



Youth Access to Rural Dating Abuse Services

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The National Domestic Violence
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Break the Cycle

Empowering Youth to End
Domestic Violence

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

One in three youth experience some form of abuse in their dating relationships, yet many victim service agencies throughout the country do not meet the needs of youth survivors of abuse. There is little information about the provision and accessibility of services for youth nationally, and even less information about those services in rural areas. This report compares the current state of dating abuse services for youth in the rural United States with services in urban areas in order to identify areas of need for technical assistance and the development of new programs.

METHODOLOGY

In the summer of 2012 the National Domestic Violence Hotline and Break the Cycle conducted a national survey of victim service providers. The survey was sent to over one thousand agencies and collected information on available dating abuse-related services for youth. This report looks at the 1,030 responding agencies from the United States, all of which vary in geography, size, scope of services, and amount and type of funding. Each agency offers some type of victim services, although for many this is not their primary or sole mission. Youth was defined between the ages of 12-24, and is further broken down into two categories as articulated in the findings.

Of the 1,030 responding agencies, 402 were classified as rural and 628 as urban. The respondents were not asked to self-identify as rural or urban, and instead their classification follows as closely as possible the guidelines laid out in the Office on Violence Against

Women rural grant solicitation. These OVAW guidelines defer to the Health Resources and Services Administration's "Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer"¹ for county classification as rural, non-rural, or partially rural. Responding agencies that were defined as rural or non-rural by the Analyzer were classified as such, and non-rural counties are referred to as urban throughout the report. The remaining agencies in partially rural counties could not comply with the Analyzer's request for an address (many did not report street addresses for confidentiality purposes) and were therefore classified by town and zip code. Town and zip codes were matched to census tract numbers with Texas A&M's Geocoding tool², and then classified by census tract number as rural or urban with the Universal Service Administration Company's Rural Health Care Eligibility search³. Rural and urban are definitions used for government classification and based on a collection of factors, including population numbers and density, and as a dichotomy do not necessarily reflect colloquial urban "city" and rural "country" areas.



¹ Health Resources and Services Administration, "Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer". Accessed at <http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/RuralAdvisor/ruralhealthadvisor.aspx> on October 29, 2013.

² Texas A&M Geoservices, "Non-Parsed Postal Address Geocoding". Accessed at <http://geoservices.tamu.edu/Services/Geocode/Interactive/> on October 29, 2013.

³ Universal Service Administration Company, "Eligible Rural Areas Search". Accessed at <http://www.usac.org/rhc/telecommunications/tools/Rural/search/search.asp> on October 29, 2013.

There are some limitations in data collection and the rural classification process which may impact the findings. First, the rural classification is based on the location of the agency, rather than the agency's service area. Service area information was not available in the survey responses, so some agencies classified as urban may serve both rural and urban populations. Responses were also self-reported by agency staff and therefore dependent on the reliability and expertise of the individual respondent. Additionally, organizations solicited that do not serve youth may have been less likely to respond to a survey regarding their youth-serving practices. Estimates of the percentage of youth clients and available services may therefore not be a representative sample and overestimated. Finally, every survey question was not included in this analysis, some questions were combined into categories to ensure relevant comparisons, and some ranges were approximated as noted in the results.



KEY FINDINGS

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS⁴

- Youth ages 12-17 make up approximately 11% of clients at rural agencies.
- A greater percentage of clients at urban agencies are youth ages 12-17, at approximately 15%.
- Rural agencies serve a slightly lower percentage of clients ages 18- 24 than do urban agencies.

TYPES OF SERVICES AVAILABLE

- Rural agencies often provide legal services to youth, but these services rarely include legal representation by an attorney. Youth are offered general legal services at 59% of rural agencies, while 8% of agencies provide legal representation by an attorney. Only 14 rural agencies provide legal representation to minors without parental consent, compared to 26 urban agencies.
- Individual professional counseling is the most available counseling service to urban youth, and is offered by 41% of urban agencies. Case management is the most available counseling service to rural youth, and is offered by 41% of rural agencies.
- The most available service to rural youth ages 12-17 is protective or restraining order assistance. The most available service to urban youth ages 12-17 is professional counseling for dating abuse.
- A notably greater percentage of rural than urban agencies provide transportation, legal services, and sexual assault services for youth ages 12-17.
- The percentage of rural agencies providing shelter for youth survivors varies significantly by age group. 17% of rural agencies provide

shelter for youth ages 12-17, and 49% of rural agencies provide shelter for youth ages 18-24. Turning 18 significantly increases youth access to shelter services, most dramatically in rural areas.

- Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to offer almost all types of services for youth, with the slight exception of counseling services.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

- Over half of available services to youth ages 12-17 require parental consent, regardless of location.
- Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to require parental consent for transportation, legal services, and shelter services.
- LGBTQ, immigrant, and parenting youth saw particular deficits in specialized services by rural agencies compared to urban agencies. Youth with disabilities or special needs, and deaf or hard of hearing youth, were lacking specific or specialized services in all locations.
- Programs for youth are less accessible for clients with physical disabilities or language barriers at rural than urban agencies.

DESIRE FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to be interested in developing programs for youth around dating abuse.
- Rural agencies are more interested than urban agencies in receiving technical assistance to support their program development.

⁴These numbers are approximated based on ranges reported by agencies.

CONCLUSIONS

The information collected through the survey illustrates important national trends in service provision to youth by rural and urban victim service agencies. Differences between the services rural and urban agencies provide highlight gaps in service as well as strengths and unique needs of communities. There are many variables influencing the services delivered by each agency, but these broader conclusions can inform rural technical assistance priorities, help rural victim service agencies strategically expand, and suggest areas of further research about dating abuse services nationally.

IDENTIFY CAUSES FOR LACK OF YOUTH CLIENTS

Research tells us young people in rural communities often face higher rates of dating abuse so it is unlikely that there is less need for services. A better understanding is needed of why youth make up fewer clients at rural agencies in order to better support youth survivors through existing services.

EXPAND PROGRAMMING TO SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Rural agencies are less likely than urban agencies to offer specialized or specific services for marginalized populations of youth. Technical assistance is needed to support rural agencies to meet the needs of specific populations, particularly youth who are immigrants, deaf or hard of hearing, or with disabilities or special needs. LGBTQ youth are also at a greater risk of violence in rural schools, so technical assistance for responding to these needs should also be prioritized⁵.

SUPPORT STAFF TRAINING

Rural agencies are more likely to be interested in developing dating abuse services for youth and in receiving training to develop these services. This may reflect a lack of access to rural-specific technical assistance services. Additionally, services that require staff with professional degrees, such as legal representation and professional counseling, are less available at rural agencies. Alternatives for professional development and training with existing advocates in rural communities could be explored to promote the growth and sustainability of rural agencies.

EDUCATE ABOUT PARENTAL CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

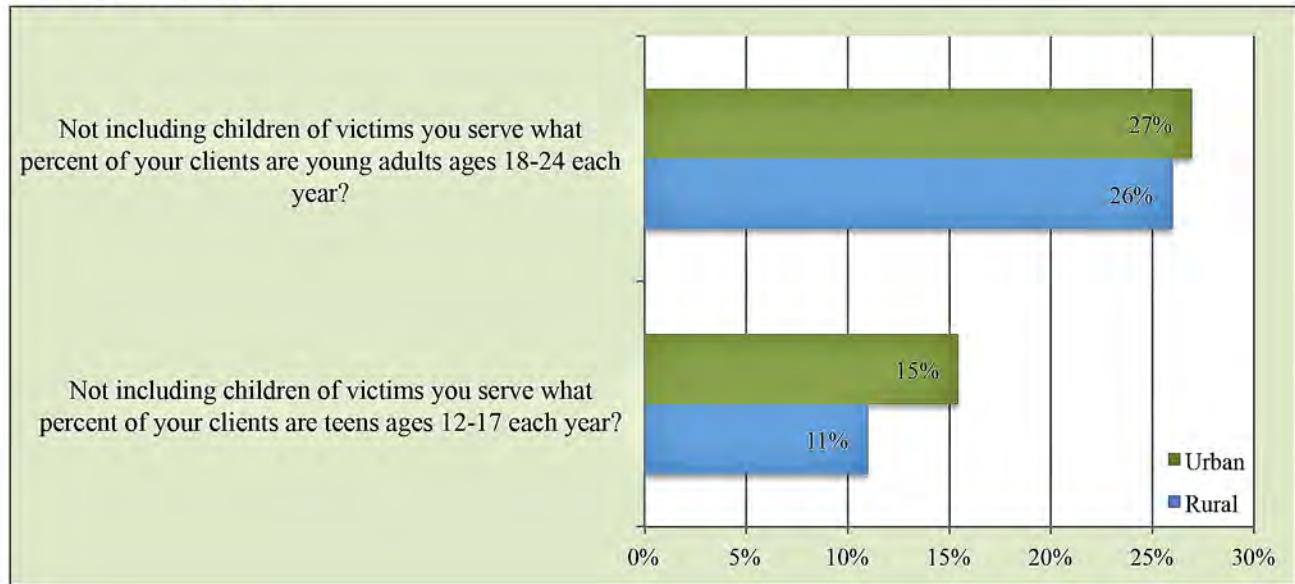
Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to require parental consent for some services offered to minors, particularly transportation and legal services. There was no distinction in the survey whether these policies are imposed by the state or agency, or why certain services required consent and others did not. Parental consent requirements are not always empowering for young survivors and may be required by providers due to a lack of understanding of state law. Clarity around parental consent laws and minor access to services is important for agencies to feel empowered and comfortable serving minors in their state. Anecdotal evidence and the difference in services available for minors suggest a technical assistance need for legal education on the topic.

⁵ Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (2012) "Strengths and Silences: The Experiences of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Students in Rural and Small Town Schools".



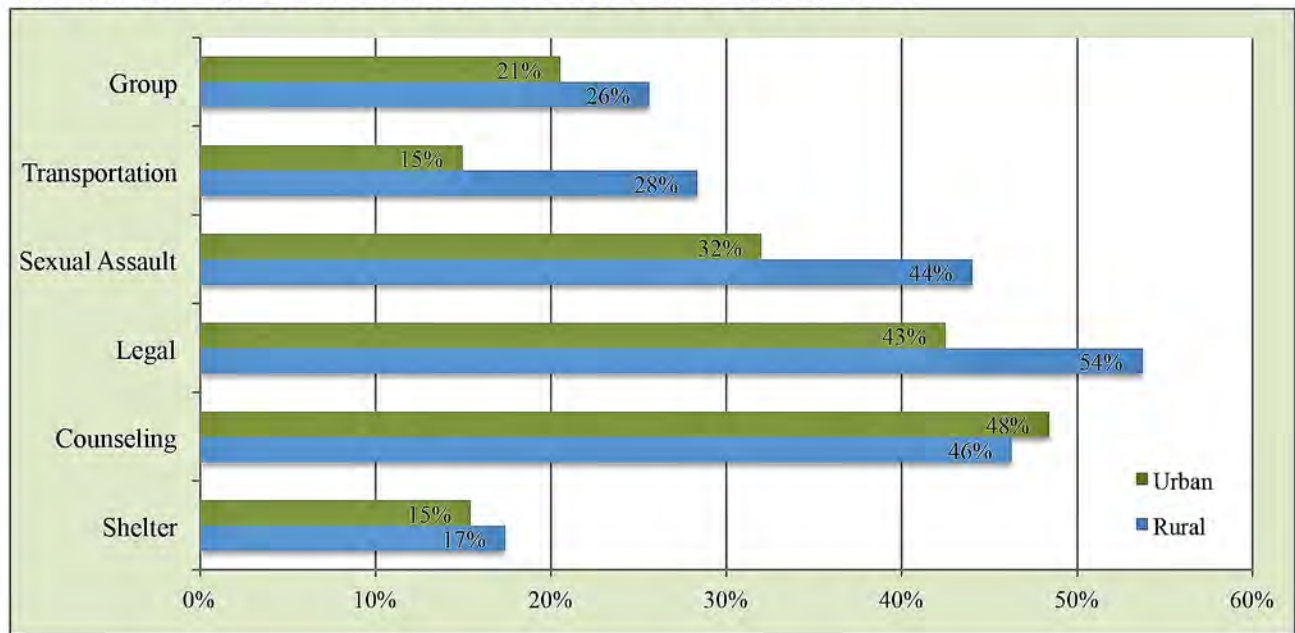
RESULTS

AGE OF CLIENTS



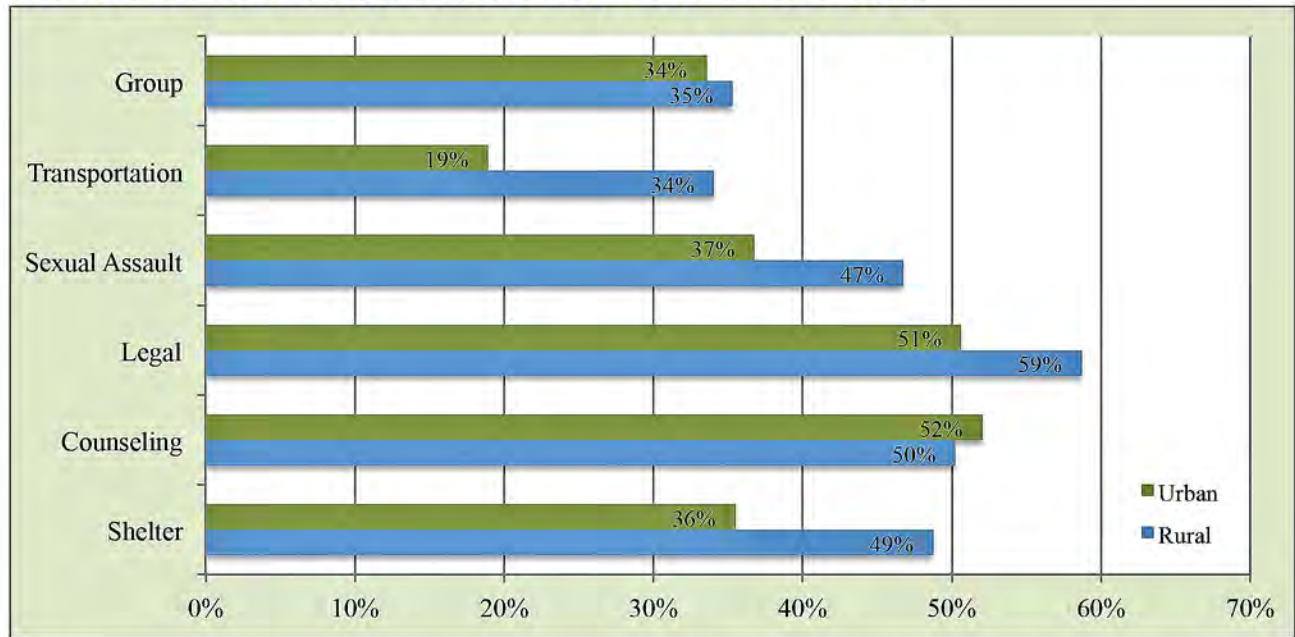
A lower percentage of clients at rural than urban agencies are youth, and this difference is greatest for youth ages 12-17. These numbers are approximated based on ranges reported by agencies.

AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES FOR YOUTH AGES 12-17



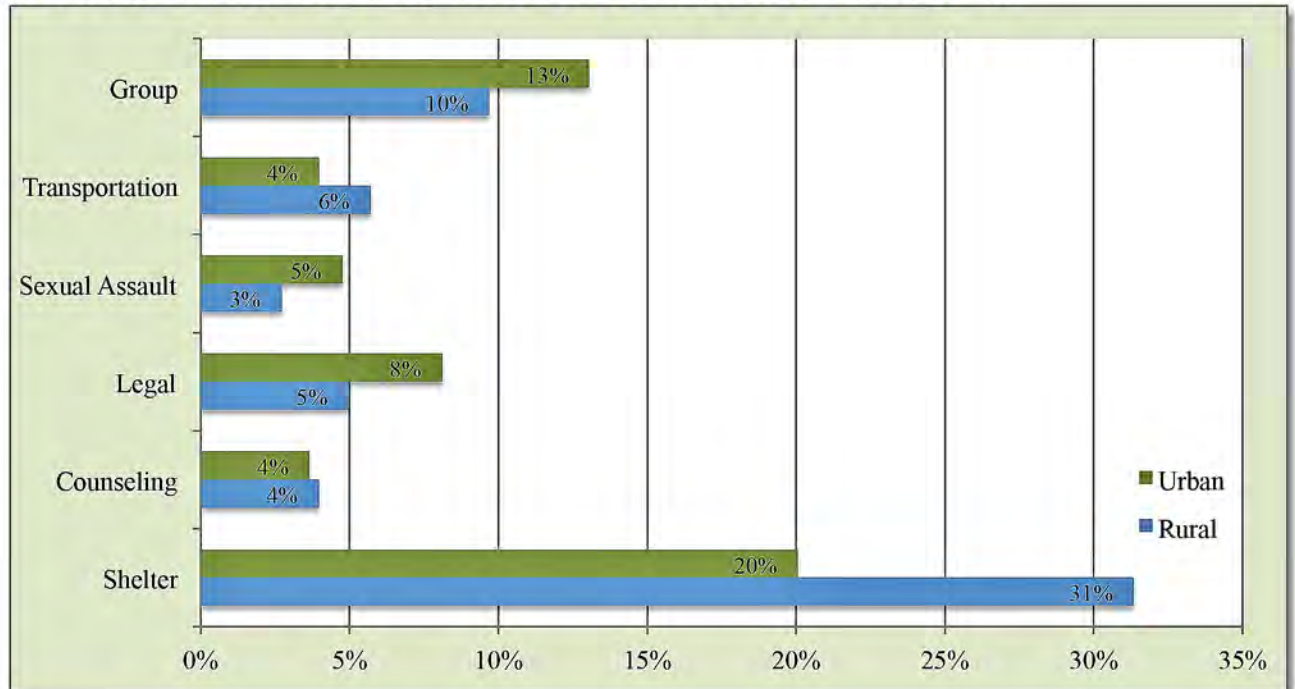
Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to offer almost all types of services for young people, with the exception of counseling services. A notably greater percentage of rural than urban agencies provide transportation, legal services, and sexual assault services for youth ages 12-17.

AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES FOR YOUTH AGES 18-24



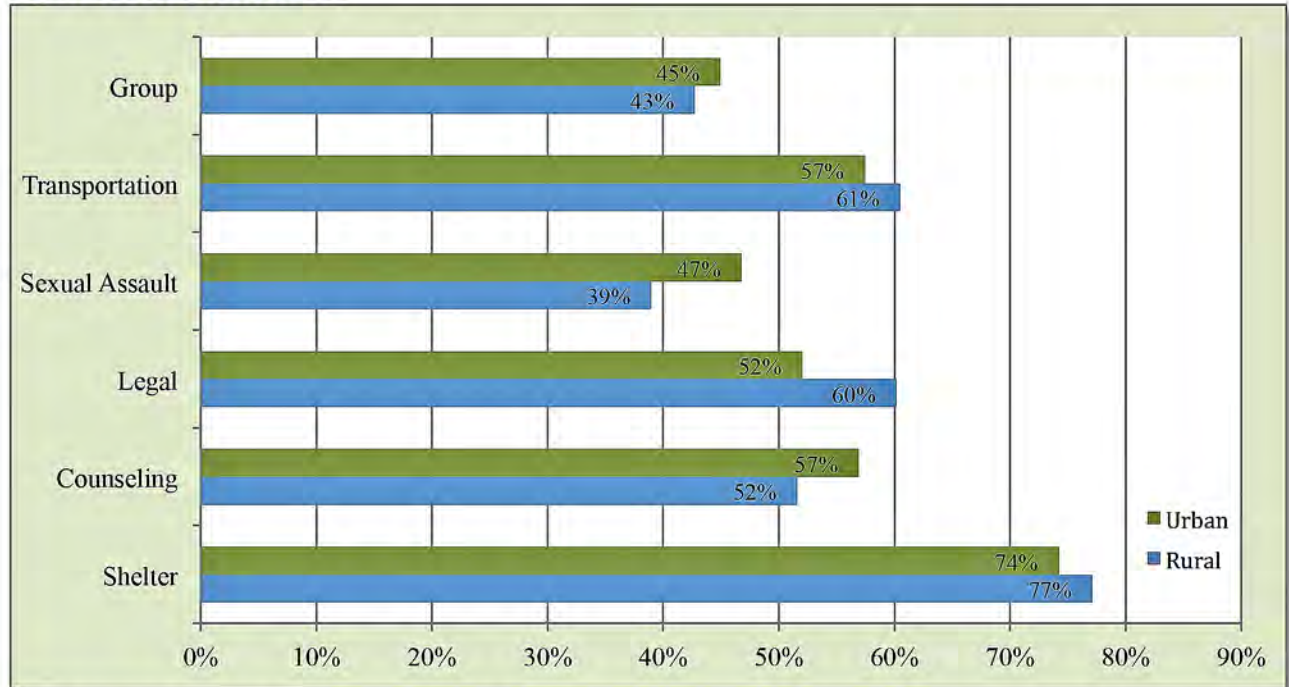
More services are available for youth ages 18-24. The gap between service provision for rural and urban youth narrows after age 18 for most services except transportation and shelter. Rural agencies surpass urban in provision of shelter and transportation services.

INCREASE IN AGENCY PROVISION OF SERVICES AFTER AGE 18



After age 18, rural youth have dramatically increased access to shelter services, while urban youth gain more access to group and legal services. Turning 18 increases access to services across the board.

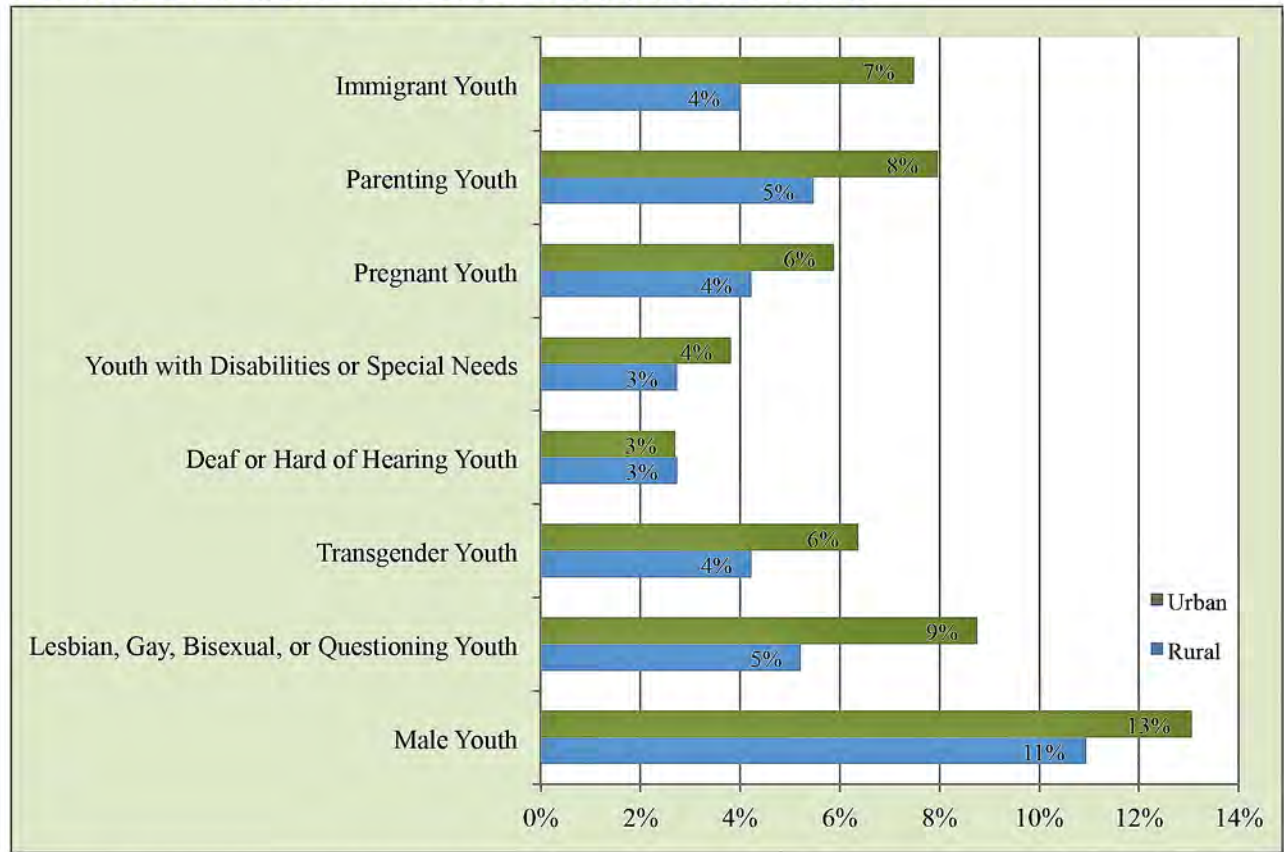
PERCENTAGE OF AVAILABLE SERVICES REQUIRING MINOR'S PARENTAL CONSENT



Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to require parental consent for transportation, legal services, and shelter services. Slightly over half of all services offered to minors, regardless of location, require parental consent.

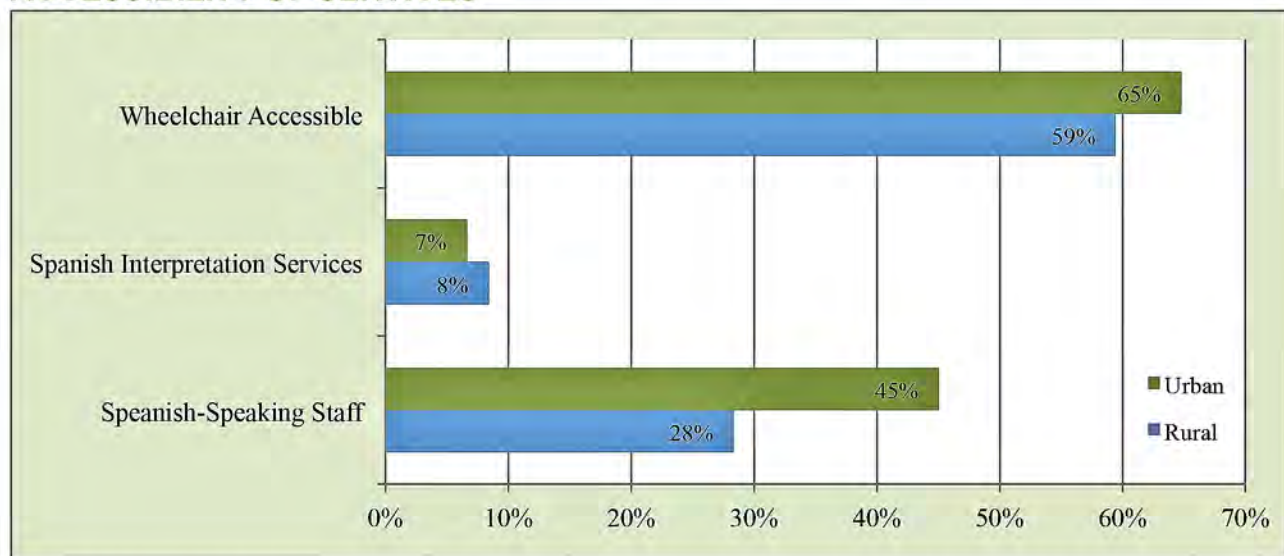


AGENCIES WITH SPECIFIC OR SPECIALIZED SERVICES



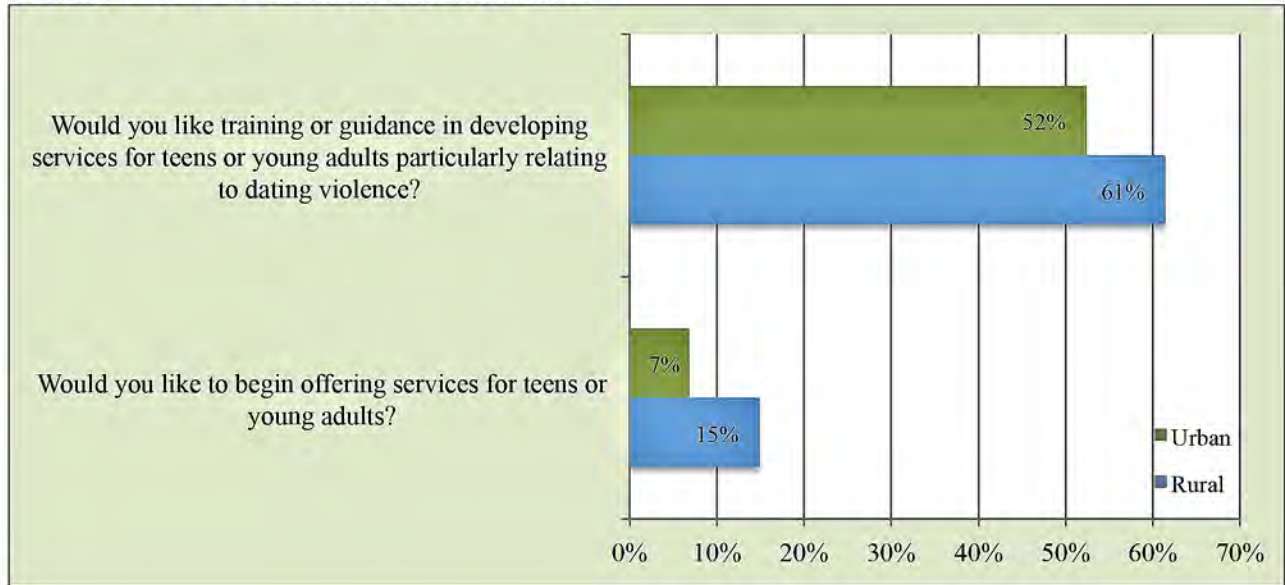
LGBQ, immigrant, and parenting youth saw particular deficits in specialized services by rural agencies compared to urban agencies. Youth with disabilities or special needs, and deaf or hard of hearing youth, were lacking specific or specialized services in all locations.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES



Programs for youth are less accessible for clients with physical disabilities or language barriers at rural than urban agencies.

DESIRE FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

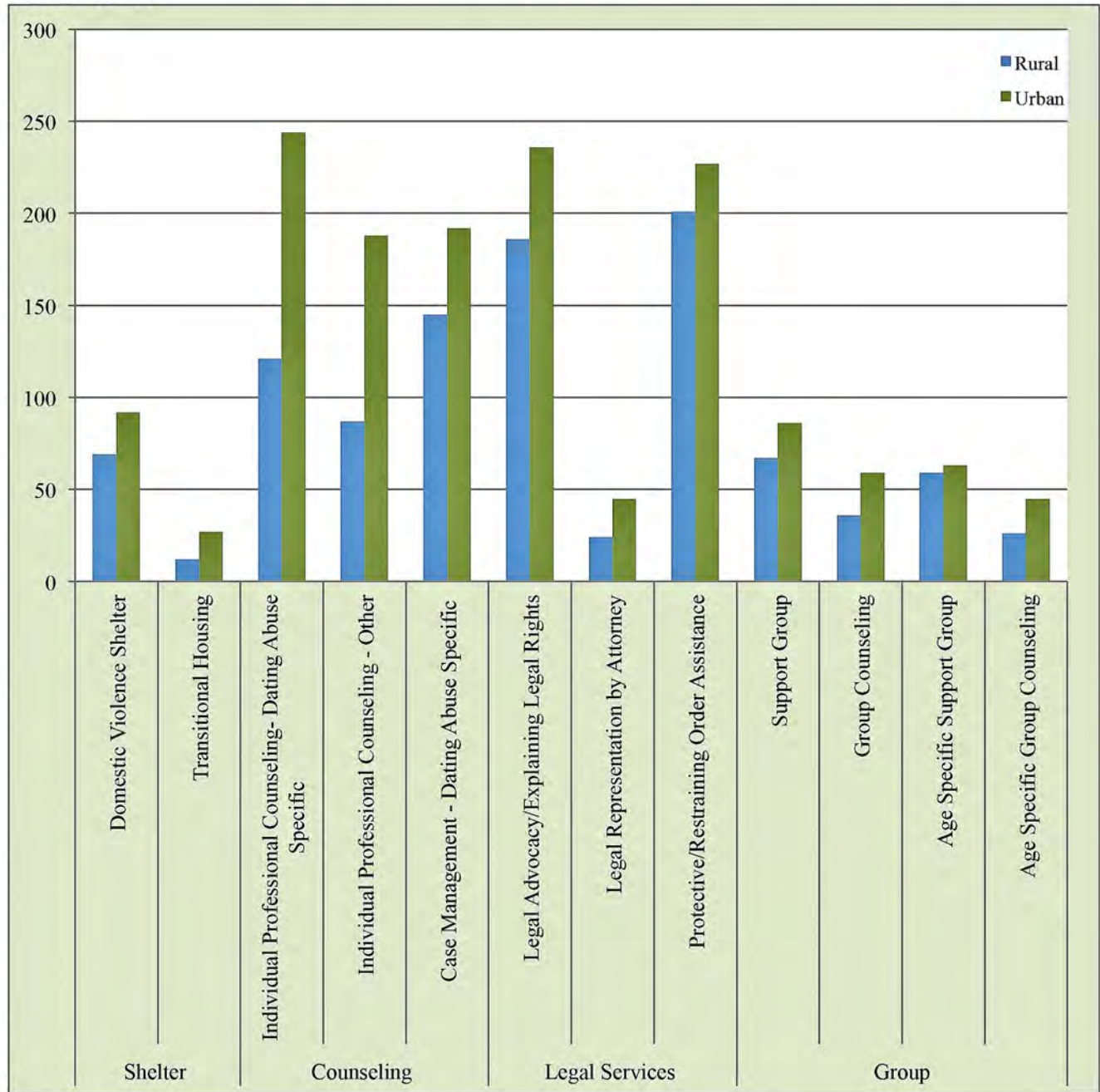


Rural agencies are more likely than urban agencies to be interested in developing programs for youth around dating abuse and in receiving technical assistance.



APPENDIX: SPECIFIC TYPES OF SERVICES

NUMBER OF AGENCIES PROVIDING SPECIFIC TYPES OF SERVICES FOR AGES 12-17



NUMBER OF AGENCIES PROVIDING SPECIFIC TYPES OF SERVICES FOR AGES 18-24

