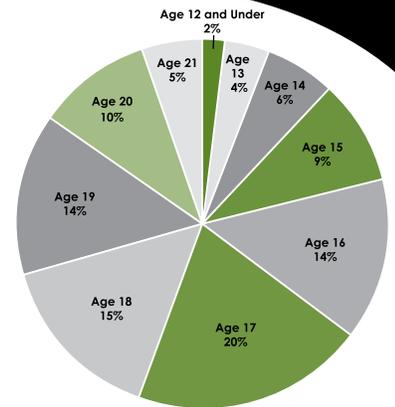




Frontline

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

SPRING/SUMMER
2012
NEWSLETTER



The largest group of crisis callers to NRS in 2011 was age 17 at 20%.

Economics, Neglect, LGBTQ Issues Increase among Youth Callers

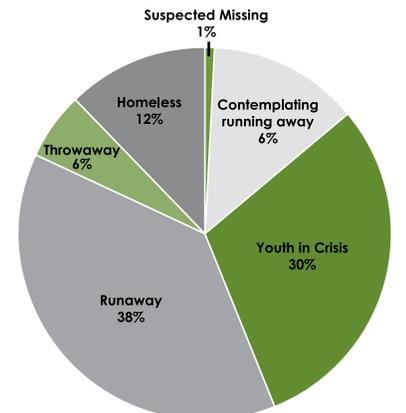
By Lashawnda M. Carter

Each year, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) handles more than 100,000 calls. NRS provides non-secularian, non-judgmental, anonymous, solution-focused crisis intervention. Those looking from the outside in may imagine a runaway as a youth coming from a poverty-stricken household or a defiant youth who disobeys the rules of the home. Contrary to this belief, there is no typical runaway. There is no typical phone call to the hotline. In fact, NRS handles calls from every demographic. In order to stay abreast of the issues youth callers identify with and provide them proper services, NRS analyzed trends in crisis calls to the hotline from 2000-2011.

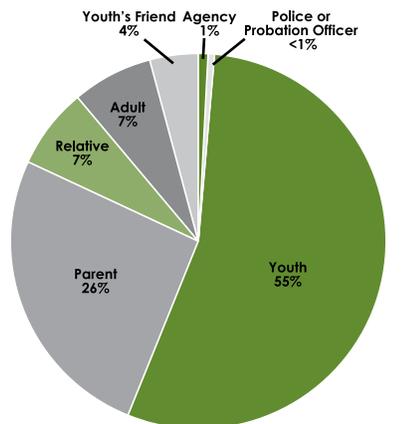
In April 2012, NRS released its annual NRS Crisis Caller Trends Report. According to the report, NRS received more calls over the last three years from or about youth who identify economics (27 percent increase), as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) (7 percent increase) issues, as reasons to call 1-800-RUNAWAY. In addition, the most significant group of issues identified by callers was neglect and physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse at 13 percent. Family dynamics remains the issue most often cited by crisis callers at 28 percent.

In addition, an annual hotline evaluation is conducted to help NRS continue to provide the most effective services and support for its callers. Outcomes from the survey showed that one hundred percent of youth callers said they would call again if they needed help and would also refer others to 1-800-RUNAWAY. "Very effective" ratings increased in every category, including: a thirty-nine percent increase when callers were asked how effective was NRS in talking with them in a supportive manner; and a thirty-seven percent increase when asked how effective was NRS in discussing details of their situation.

NRS is constantly analyzing data and providing the most comprehensive research and statistics on youth in crisis. Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org/learn/research to learn more.



Throwaway youth calls have increased 3 percent over the past year, and more than 50 percent over the last decade.



Over the past decade the number of youth calling about themselves has increased by 35 percent.

INSIDE

- Evelyn's Story
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- What's New at NRS?

Broaden • Assess • Increase • Develop

In June 2011, NRS began a five-year strategic plan focusing on four priority areas: Broaden the delivery platform to better serve our target market, Assess and develop collaboration strategies within the youth services sector, Increase and diversify funding sources, Develop and implement an effective branding strategy to better connect with a larger percent of our target market. As we come to an end of the first year, here's how NRS focused on its organizational goals based on the strategic plan.

BROADEN THE DELIVERY PLATFORM TO BETTER SERVE OUR TARGET MARKET: NRS has significantly strengthened its social media presence. In the past year, NRS reconfigured the staffing structure to focus a position solely on digital media management. In this role, staff facilitated the redesign of the youth blog section, introduced a new mobile website for smartphones, and broadened NRS' presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Tumblr. In addition, ongoing search engine optimization ensures youth find www.1800RUNAWAY.org when searching for help online.

ASSESS AND DEVELOP COLLABORATION STRATEGIES WITHIN THE YOUTH SERVICES SECTOR: NRS has contracted with the Youth Network Council as the informational and referral line for Illinois' Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS). NRS provides a 24-hour crisis response system providing a continuum of services to assist the youth who are at risk of involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. The partnership began in early 2012.

NRS continues to serve as a knowledge leader in runaway and homeless youth research. NRS released ground-breaking results from a 15-year longitudinal study investigating the correlation between running away as a youth and mental health, financial and legal complications as an adult. In addition, NRS' website maintains a robust research section for organizations and the media and public to access on youth issues.

INCREASE AND DIVERSIFY FUNDING SOURCES
Changing from a gala to cocktail reception for its annual benefit, NRS netted a record-breaking \$102,000 for its Spirit of Youth 2011 fundraiser. In addition, NRS continues to seek out new individual donors through cultivation efforts, including: increasing NRS' presence in the Combined Federal Campaign and securing a matching grant for the holiday appeal.

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE BRANDING STRATEGY TO BETTER CONNECT WITH A LARGER PERCENTAGE OF OUR TARGET MARKET. NRS is completing a comprehensive branding project targeted at increasing awareness and visibility among youth, parents, partners, and funders. We are evaluating incorporating a tagline into our current naming and branding strategy and assessing potential risks and benefits of a name change. Through qualitative and quantitative research from youth and NRS stakeholders, NRS will further consider what direction to take this summer.

As NRS begins the second year of its strategic plan, we thank you for your support in helping us keep America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.



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Maureen Blaha
Executive Director

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OUR SERVICES ARE FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, AND AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY 365 DAYS A YEAR. CALL US. WE CAN HELP. 1-800-RUNAWAY.

Evelyn's Story

By Colin Packard

Evelyn, a seventeen-year-old from Mississippi, hadn't eaten for almost two days when she called the National Runaway Switchboard. Laurena, a trained volunteer on the lines, answered the phone.

"National Runaway Switchboard, how can I help you?"

"Hi, I think I'm stuck," said Evelyn.

"Do you want to tell me what happened?"

Evelyn was more than ready to share her story; she told Laurena that after what had happened to her, she hated to think about lying to anyone.

"I'm stuck in Las Vegas because of a guy I met."

Listening intently, Laurena guided Evelyn along with questions, encouraging her to explore what made her decide to leave Jackson, Mississippi.

She'd always wanted to act, Evelyn confided. For fun, she and her friends would get together for mock photo shoots and post the pictures to their profiles on social media websites. She never expected anything to come of them; for the most part, they all liked to laugh at the pictures afterwards. When a network executive contacted her about a modeling job after viewing her photos, she was skeptical, but she was interested. After speaking with him, he checked out. Or so she thought.

"I paid for my plane ticket to Vegas, but he never came to pick me up," Evelyn said. "I think it's because I told him I didn't have any cash left, and I don't have my own credit cards."

Evelyn admitted that she searched for the executive on the internet after he claimed to be too busy to meet her and she discovered him to be a scam artist. She realized the modeling job didn't exist. She felt dumb.

"My boyfriend doubted it the whole time," she said.

"Was it okay with your mom that you left?" asked Laurena.

"No, I don't think so. I didn't really tell her before I left."

For two days, Evelyn had been without any friends or family to support her. She told Laurena that she stayed in the lobby of a hotel for the first night, and, for the most recent night, she was able to find a shelter that had a spot for her. All she wanted was to get home, but she didn't have a way. Her boyfriend didn't have the money to get her back, nor did her mom.

"We have a program called Home Free," Laurena explained.

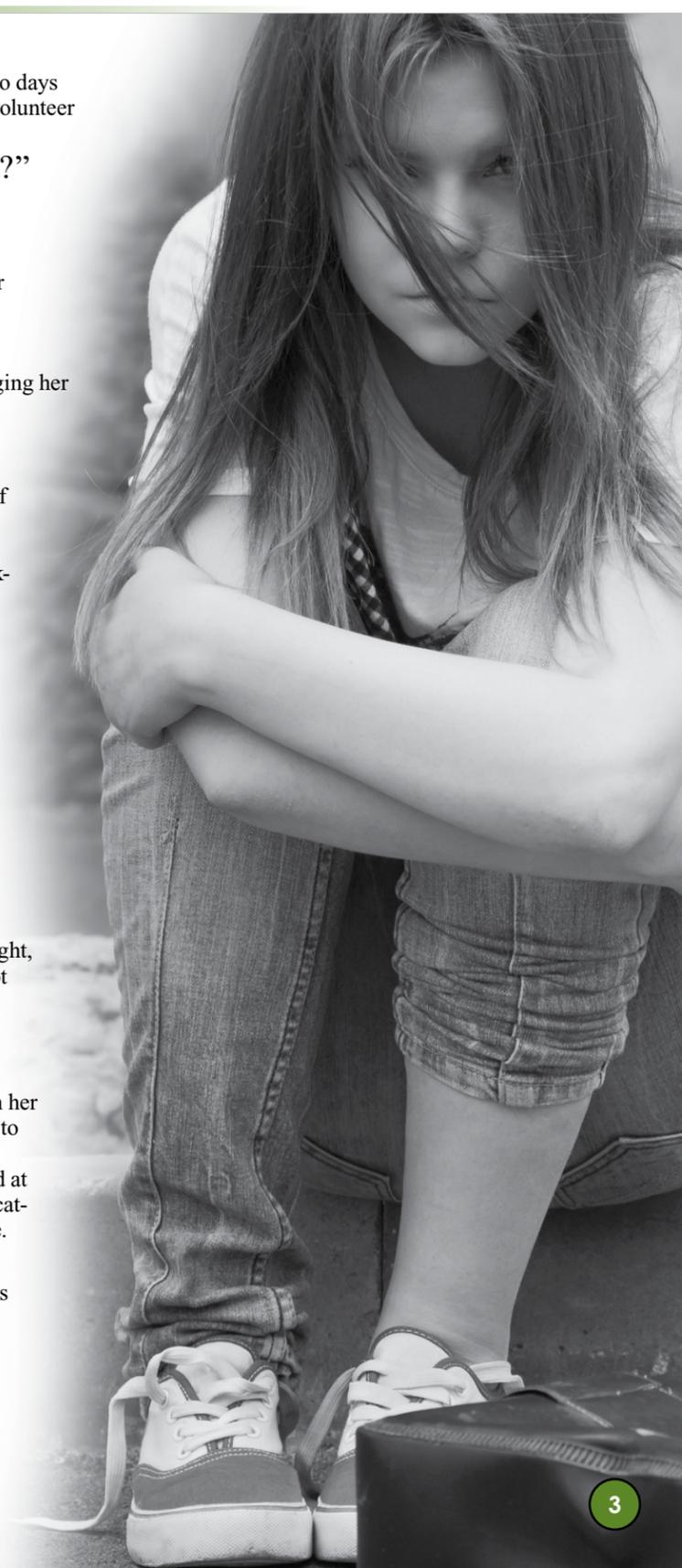
After discussing the process with Evelyn and reviewing the situation with her supervisor, Laurena moved forward in the Home Free process with a call to Evelyn's mother. She had no idea her daughter was in Las Vegas. It became apparent that both Evelyn and her mother wanted to be reunited at home, and they agreed that they needed to be more open about communicating their feelings to each other to avoid similar predicaments in the future.

Almost an entire day went by talking with Evelyn and her mother and waiting for documentation, but Evelyn was going home. A Greyhound bus ticket was booked in her name and she was scheduled to arrive home in a couple of days.

"Thank you. I can't tell you how much I appreciate this," said Evelyn.

"If you and your mother need more resources once you get home, give us a call. We're always here."

**Names and locations have been changed to respect anonymity.*



NRS Youth Webpage Undergoes Redesign, Incorporates Blog and Videos

By Crisis Call Center videos by Colin Packard

In April, NRS launched a redesigned Youth & Teens page on its website. The new page incorporates the agency's youth blog, which focuses on youth issues and how NRS can be a resource in a variety of circumstances. In addition, the page features

video interviews with call center staff explaining how NRS helps youth in crisis, how the Home Free program works, and the atmosphere of the call center.



The new youth webpage can be seen by visiting www.1800RUNAWAY.org and clicking on "Youth & Teens."



"We have bulletin boards and email. We now have the live chat from 4:30-11:30." -Gwen

Here are some quotes from the videos featured on the Youth & Teens page.



"I had this idea of a call center being a row of cubicles with people on headsets. Our call center is in a circle and completely open and still confidential." -Lindsey



"When somebody calls in, the first thing we want to find out is if they are safe." -Matt



"Shelter, counseling and therapy, healthcare services, you name it - we have access to a lot of this stuff." -Fro



"We can take a message from them and give it to their parents if they're uncomfortable opening a dialogue." -Maria



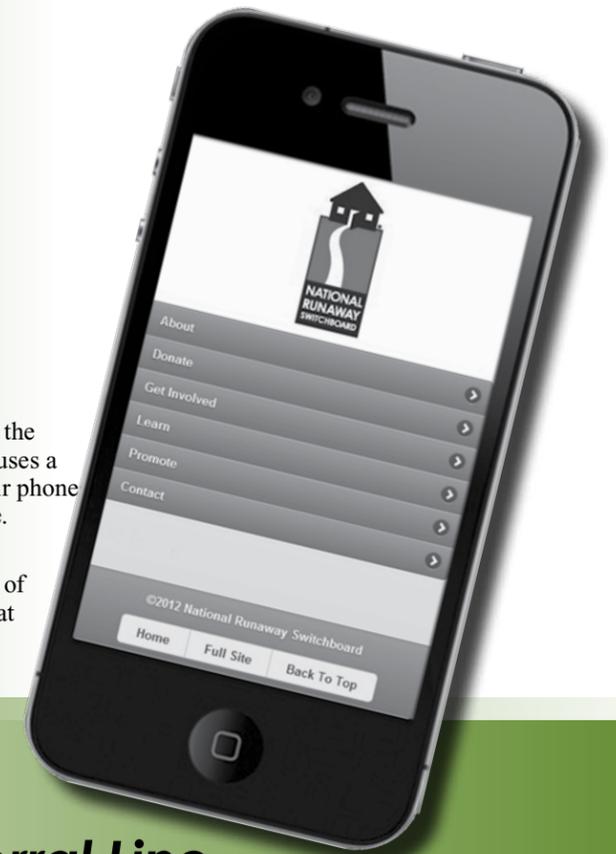
What Else is New at NRS?

By Jasleen Jaswal Vines

NRS Launches Mobile Website

Mobile phone use among youth 13-17 continues to accelerate. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, one in four youth uses a smartphone. Mobile internet is the second most popular way youth use their phone beating out social networking and mobile application downloads and usage.

Given that data, NRS is launching a mobile website to ensure the best user experience for those in need of services. The mobile site will make key parts of the desktop site available on mobile browsers, including the ability to live chat with NRS' frontline team of volunteers and staff.



NRS Takes Over Management of Illinois Information and Referral Line

As of February 1, NRS has been operating the toll free 24/7 Illinois Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services statewide information and referral line (CCBYS IRL) through a contract with Youth Network Council.

Sometimes called the "grandfather" of all of Illinois' programs and services for at-risk youth, CCBYS has been in operation since January 1, 1983. The goal is to quickly provide callers, who often are contacting CCBYS on behalf of youth between the ages of 11 and 17, with the contact information of the designated CCBYS service provider in their area.

The program provides comprehensive and community-based individualized services to at-risk youth and their families to achieve family stabilization and reunification. CCBYS diverts or minimizes youth contact with the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems.

NRS' frontline team of volunteers and staff underwent additional training to handle the CCBYS calls.



Check out our Tumblr!

Tumblr, a microblogging platform and social networking website, is incredibly popular with teenagers. The website's traffic more than doubled in 2011, and one estimate puts 50% of Tumblr's visitor base under the age of 25. In an effort to reach its target population, NRS launched a Tumblr in March. The goal is to encourage youth to consider NRS a voice they can trust on a variety of issues. Visit it at nationalrunawayswitchboard.tumblr.com.

Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 100,000 calls in 2011!



The 2012 Running For Runaways team raised over \$12,400 for NRS at the Wrigley Start Early Run.



NRS Board members Richard Malone, David Dean and Christina Van Pelt set the pace for the successful fundraising event.

FUNDING PARTNERS

Family & Youth Services Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Youth Network Council

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Shawn Gannon
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In Honor of Rich Malone's Super Bowl Party
Kim Fette
In Memory of Mother, Grandmother, and Great-Grandmother Gladys Marvin and Kay Zelkin
In Memory of Dwight and Terry Nims
Ellen and David Wilson



(left to right) NRS board alumni Rick Stoneham, NRS executive director Maureen Blaha, NRS board member David Wells with NRS board member and event host Rich Malone.



NRS 2012 Volunteer of the year, Jon Newgren, and executive director, Maureen Blaha.



Volunteers Daniel Kessler, Ryder Moses, and Ron Schankin attend NRS' annual Volunteer and Community Recognition reception held to honor volunteers for their hard work and commitment to help NRS keep runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.



NRS board member Rich Malone initiated an NRS fundraiser at Marty's Martini Bar and raised over \$1,000. (Left to right) NRS executive director Maureen Blaha, Rich Malone and Owner Marty Rago.



"I like that I'm able to get hands-on experience working directly with callers and learning about the different resources available to people in crisis." -Heather (Simms) Skomba, June 2011 Volunteer of the Month



NRS staff attended an all day retreat at BeSpoke Cuisine in Chicago's west loop area to develop team building skills with lessons in meal preparation.



"I think my strongest skill as a liner is my ability to empathize with the caller, and to let them know that they are truly supported." -Heather Mann, October 2011 Volunteer of the Month



Cubs Care, a McCormick Foundation Fund, awards NRS a grant to sponsor the 2012 Thanksgiving dinner for Chicago homeless and runaway youth.

(left to right) Laura Ricketts, Chair, Chicago Cubs Charities; Maureen Blaha, NRS Executive Director, and Chicago Cubs' legend and NRS ambassador Ernie "Mr. Cub" Banks.



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Frontline is a publication of the National Runaway Switchboard

3080 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657
Tel: 773.880.9860 • Fax: 773.929.5150 • TDD: 800.621.0394
Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
Maureen Blaha • Executive Director