



1-800-RUNAWAY

self awareness

community

responsibility

resources

support

communication

# let's talk

## Runaway Prevention Curriculum



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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And, special thanks to you, the youth advocate who will implement *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*.

thank you



Dear Community Educator,

When you think about it, runaway prevention is everyone's concern. Youth who run away have an impact on their immediate families and friends as well as on their communities. Prevention is a delicate balance of awareness, communication, resources, stress management, and support.

In response to the expressed needs of teachers, social service providers, and community members, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) worked collaboratively with DePaul University's Center for Community and Organization Development (CCOD), youth, and the community on a three-year process to develop a one-of-a-kind runaway prevention curriculum. This program was developed for you to use in its entirety, as individual modules, or to supplement your own prevention strategies.

On behalf of NRS, I am pleased to present you with *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*. This professionally developed curriculum, accompanied by the companion film "1-800-RUNAWAY", provides you with easy-to-use lessons on various topics and interactive youth-approved activities. Included with these lessons are all of the information and resources you will need when using the curriculum. In addition to the curriculum, we are excited to offer technical assistance and train-the-trainer opportunities. For more information please contact the NRS Prevention Specialist at 773-289-1723 or via email at [prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org).

As partners in prevention, we look forward to hearing from you regarding your successes, questions and comments with *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*. We encourage you to use the pre- and post-tests within the curriculum and return them to NRS. This will be a helpful tool for us to measure the impact of the curriculum. As always, please let us know how NRS can further support the important prevention work you do in your community. Together we can increase prevention efforts and provide renewed hope for youth and families.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Maureen Blaha'.

Maureen Blaha  
Executive Director  
[mblaha@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:mblaha@1800RUNAWAY.org)  
773-289-1720

# LET'S TALK: RUNAWAY PREVENTION CURRICULUM BRIEF OVERVIEW

Information from the curriculum development process was synthesized into a curriculum of 14 modules to help prevent youth from running away. The modules are as follows:

<b>Module 1: Communication and Listening</b> Youth will identify barriers to communication and use active listening skills in real-life scenarios. Youth will also be provided an introduction to the NRS Crisis Intervention Model.
<b>Module 2: Adolescent Development</b> Youth will learn the aspects and challenges associated with adolescent development. Youth will discover their personal identity by looking at their strengths and qualities.
<b>Module 3: Personal Influences</b> Youth will identify how personal values, principles, and beliefs will impact their decision making. Youth will reflect on the role of influential others in decision making.
<b>Module 4: Peers</b> Youth will discuss positive, negative, direct and indirect peer pressure. Youth will characterize their current friendships and social groups.
<b>Module 5: Families: Roles &amp; Responsibilities:</b> Youth will define the term "family" for themselves and will consider the roles and responsibilities each family member holds. Techniques to improve communication among family members and skills to resolve family challenges will be addressed.
<b>Module 6: Runaway Reality</b> Youth will brainstorm reasons why young people choose to run away, questions to consider before leaving, and generate options other than running.
<b>Module 7: National Safe Connections</b> Youth will identify their own personal "safe place." Youth will learn about the National Safe Place program, which invites local businesses and agencies to provide access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis.
<b>Module 8: Community Response &amp; Responsibility</b> Youth will consider who in their community is affected, both directly and indirectly, by a runaway incident. Youth will learn how to use their community as a resource and discover ways to contribute to their community.
<b>Module 9: Anger Management</b> Youth will identify and recognize mental and physical reactions to anger. Youth will learn positive ways to deal with these reactions.
<b>Module 10: Stress Reduction</b> Youth will identify their individual stressors. Youth will learn problem-solving techniques, stress management skills, and resources to avert a potential crisis situation.
<b>Module 11: Drugs &amp; Alcohol</b> Youth will learn facts about and reasons why people use drugs and alcohol. Youth will discuss consequences and risks associated with drug and alcohol use.
<b>Module 12: Sexuality &amp; Sexual Orientation</b> Youth will consider the roles sexuality and sexual orientation play in the lives of those who choose to run away.
<b>Module 13: Internet Safety &amp; Fun</b> Youth will brainstorm their current uses of the internet and ways to interact safely online. Role plays will be used to encourage internet safety.
<b>Module 14: Future Life Planning</b> Youth will discuss facilitators and barriers for achieving the life goals they identify in this module.

## Curriculum Development

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) entered into a three-year development process and partnership with the DePaul University Center for Community and Organization Development (CCOD) which was made possible by The Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust. The Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust shares our interest in promoting the well being of families and integrating change in communities. Likewise, the CCOD was a natural partner because they provide consulting and research services related to clinical, community, and organizational psychology to not-for-profit service oriented community-based organizations. The CCOD specializes in program evaluation and development, leadership development, and coalition building.

*Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* is an interactive, 14-module curriculum intended to build life skills, increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention, educate youth about alternatives to running away, and encourage youth to access and seek help from trusted community members. The curriculum development was organized into three distinct phases:

Phase 1: Program Research

Phase 2: Curriculum Development and Field Testing

Phase 3: Publication and Promotion

### **Phase 1: Program Research**

Phase 1 consisted of a literature review, community needs assessment, and development of the curriculum framework.

A literature review was conducted to identify 1) predictors of runaway incidents, 2) existing runaway prevention and intervention programs, and 3) strategies used in communities to address runaway incidents. While few established programs were found, runaway prevention occurs at the local level through classroom and community presentations. Results from the literature review indicated there was no single cause for runaway episodes, though family dynamics often play a significant role.

The community needs assessment included 1) semi-structured phone interviews, 2) a national web-based survey, and 3) focus groups with youth and adult youth service providers in urban, suburban, and rural Illinois. Eighteen providers, representing a variety of agencies and organizations nationwide, participated in phone interviews and shared ideas regarding the design, content, and implementation of a runaway prevention curriculum. A web-based survey was then created from the phone interview results, promoted nationwide, and completed by more than 280 service providers. These service providers represented the fields of social services, health, religion, law enforcement, and education. The combined results of the survey and phone interviews were then discussed in focus groups with 27 youth and 26 adults. From these three assessment methods came the topics for inclusion in the runaway prevention curriculum.

### **Phase 2: Curriculum Development and Field Testing**

In keeping with the positive youth development philosophy of NRS, five youth from local agencies and organizations were recruited to form a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) in the second phase. This process was an opportunity to build leadership skills among these youth by engaging them in a meaningful community service project. The YAC was composed of both male and female youth of varying ethnicities between ages 17 and 20. These youth had various life perspectives which ensured diverse experiences and opinions. YAC members reviewed each module and provided verbal and written feedback, which was then considered and integrated into the curriculum.

In addition to gathering feedback from the YAC, fourteen pilot testing groups were conducted with youth in urban, suburban, and rural regions of Illinois and Northwest Indiana. A total of 94 youth participated in the pilot testing groups. Of those who participated, the ages ranged from 12 to 21 with the majority being 14 to 19 years old. They were 49% male and 51% female. Ethnicities represented were African-American (29%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2%), Latino (21%), White (35%), Native American/American Indian (4%), Bi/Multiracial (5%), and other (3%). Various locations were chosen for the pilot tests, including youth service organizations, faith-based settings, and schools, to help guarantee a diverse group of participants.

For each pilot testing group, the participants took part in either one or two full-length modules of the Runaway Prevention Curriculum. The participants were given pre- and post-tests to assess whether or not they acquired the knowledge and skills presented. After the module was presented, they completed an overall process evaluation survey. They then discussed what they did or did not find informative about the module. Participants also provided other comments they believed would improve the program. CCOD and NRS then synthesized the feedback to further modify the curriculum. A final YAC curriculum review was held to ensure that the curriculum was youth-friendly and developmentally appropriate.

### **Phase 3: Publication and Promotion**

A copyrighted version of *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* will be available in printed format (limited supply), compact disc format and for download at [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org). In addition, the companion film "1-800-RUNAWAY" is available on DVD and for download at [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org).

Promotion of *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* will include the following:

- Training and technical assistance to curriculum users
- Links to the curriculum on the NRS website
- Utilization of existing partners in generating interest in the curriculum
- Collaborations with existing NRS partners and organizations
- Highlighting the curriculum during National Runaway Prevention Month (November)
- Attending local and national conferences to exhibit and provide presentations on the curriculum
- Establishing and maintaining contacts within the community to spread the word about the curriculum

This project was a unique opportunity for NRS, CCOD and The Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust, youth, schools and other community groups to work together to help prevent youth from running away.

## Guide To Using The Curriculum

You'll find *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* is an easy-to-use format developed with educators, facilitators, and instructors in mind!

### Each module contains the following sections:

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Refers to the knowledge, information, and skills that the participant will acquire after completing the module activities.

#### **Define the Issue:**

- Elaborates on how the specific module and learned skill sets can prevent runaway episodes.

#### **Icons:**

- Notates helpful facilitation tips and recommended supplemental materials pertaining to certain modules/activities.



Contains discussions of a sensitive nature



We encourage you to do this module with family members or guardians.



Activity may require more open space



For a complementary activity or module, please see...



Helpful hint, facilitation suggestion or supplement(s) to consider with the activity/module



A must-do if you are short on time!



May need more time for this activity

#### **Modules Activities:**

- Lists the activity titles, time allotted and methodology for each activity.

#### **Time Required:**

- Notes the approximate length of time required for the entire module.

#### **Materials:**

- Lists the materials, handouts and/or worksheets for the module. Note that some materials may need to be ordered in advance.

**Module Activity Content:**

- Includes approximate time and a detailed script for each activity. The module format indicates:
  - **BOLD VERBS** in the left margin indicate actions to take.
  - An italicized paragraph indicates content the facilitator states aloud to the participants.
  - Includes a complete summary at the end of each module. If you have not completed the entire module, the summary is formatted in sequential order to easily recap the activities.

**Handouts and Worksheets:**

- Lists the handouts and worksheets included in the module.

**References:**

- Provides a list of material used to develop the content area.




**Resources:**

- Offers additional resources on the module content for further readings and materials.





At the end of each module is an appendix that includes handouts, worksheets and pre- and post-tests for participants. Please return the completed pre- and post-tests to:

Prevention Specialist  
National Runaway Switchboard  
3080 North Lincoln Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60657

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