



PORTRAIT OF A RUNAWAY

Runaways are not “bad” kids. They are not running *to* something, but away *from* something. They are dealing with a situation that feels overwhelming, be it family dynamics, bullying, gender identity or being lured from home over the internet. They believe living anywhere else is better; even if this means living on the streets. Their home situation usually involves many problems, not one isolated problem.

Anyone may run away from home when situations become devastating for them. And it is important to understand that a youth’s reason for leaving is unique to that individual. There is no such thing as a “typical” runaway. Runaway youth come from every kind of neighborhood, rich or poor, rural or urban. There is no differentiation between race or religion.

NRS MISSION

The mission of the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) is to keep America’s runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

NATIONAL DISTINCTION

The National Runaway Safeline is the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth, the only organization to ever hold that distinction.

NRS SERVICES

Crisis Intervention: NRS operates a confidential 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online crisis service (live chat, emails, bulletin board) 24/7/365. Texting is now also another option for kids in crisis to connect at 66008. Our frontline team of staff and volunteers receive 40 hours of training to provide non-judgmental, non-sectarian and non-directive support, empowering callers to develop a plan of action to improve their situation.

Information & Referrals: A database of about 10,000 youth and family resources provides countless options for callers to access a myriad of services, such as counseling, shelter services, alcohol/drug treatment and child protective services.

Conference Calls: When youth request assistance contacting their family or an agency that can help, NRS facilitates a conference call. The frontline team member

remains on the line with the youth, advocating, as needed, on their behalf.

Message Service: NRS maintains a message service for youth who want to relay a message but are not ready to communicate directly with their parent. NRS’ message service is a less intimidating means for a youth to reestablish contact with their parent/guardian and often serves as the first step toward reunification. In addition, a parent may access the service to leave a message for his/her child.

Home Free: In partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., NRS helps reunite runaway youth with their families, or alternate living arrangement through a free bus ticket home. More than 15,000 youth have been reunited with families through the Home Free Program since 1995.

Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum: NRS has created a free 14-module, interactive instructional tool, available in English and Spanish. The evidence-based prevention curriculum is intended to build life skills; increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention; educate about alternatives to running away; and encourage youth to access and seek help from trusted community members.

Prevention and Educational Materials: NRS provides educational and promotional materials free of charge to individuals, schools and organizations to distribute within their community. All prevention and education materials are available to order or download at 1800RUNAWAY.org.

Online Resources: Our website, 1800RUNAWAY.org, has four main goals: to provide online crisis intervention with one-on-one chats, emails or bulletin board postings, to direct calls to the hotline so that youth and families can receive verbal, individualized attention and support; to engage youth and families so they can access critical information before a runaway episode occurs; and to disseminate information about NRS, youth and runaways to the community.

Fee-Based Training: NRS staff are frequently contracted to provide training on a myriad of topics, including commercial sexual exploitation of children, *Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, NRS’ crisis intervention model and other topics listed at 1800RUNAWAY.org.

NRS HISTORY

Founded by a group of Chicago agencies and originally named Metro Help, the hotline was established in 1971 to fill a need for comprehensive crisis intervention for young people in Chicago. It was conceived as a centralized organization with 24-hour services, expertise in all youth-related issues and as an information clearinghouse of youth services.

In 1974, the National Runaway Safeline received an eight-month federal demonstration grant to establish a national hotline. During this time, 11,000 calls were received demonstrating the need for this type of service. Since then, NRS' capabilities and services have grown considerably. Annually, NRS makes more than 250,000 connections to help and hope through hotline, online and offline services. The operations are supported by a professional staff and over 120 volunteers.

NRS' services are provided through funding from and in partnership with the Family and Youth Services bureau in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, private funding is raised from foundations, corporations and individuals.

NRS VOLUNTEERS

As a non-profit organization, NRS depends heavily on volunteers. NRS volunteers include "liners" in its Chicago call center, who chat online and answer calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from youth and families in crisis. Each liner completes more than 40 hours of specialized training to provide hotline support to callers from across the country. In addition, volunteers serve as task force members to help plan activities. Volunteer ambassadors, street team members, across the country promote NRS by distributing runaway prevention educational materials and 1-800-RUNAWAY promotional materials. Volunteers are of every age and socio-economic background.

"The amazing supervisors and wonderful volunteers keep me coming back! [The call center supervisors] are truly a joy to work with. They are always patient and understanding. I've met some great people during my work as a frontline team member at NRS. NRS does great work and attracts great people in return—people that are truly passionate about this work and dedicated to making a difference" - Heather, NRS Volunteer

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STATEMENT OF NEED

The statistics tell the story of why NRS is in operation. In a time when so many children are in crisis, NRS' services are needed even more urgently. Recently, the National Runaway Safeline released The Runaway Youth Longitudinal Study. From a nationally representative study of 15,000 individuals, NRS determined compelling evidence that running away from home as an adolescent is correlated with important health, economic and juvenile justice outcomes in adulthood. Adults who ran away from home as a kid were...

- ✓ 3 times as likely to attempt suicide
- ✓ Twice as likely to smoke
- ✓ 72% more likely to be a recipient of welfare
- ✓ 2 ½ times more likely to be arrested

2014 STATISTICS – REASONS FOR CALLS

Family Dynamics: divorce, remarriage, problems with siblings, extended family **-30%**

Mental Health/Economics: depression, suicide, counseling or therapy, concerns and referrals, financial difficulties **-16%**

Abuse: neglect, emotional maltreatment, physical abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation **-16%**

Youth Services/Judicial System: relationship with social worker, alternative housing, judicial system **-15%**

Peer/Social: pressure from friends, bullying, gang issues, dating and relationships **-9%**

Transportation: Since 1995, NRS has reunited over 14,000 families through the Home Free Program done in partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc. **-5%**

Alcohol/Drug: by youth, friend, parent, family member, treatment concerns **-4%**

Health: physical ailment, pregnancy, STDs, including HIV/AIDS **-2%**

Sexuality: homosexuality, bisexuality, sexual concerns of self or others **-1%**

Sexual Exploitation: coerced into having sex for basic needs, recruited by someone into sex industry, forced participation in sex industry **-1%**

Visit 1800RUNAWAY.org for more statistical information.

1-800-RUNAWAY
1800RUNAWAY.org