



Identifying and Serving Homeless Youth in Rural Colorado

2024 Rural Collaborative Annual Report

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CPR 
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Background

The Colorado Rural Collaborative for Runaway and Homeless Youth (RC) is a consortium of agencies that serve youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability in 31 counties across rural Colorado. The RC was formed in 2008 and has continued to expand throughout the years in an effort to serve all regions across the Colorado Balance of State and Northern Colorado Continuums of Care (CoC), and work towards solving rural youth homelessness.

Through shared resources, knowledge, and expertise, RC partner agencies provide services to youth using a positive youth development approach. Services fall into five major categories: shelter/housing, health and well-being, education, employment, and permanency. Youth with short-term needs are typically served in a brief contact manner, while those who need long-term assistance are fully enrolled into an RC program.

In 2024, the RC was funded through three Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) grants, the Basic Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP), with additional support from the Colorado Division of Housing (DOH) Host Homes Program and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Outreach & Emergency Assistance Program.

In 2024, the RC served a total of 380 youth across rural Colorado. Youth who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability are most commonly referred to the RC from local community agencies and through word-of-mouth within their rural communities.

Rural Collaborative Service Areas

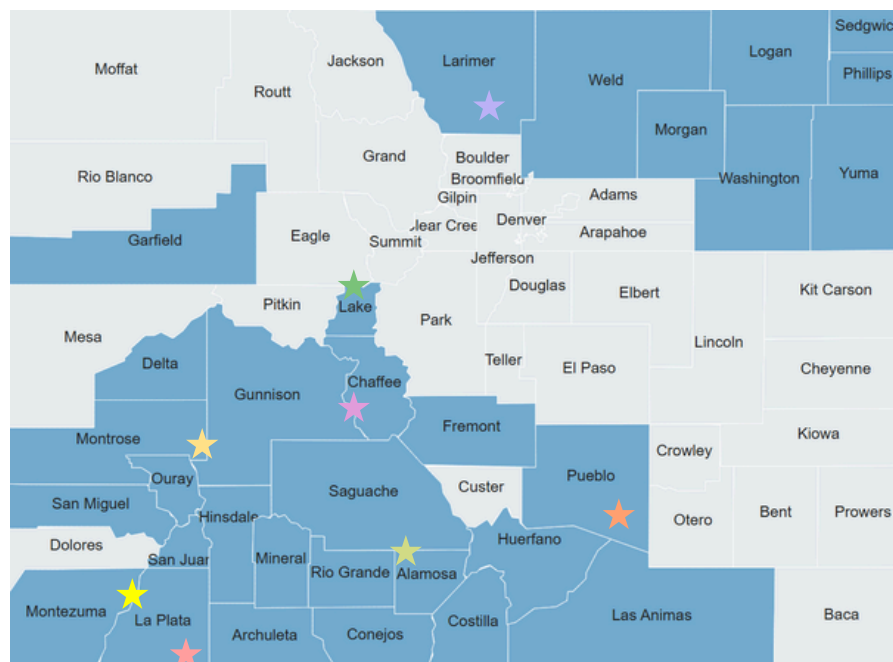
★ Splash Youth of Northern CO

★ Lake County Wraparound

★ CASA of the 7th Judicial District

★ Oak Tree Youth Resources

★ La Plata Youth Services



★ Centennial BOCES

★ Shiloh House

★ Chaffee Department of Human Services

★ Mariposa Center for Safety

★ Boys & Girls Club of the San Luis Valley

Service Model

The RC service model is grounded in positive youth development.

01

OUTREACH

- Actively find youth who have runaway or youth experiencing homelessness, or youth at risk of becoming runaway or homeless.
- Providing information to them about services, benefits, and encouraging the use of appropriate services.

02

SCREEN & ASSESS

- Standardized methods to assess eligibility to receive shelter and support services.
- Determine suitability for the program as well as for the health and safety of other youth and the programs.

03

SHELTER & HOUSING

- 21-day basic center host home program
- Family reunification when appropriate
- Transitional living program
- Permanent housing

04

CASE MANAGEMENT & CARE COORDINATION

- Targeted individualized plans that are strengths based, trauma informed, and ensure social and emotional well-being
- Counseling

05

SERVICE LINKAGES

- Soft landing resources that are culturally appropriate that focus on education/employment, well-being, stable housing, and permanent connections.

06

MONITOR PROGRESS

- Strengths-based review that highlights successes.
- Advocacy and adjustment of service and interventions to supports youth.

07

AFTER CARE

- Imbedded community connections.
- Resources and linkages to reunification or housing.
- Focus on supporting social determinates of health.



2024 Programs

Basic Center Program

- Serves youth ages 17 and younger
- Emergency shelter & homelessness prevention enrollments

Transitional Living Program

- Serves youth ages 16 through 21
- Up to 18 months of safe and stable housing support

Street Outreach Program

- Serves youth ages 21 and younger
- Street-based outreach, gateway services, & emergency shelter

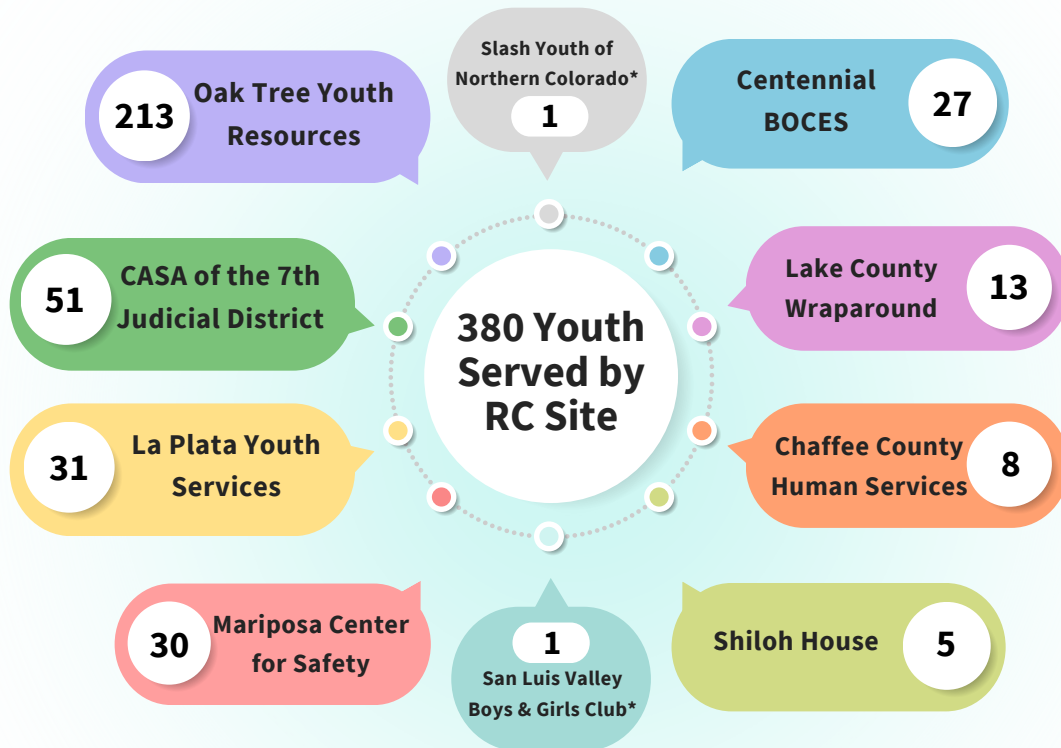
DOH Host Homes

- Serves youth ages 18 through 24
- Community member provides host home for up to 6 months

Outreach & Emergency Assistance Program (CDE)

- Serves school-aged youth (typically ages 18 and under)
- Wraparound services & emergency shelter to support school attendance

Youth Served by the RC in 2024

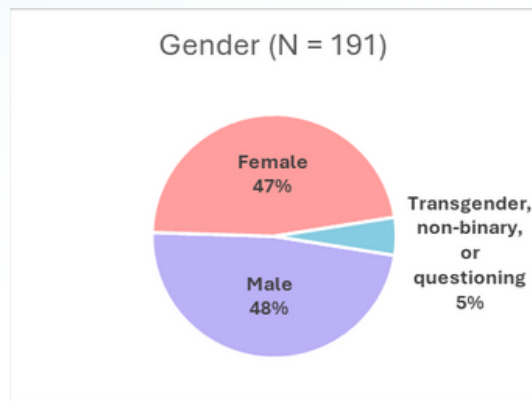
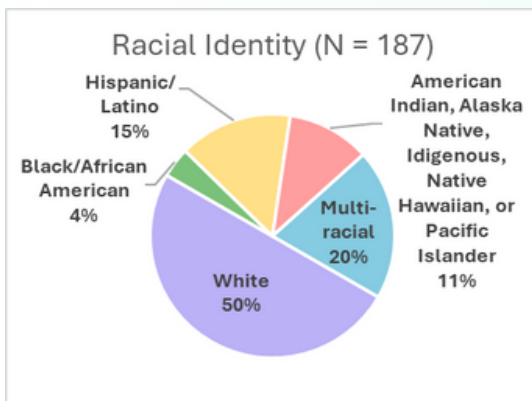


*New Site

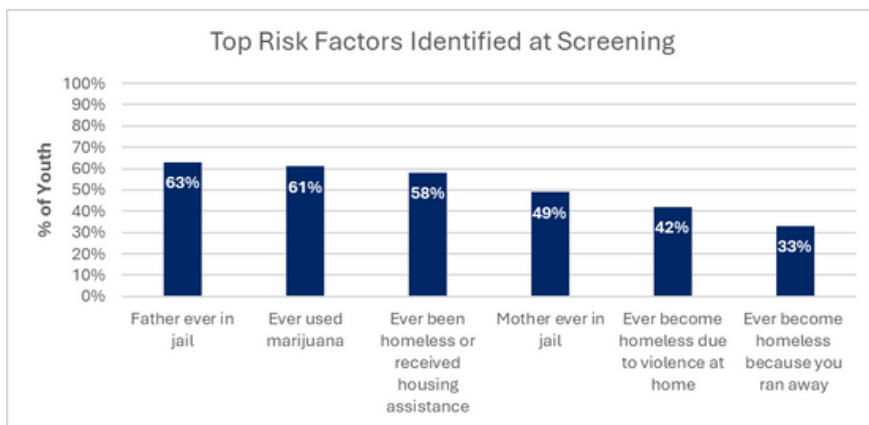
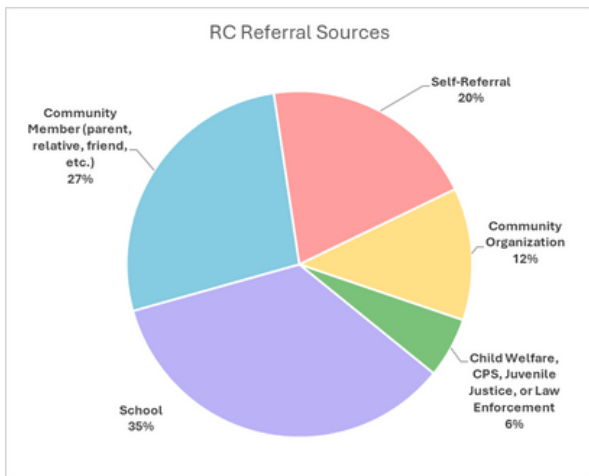
35% of youth reported having a disability

AGE: Range: 11-24 years
Average: 18.0

20% of youth identified as LGBTQ+



Referrals and Screening (N = 148)



Brief Contact: Outreach/Drop-in Services

Some youth experiencing housing instability or homelessness may only need short-term assistance and are better served through brief contact. While some partner agencies serve these youth through drop-in centers, others employ mobile outreach strategies to reach youth across large rural areas. Additionally, some youth may not be ready to fully enroll in an RC program despite longer-term needs, so agencies may use brief contact services as a method for building trust during their first few interactions with a youth before fully enrolling them into an RC program.

Brief contacts are typically under one hour and focus on meeting youth's immediate needs, most commonly with basic needs supplies such as food, clothing, hygiene products, or blankets. Agencies may serve a youth through brief contact up to three times before fully enrolling a youth into an RC program if they need additional support and services.

“Oak Tree Youth Resources (OTYR) offers young people ages 12-24 a youth-centered space where they have access to hygiene items, food assistance, free clothes, laundry, shower, and other basic needs. Our activities and programming are geared towards young people who have painful life experiences impacting their ability to make healthy choices. We emphasize positive youth development and focus on empowering youth to develop social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies. OTYR also provides a weekly ‘Young People in Recovery’ group to support at-risk youth dealing with substance abuse and addiction issues.

- OTYR Site Supervisor

”

457 Brief Contact Services were Provided to 191 Youths



- 184 basic needs supplies (food, clothing, etc.) distributed
- Assisted 99 youths in locating housing options
- Connected 59 youths with physical or mental healthcare
- Provided 59 youths with emergency shelter

Street Outreach Program



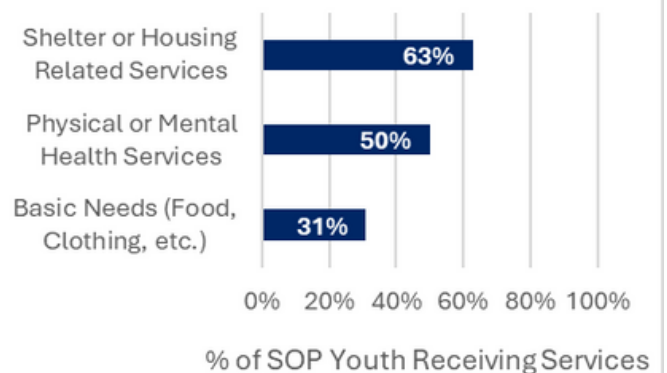
“ I'm getting my dental covered as well. My teeth are a disaster. I actively try to hide my teeth. So, it's not just important for overall health, but it also helps with your image and being able to present yourself to an employer. If I look raggedy and whatnot, I'm going to be at a disadvantage [for getting a job].

-Youth receiving services from Lake County Wraparound

The Street Outreach Program (SOP) serves youth ages 21 or younger who are currently experiencing homelessness, live on the street, or have runaway from home. RC agencies work to develop relationships with youth and rebuild their trust in caring adults. Services available to youth through SOP include street-based education and outreach, access to emergency shelter, survival aid, treatment and counseling, crisis intervention, and follow-up support.

- **137** Total Youth Served through SOP
- **331** Total SOP Services Provided
- **22%** of youth who received brief contact services later enrolled in the program.

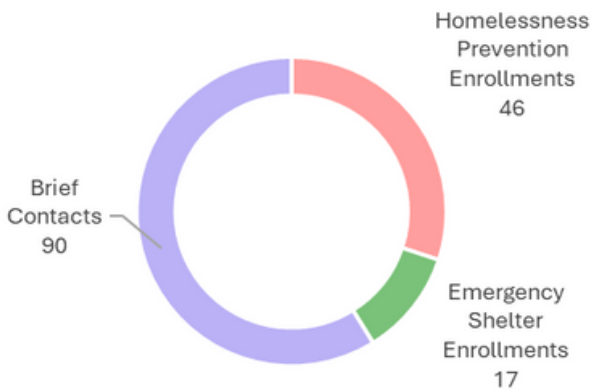
Top Services Received Among Enrolled Youth (N = 52)



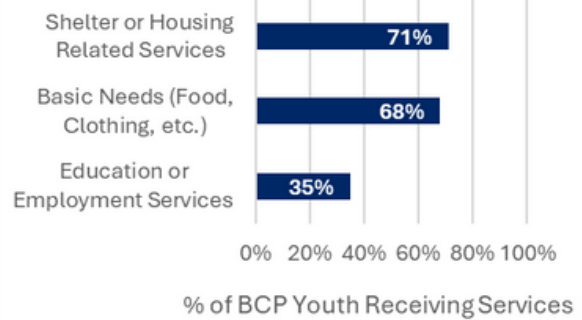
Basic Center Program

The Basic Center Program (BCP) serves youth ages 17 and younger who are currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability or who have runaway. BCP has two enrollment types, Emergency Shelter (ES) and Homelessness Prevention (HP). Youth with an ES enrollment can be provided up to 21 days of shelter, while a variety of supportive services are available to youth with a HP enrollment. Supportive services include food, clothing, medical care, counseling, crisis intervention, family reunification, recreation programs, and aftercare services.

Youth Served Through BCP Programs (N = 153)



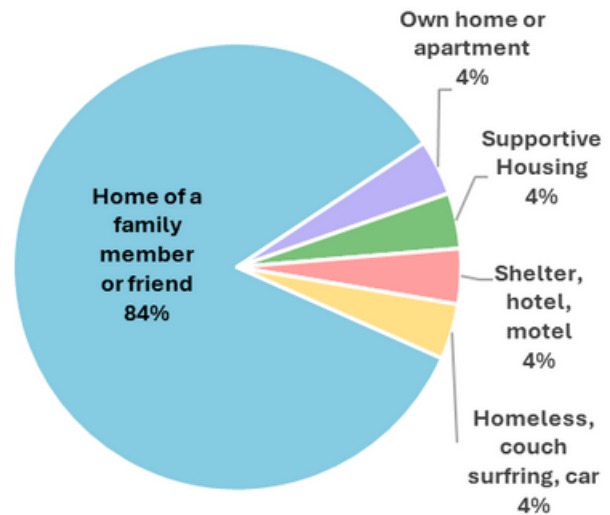
Top Services Received Among Enrolled Youth (N = 63)



Key Outcomes

- **96%** of youths exited the program to safe and stable housing.
- **93%** of youths were attending school or had graduated/completed their GED at program exit.
- **59%** of youths were employed or looking for work at program exit.
- **71%** of youths had an average health rating (physical and mental) of good or better at program exit.
- **100%** of youths reported having at least one adult whom they can go to for support at program exit.

BCP Youth Exit Destinations (N = 25)

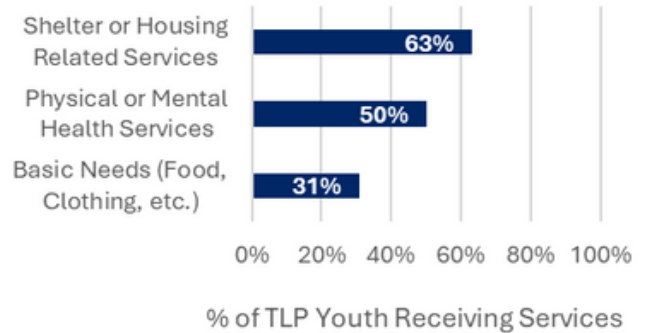


Transitional Living Program

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) serves youth ages 16 through 21 who are currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability and provides long-term (12-18 months) services to help youth create and maintain housing stability. Housing support through TLP can come in a variety of forms including community-based, adult-supervised, long-term shelters, apartments, and scattered-site apartments, and in rural areas often include host homes and hotel stays due to limited options. In addition to providing support for safe and stable living accommodations, TLP provides youth with building basic life skills, educational opportunities, job attainment services, mental healthcare, and physical healthcare.

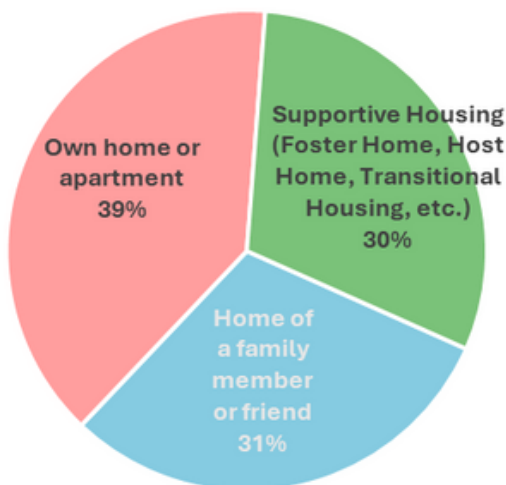
Total TLP Youth Served: 58 (52 enrolled + 6 brief contact)
Average Length of Enrollment: 7.1 months
Maximum Length of Enrollment: 17.8 months

Top Services Received Among Enrolled Youth (N = 52)



Key Outcomes

TLP Youth Exit Destinations (N = 23)

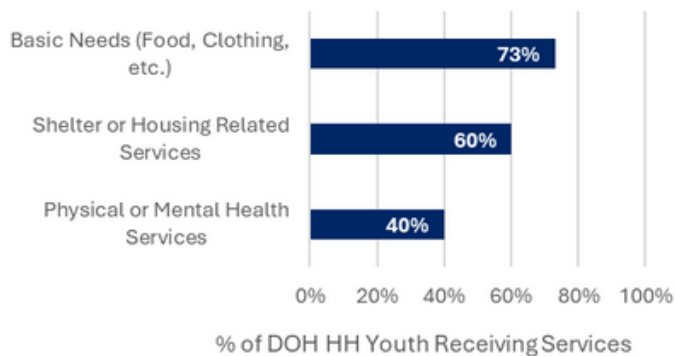


- **100%** of youths exited the program to safe and stable housing.
- **82%** of youths were attending school or had graduated/completed their GED at program exit.
- **66%** of youths were employed or looking for work at program exit.
- **70%** of youth rated their general health as good or better at program exit.
- **63%** of youth rated their mental health as good or better at program exit.
- **100%** of youths reported having at least one adult whom they can go to for support at program exit.

DOH Host Homes Program

The DOH Host Homes (HH) program serves youth ages 18 through 24 who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Community members provide youth with shelter and food for up to six months to provide stability while an RC agency works with the youth to create long-term housing stability. Host families are provided a stipend to help cover the costs for the youth. Due to the limited shelters available in rural Colorado, host homes are critical housing for youth in rural areas.

Top Services Received Among Enrolled Youth (N = 19)



“More than anything it was to have a place to sleep, because I [could live with] my aunt, but the room did not have a bed or anything. It was very difficult for my aunt to be able to help me, so [my RHY provider] helped to furnish the room, helped my aunt financially, gave me food cards, and also helped with personal things that I needed as well.”

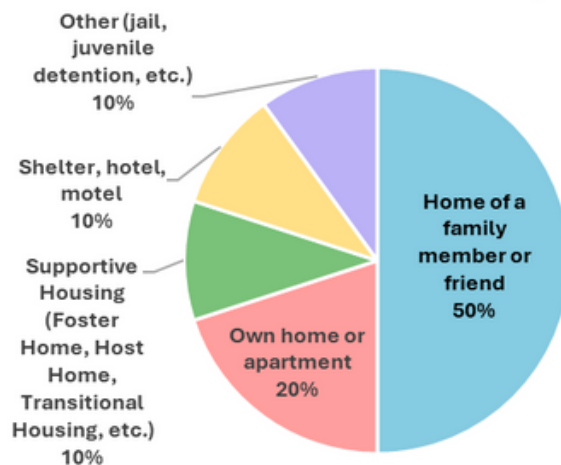
-Youth receiving services from CBOCES



Key Outcomes

- 90% of youths exited the program to safe and stable housing.
- 67% of youths reported having at least one adult whom they can go to for support at program exit.

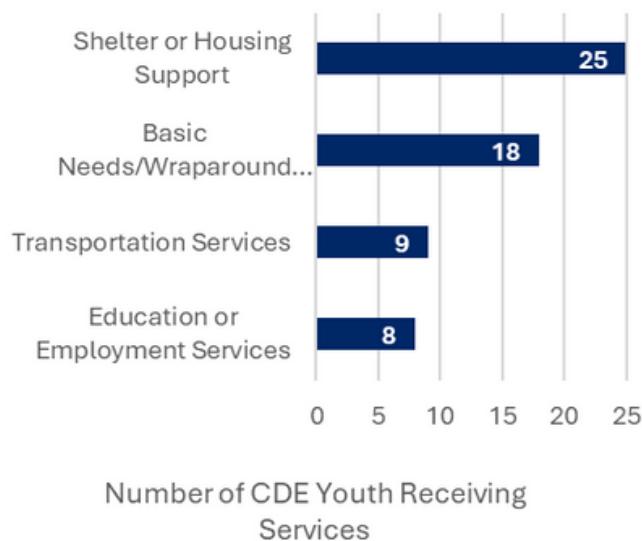
DOH HH Youth Exit Destinations (N = 10)



Outreach & Emergency Assistance Program (CDE)

The Outreach and Emergency Assistance Program (CDE) serves school-aged youth currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability with critical services that enable school attendance. Services include basic needs supplies (food, hygiene products, etc.), transportation, connectivity devices (cell phone, computer, etc.), internet access, temporary housing, and wraparound services.

Top Services Received
Among Youth (N = 38)



- **38** Total CDE Youth Served
- **165** total CDE Services Provided
- **Average Age of Youth:** 15.7 years





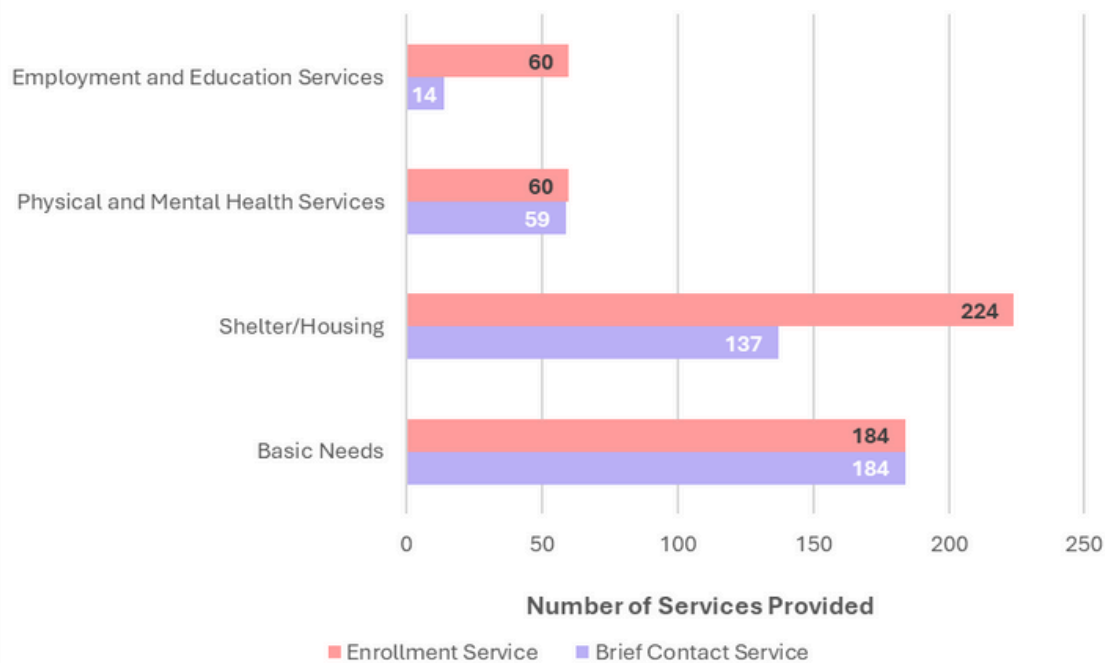
Summary and Impacts

The RC connects youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability to resources that would otherwise be unavailable in rural areas. RC service providers delivered over 1,000 critical services to youths in rural communities across Colorado in 2024. Drop-in centers provide a space for youth struggling with homelessness or housing instability to feel welcome, supported, and safe. RC service providers employ mobile outreach strategies to ensure that all Colorado youth have access to services, regardless of where they are located.

In total, the RC served 380 youth in 2024, split equally between brief contacts (191) and full program enrollments (189). The most common programs utilized by youth were BCP (153) and SOP (137). The top services provided were for basic needs, such as food, clothing, and hygiene products (368 services), and shelter or housing (361).

Across programs, key outcomes for youth exiting RC programs were overwhelmingly positive. Almost all youth exited to safe and stable housing (97%) and reported having at least one adult they could go to for support (95%). A vast majority of youth (88%) were either enrolled in school, graduated, or obtained their GED. Additionally, 62% of youth were either employed or looking for work at program exit. The RC plays an imperative role in addressing youths' basic needs and reducing youth homelessness across rural Colorado.

Top RC Services Provided Across Programs by Type



Site Name and Website

Areas Served

SPLASH Youth of Northern Colorado

<https://splashnoco.org/>

Splash Youth serves LGBTQIA+ youth in Weld and Larimer Counties.

Lake County Wraparound

<https://www.lakecountywraparound.com>

Lake County Wraparound serves youth in Lake County.

CASA of the 7th Judicial District

<https://www.casa7jd.org/>

CASA7JD serves youth in Montrose, Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Ouray, and San Miguel counties.

Oak Tree Youth Resources

<https://oaktreeyouthresources.org/>

OTYR serves youth in Montezuma and La Plata counties.

La Plata Youth Services

<https://lpys.org/>

LPYS serves youth in La Plata and San Juan counties.

Centennial BOCES

<https://www.cboces.org/homelessed>

C-BOCES serves youth in Larimer, Weld, Morgan, Logan, Washington, Sedgwick, Phillips, and Yuma counties.

Shiloh House

<https://www.shilohhouse.org/>

Shiloh House serves youth in Arapahoe, Douglas, Morgan, Larimer, Weld, Logan, Sedgwick, Phillips, and Yuma counties.

Chaffee County Department of Human Services

<https://www.chaffeecountyfyi.org/>

Chaffee County Department of Human Services serves youth in Chaffee County.

Mariposa Center for Safety

<https://mariposacenterforsafety.org/>

Mariposa Center for Safety serves youth in Pueblo County.

Boys & Girls Club of the San Luis Valley

<https://www.bgclsv.org/>

BGCLSV serves youth in San Luis Valley County.