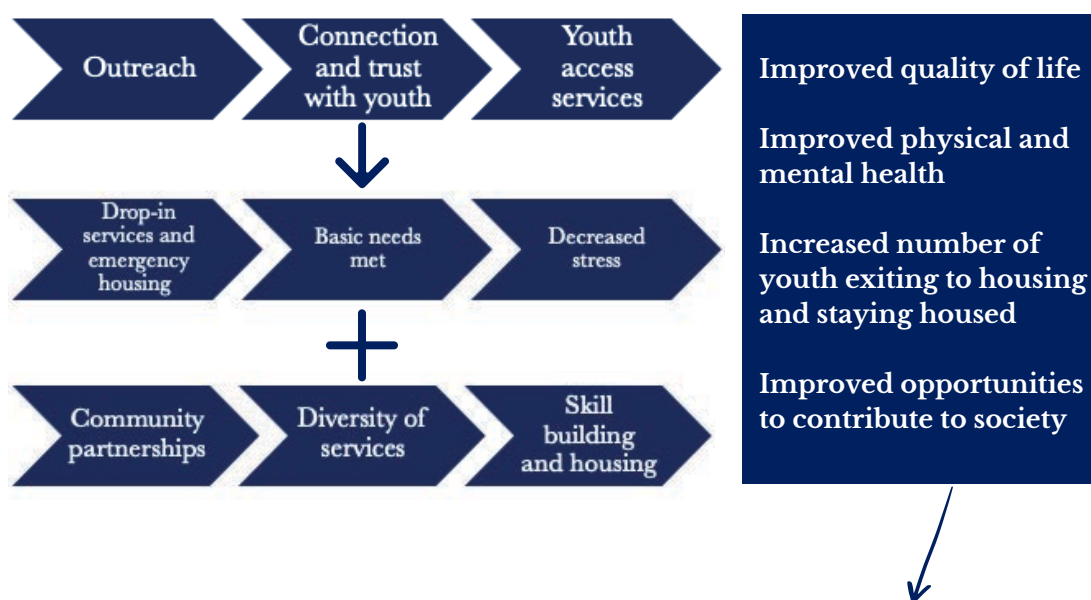
The past year marked an adaptation to a "new normal" with the COVID-19 pandemic, the passing of a bill that increased a minor's right to access shelter, and an influx of millions of dollars from the Youth Housing Demonstration Project (YHDP) supporting programs and housing for youth experiencing homelessness. RYSE partnered with agencies across O'ahu to open up new facilities which increased the physical number of beds available for youth experiencing homelessness, a critical improvement during the pandemic. RYSE also expanded programmatic opportunities for youth, in partnership with organizations both on and off-site, capitalizing on the strengths of non-profits and other culture-focused programs on O'ahu.

RYSE continues to utilize a **strength-based, trauma-informed, harm reduction** framework that puts the youth in charge of their own plan forward at RYSE. This fosters a trust between staff and youth and allows the youth to find their way, on their own time.

Theory of Change



RYSE's Mission: To work in a continuum of support that empowers Hawai'i's street youth to move beyond homelessness.



RYSE's Vision: A community where there is no youth homelessness.

Expansion of facilities across O'ahu in 2021



RYSE continued to expand services for homeless youth on O'ahu both with on-site programming and off-site housing. The original youth shelter on Kawaihoa campus has 20 beds and operates at full capacity throughout the year. The Minor Right to Shelter bill introduced in 2021 makes emergency shelter more accessible for youth under age 18. The Canoe House is a five-bed shelter adjacent yet separate to the main shelter. Originally a COVID quarantine facility for minors, Canoe House operates in partnership with Child Welfare Services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) to place minors at RYSE when appropriate. Rycroft House is a five-bedroom home which operates in partnership with Mental Health Kokua and is the first shared housing facility on O'ahu that provides support for high level acuity youth who have a severe mental illness. The number of available housing vouchers for youth who want to live on their own has also increased over the last year, including an additional eight for youth who need permanent supportive housing. Additionally RYSE operates the Hale'iwa Project with Achieve Zero on the North Shore, a ten-bedroom home for youth transitioning to housing and the Makiki Project, an eight-bedroom home in Honolulu specifically for youth who have been victims of crime.

Expansion of programming in 2021



On-site at the main campus, RYSE has a medical provider who can also administer COVID testing and vaccination two days per week. RYSE offers behavioral health support five days per week and is able to conduct 1157 psychological evaluations which allows youth with severe mental illness to access coordinated community resources with specific mental health supports. In addition to medical services, there are supportive programs that youth can access based on their interests and goals. Youth who are transitioning into housing can take a course on how to be a responsible renter. This includes a letter of support upon graduation that youth can present to their landlords to help their rental applications. Last year, the annual report indicated that youth were interested in anger management classes which RYSE now offers. Youth interested in improving their wellness can take part in Project Koa Yoga's eight-week mindfulness and movement classes which are grounded in trauma-informed practice and culture-based programming. "Four For Forty" is another culture-based program where RYSE youth can work four hours to earn forty dollars at the farm on campus, Kupu 'Āina, which is run by Partners in Development. So far, over 70 youth have worked on the farm. RYSE has come together with Hale Kipa and Waikiki Health Youth Outreach (YO!), ALEA Bridge/Achieve Zero and Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center to run a mobile crisis van that provides outreach services all across O'ahu. RYSE also runs a diversion project to prevent youth exiting mental health facilities and prison from becoming homeless. RYSE continues to look for ways to fill the gaps in services with the ultimate goal of ending youth homelessness.

DATA SOURCES

The 2021 RYSE Annual Report utilizes four sources of data to tell the story of RYSE youth this year and includes youth who entered and/or exited RYSE between January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021. Surveys were designed in collaboration with RYSE staff and University of Hawai'i Mānoa researchers, implemented by RYSE staff, and analyzed by UH Mānoa.

First, the revised RYSE Intake Survey is in its second year of use and 2021 marks the first full year where the intake data has been streamlined to come from one source. Second, the RYSE Exit Survey was introduced in January 2021 and begins to capture the picture of RYSE youth as they exit the shelter and provide feedback for programmatic improvement.

Third, RYSE staff collect exit data on where youth go after RYSE through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This additional layer of data captures the next steps of youth who do not take the exit survey.

The last source of data for this report is the Direct Cash Transfer Program survey. The Direct Cash Transfer Program was a pilot program in 2021 that provided youth a one-time stipend of \$1,000 to help as they transitioned to housing. A follow-up survey was distributed to program participants six months after leaving RYSE. This follow-up survey includes measures from the original exit survey as well as program improvement questions specifically focused on the direct cash transfer program.

This report is structured into four sections:

- RYSE intake survey summary
- RYSE exit survey summary
- Special report on the Direct Cash Transfer Program
- Special report on equity

A black and white photograph of palm trees against a cloudy sky. The palm fronds are silhouetted against the bright, cloudy sky. A semi-transparent rectangular frame is centered over the image, and the text "Intake Survey" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font within this frame.

Intake Survey

Intake Survey Summary



- RYSE **served** 142 youth and had 183 **admissions**.
- The **average age** of RYSE youth was 20.4 years old.
- The two largest sources of **referrals** were another person (32%) and outreach (30%).
- RYSE youth identified as **female** (48%), **male** (46%) and **transgender/gender fluid** (6%).
- Almost one-fifth of RYSE youth identified as **lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another non-heterosexual identity**.
- Over half (51%) of RYSE youth identified as **Native Hawaiian**.
- The largest percentage of RYSE youth **came from the Honolulu area** (45%).
- The largest percentage of RYSE youth **came from living outside** (34%) or with **friends or family** (34%).
- The top three **reasons for homelessness** are: being kicked out (42%), other family issues (39%), and drinking/drug use (23%).
- Almost half (46%) of RYSE youth have experienced **domestic violence**.
- Half (50%) of all RYSE youth have been **arrested**, but only 21% spent longer than one week in jail.
- More youth report **drug use** (68%) than **alcohol use** (44%).
- Over three-quarters (77%) of youth had **health insurance**.
- RYSE youth report over five times as many **physically unhealthy days** per month than the Hawai'i youth average (7.1 versus 1.4) and over three times as many **mentally unhealthy days** (14.8 versus 4.2).
- Over half (58%) of RYSE youth report being **impacted by COVID** in a significant way.
- Over 65% of RYSE youth **graduated high school or equivalent**.
- One-quarter (25%) of RYSE youth **entered the program with a job**.

Youth Served

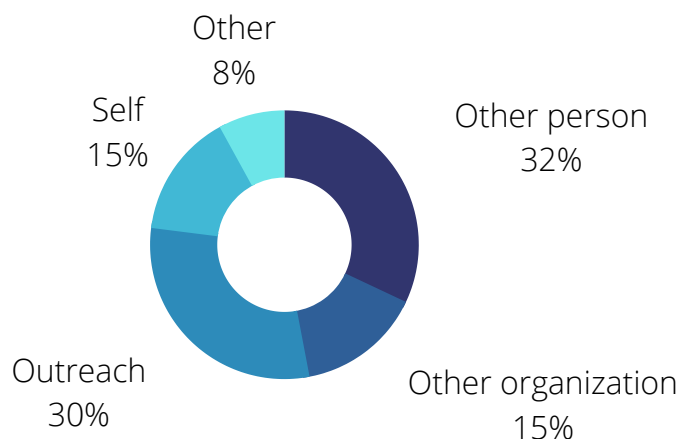
RYSE served **142 unique youth** and had **183 admissions** to the main shelter in 2021.

The **average age was 20.4**, consistent with previous years.

Referrals diversify:

Referrals from another person surpassed outreach as the top referral method, as **32% of all referrals came from people** including therapists, case managers, friends, family, and other youth. Outreach continues to be important, as 30% of all referrals came from outreach efforts. **Other organizations and self-referrals each accounted for 15% of referrals.** All of this indicates that RYSE continues to establish connections in the community and that youth feel comfortable returning to RYSE on their own.

SOURCE OF REFERRALS

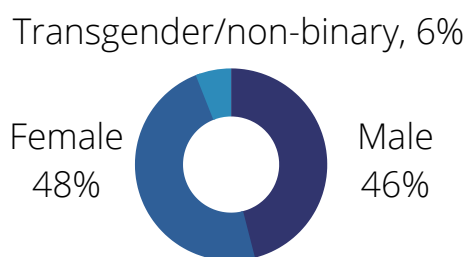


Gender and sexual orientation breakdown:

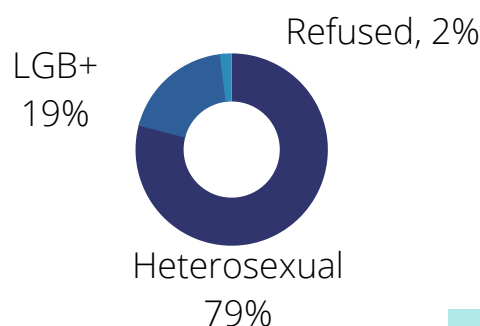
Gender: In 2020, males accessed RYSE at a 2:1 rate compared to females. In 2021, the rate was almost equal, with **females (48%)** slightly edging out **males (46%)**. Youth identifying as transgender or non-binary doubled compared to 2020, with **6% of youth identifying outside of the binary**. This is consistent with national trends of increasing numbers of women and transgender individuals experiencing homelessness (Gardner, 2020).

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation was consistent with 2020 for RYSE youth. Out of all RYSE youth, **79% of youth identified as straight** compared to 78% in 2020 and **19% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or another non-heterosexual identity (LGB+)** compared to 22% in 2020. A few youth declined to declare a sexual orientation (2%). This is consistent with national trends that show LGB+ youth are over-represented in homeless populations compared to the general population (Morton et. al, 2017).

GENDER IDENTITY



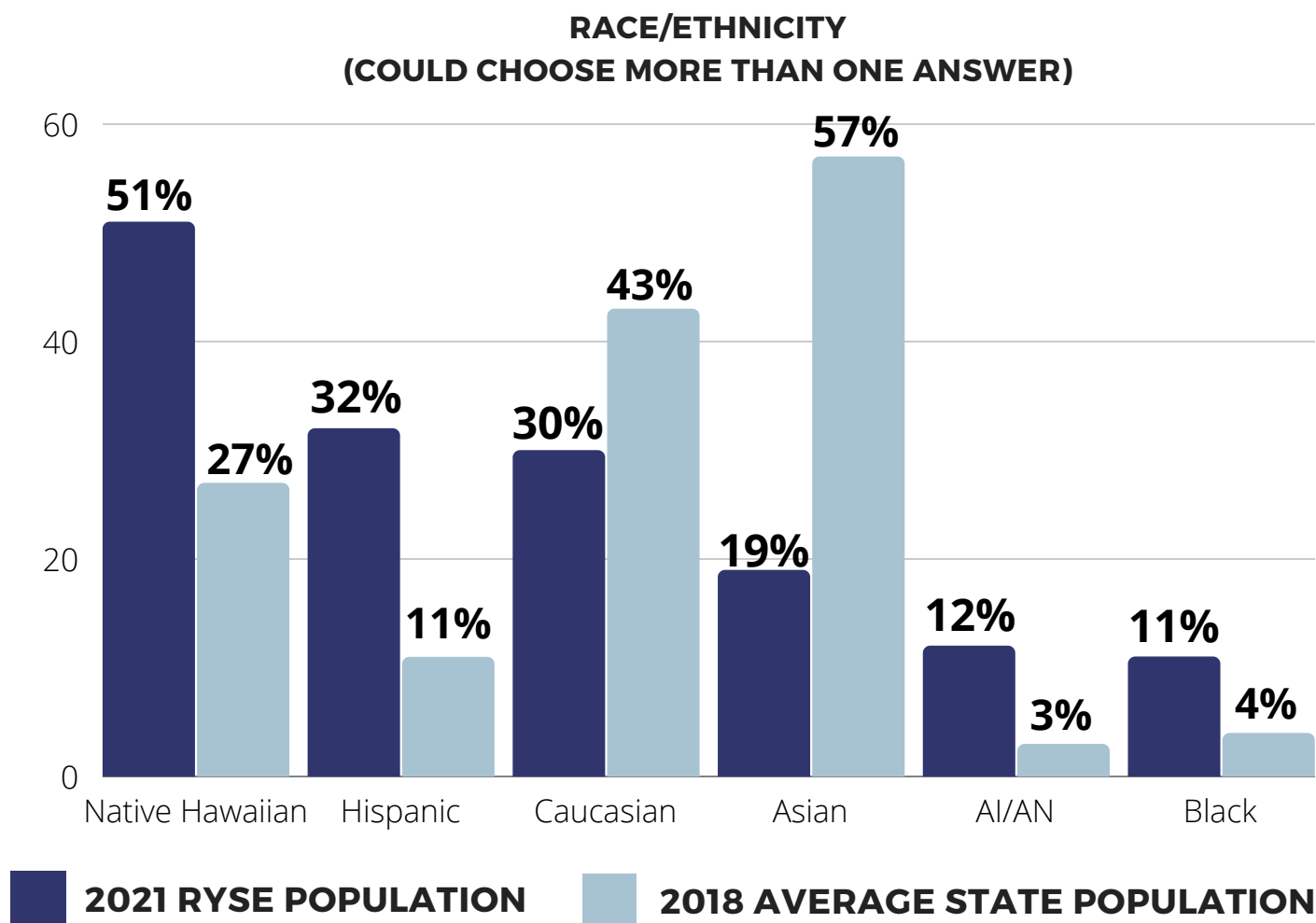
SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Youth Served: Race/Ethnicity

Over half of RYSE youth (51%) identify as Native Hawaiian, either full or in part, followed by 32% identifying as Hispanic, 30% as Caucasian, 29% as other Pacific Islander, 19% as Asian, 12% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 11% as Black. Other groups represented but not listed on this chart include other Pacific Islanders (29%), Samoan (9%), Micronesian (5%), Marshallese (3%) and Tongan (3%).

Asian and Caucasian are underrepresented groups at RYSE, while **Native Hawaiian, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black are over-represented** communities when compared to the overall 2018 state population.



NOTE: AI/AN IS AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE

Source: https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/census/popestimate/2018_county_char_hi_file/Pop_char_hi_2018_final.pdf

Other Characteristics of RYSE Youth



3

RYSE youth had military service, 29 had family members in the military, and 5 were homeless due to family military status



15

RYSE youth were pregnant or had a pregnant partner



19

RYSE youth reported arriving in Hawai'i in the last 12 months



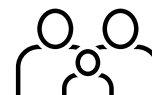
23

RYSE youth had children, 19 reported that none of their children live with them



18%

have engaged in survival sex or sex work



38%

were in foster care and 10% (of all youth) said they were homeless because they aged out of foster care



42%

were homeless at some point under age 18



82%

have been in most recent living situation for less than one year

Youth from Hawaiian Homestead Land

Grew up on O'ahu Hawaiian Homestead Land

1 9 (youth)



Approximately **15% of all youth (29% of Native Hawaiian youth)** grew up on Hawaiian Homestead Land. The majority of youth came from **Wai'anae Coast (nine youth)**, then **Waimānalo (six youth)**, **Neighbor Islands (three youth)**, and **Kapolei (two youth)**. One youth reported to have grown up on homestead land but declined to specify which one.

Neighborhood Prior to RYSE

Neighborhood Prior to RYSE

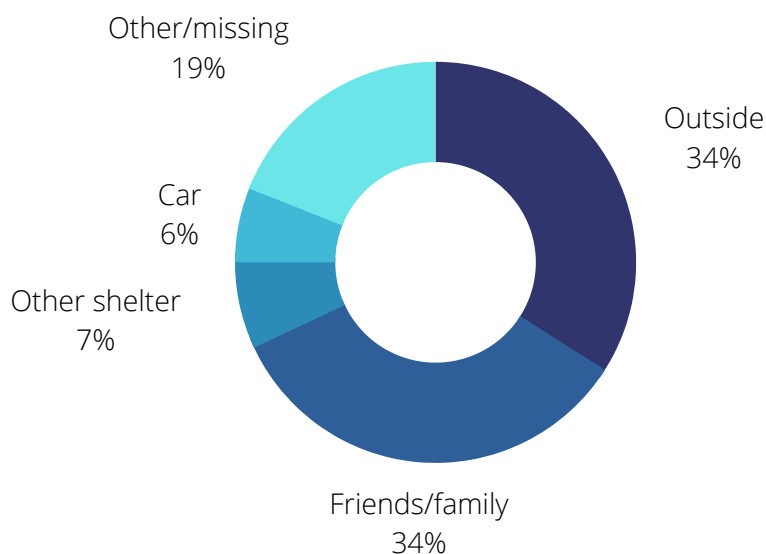
1 64 (youth)



The distribution of neighborhoods that RYSE youth come from looks similar to the map from 2020. About half of all youth came from **Honolulu (45%)**, the same rate as 2020. Numbers of youth coming to RYSE from the Windward Coast rose since 2020, with 19% of youth coming from: **Waimānalo (5%)**, **Kailua (8%)**, and **Kān'eohe (6%)**. Just over **15% of youth came from the Wai'anae Coast**, up from 12% in 2020.

Living Situation Prior to RYSE

A larger percentage of youth came from **living outside (34%)** in 2021 compared to 24% in 2020. An equal share of youth came from living with **friends or family (34%)** prior to RYSE, equal to the 2020 rate. A few youth came from **another shelter (7%)** or their **car (6%)**. Other locations included the **hospital, a hotel, one's own house, or a treatment center (3% each)**, and about **7% were missing information** on previous location.



Reasons for Homelessness



Top 3 reasons for homelessness

42%	39%	23%
Kicked out	Other family issues	Drinking or drug use

The top reasons for homelessness were **being kicked out (42%)**, **other family issues (39%)**, and **drinking and drug use (23%)**. Being kicked out and family issues were consistent with 2020 rates, with youth identifying these as reasons for homelessness at 42% and 38% respectively. Drug use however, went from 38% in 2020 to 23% in 2021 even though it was still the third most common reason.

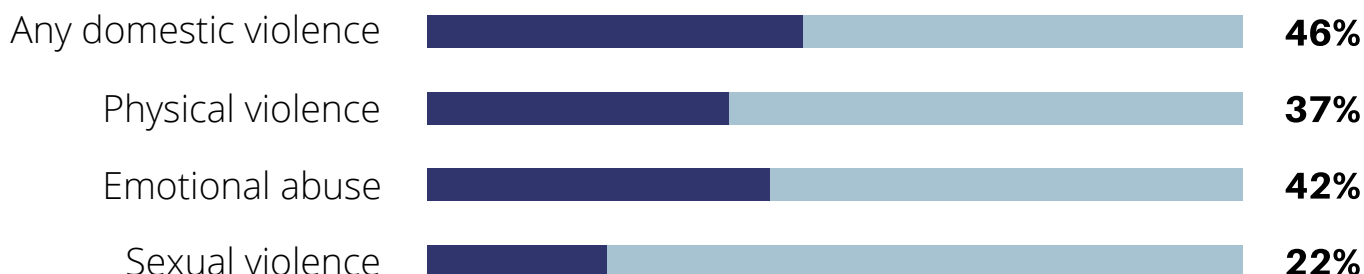
Money issues (22%) and **abuse (20%)** were the next most frequent reasons for homelessness, followed by **no job/lost job (17%)**, **domestic violence (13%)** and **COVID (8%)**. **Leaving jail (8%)** or **a program (7%) with no place to go** accounted for 15% of reasons for homelessness, again citing the need for continuity of services. Other notable reasons for homelessness include: "religious issues", "anti-trans", "starting over", and "no legal documents".

Domestic Violence



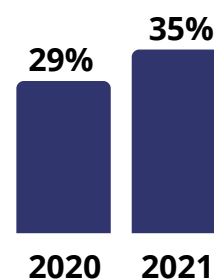
Almost 2 in 10 RYSE youth (18%) have experienced all three types of domestic violence

Percentage of RYSE youth reporting having experienced domestic violence

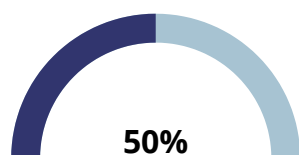


RYSE youth reported experiencing domestic violence at identical rates as 2020, with just under half of all youth (**46%**) **reporting some type of experience with domestic violence** each year upon entry to RYSE. A smaller percentage of youth reported experiencing all **three types of violence in 2021 (18%)** compared to 32% in 2020. Slightly over **7% of all youth were at RYSE because they were fleeing a violent relationship**. More youth are interested in violence prevention programs this year compared to 2020 (35% up from 29%). This data supports a continued need and want for program supporting healthy relationships and safety planning.

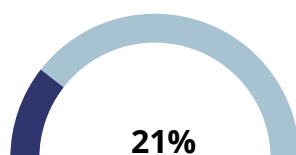
Youth interested in violence prevention programs



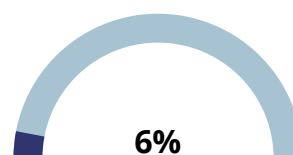
Justice System



50%
Were ever
arrested



21%
Spent longer than
one week in jail



6%
Spent longer than
one year in jail

Although half of RYSE youth in 2021 had **ever been arrested (50%)**, only about 2 in 10 youth spent **more than one week in jail (21%)**. A very small percentage of youth spent **more than a year in jail (6%)**.

The top three reasons for being arrested were **stealing (12%)**, **fighting (11%)**, and other physical **violence (9%)**. Youth also cited trespassing, being drunk or high in public, not showing up to court, and sleeping outside as other common reasons for being arrested.

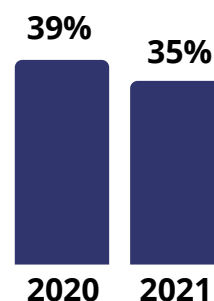
Drug and Alcohol Use

Percentage of RYSE youth reporting drug or alcohol use



The rate of **drug use (68%)** in 2021 is similar to 2020 (67%), however **alcohol use (44%)** in 2021 has increased from 2020 (39%). The two most popular drugs of choice continue to be marijuana and methamphetamine. Of all people who reported drug use, 53% cited marijuana as their preferred drug and 35% preferred methamphetamine. **Over one third of all RYSE youth said they would like help quitting their drug or alcohol use (35%)**, citing the continued need for these services. Only 9% of those using drugs reported using intravenous drug use.

Percentage of youth who would like help quitting drugs or alcohol



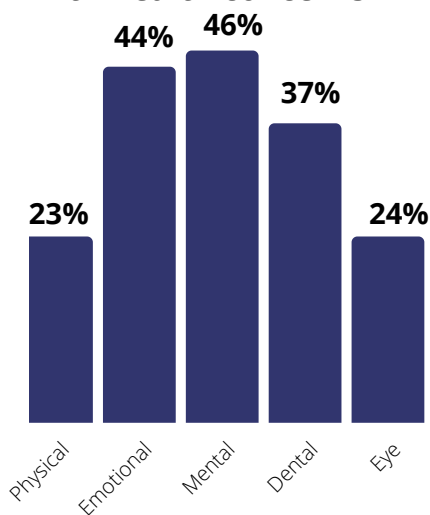
Health

Almost one quarter of all youth (23%) said they do not seek healthcare when they are sick.

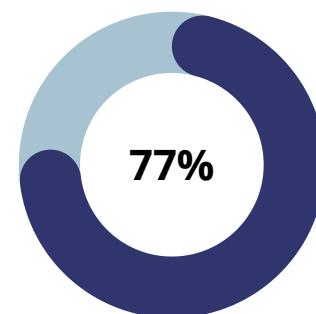


The majority of RYSE youth **have health insurance (77%)** and describe their health as **good to excellent (66%)**. Although only **34% describe their health as poor or fair**, RYSE youth continue to express the need for comprehensive health care, with almost half expressing **emotional (44%)** or **mental (46%)** health concerns; **37% of youth have dental health concerns**; and just under a quarter of all youth have **eye (24%)** or **physical (23%)** health concerns.

Percentage of youth with health concerns



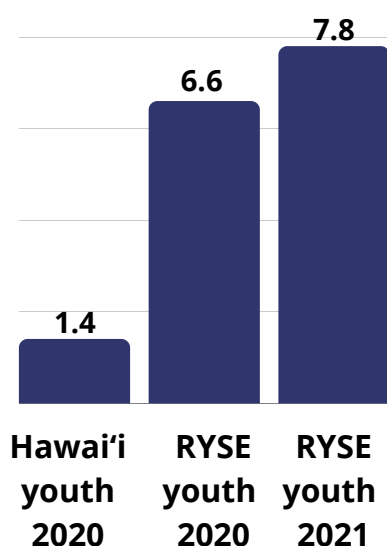
Percentage of youth with health insurance



Almost three-quarters of all youth have seen a **doctor in the past year (71%)**, but less than a quarter have seen the **dentist (23%)** or **eye doctor (17%) in the past year**. Youth have accessed healthcare from a variety of different places (could choose more than one option): the emergency room (43%), clinic (27%), private doctor (22%), and traditional methods (10%).

Healthy Days

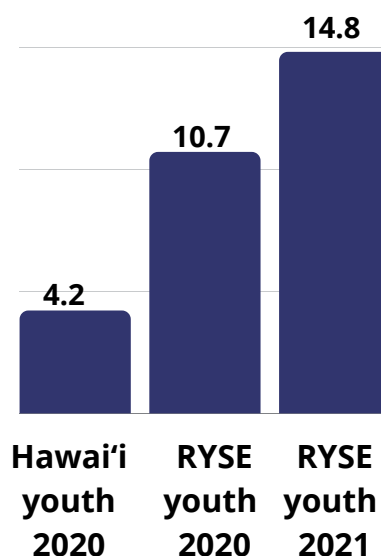
Number of physically unhealthy days per month



The number of physically and mentally unhealthy days for RYSE youth went up from 2020. **The number of physically unhealthy days for RYSE youth in 2021 is more than five times the average for Hawai'i youth in 2020.**

The number of mentally unhealthy days for RYSE youth in 2021 is over three times the average for Hawai'i youth in 2020 (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). These staggering numbers suggest a need for comprehensive physical and mental health services for RYSE youth.

Number of mentally unhealthy days per month



COVID

Percentage of youth who were affected in some way by COVID

Affected by COVID  **58%**

As the pandemic continued to evolve in 2021, a majority of RYSE youth report being **affected by COVID in a significant way (58%)**. The most common challenges were surrounding employment, with 28% reporting not being able to find work and 22% report losing their job directly related to COVID. Access to programs, quarantine locations, and testing were also challenges for RYSE youth, with 14%, 7% and 5% (respectively) of youth saying they were not able to access these services when needed. As COVID vaccines became available, RYSE implemented an onsite clinic where youth could get vaccinated. This accessibility of care reduced barriers of needing to travel somewhere else and navigating appointment procedures and built on the trust that RYSE youth have in on-site staff.

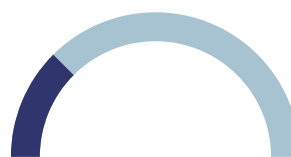


Education and Employment

Out of all RYSE youth in 2021,
65% have graduated high
school or equivalent.



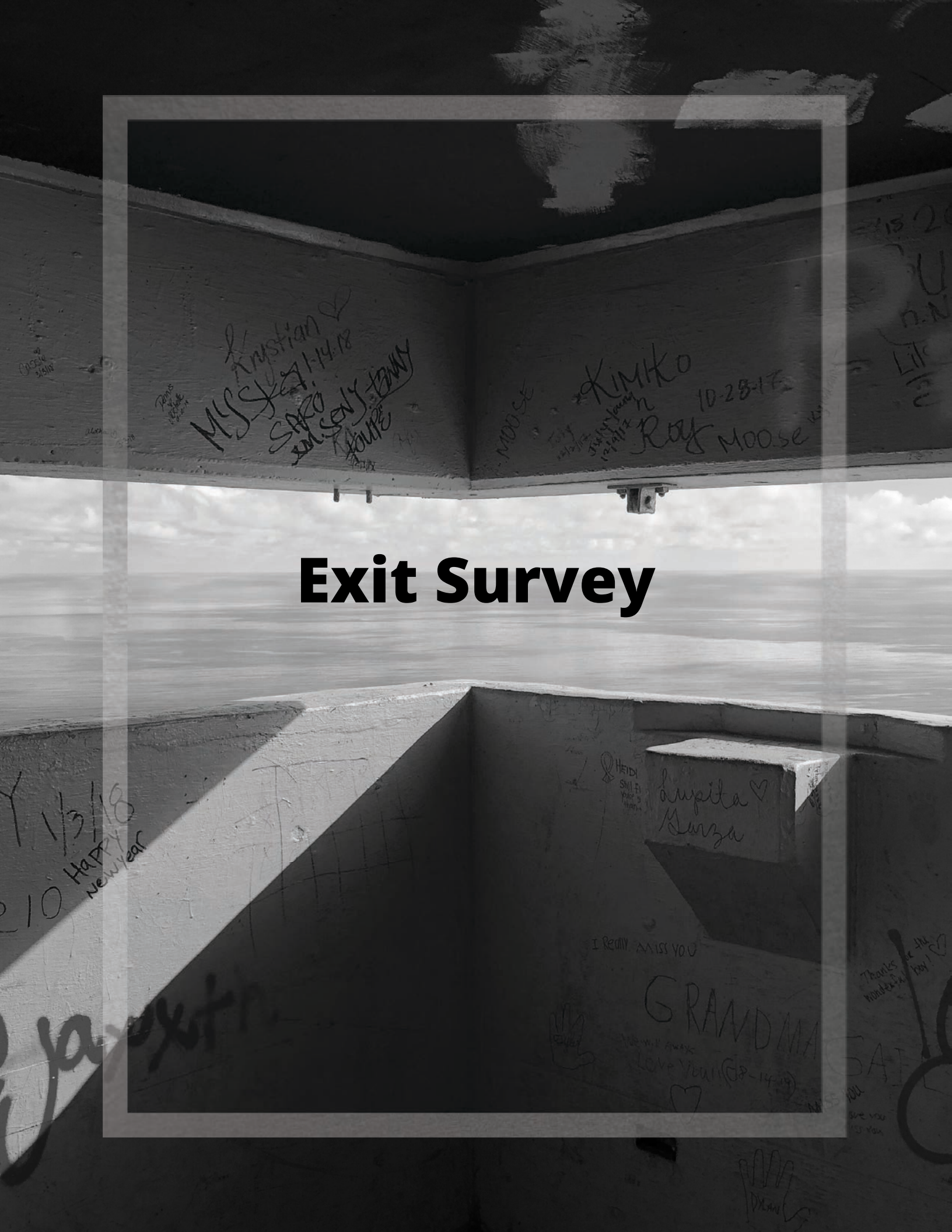
Out of all RYSE youth in 2021,
25% entered RYSE with a job.



Of youth looking for employment, 81% say they would like help with their job search.

More youth with a high school diploma or equivalent entered RYSE in 2021 (65%) compared to 2020 (54%). Youth entering RYSE with a job also rose in 2021 with 25% of youth having a job versus 19% of youth in 2020. COVID also affected education and employment with RYSE youth, with **13% reporting they could not continue with school, 22% lost their jobs, and 28% could not find work** due to COVID related reasons. Additionally, approximately one-quarter of all youth cited **money reasons (22%)** and **not having or losing a job (17%)** as reasons directly contributing to their homelessness.

Many youth say that their ideal job would be something in the helping profession, like a social worker, registered behavior technician, at-risk youth counselor, volunteer coordinator, substance use counselor, caregiver, or outreach worker. Also notable is the number of youth who would like to do a trade job, like construction, landscaping, or cosmetology,



Exit Survey



RYSE Exit Surveys

"All staff's there when you need them and they all make you feel welcome and like family and helps you get back on your feet and encourages you to do great in life.

RYSE IS AN AMAZING PLACE FOR EVERYONE THAT STRUGGLING."

- RYSE youth

RYSE began administering the exit survey in January 2021 and captures how long youth were at RYSE, where they are going next, RYSE program satisfaction and improvement suggestions, and information on stress, social support, and healthy days. The stress, social support, and healthy days questions are identical to the intake, so data are linked by youth from intake to exit and can show significant change.

Youth choose to leave RYSE in a number of different ways: some move on to housing, some leave without warning, and on rare occasions, some are asked to leave if they are a danger to others or RYSE property. Those who leave without warning are less likely to participate in the exit survey because often they only come back into contact with RYSE staff when they return to the shelter or are seen on outreach. This heavily skews the exit survey data to youth who transition to housing because they continue to work with case managers and their exit dates are planned for and known.

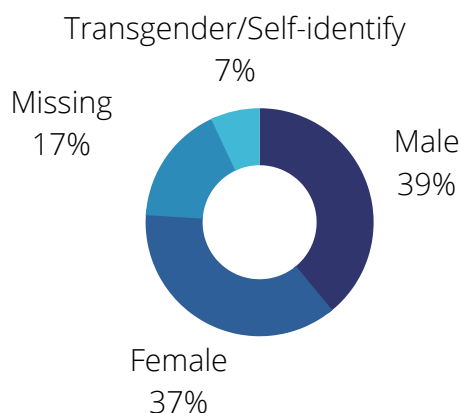
In 2021, **RYSE completed 59 exit surveys, a 32% completion rate.** Exit data is supplemented by RYSE staff documentation in HMIS when destination locations are known but youth did not complete an exit survey.

Exit Survey Demographics

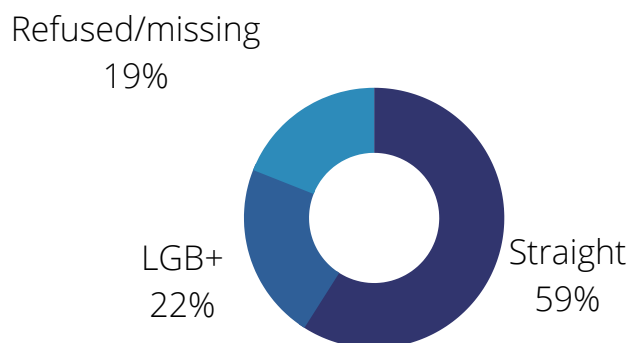


The average age of RYSE youth taking the exit survey was 21.5.

GENDER IDENTITY

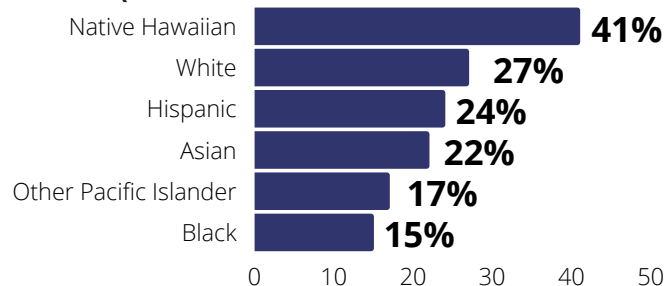


SEXUAL ORIENTATION



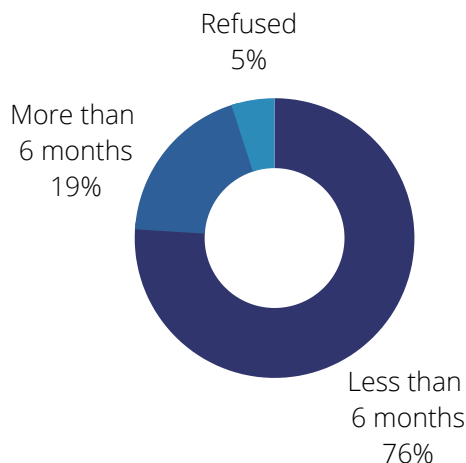
RACE/ETHNICITY

(CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE)



Demographic data was missing from ten youth which makes this section incomplete. However, most of the sections are similar in breakdown to the larger RYSE population, except for sexual orientation which has a smaller proportion of straight/heterosexual youth.

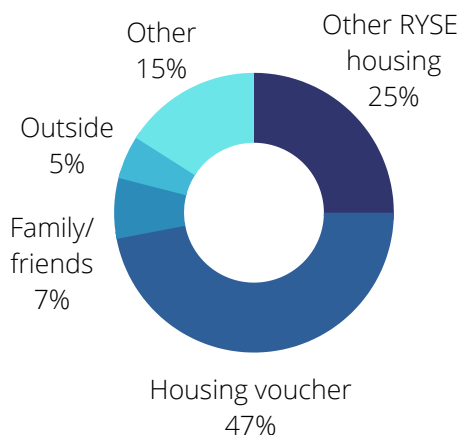
Length of time at RYSE



Just over three-quarters (76%) of RYSE youth who completed the exit survey stayed at RYSE for less than six months before moving on to their next location. This speaks to the amount of time that it takes for stabilization.

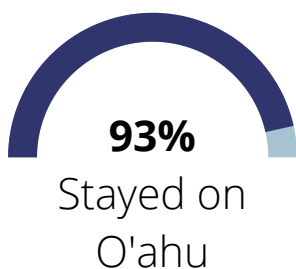
Top emotions reported on leaving RYSE include: **excited (56%)**, **happy (49%)**, and **hopeful (42%)**. Youth were also nervous about leaving (41%), confident (39%) and proud (39%). About one in five (19%) youth were stressed about leaving and 15% described feeling sad or worried.

Location after RYSE



Almost half of all youth who completed the exit survey left with a **housing voucher (47%)**. The housing voucher programs provide a stipend to cover rent for up to 12 months. Youth pay up to 30% of their income, then the voucher covers the rest of rent. The goal of these programs is to help youth stabilize so that they can eventually pay for their own expenses by the end of the year.

Because it can be challenging to find landlords and properties that will accept vouchers, RYSE opened up a few properties (described on page 3) that they run which make the transition easier for youth to move from the shelter to housing in Honolulu and Hale'iwa. **One-quarter of youth exited to other RYSE properties.**



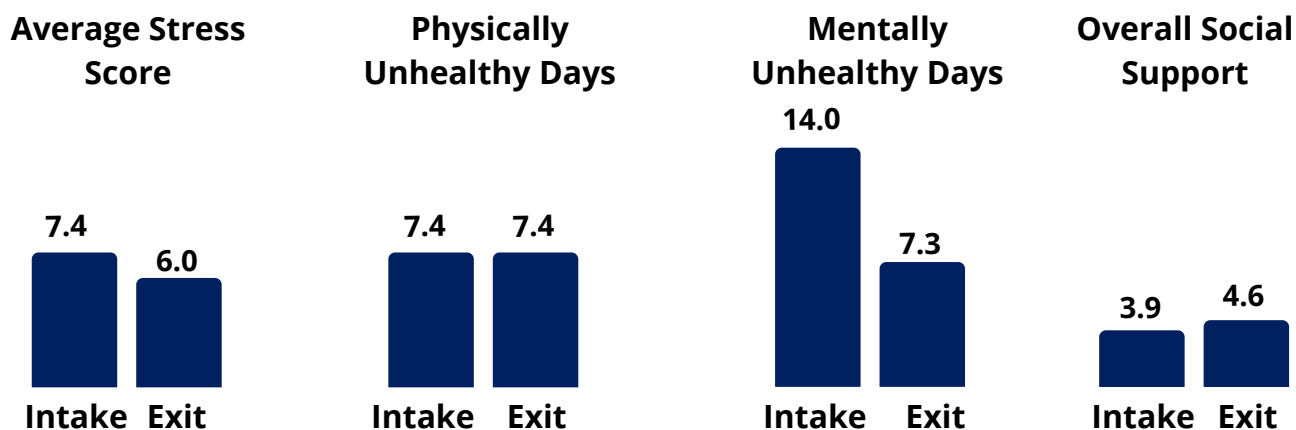
The vast majority of youth **stayed on O'ahu (93%)**. A few left for **the continent (5%)**, or **a neighbor island (2%)**.

Lastly, RYSE documented information about 117 youth exit destinations which includes youth who did not complete the exit survey. This data provided by RYSE shows that 34% left RYSE and went back to the street, 55% went to some type of housing and 11% went to other locations or data were not collected.

Stress, Healthy Days, and Social Support



The intake and exit surveys both include three psychologically-validated scales to assess change over time in stress, healthy days, and social support. Stress is measured by the short form of the Perceived Stress Scale which includes four questions on perceived levels of stress in the past 30 days. Healthy days are measured by a scale developed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention that asks youth how many days out of the last month their physical and mental health was not good. Social support is measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support which includes a total social support score and three sub-categories of support: family, friends, and significant person. These intake/exit results will be different than the overall intake results because it includes only the subset of youth who completed both the intake and exit.



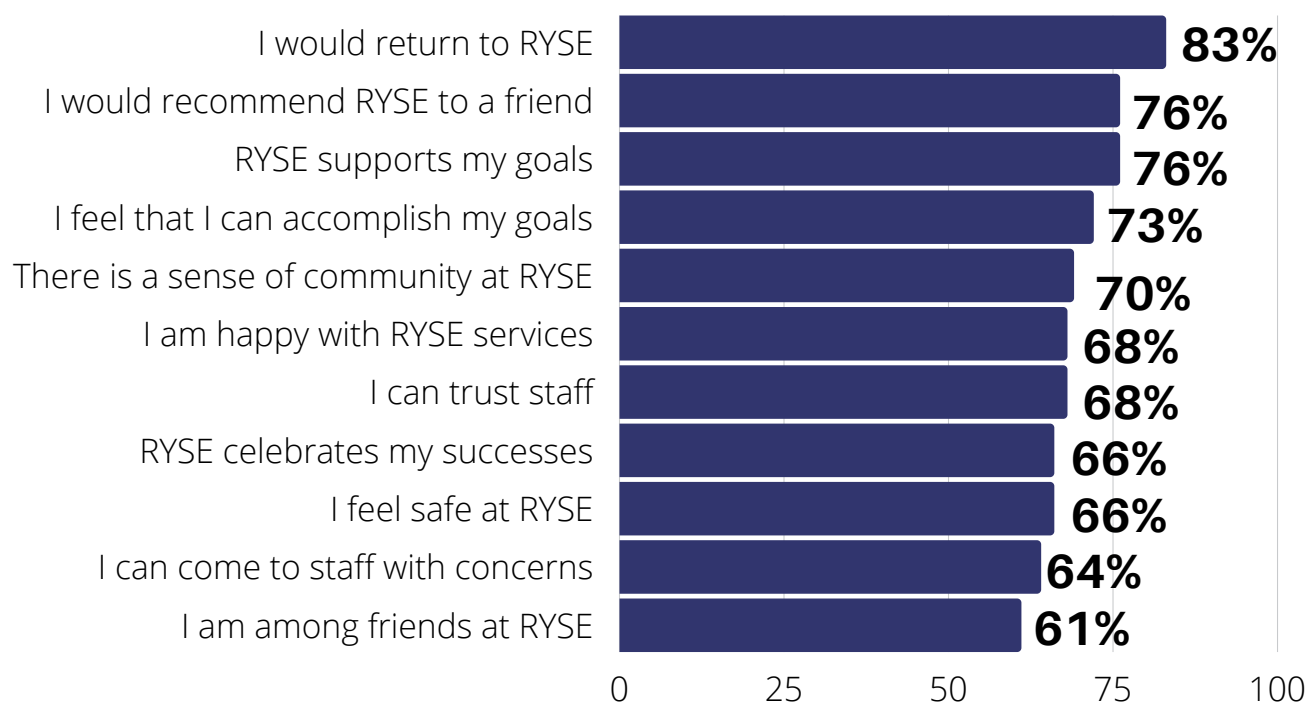
Results were statistically significant for stress, mentally unhealthy days, and social support. **Youth reported on average less stress, fewer mentally unhealthy days, and greater social support on exit.** Youth reported, on average, the same number of physically unhealthy days on intake and exit.

RYSE Satisfaction

Eleven questions on program satisfaction and improvement were asked to youth as they exited the shelter. Answers ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a scale from 1-5. Notably, **no more than three youth (5%) answered disagree or strongly disagree for any question.** Overall, youth were satisfied with RYSE, would return if they needed services and would recommend RYSE to their friends. Youth highlighted RYSE staff as one of the most positive aspects of the program. Specifically, youth noted the support and care they felt from staff members and how staff advocated for youth to get housing.

"Having fun and irritating the staff and love to talk stories with my favorite staff. But I love this place, the place that I call home, the place that there's someone who really cares for me when I'm on my downtime. It's RYSE, not fall. I love this place, special thanks to the RYSE staff and everyone else." - RYSE youth

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH ANSWERING "AGREE" OR "STRONGLY AGREE" TO PROGRAM SATISFACTION QUESTIONS



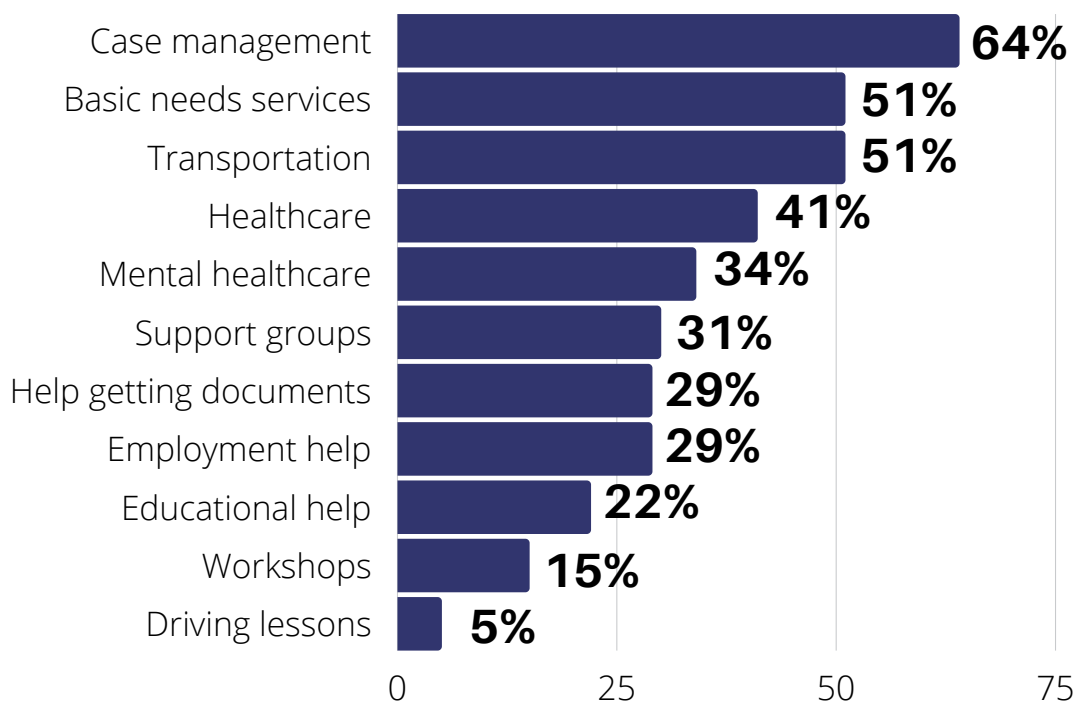
Program Utilization

"I liked all the support they offered at RYSE and the amount of resources they had." - RYSE youth

"The support group. I felt very alone before I came here. I made friends and met some examples of who I don't want as friends." -RYSE youth

RYSE youth who completed the exit survey indicated all of the services they utilized during their time at RYSE. Over half of the youth said they utilized **case management (64%)**, **basic need (51%)** and **transportation services (51%)**. Healthcare (41%) and mental healthcare services (34%) were also utilized. These services all support stabilization.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH FROM EXIT SURVEY UTILIZING SPECIFIC SERVICES





Program Improvement

One in five youth (20%) stated that RYSE, as is, was great. This is exemplified by the following quotes.

"RYSE has been doing amazing, they do things the right way and help with anything." - RYSE youth

"Nothing! You guys are awesome." - RYSE youth

One common theme of contention in the program improvement suggestions was rules, specifically around drug use. Rules were mentioned by 12 people (20%). Several people advocated for stricter rules and control of substances whereas several others advocated to relax rules around drug use and curfew.

"Allowing me to smoke my damn weed on campus for I no need walk miles to get stoned and come back" - RYSE youth

"Tell the chronics to stop smoking dope if they cannot handle it. Because it affects people who are sober." - RYSE youth

This conflict is a good example of the challenges faced by harm-reduction programs in finding a balance that supports those on the journey to sobriety and staying sober while still aiming to meet youth where they are at and employ a Housing First approach that does not require sobriety to access housing.



Direct Cash Transfer Program

RYSE Direct Cash Transfer Program



As someone exits homelessness, there are many unexpected costs that make it challenging to move forward. As one RYSE youth put it:

"RYSE was able to help me get an apartment of my own when I had nothing."

One way to help set youth up for success as they move into housing is through a direct cash transfer program that provides financial assistance to youth exiting homelessness. Chapin Hall at The University of Chicago provide four guidelines for successful direct cash transfer programs: 1) center on youth, equity, and trust, 2) boost housing stability and empowerment, 3) adopt a flexible and simple approach, and 4) identify and manage barriers to success (Morton et al., 2020).

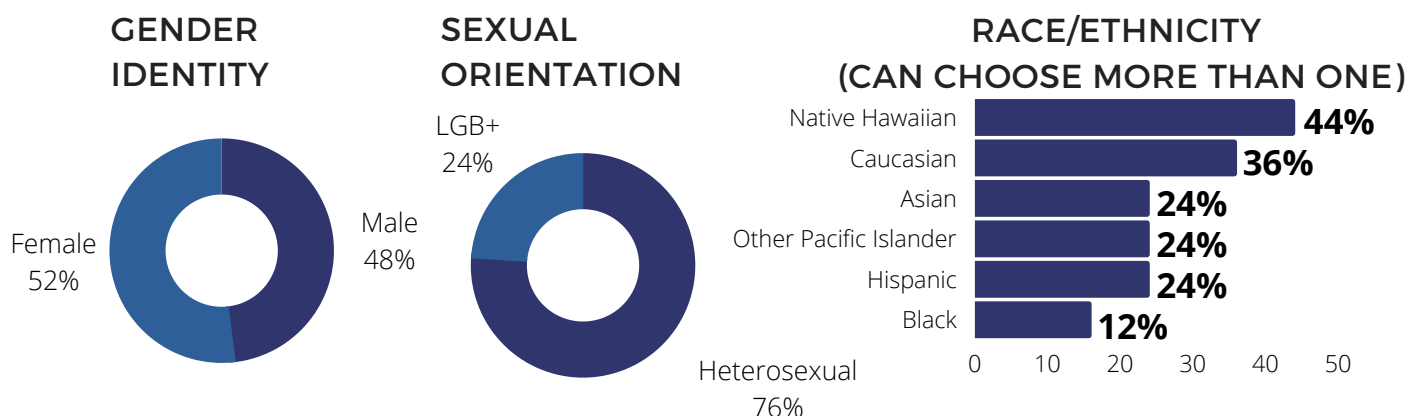
RYSE received support from the Stupski Foundation to pilot a direct cash transfer program which provided a one-time \$1,000 stipend to youth, no strings attached. Youth applied for the program through a short application which asked for some basic information as well as how \$1,000 would make a difference in their life. RYSE accepted 25 youth into the project. Money was given directly to the youth via check in a lump one-time sum. If youth did not have a bank account, RYSE covered the check cashing fee.

All 25 youth who participated in the program completed an exit survey when they left RYSE and 17 completed a follow-up survey after 6 months. The program distributed their first checks in Spring 2021 and followed up with youth in Fall 2021. Although this data comes from a small number of youth, it begins to tell the story of how just \$1,000 can help set someone up for success.

Direct Cash Transfer Program Demographics



The average age of RYSE youth taking the exit survey was 22.5.



Although the sample size is small (only 25 youth in the program), it is important to look at who participated in order to think about equity-focused programming. **Almost half of the youth (44%) enrolled in this program identified as Native Hawaiian**, either full or in part, which is a step towards equity and ensuring Native Hawaiians have access to programs that will help them step out of homelessness. However, there is still room for improvement as this is less than the proportion of Native Hawaiians accessing RYSE overall. Additionally, Caucasians and Asians are slightly over-represented in this program, Black youth are about equally represented and Pacific Islander and Hispanic youth are slightly underrepresented. The gender breakdown is similar to the overall RYSE population and slightly more LGB+ individuals were represented in this program.

Youth who entered RYSE had an average age of 20.4, youth who completed the exit survey (a large portion who entered into housing) had an average of 21.5 and youth in the direct cash transfer program had an average age of 22.5. This might speak to the level of readiness to move into independent housing, although the sample sizes are small - more research is needed.



Programmatic Outcomes

"It would be really hard trying to find work knowing you don't have money to buy house stuffs and etc.."

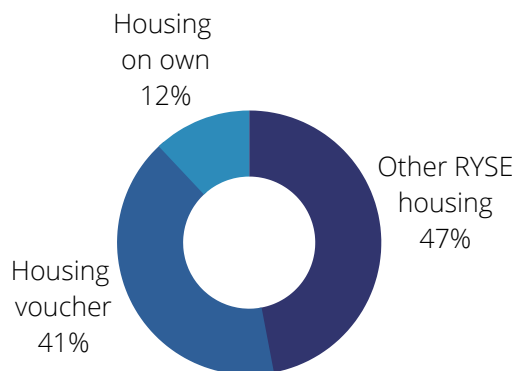
- RYSE youth on how life would be different if they did not receive the \$1,000

RYSE received \$25,000 for this project and distributed \$1,000 to 25 youth. **About three-quarters (76%) of youth said this was enough money, while one-quarter (24%) of youth said they needed more to get stable.** Of the youth who said they needed more money to get stable, answers ranged from \$1,500-\$3,000 as to how much they needed.

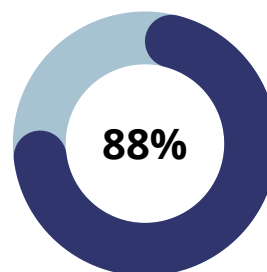
Youth were generally happy with receiving the money as a lump sum. Only 18% reported they would prefer to receive it month to month. A large portion of youth said they used the money for **basic needs like food, clothes, or household supplies (71%)** while almost half of youth said they used the money for **rent or bills (47%)**. Three youth said they used the money towards their phone and one youth said they used it to help put a down payment on a car.

Location after RYSE

DESTINATIONS OF YOUTH LEAVING RYSE



PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH AT THEIR CURRENT LOCATION FOR MORE THAN 4 MONTHS

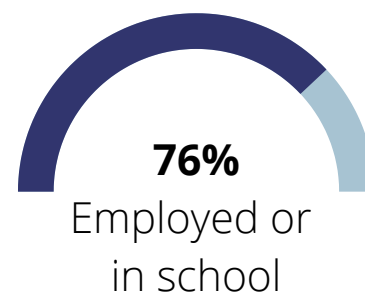


One hundred percent of youth in the direct cash transfer program exited RYSE to housing, with half (47%) going to other properties that RYSE manages, 41% obtaining a housing voucher, and 12% found housing on their own. **At the time of the 6-month follow-up, 100% of youth who completed the survey were still housed and almost all (88%) had been at their location for at least four months.** All youth in the direct cash transfer program remained on O'ahu.

Health and Other Impacts

The same psychological scales on stress, unhealthy days and social support were assessed for the direct cash transfer participants. No statistically significant findings were found between exit and 6-month follow-up survey. This could be due to the small sample size (17 youth) who completed both the exit survey and 6-month follow-up survey.

At the time of follow-up, **13 youth (76%) were either actively working or in school.** Two youth were attending community college, two youth were working on their GEDs and 11 youth were employed. Two of the youth were both employed and in school.





Equity Sub-Report

Equity and Outcomes



This sub-section of the 2021 report pays special attention to equity and outcomes. Equity is an important lens in developing responsive programs that address health and social disparities. This report looks at differences in outcomes by race, gender and sexual orientation. Statistical analyses are available upon request to University of Hawai'i Mānoa Ecolab.

Groups of interest



**Native Hawaiians/
Pacific Islanders**



**Male/Female/
Non-binary**



LGBTQ+

Note: Anyone who identified as part or all Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander were included in this group. Gender differences were assessed in three categories: those identifying as male, female, or outside of the binary. LGBTQ+ includes anyone identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity.

Ethnicity Differences - Summary



Over half (51%) of RYSE youth identify as Native Hawaiian compared to the state population of 27% Native Hawaiian, and three-quarters (75%) of RYSE youth identify as Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander. This indicates how these groups are overrepresented at RYSE compared to the overall state population. Differences in outcomes were assessed between Native Hawaiians and non-Native Hawaiians and anyone who identified as Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander (NH/PI) and non-Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander (non-NH/PI).

Two statistically significant findings came up for Native Hawaiian youth only:

- Of those ever arrested, Native Hawaiian youth (32%) were **less likely to report spending longer than one week in jail** than non-Native Hawaiian youth (58%).
- Native Hawaiians (47%) were more likely to report **family issues as a reason for homelessness** than non-Native Hawaiians (30%). In particular, Native Hawaiian cisgender males (61%) were more likely to report family issues as a reason for homelessness than non-Native Hawaiian cisgender males (24%).

Three outcomes of note arose when looking at Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander youth:

- NH/PI youth (29%) were more likely to experience **sexual violence** than non-NH/PI youth (6%).
- NH/PI youth (21%) were more likely **to be a parent** than non-NH/PI youth (3%).
- NH/PI youth (56%) were more likely to report **being homeless under the age of 18** than non-NH/PI youth (29%).

Gender Differences - Summary



Cisgender: A person whose gender identity/expression are aligned with their sex assigned at birth.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth.

Non-binary: A person whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female.

The majority of statistically significant gender differences in RYSE youth pertained to crime, violence, and survival sex although some differences in health concerns were also identified.

- Transgender and nonbinary youth (88%) and cisgender females (60%) were more likely to report that they were the **victim of a crime** than cisgender males (29%).
- Transgender and nonbinary youth (83%) were more likely to report **engaging in survival sex** than cisgender females (24%) and cisgender males (10%).
- Cisgender females reported **more health concerns** (mean=2.2) than cisgender males (mean=1.4).
- After adjusting for reason for arrest, cisgender males were 6 times more likely than cisgender females to report **spending longer than one week in jail**.
- Cisgender females (72%) and transgender and nonbinary youth (86%) were more likely to report **interest in a violence prevention program** than cisgender males (23%).
- Cisgender females (72%) and transgender and nonbinary youth (86%) were more likely to report experiencing any **domestic violence** than cisgender males (23%). The pattern remains the same across **physical violence** (62% and 86% vs. 13%), **emotional abuse** (69% and 86% vs. 22%), and **sexual violence** (40% and 60% vs. 3%).

LGBTQ+ Differences - Summary



Many statistically significant differences were found between LGBTQ+ youth and cisgender heterosexual youth. This indicates a need for special attention to this group to address health and social disparities.

- LGBTQ+ youth (68%) were more likely to report that they were the **victim of a crime** than cisgender heterosexual youth (42%).
- LGBTQ+ youth (44%) were more likely to report engaging in **survival sex** than cisgender heterosexual youth (14%).
- LGBTQ+ youth were more likely than heterosexual cisgender youth to report being **unable to continue with school, find work, and access other programs or services due to the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- LGBTQ+ youth reported on average 5 more **mentally unhealthy days** than cisgender heterosexual youth (18.7 vs. 13.7 days).
- LGBTQ+ youth reported **more health concerns** (mean = 2.7) than heterosexual cisgender youth (mean = 1.6).
- Of those ever arrested, LGBTQ+ youth (69%) were more likely to report **spending longer than one week in jail** than cisgender heterosexual youth (36%).
- LGBTQ+ youth (68%) were more likely to report **interest in a violence prevention programs** than cisgender heterosexual youth (27%).
- LGBTQ+ youth (82%) were more likely to experience **domestic violence** than cisgender heterosexual youth (42%). The pattern remains the same across **physical violence** (65% vs. 34%), **emotional abuse** (78% vs. 39%), and **sexual violence** (42% vs. 19%).
- LGBTQ+ youth (28%) were more likely to report **domestic violence as a reason for homelessness** than cisgender heterosexual youth (10%).

No statistically significant differences



No statistically significant differences does not mean we do not need to consider these outcomes, just that more data might be necessary to further understand the nuances between groups. No statistically significant differences were found based on ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation on the following outcomes:

- **Employment status**
- **Educational attainment**
- **Physically unhealthy days**
- **Health insurance**
- **Drug and/or alcohol use**

Further research will help understand where there are statistically significant differences between groups and where there truly are no differences between groups, ultimately informing program development.

Future Directions



This is the first year with intake and exit data. The exit data is primarily skewed towards those exiting to some kind of housing as opposed to the street. As more youth complete the exit survey, it will be easier to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities for program improvement.

The direct cash transfer program yielded interesting results: all the youth who completed the 6-month follow up survey remained in housing and provided insight into how the program could be improved. However, with such a small group of youth piloting the program, more research is needed to truly understand the impact of the program. In particular, comparing outcomes of those who participated in the program with those who did not would shed light on the program's benefits and successes.

RYSE is entering its fourth year of existence in 2022. The intake data from the past three years gives a good picture of youth who utilize RYSE's services. What is missing, however, are the stories behind the data. Qualitative data will be collected in Fall 2022 and reported in the next annual report to help further understand RYSE youth and their stories.



Conclusion

The results of the 2021 data continue to paint a sobering picture of youth homelessness on O‘ahu, although hopeful trends can be seen through the percentage of youth exiting to housing. Almost three-quarters (72%) of all youth who completed the exit survey left RYSE on a housing voucher or to a longer-term housing program run by RYSE. The services and available housing units for youth in Hawai‘i are still growing with new resources coming from the federal government and local agencies. These resources promote hope that more youth will be able to exit to housing as opposed to the street.

Regardless of where youth go after RYSE, there is still a myriad of complex issues that comes from experiencing homelessness. The largest percentage of youth come to RYSE from Honolulu (45%) and over one-third (34%) come from living outside. Violence is a pervasive issue among RYSE youth, with almost half of all youth reporting having experienced some kind of domestic violence. Drug (68%) and alcohol (44%) use continue to be common among RYSE youth and RYSE youth report many more physically and mentally unhealthy days per month compared to the average Hawai‘i youth.

Targeted programs will help address disparities of race, gender, and sexual orientation as related to experiencing homelessness. As a society we must nurture our most vulnerable youth. Organizations like RYSE lead this call to action, implementing values of empathy, compassion, and kindness. If we work in partnership with youth and listen to what they tell us they need, together we will build a stronger O‘ahu.

References



- Centers for Disease Control. (2020). BRFSS Survey Data and Documentation. https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual_data/annual_2020.html.
- House of Representatives (2021). A Bill for an Act: Minor Right to Shelter. https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2021/bills/HB282_SD1_.HTM
- Gardner, J. (2020). Increases in Individual Homelessness: A Gender Analysis. National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/increases-in-individual-homelessness-a-gender-analysis/>
- Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Morton, M. H., Chavez, R., Kull, M. A., Carreon, E. D., Bishop, J., Daferede, S., Wood, E., Cohen, L., & Barreyro, P. (2020). Developing a direct cash transfer program for youth experiencing homelessness: Results of a mixed methods, multistakeholder design process. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- Research Economic Analysis Division. (2018).Hawai'i Population Characteristics. State of Hawai'i. https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/census/popestimate/2018_county_char_hi_file/Pop_char_hi_2018_final.pdf