WHY
WE DO WHAT WE DO
We have a mission to keep America’s runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE

This year’s annual report is late. For the last five years, the National Runaway Safeline’s (NRS) fiscal year has ended on July 31st. Our audit was completed in September. And then, the annual report was distributed in October. This year began and ended differently.

NRS anticipated formally submitting a proposal to continue to serve as the National Communication System (NCS) for Runaway and Homeless Youth in early 2017. NRS had been under a five-year grant contract cycle for the last couple decades. And NRS had served as the NCS since 1974. Although we were prepared to re-submit this past winter, the Family & Youth Services Bureau didn’t release the official proposal announcement until May 10th with a submission deadline of July 10th. And NRS’ 2013-2017 contract was due to expire on July 31st.

This summer was a nail biter! The timing, the uncertainty, the budget constraints sent NRS into an existential crisis. We were forced to explore if we weren’t the NCS who were we? NRS defines itself as a 24/7/365 hotline and online crisis center. We have a mission to keep America’s runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. Our trademarks are a 40-hour crisis intervention training and the Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum. These are our essences. For over four decades, thousands of staff, board members, volunteers, and donors have worked tirelessly and passionately to ensure millions of youth in crisis were supported. What would happen to future youth if we weren’t here to help?

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF NRS DISAPPEARED?

Fortunately, for youth and families across the country, this question went unanswered. On September 20th, NRS received notice that we would continue for the next three years providing crisis intervention hotline and online services. Without a contract in August and September, NRS continued with limited funds to provide crisis services to our nation’s youth without interruption. And although our government funding has been flat since 2006, NRS continues to transform technology, training and services to better serve youth in crisis. We are able to be there for them because you are there for us. Within this annual report, we will share why we support, why we listen, why we evolve, why we can.

WHY WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO.

The generosity of our donors and funders provide the vital resources to operate. On behalf of the youth and families NRS serves, thank you to everyone who supported the National Runaway Safeline from August 1, 2016 through September 29, 2017. Why we can is because of YOU. Thank you!
On October 15, 2016, Spirit of Youth raised over $170,000 for NRS. (left to right) Board Members and event co-chairs Joyce Sapir and Troy McDonald Kane with Board Member Erica Wolfort.

We support.
NRS’ services are supported by staff, board members, volunteers, donors, associate board members, and community partners. Here is why we support...

NRS has a proud history of over 40 years of nationwide support for our youth in need and their families. We have over 250,000 contacts annually, and continue to grow. As volunteers we get comprehensive training, and are well supported by our dedicated supervisors and NRS’ staff. For me, it is truly a privilege to be able to volunteer and support the mission of NRS.

– Ken Lavelle, Board Treasurer, Volunteer, Volunteer of the Year 2017

What keeps me coming back is the friendly environment at NRS and how much support and help we receive from the supervisors. It’s also a very rewarding feeling when I can help a caller. I remember a caller who was stranded in a city because his friends had abandoned him there. It was nice to start the Home Free process with him and see it through all the way to the end when his bus ticket got booked.

– Jermaine Dictado, Volunteer since 2014

Spirit of Youth (SOY) is our only major fundraising event of the year and our sponsors and donors are the lifeblood of our organization and SOY. Without our sponsors, SOY would not happen. Without this event, that raises money for NRS, we wouldn’t be able to keep open 24/7 helping youth and their families in crisis across the nation. It’s so exciting to see how the event goes from the planning stage to fruition and the level of enthusiasm of our task force is unmatched. When we get together there is such great camaraderie and the ideas just flow.

– Joyce Sapir, Board Secretary, Spirit of Youth Co-chair
WE LISTEN. The first step in providing support is to listen. The National Runaway Safeline’s (NRS) crisis services team listens and provides non-directive and non-judgmental support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

A chat came in from a 16 year old transgender individual, Jay, one Friday evening. Jay began the chat saying they* were suicidal, because they could no longer deal with being themselves in a rural Christian household where their gender identity was not accepted. They were constantly harassed at school and home for their appearance, and had reached a breaking point.

Jay said that earlier that day, their parents had taken them to a lecture at their local church on “transgenderism” by a well-known anti-gay pastor. The pastor told them that “transgenderism” is a mental illness, or something people do for attention when they are lacking God in their lives. The pastor told them not to acknowledge people’s preferred pronouns, and to confront transgender people by telling them their real gender identity is the sex they were born with. Jay talked about how the lecture made them feel defeated and worthless. It completely invalidated them as a person, and made them feel like ending their life.

Immediately, the frontline team member, aka ‘liner’, attempted to revalidate Jay’s self-worth and discussed their strengths as an intelligent, resilient, self-aware individual. The liner and Jay discussed how being trans is not an illness. The liner talked about when people do not accept Jay’s identity it is that person’s problem, and not their own. Jay agreed and said they would not let other people’s hate define them, and said they were no longer feeling suicidal.

The liner and Jay then talked about Jay’s support system and how they have been coping. Jay said that since they are in a non-accepting community they looked for support through online LGBTQ chatrooms. However, a few months ago, the person online that Jay had relied on for support stopped being supportive and became a sexual predator. That experience online caused Jay to start having panic attacks, so they had recently started seeing a counselor. Jay’s counselor recognized their preferred pronouns, but also did not adequately provide them with the support they so needed. The liner found an LGBTQ center in a nearby city that Jay could go to for support when they have the car on the weekend that also had counseling services. The liner and Jay also brainstormed ways Jay could cope on their own. Jay decided to start writing in a journal, doing personal affirmations, and going to the Trevor Project or LGBT Hotline chatrooms rather than the ones they were using before. Jay left the chat saying they felt much better than they did earlier, and thanked the liner for listening to them.

Jay was not alone during this hard time. NRS was their support system. Here to listen. Here to help.

*Since Jay self-identified as “they”, this vignette was written with that pronoun. Transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals may prefer to be referred to as “they” as a gender neutral, singular pronoun.

The youth’s name and details have been changed to respect anonymity.
WE EVOLVE. Our goal is to reach youth when they are in most need, when they are in crisis. This past summer, NRS submitted a proposal to the Family & Youth Services Bureau to continue to serve as the national communication system for runaway and homeless youth. During the process, NRS had the opportunity to look back on the previous five year grant cycle. The accomplishments were extraordinary as NRS has continued to evolve to connect with youth.

In June 2015, NRS launched a new website which saw a significant increase in traffic.

<table>
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<th>1800RUNAWAY.org visitors</th>
<th>FY13</th>
<th>FY14</th>
<th>FY15</th>
<th>FY16</th>
<th>FY17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>267,502</td>
<td>210,572</td>
<td>492,389</td>
<td>775,769</td>
<td>797,366</td>
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In addition, the new website, reinforced by social media, escalated online crisis services.

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<td>Crisis Emails</td>
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<td>6586</td>
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<td>Forum Postings</td>
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<td>3084</td>
<td>3336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chat Requests</td>
<td>5264</td>
<td>9367</td>
<td>15,440</td>
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NRS continues focus on crisis logs as the best measure of crisis intervention services received. In 2016, NRS completed 29,806 youth crisis logs. Although NRS received over 60,000 calls during 2016, each call did not necessarily result in a crisis log being completed. In addition, crisis logs also encompass our online services. A crisis log is completed when the youth, or adult on behalf of a youth, connecting receive crisis intervention services. NRS had a 44% increase in crisis logs from 2015 to 2016 and nearly 100% from 2014 to 2016.

We continue to evolve in order to match our audience, so that we are able to help those in need, more quickly and more easily.
Our funding partners and donors provide the financial resources that allow us to operate crisis services for youth and their families 24/7/365.

**WHY WE CAN.**

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017**

Board of Directors 2016-2017: (left to right seated) Executive Director Maureen Blaha, Joyce Sapir-Secretary, Brian Shin, Don Sands (left to right standing) Greg Buseman, Ryan Bracken, Randall Royer-Chair, Troy McDonald Kane, Ken Lavelle-Treasurer, Anne Schankin, Michele Lehman, Tom Lawler. Not Pictured: Suzi Cabo, Cindy Campbell, Jodi Cohen, Peter Kingma, Adriana Kissel, Jack Philbin, Robert Speed, Erica Wolfort.

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**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Fiscal Year 2017, August 1, 2016 through July 31, 2017*

- Revenue $2,073,183
- Expense $2,090,462
- Net income $(17,279)
- End Net Assets $350,495
- Program services $1,653,365
- Management and general $288,191
- Fundraising $148,906

*The complete audit and 990 for Fiscal Year 2017 and information for the two month gap period of August-September 2017 is available at 1800RUNAWAY.org/about/financials.