

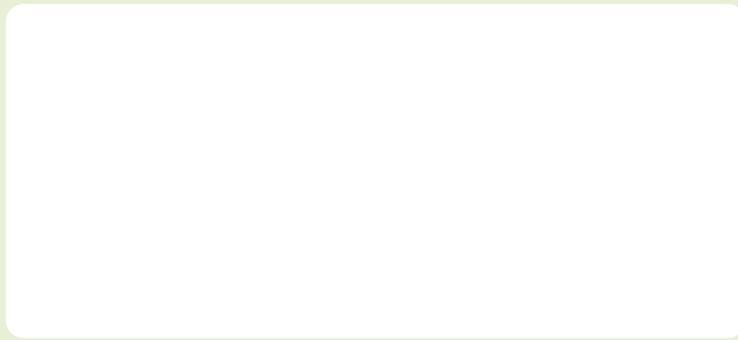


MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

"Thanks!
You helped me."



National Runaway Safeline
3080 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657
1.800.RUNAWAY
1800RUNAWAY.org



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FRIEND



STUDENT



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NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

NRS

“More than meets the eye” is the National Runaway Safeline’s (NRS) theme for the 2015 Annual Report. We think the phrase illustrates the fact that the youth we serve every day are so much more than their housing situation. A youth isn’t just a runaway or homeless or at-risk. She is a daughter. He is a son. She is in the choir. He writes poetry. She dreams of being a scientist. He wants to be a professional football player or own his own pizza place.

When something happens in her life, in his life, NRS is accessible through our crisis hotline and online services. We are here to listen to the stories. We are here to help by taking a deeper look at what has gone wrong. NRS’ mission is to keep America’s runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. As the federally-designated communication system for runaway and homeless youth, NRS uses innovative partnerships and collaborations to ensure every youth knows to call 1-800-RUNAWAY, click 1800RUNAWAY.org or text 66008 to connect to help.

When life seems to be out of focus for a youth, NRS remains a trusted, confidential and viable resource. We’ve been offering help and hope to youth since 1971. Because of the support of our funding partners and donors, NRS has been able to grow to meet the ever-changing needs of over four decades of youth generations. It’s not just about answering the phones anymore. NRS is also more than meets the eye. We are doing more and more crisis intervention online. Today’s youth can use chat, email or the forum to share their story. And NRS does more than intervention. We also focus on prevention. Our runaway prevention curriculum helps build life skills.

And NRS isn’t just 25 staff members. We are 20 board members, 120 volunteers, 9 associate board members, 493 street team members, 30 youth activist league members and hundreds of donors. Together, NRS continues to help keep the daughter, the son, the choir member, the poet, the scientist-in-training, the professional football player wannabee and the future pizza place owner safe and off the streets. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the National Runaway Safeline!



MAUREEN BLAHA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CHRISTINA VAN PELT
BOARD CHAIR

A youth isn't just a runaway or homeless or at-risk. She is a daughter. He is a son. She is in the choir. He writes poetry. She dreams of being a scientist. He wants to be a professional football player or own his own pizza place.



Staff

The NRS staff is a team of professionals committed to serving runaway, homeless and at-risk youth. (left to right, kneeling: Rebecca Bowlin, Jennifer DiNicola, Samantha Owens. Standing: Gordon Vance, Sabrina Hamilton, Lindsey Shelton, Ashley Berntgen, Johnny Moran, Brittany Mabry, Erin Scheck, Katy Walsh, Steven Barragan, Maureen Blaha, Olivia Mansour, Andrea Medina, Katelyn DeLavan. Not pictured: Larry Bechdol, Amelia Garcia, Jim Lucchesi, Elizabeth Hercher, Danny Meloy, Larry Miller.)

We inform the nation as KNOWLEDGE LEADERS

NRS continues to spearhead the national dialogue on runaway and homeless youth issues. We help the general public garner a deeper understanding of the cause and impact of youth experiencing homelessness.

- In fiscal year 2015, NRS launched the new, youth-friendly 1800RUNAWAY.org. The site is built to connect youth to services quickly with call, chat, email and forum buttons prominently featured. Clear and succinct navigation allows youth and parents to easily access information about services.
- NRS is regularly sought out as an expert on runaway and homeless youth in multiple national arenas. In Chicago, NRS walked the red carpet for the premiere of *The Homestretch* documentary. In DC, NRS joined expert panelists, including celebrity activist Cyndi Lauper, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. In Charleston, NRS presented on human trafficking at the Interstate Commission for Juveniles annual meeting.
- And internationally, social workers from Casablanca, Morocco toured our facilities and met with NRS staff and a youth volunteer.
- NRS’ expertise was contracted for 11 professional trainings across the country, several specifically on sex trafficking of youth.
- NRS’ family reunification Home Free program was featured in “Child and Youth Services” professional journal citing improved communication and awareness of differing perspectives.

We support as YOUTH ADVOCATES

Fourteen year old Jimmy called from Grand Rapids, Michigan. He had skipped school and was calling from a friend’s house. Jimmy told frontline team member Betsy that the night before, he had gotten into a huge fight with his parents.

“They treat me like I’m their slave,” Jimmy said. “I do everything.” Betsy encouraged, “Tell me more about ‘doing everything’.”

Jimmy shared that after school, he goes right home to take care of his two little sisters. He helps them with homework, makes dinner, gets them into the shower, and puts them to bed. Jimmy feels like he has too much responsibility. He has tried to talk to his parents about feeling overworked before, but with no luck.

“I’m tired of all this crap. I want to just run away,” Jimmy stated. “What else can I do?”

Throughout the conversation, Jimmy referenced leaving several times but paired each statement with the question, “What else *can* I do?” He said leaving would be difficult, even though it was an answer to *some* things.

Betsy did some reality checking, asking him where would he live and how would he get to school. She walked through how difficult it may be leaving home. Jimmy acknowledged that running away wasn’t really what he wanted. At that point, the conversation turned to exploring other options.

Betsy asked Jimmy about other supportive people in his life. He said his friend’s parents happen to be teachers at his school. They know him, and his parents, very well. Even though they didn’t know he was currently in their home, the possibility of talking to them and getting their support and advice appealed to Jimmy.

Towards the end of the call, Jimmy felt better about trying to work things out by talking to his friend’s parents. He was nervous about involving other adults in the situation but was glad to look at his issues through a new lens. Betsy assured him he could call back if he ever thought of running away again or if things didn’t go well with his parents.

“Thanks! You helped me,” Jimmy said as he ended the call.

*Names and locations have been changed to respect anonymity.

