National Runaway Safeline 2013 Crisis Connection Trend Report Fact Sheet

The National Runaway Safeline (NRS) analyzed records of crisis calls to 1-800-RUNAWAY from 2002-2012 for this trend report. Prior trend reports have always included crisis calls handled by NRS, and this is the first report to also include crisis online chats through the live chat service NRS added in 2011.

Each year, NRS handles more than 100,000 incoming and outgoing calls. Incoming calls come from runaway, homeless and at-risk youth, their friends, family members, teachers, social service organizations, law enforcement officials, and anyone who cares about helping today's youth. Outbound calls are calls made by NRS on behalf of a caller to a local shelter, Greyhound Lines, Inc. regarding the Home Free program, or other local resources.

The connections calculated in this report are those in which NRS specifically provided crisis intervention services. In 2012, these crisis intervention services were mostly provided by phone (90 percent) but were also provided by online chat (10 percent). In 2012, NRS handled 15,606 crisis calls and 1,535 crisis chats for a total of 17,141 crisis connections. NRS also refers to the crisis calls and online chats as "crisis connections" throughout the findings. The sample size of these categories varies, due to the fact that not all categories are pertinent to providing crisis intervention, and therefore may not be addressed in every crisis connection.

**Key Findings**

**Status of Youth in Crisis (NRS defines youth as young people up to 21 years old)**
- Runaways made up the largest group of crisis calls and online chats to NRS in 2012 at 33 percent.
- The second largest group of connections was youth in crisis who have not yet run away from home at 32 percent.
- NRS was also contacted by youth contemplating running away (15 percent), homeless youth (13 percent), throwaway youth (6 percent), and suspected missing youth (1 percent).
- Connections with NRS from homeless youth have increased by 18 percent over the last year, 25 percent over the last three years and by 61 percent over the last decade.
- Those youth who are contemplating running away increased 11 percent over the past year, 17 percent over the past three years and 27 percent over the past decade.
- Calls and online chats from throwaway youth have increased 11 percent over the past year, and 42 percent over the last decade.

**Age of Youth in Crisis**
- The largest group of youth in crisis who contacted NRS in 2012 was age 17 at 21 percent.
- Age 18 (15 percent), age 19 (14 percent) and age 16 (13 percent) were the next largest groups.
- The largest increase in calls and online chats over the last year came from youth aged 14 with a 29 percent increase.
- Crisis connections from youth aged 12 and under decreased by 9 percent over the past year, the largest decrease of all the age groups.

**Means of Survival for Youth in Crisis**
- The majority of youth in crisis who contacted NRS in 2012 were surviving through assistance from friends and relatives at 73 percent.
- Twelve percent reported using shelters/soup kitchens to survive in 2012. The number of youth who report using shelters to survive has increased by 10 percent over the past year.
- Youth have also reported that they are less able to survive using personal funds than in the past, a 14 percent decrease over the past year and a 33 percent decrease over the past three years.
- There has been a decrease in reports of youth panhandling to survive over the past year (34 percent) and over the past three years (97 percent).
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Length of Time on the Street for Youth in Crisis Before Contacting NRS

- The most common length of time on the streets for youth in crisis who contacted NRS in 2012 was one to three days at 45 percent.
- The largest percentage increase in crisis connections over the past year was from youth who had been on the street for one to two months (8 percent). There was also a significant increase in connections from youth who had been on the streets for one to four weeks (5 percent).
- Calls and online chats from youth who had been on the street for less than one week and more than two months decreased over the past year. There was a particularly large decrease in connections from youth who had been on the street for more than six months, down 74 percent over the past year.

Whereabouts at Time of Contact for Youth in Crisis

- The largest proportion of youth in crisis contacting NRS in 2012 was calling or online chatting from home at 36 percent.
- Youth contacting NRS from a friend (25 percent) or relative’s (9 percent) house comprised an almost equal percentage of callers at 34 percent.
- There was an increase of 20 percent in connections from youth located in a shelter over the past year, a 7 percent increase over the past three years, and a 5 percent increase over the past decade.
- Calls and online chats also increased from youth who were at home over the past year by 16 percent and over the past decade by 18 percent. This increase in connections from youth at home goes hand in hand with the increase noted in calls from youth who are contemplating running away from home.

Issues Raised by Youth in Crisis

- The issue most often cited by youth contacting NRS in 2012 was family dynamics at 29 percent.
- The next significant group of issues was the combination of abuse variables, including neglect, physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse at 13 percent. Peer and social issues are indicated by 10 percent of callers.
- The largest increase among issues raised over the past year was economics, with a 14 percent increase. This issue has steadily increased over the past one, three (15 percent), and 10 year periods (56 percent).
- Transportation is another issue that was discussed more frequently by youth in crisis in 2012 than in 2011 with an increase of 13 percent.
- Reporting rates for all four types of abuse increased over the past year with an increase of 10 percent for emotional or verbal abuse, 14 percent for neglect, 4 percent for physical abuse, and 3 percent for sexual abuse.
- Youth in crisis reported health problems more frequently in the past year with an increase of 6 percent (5 percent increase in mental health problems and an 8 percent increase in non-mental health problems).
- Peer and social issues were not raised as often in 2012 compared to 2011, with a decrease of 5 percent.

Relationship to Youth in Crisis

- Sixty percent of the individuals who contacted NRS in 2012 were youth calling about themselves.
- Parents made up the second largest group in 2012 at 21 percent. Connections from parents were down by 2 percent over the past year, but calls and online chats from other relatives increased 11 percent.
- The largest increase in this category was calls and online chats from youth agencies, a 34 percent increase over the past year and a 10 percent increase over the past three years.
- There has also been an increase in calls and online chats from a youth’s friend, 18 percent over the past year and 4 percent over the past three years.

Gender of Youth in Crisis

- The majority of youth in crisis who contacted NRS in 2012 came from females at 72 percent.
- Over the past year, calls and online chats with females have increased by almost 10 percent. The number of connections with males in 2012 increased 7 percent compared to the number of connections with males in 2011. When looking at the longer trend horizon of 10 years, there is a drop of 8 percent in connections with females and an increase of 12 percent in connections with males.
- In the past three years of trend reports, females were more likely to call or online chat with NRS than males, but connections from males with NRS have been increasing more rapidly than connections from females. If this trend had continued, males would eventually have had the same level as or more connections than females. This year that trend has reversed where females are more likely to contact NRS than males and the rise in calls and online chats from females has been larger than the rise in calls and chats from males.