



Frontline

Keeping America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

SPRING/SUMMER
2010
NEWSLETTER

94% OF CRISIS CALLERS CONTACTED 1-800-RUNAWAY FOR THE FIRST TIME

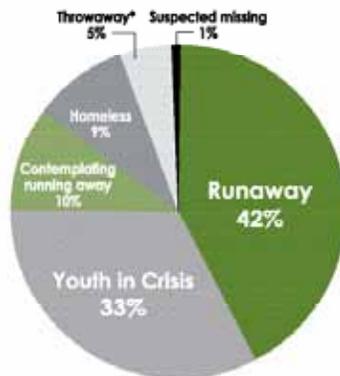
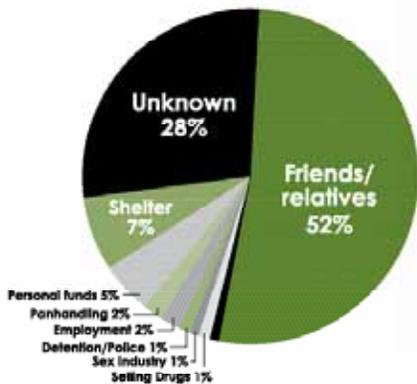
By: Lashawnda M. Carter

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) released its 2009 caller statistics for the crisis hotline. From January 2009 through December 2009, NRS handled a total of 117,602 calls; a three percent increase from the previous year. Statistical data was collected on 16,932 crisis calls. Of those crisis callers, the majority (94%) called the hotline for the first time. Family dynamics (29%) continues to be the number one reason runaway and at-risk youth seek help. According to the annual call volume statistics, peer and social problems (13%) is the second identified motive for callers to seek help.

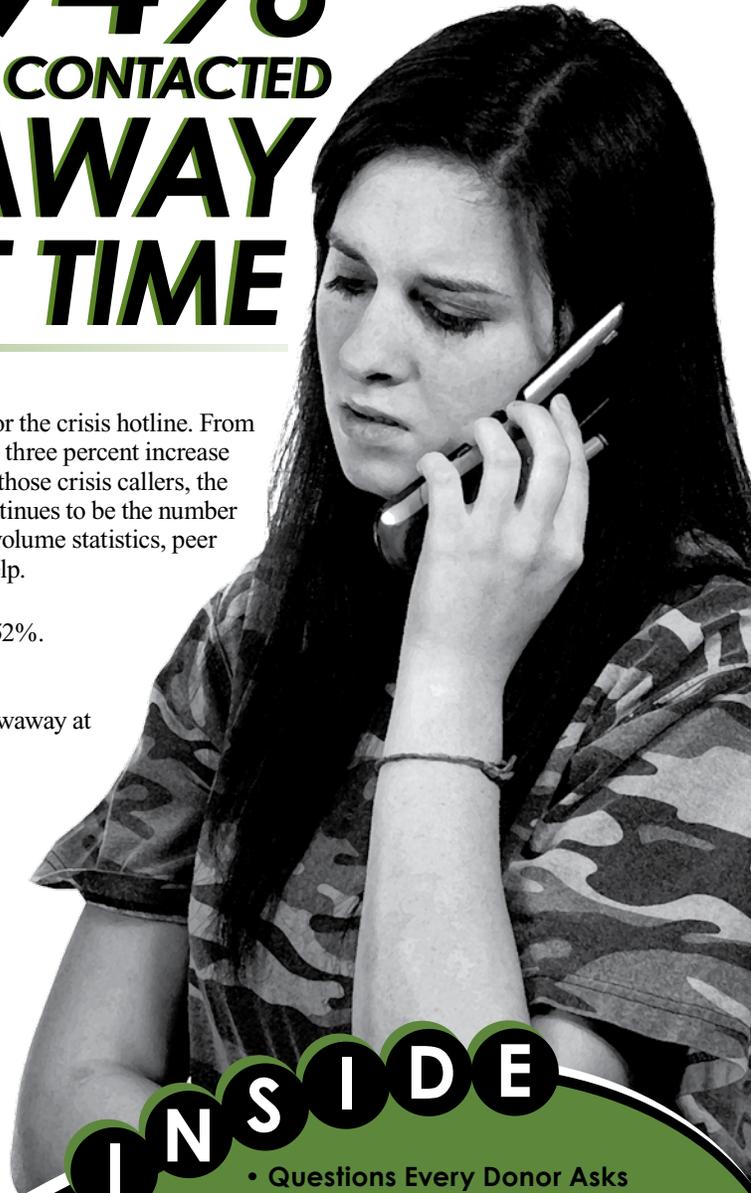
Among youth crisis calls, the report also revealed:

- Friends and family are the most frequently identified means of survival at 52%.
- 53% were callers between the ages of 15 and 17.
- More than half have been on the street for one week or less.
- More than half of the youth were already on the street as a runaway or throwaway at the time of call.

52% of crisis callers depended on friends and relatives for their means of survival while on the streets.



56% of youth crisis callers were away from home
(*runaways, homeless, throwaways)



INSIDE

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- Raquel's Story
- NRS Needs Your Help!
- Join the Running for Runaways Team

For the complete report of the 2009 Caller Statistics visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

NRS' Year At A Glance

Not only did NRS handle over 117,000 calls in 2009, we are proud of our other accomplishments last year, as well.

January: NRS launched the "birthday club", a fundraising initiative allowing donors to sponsor the call center on their birthdays and receive information on calls handled and families reunited through our Home Free program with Greyhound Lines, Inc.

February: NRS released a nine-year trend analysis in crisis caller statistics showing increases in younger calls and economic issues.

March: The youth section of www.1800RUNAWAY.org was redesigned to more prominently feature NRS social media vehicles, including: *Switched-On* e-zine and blog, MySpace and Facebook.

April: NRS launched *E-Source*, a monthly electronic communiqué targeted to provide information on NRS services and other resources for runaway and at-risk youth.

May: NRS implemented the second year of the three-year Strategic Plan to continue to 1) build the infrastructure and capacity to deliver results for youth and 2) strengthen, deepen and broaden NRS programs.

June: Coldwell Banker facilitated a special event to raise nearly \$10,000 for NRS.

July: NRS Street Team members distributed materials and promoted 1-800-RUNAWAY in 11 states.

August: *Hablemos*, the Spanish version of NRS' *Let's Talk* runaway prevention curriculum was produced and made available for free to schools and youth serving organizations.

September: Country singer Jason Michael Carroll featured NRS on his *Hurry Home* music video about a young girl running away from home.

October: The *New York Times* prominently featured NRS in *Running in the Shadows*, a two-part series drawing attention to the runaway crisis.

November: The Hudson Bay Bridge was lit green to promote National Runaway Prevention Month.

December: Spirit of Youth 2009 activities raised over \$110,000 and honored Chef Charlie Trotter for his on-going support of NRS and at-risk youth.

Thank you for your role last year and this upcoming year in supporting NRS' mission of keeping America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.



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Successful Year of Outreach



Program, Education, and Research Task Force Concludes Successful Year of Outreach, Spins Off Research Committee

By Jasleen Jaswal Vines

The Program, Education, and Research Task Force (PERTF), led by board member Dr. Gary Harper, Ph.D., M.P.H. and National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) Director of Programs Gordon Vance, concluded a year-long campaign to raise awareness of specific NRS initiatives in November.

The PERTF, which included prominent academics and social service providers, used its extensive network to promote the utilization of NRS' services and data, such as the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* (RPC), while also developing new community partnerships.

"There was great nationwide participation," said Vance. "task force members opened doors, provided us with new contacts, and spread information about the RPC and National Runaway Prevention Month within different networks."

Dr. Harper agrees. "Through the time we had the meetings," he says, "people learned a lot about the RPC and also did a lot of activities in their areas to promote the utilization of it. We had one member who brought copies of materials to an academic conference. We had another member who distributed information about the RPC through her network of academics and researchers."

Besides Harper and Vance, the task force included:

Trudee Able-Peterson, The Street Works Collaborative
Colette Auerswald, Division of Adolescent Medicine, UCSF
James Bolas, Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services
Carolyn Broughton, State of Illinois Department of Human Services
Leslie Clark, Keck School of Medicine USC
Akeshia Craven, Chicago Public Schools and NRS Board Member
Rhys Gardiner, Boston-based community activist and consultant
Susan Haskell, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
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Rose Haggerty, Houston Independent School District
Michele Kipke, Children's Hospital Los Angeles
Andy Johnson, Colorado Department of Human Services
Carolyn Wong, Children's Hospital Los Angeles

The PERTF members set out with the goal of accomplishing their objectives and then reassessing its efforts after one year. This review prompted the formation of NRS' Research Oversight Committee (ROC), which includes some members of the PERTF. The purpose of this new committee is to oversee research utilizing NRS caller data.

"NRS hasn't had a formal procedure for sharing its data and working with academics in the United States," Dr. Harper says. "It's critical so that people can learn more about at-risk and runaway youth, and also get the word out about NRS. If I'm a researcher in Seattle, I'm going to go through ROC but also learn a lot about NRS. Through day-to-day work, that researcher will also share information about NRS with other service providers in the area. It's a model – a lot of agencies need to do a better job of integrating academics and service providers. Research should be informing practice, and vice versa. With NRS' ROC, that's possible."



CALL US. WE CAN HELP. 1-800-RUNAWAY

Youth Sex Trade Story

Raquel's Story

By Scott Spiegler

"National Runaway Switchboard," Stephanie said as she answered the phone in NRS' call center.

She was greeted by silence with intermittent sobs.

"Hi, is everything ok?" No one responded. "Why don't you take a few deep breaths and try to relax. I am here to listen and can wait until you are ready to talk. We are a completely confidential hotline, so nothing you say will be repeated to anyone" Stephanie assured the caller.

After a few moments, the young woman at the other end of the line started to tell Stephanie her story.

"My name is Raquel. I am 16 years old. I ran away from home four months ago with my boyfriend because I thought he loved me and wanted to be with me. Lately, things have been awful. After we left home, we ran out of money, and my boyfriend told me that if we wanted to survive, I would need to sell my body. I have been doing it for about two and a half months and am just so tired of it. If I don't come home with enough money, my boyfriend gets so angry, he beats me up. I am scared to be here. I feel like my life is spiraling out of control and I am in danger. I'm at the Greyhound bus station now. Please, I just want to go home to my mom and get help. Things were good at home, and I miss my mother so much."

Stephanie reassured Raquel and explained the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) Home Free program. She explained that a conference call would follow. Raquel was nervous as to how her mother would react, but Stephanie assured her that she was there for support and would try her best to make sure the call was productive and effective.

Stephanie then called Raquel's mother, Martha, to open up family communication. Martha was happy to hear that Raquel wanted to return home and get help. She said she had not heard from Raquel in months and stated she had filed a runaway report. Martha sounded relieved that Raquel wanted to come home. She wanted her daughter to agree to seek counseling and go back to school. Raquel agreed. Stephanie also gave them both resources for counseling and therapy before ending the conference call. Raquel's Home Free ticket was now ready to be booked. [Home Free is NRS' family reunification program done in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc.]

After Stephanie was finished booking the ticket, Raquel started to cry again.

"Thank you so much, Stephanie. You have been so kind to me and I will never forget you. You have really saved my life," Raquel said.

Stephanie felt tears well up in her own eyes as she said, "You are so welcome, Raquel. I am glad we were able to help. Remember, if you need anything, we are here 24/7 to take your call."

After hanging up the phone, Stephanie felt a sense of accomplishment. Raquel was soon going to be on her way home and Stephanie was elated knowing that NRS was there to help.

** The name and location have been changed to protect anonymity of the caller.*

NRS Needs Your Help!

By Scott Spiegler

Volunteers serve as the lifeblood of the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS). There are many ways to volunteer and support youth at NRS. Whether serving as a front line team member or street team member, hundreds of individuals help provide youth and families across the nation with an opportunity to find solutions to whatever problems they may be experiencing.

Crisis Line Worker (Chicago area only): NRS' front line team answers more than 300 calls received each day. "Liners," as they are called at NRS, assist callers with identified needs such as filing an

abuse report, finding shelter or making arrangements to return home. "It is a great way to serve youth from all over the country," says liner Jessica. You too, can join Jessica and our other liners who answer the call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Street Team Member: Because many teens and families in crisis don't know about our services, the street team localizes a national initiative. There are several ways to help get the word out about 1-800-RUNAWAY in a community. Street Team Members distribute materials throughout their local community. Handing out or leaving materials in schools, churches, libraries, stores, restaurants, malls, bus/train stations or anywhere that youth and parents will see them are great ways to promote NRS. Street team member Andrew put up NRS posters in his church, school, and around his neighborhood. His high school counselor told him that because of his efforts, she was able to give NRS' hotline number to ten students! You too, can do the same. And the best part: do it ON YOUR OWN TIME!

If you wish to pursue or have questions about our volunteer opportunities, please contact NRS' volunteer coordinator at volunteer@1800RUNAWAY.org or (773)289-1726.

Please join hundreds of National Runaway Switchboard volunteers, making a difference everyday!



Richter Studios filmed a television public service announcement pro bono to promote NRS Street Teams. Cinematographer Marcel Morin, Actor Joshua Volkers, and Director Joe Martinez.

Join the Running for Runaways Team

By Jasleen Jaswal Vines

Last year, the National Runaway Switchboard's (NRS) Running for Runaways team raised over \$16,000 to help keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

Consider running your next race for a good cause—on NRS' Running For Runaways Team!

NRS is currently recruiting runners for ANY race, in ANY city! People have run in Minneapolis, Philadelphia—and of course, Chicago. Race lengths have varied from 5Ks to marathons.

NRS also has a limited number of charity entries for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

Runners who run for NRS receive:

- Paid entry (while slots are open)
- Team shirt
- Weekly training emails
- Incentives for exceeding your fundraising goal
- Chicago-area runners also receive race training

Additional perks vary by race.

Interested? Contact Jasleen Jaswal Vines at jjaswal@1800RUNAWAY.org to learn more or sign up!



RFR 2009 members Jay Baldrige, Shari Bryan-NRS Administrative Assistant, Todd Garrett, Emily Tang, Froilan Landeras-NRS Call Center Supervisor, Caroline Knoll, and Kelly Carder fuel up at an NRS-hosted pasta dinner the night before the Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

NRPM in a Box Initiative

By Lashawnda M. Carter

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) announces the ninth annual National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) campaign, *Running in the Shadows*, which will be held in November. The campaign theme stems from the *New York Times* October 2009 two-part series "Running in the Shadows," which garnered national attention by painting a vivid picture of the dangers our youth face once they run away from home. To kick-off the campaign, NRS launched the *NRPM in a Box* initiative in which NRS will distribute toolkits to two-hundred national and grassroots organizations to raise awareness of NRPM.

The purpose of the *NRPM in a Box* initiative connects with the two goals for NRPM: **1) raise awareness of the runaway issues; and 2) educate the public about solutions to prevent youth from running.** Each box includes NRS general brochures, stress bookmarks, *Home Free* wallet cards, a Ludacris *Home Free* poster, green light lapel pins, green light bulbs, *Switched-On* key chains, the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, a copy of the *1-800-RUNAWAY* film, and the "Running in the Shadows" series.

The initiative began on March 14, 2010 with four stops in Nevada and California. The initiative runs through November 30, 2010 and includes face to face distribution to states around the country, including Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Georgia.

For more information on receiving an NRPM in a Box (supply is limited) and how to implement your own NRPM activities, visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org or contact outreach coordinator, Lashawnda M. Carter, lcarter@1800RUNAWAY.org.



The 2009 National Runaway Prevention Month campaign "Running in the Shadows"



NRS Executive Director, Maureen Blaha and Tim Mullin, Interim Director for the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth.

Natalie Smith, NRS Training & Education Manager with SSWAA president, Rochelle Leiber-Miller.



Dr. Lois Lee, Executive Director for Children of the Night in Van Nuys, California and Gordon Vance, NRS Director of Programs.



Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 117,602 calls in 2009!

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The following people made donations in memory of Mrs. Mary Chmielewski. Mrs. Chmielewski's daughter, Maureen Blaha, is the Executive Director of the National Runaway Switchboard.

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