



NATIONAL RUNAWAY PREVENTION MONTH

2020 Toolkit

1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM



FYSB Family & Youth
Services Bureau



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4.2 million people ages 13–25 endure some form of homelessness every year. In a classroom of 30 students, at least one of them will experience homelessness in a year. These numbers are staggering, but we can work together to address this crisis.

November is National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM), a public awareness campaign designed to “Shine a Light” on the experiences of runaway and homeless youth that too often remain invisible. It is also an opportunity to spotlight the resources available to support youth in crisis throughout the nation. As part of the campaign, individuals, organizations and communities across the nation are encouraged to work together to prevent youth homelessness.

This toolkit was created to help people get involved with National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM). It also offers ways to get communities, youth advocates and young people involved with NRPM.

This awareness campaign will equip communities with the knowledge, resources and action plans to engage in early interventions and prevention efforts for youth at risk and runaway and homeless youth.

BECOME AN OFFICIAL NRPM PARTNER

National Runaway Prevention Month is successful due to the incredible community of partner organizations who join this effort every year. You can become an NRPM partner and shine a light on issues impacting youth in your local community by filling out our partnership form at 1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM-partner.

National Runaway Prevention Month Partners receive:

- NRPM updates and useful information/resources;
- A spotlight on your organization on the main NRPM page and on social media; and
- Regular partnership calls to collaborate and discuss strategies on engaging our communities.

Please reach out to prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org or call 773-289-1723 with any questions.



Goals and History

NRPM GOALS

1. To raise awareness of the runaway and homeless youth crisis and the issues that young people face.
2. To educate the public about solutions and the role they can play in runaway prevention and ending youth homelessness.

NRPM HISTORY

In October 2002, national leaders across the country met at the White House Conference on Exploited and Runaway Children to discuss issues and challenges impacting runaway and homeless youth and youth in crisis. In connection with this conference, they recognized National Runaway Prevention Week, which has since been expanded into a month-long prevention and awareness campaign.

Over the years, members of Congress from both the House and Senate have supported NRPM. In 2019, the Senate passed the bipartisan [Senate Resolution 442](#), which designated November as National Runaway Prevention Month.

NRPM is spearheaded each year by the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) with the support of the Family and Youth Services Bureau and other national and local partners.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE

Founded in 1971, the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) is a national non-profit organization committed to ensuring that runaway, homeless and at-risk youth are safe and off the streets. NRS serves as the national crisis and communication system for at-risk youth ages 12-21.

Each year, NRS makes approximately 100,000 connections to help and hope through hotline (1-800-RUNAWAY), online (1800RUNAWAY.org) and prevention services, which are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The National Runaway Safeline also provides the free, evidence-based *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum* for schools and youth-serving organizations.

For more information, visit 1800RUNAWAY.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

THIS TOOLKIT IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR A VARIETY OF AUDIENCES:

- **Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) organizations**, such as street outreach, emergency shelters and long-term transitional living, maternity group home programs and other organizations that work directly with youth are encouraged to participate in NRPM. Staff, young people, and board members from these organizations see firsthand the magnitude of this issue and can help bring awareness and also highlight the support and resources available for those who are struggling.
- **Schools and after school programs** are an important part of reducing the number of runaway and homeless youth. Often serving as a hub of resources and connections in communities, schools and after-school programs are in a unique position to implement early intervention and prevention tools, assist with drawing awareness to the issue and serving as an important link to information and available services.
- **Youth** are critical to the success of NRPM and it is essential to include their voices and perspectives. Youth have the capacity to impact their peers, support their friends through participation in this campaign by showing them they are not alone and raising awareness.
- **Other youth and family-serving organizations**, including community organizations, national partners, local government and child welfare agencies.

As a campaign dedicated to runaway and homeless youth, youth leadership and involvement is a key component for success in the planning, execution and sustainability of NRPM activities and efforts. Accordingly, the NRS Youth Advisory Board has helped to create a Youth Toolkit to foster more youth participation in NRPM. As partner organizations plan to support NRPM, youth involvement will ensure that prevention and awareness events and messages speak to their experiences, as well as adults. In addition, including youth with lived experience can result in a more impactful and engaging awareness campaign, while giving these young people a sense of empowerment and ownership.

[Please click here to access the Youth Toolkit.](#)

- **Local leaders, organizations and anyone committed to supporting youth and families** can bring awareness to the issues faced by runaway and homeless youth. With the support of local leaders and organizations, NRPM can bring key issues to the forefront and ensure community engagement.



Events and Activities

Each year, National Runaway Prevention Month partners host creative events to engage communities, raise awareness and build support for available services.

These events are an effective way to spotlight resources for youth and inform communities on how to get involved with local and national organizations and efforts to end youth homelessness.

GREEN LIGHT PROJECT

Green is the official color of NRPM. The Green Light Project is an effort to “shine green lights” across the country as symbols of support and beacons of hope. This has included everything from lighting entire buildings and spaces green in communities across the country to replacing regular light bulbs with green bulbs to wearing green. Some examples on how to plan a green light event are:

- Host a green light event/ceremony and purchase and distribute green light bulbs in your community. Green light bulbs are available at most local hardware stores.
- Secure a landmark or well-known building in your community to be lit green in November. Requests to turn a public space or building a specific color often need to be made many months in advance of the lighting date.
- Create green awareness ribbons and distribute them to local government officials and/or local businesses.

INVOLVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Invite local government representatives (mayor, city councilperson, congressman, etc.) to attend your event or to sign a proclamation to declare November as National Runaway Prevention Month in your city. Having a respected county official, mayor or other notable person in attendance or issuing a proclamation adds credibility to your event and potentially brings press coverage. Visit 1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM for a sample proclamation.

If you received a proclamation, [please fill out this form](#) or email prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org. This way, we can support your effort by highlighting your proclamation in our social media platforms.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Convene a group of youth, service providers, experts and stakeholders to lead a community discussion about runaway and homeless youth issues.

Here are some sample panel questions depending on the members of your panel:

Service Providers:

- What can communities do to prevent youth from running away or experiencing homelessness?
- What resources and strategies help to support runaway, homeless and at-risk youth in your community?

Youth Panel Questions:

- Can you share your experience interacting with youth-serving organizations?
- What do you think is important for youth service providers to know when serving youth?
- What do you think helps build resiliency in youth?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

Community engagement projects happen when members of a community come together, decide upon a way to make their neighborhood more welcoming for all its residents and take action. This can include, but are not limited to, painting murals, building community gardens, and installing miniature libraries. These projects can help youth feel more connected to their communities and feel a sense of support.

COMMUNITY DISPLAY

Develop a display of statistics and [outreach materials](#) (i.e., bookmarks and brochures) that community members can take and share. You might try a public building, business establishment, library or school. The National Runaway Safeline has FREE educational materials available for your use at 180ORUNAWAY.org.

Also be sure to include copies of the [NRPM Call to Action Guide](#) at your display.

HOST A FUNDRAISER

Organize a fundraiser at your office, place of worship, school, or social club. The funds collected can be donated to a local runaway and homeless youth program or a local youth-serving organization in your community.



Tips for Hosting Events

PARTNER WITH A LOCAL ORGANIZATION

Collaboration and support to local organizations dedicated to runaway and homeless youth is a key element of NRPM. Runaway and Homeless Youth programs in your area may be hosting a local NRPM event. Learn about the RHY programs in your community and see how you can support them through a partnership or volunteer opportunity. You can find local RHY programs on the FYSB website at www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb.

USE THE LET'S TALK: RUNAWAY PREVENTION CURRICULUM

Our Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum helps youth explore difficult subjects while building life skills and resiliency. Visit 1800RUNAWAY.org to download the curriculum for free and see the Messaging Guide section to see some recommended Let's Talk activities.

COMMITMENT CARDS AND WALL

Make a commitment to end youth homelessness by filling out a [commitment card](#). Show your followers on social media how you plan on supporting runaway and homeless youth by posting a picture of the card and use the hashtag #NRPM2020.

You can also create a commitment wall with these cards at your school, community, or organization. Have people fill out these cards and hang them up where the public can see (i.e. on a window or at the front of the building). You can also post a photo of the wall on social media. If you tag NRS @1800RUNAWAY, we'll share your posts!

PARTICIPATE IN 2020 PARTNER CALLS

NRPM partners participate in regular calls to discuss strategies and tips on engaging our communities in runaway and homeless youth issues throughout National Runaway Prevention Month. If you are interested in participating in a partner call, please email prevention@1800runaway.org.





Tips for Hosting Events

CONTINUED

COLLABORATE:

Connect with your local RHY providers and other youth-serving organizations to see if they already have something planned that you can support. Find a local provider on the [FYSB website](#).

MAKE IT TANGIBLE:

Focus your event on a specific call to action. This can be a fundraiser, creating a community taskforce, getting involved with local RHY providers, etc. See our [Call to Action Guide](#) for a full list of ideas.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

While in-person events are a lot of fun, online events may also work well for you and your supporters. It may also be an opportunity to engage a larger audience. Host a Facebook Live event, Twitter Chat or online fundraiser. Get creative!

TIE THE EVENT TO THE ISSUE:

Organize a fun event or challenge that will draw people in while relating it back to the issues of runaway and homeless youth. This will provide extra motivation for people to participate. If you're a service provider, include quotes or a story from youth. You can also use available statistics and findings from research to motivate people to get involved. See the messaging guide section for updated statistics and information.

INVOLVE YOUTH:

Incorporate the voices and leadership of youth in your efforts. Youth are experts of their own experiences and will know best how your campaign and/or event can further resonate with young people. Click here to view the NRPM Youth Toolkit for more ways young people can take action and participate.



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2020 National Events

Here is a list of national events for you and your community to participate in throughout November.

Connect with a [local RHY provider](#) and check out our [NRPM partners](#) to plan or participate in national and other events in your area.

NOVEMBER 1, 2020: FACEBOOK PROFILE PICTURE DAY

Kick off National Runaway Prevention Month by adding the #NRPM2020 Frame to your Facebook Profile Picture. To do this, visit facebook.com/profilepicframes search for NRPM, and upload it as your picture. Encourage your networks to do this as well – including staff, board, youth, donors, community leaders, etc.

Be sure to post a caption along with the picture to let your friends know about NRPM and how they can learn more. An example is:

“4.2 million youth endure homelessness every year. I’m participating in National Runaway Prevention Month to raise awareness of the issues & runaway homeless youth face. Learn more at [#NRPM2020](https://1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM)”

NOVEMBER 2 – 6, 2020: EDUCATION WEEK

During this week, the National Runaway Safeline will lead an online educational series to inform the public about runaway and homeless youth (RHY) issues. This will include providing current statistics, exploring existing issues, resources available and the challenges of navigating different systems.

Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) ahead of time to join the conversation.

NOVEMBER 5, 2020: TWITTER CHAT AND NATIONAL RESOURCE DAY

NRPM partners and individuals will host a Twitter Chat on November 5th at 2:00 PM CT where they will engage in a discussion about runaway and homeless youth issues. Follow along and participate @1800RUNAWAY and use the hashtag #NRPMChat.

Throughout the day, partners will also spotlight resources in their local communities on social media to show those in need what is available and how to access them. Use the hashtag #NRPM2020 and NRS will highlight what you share!





2020 National Events

CONTINUED

NOVEMBER 10, 2020: WEAR GREEN DAY

Dress in green on November 10th. For added impact, post the picture with a message about your commitment to supporting runaway and homeless youth and include the hashtag #NRPM2020. You can get creative and make this a competition in your office: see who can wear the most green!

NOVEMBER 17, 2020: LIGHT THE NIGHT COMMUNITY EVENTS

Youth service agencies, community groups and individuals across the country will host events to “Shine a Light” on the issues and show solidarity with youth in crisis. Previous events included resource fairs, sleep outs, open mic nights, walks and more.

If you are planning a 2020 event or have hosted one this year [please fill out this form](#) or email prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org. This way, NRS can highlight the event on social media and also keep track of all the wonderful events across the country!

NRPM 2020 LIVE EVENTS

The National Runaway Safeline will host live, streaming events throughout NRPM aimed at increasing awareness on a range of topics. Events will include a Lunch & Learn Prevention Series, a Youth Forum on Preventing Youth Homelessness, and a Prevention Roundtable. Please visit 1800RUNAWAY.ORG/NRPM to see the latest details on dates, times, and links to attend these and other events throughout the month.



Spreading the Word

Whether your NRPM campaign revolves around a fundraiser, a panel discussion or a social campaign, it is important to consider how you will communicate your message.

On the right, you will find resources and tips on how to spread the word about NRPM and your events.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

It is important to know who you want to attend your event or engage with your campaign. Your audience will not only guide the type of event you host, but will also influence how you communicate your message.

Examples of who your audience may be include:

- Youth
- Parents
- Service providers
- Law enforcement
- Key stakeholders
- Advocates
- Donors

HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD

There are so many different ways to communicate your NRPM message. See our Resources section below for our free materials that we encourage you to integrate into your campaign, including sample social media posts and graphics.

YOUR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS MAY INCLUDE:

- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - Youtube
- Print Publications
- Blogs
- Radio
- Televisiong
- Billboards
- Signage
- Word of Mouth
- E-mail
- Podcasts
- Advertising on Social Media
- Public Relations - write a press release or letter to the editor to your local newspaper.



Campaign Resources

Every year we provide a number of resources and materials that you can use to spread the word about National Runaway Prevention Month.

All of the materials listed are available at 1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Press Release & Media Pitch Template
- Media Pitch Tip Sheet
- Sample Proclamation
- Proclamation Request Letter

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

- Event Flyer
- NRPM Logos
- Community Presentation

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Graphics
- Sample posts
- Facebook Cover
- Twitter Header
- Facebook Profile Picture Frame



Commitment Cards



Social Media Graphics

Messaging Guide

This messaging guide is intended to serve as a resource that allows participating organizations and individuals to easily access content and statistics during NRPM.

ABUSE

- According to an ACF/FYSB Street Outreach Program Study one of the top three reasons reported for youth experiencing homelessness was physical abuse (23.8%).¹⁶
- The National Runaway Safeline's *National Trends on Youth in Crisis in the United States* report found that there was a 65% increase in young people who connected with NRS' hotline and online services who experienced abuse and neglect in the last 5 years.¹¹
- Homeless youth are at high risk for involvement in the criminal justice system. Homeless youth who have been physically abused are almost twice as likely to be incarcerated compared to homeless youth without a history of physical abuse.¹⁸
- A 2015 study looking at homeless youth in Minnesota found that over half of their homeless youth population had been physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected at some point in their childhood.⁵
- A history of childhood physical abuse is associated with an increased risk of experiencing homelessness.²⁴
- **Recommended activity from our [Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):** "Healthy Relationships" activity in Module 4: Peers and Healthy Relationships.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- 91% of runaway and homeless youth had been approached by someone offering an opportunity for income that was “too good to be true.”³⁰
- A recent study from the Loyola University New Orleans’ Modern Slavery Research Project interviewed 641 runaway and homeless youth from across the country. The study found that 19% experienced some form of trafficking, 14% had been involved in sex trafficking, 8% had been involved in labor trafficking, and 3% had been involved in both sex and labor trafficking.³⁰
- Researchers estimate that the between 33% and 90% of victims of commercial child sexual exploitation have experienced sexual abuse, chronic maltreatment and neglect.³¹
- According to an ACF/FYSB Street Outreach Program Study, almost a fourth of participants (24.1%) said that they had “agreed to be sexual” with someone in exchange for money, and 27.5% had “agreed to be sexual” with someone in exchange for a place to spend the night.¹⁶
- Runaway, homeless and at-risk youth can be susceptible to human trafficking because often times traffickers prey on vulnerability and instability.²⁹
- In 2018 over 23,500 runaways were reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and one in seven were likely victim of child sex trafficking.⁹
- In a 2013 study The Institute of Medicine found that homelessness is the largest risk factor for the commercial sexual exploitation of children and sex trafficking of minors.⁴
- In two different studies where trafficked youth were surveyed, nearly all had experienced homelessness or housing instability.⁵
- Youth from vulnerable populations are disproportionately recruited into trafficking situations.⁵
- **Recommended activity from our [Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):**
“Runaway Risks” activity in Module 6: Runaway Reality.



SYSTEM INVOLVED YOUTH

- Of the nearly 25,000 runaways reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 2017, 88% were in the care of social services when they went missing.⁸
- Runaway and homeless youth are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system. Some reasons include:²
 - Youth experiencing homelessness may commit survival crimes such as trespassing to be in a warmer place, sleeping in a park after dark or protecting themselves during a physical altercation.
 - Young people may enter the system through charges related to victimization, like trafficking.
- Approximately 12 to 36% of youth ages 18 or 21 exiting the foster care system become homeless.³
- Within the first two to four years of leaving the system, more than 25% of former foster children become homeless.²
- According to report from Coalition for Juvenile Justice and National Network for Youth, more than 80% of providers reported that juvenile justice involvement was a top contributor to youth homelessness.¹⁰
- **Recommended activity from our [Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):**
“Who’s On Your Bus” activity in Module 3: Personal Influences.



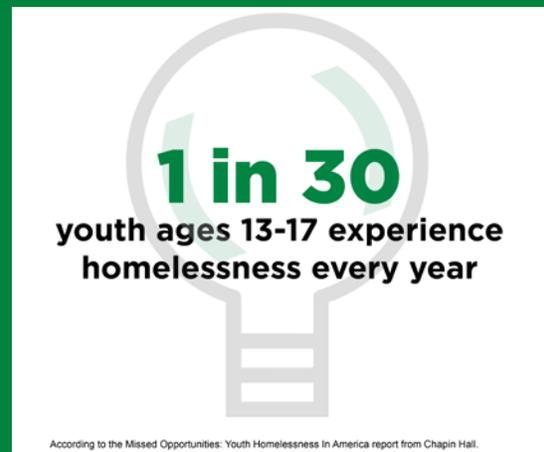
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

- Studies estimate between 19% and 36% of youth experience homelessness shortly after aging out of the foster care system.²⁴
- A youth's risk of homelessness increases as their age of entry into foster care increases. Similarly, a youth's risk of homelessness increases as their number of foster care placements increases.²⁶
- According to a FYSB study published in April of 2016:²⁵
 - About half (50.6%) of the homeless youth surveyed reported having stayed in a foster home or group home.
 - Youth with a foster care history experienced homelessness for much longer (27.5 months on average) compared to youth who had never been in foster care (19.3 months, on average).
 - Youth who had formerly been in foster care reported higher levels of victimization both prior to and after becoming homeless.
- Youth whose last placement type was a state shelter had a 55% greater chance of becoming homeless than those who had been in a family or kinship placement.²⁷
- In some states, youth age out of the foster system at 18 years old. In other states, youth age out of the foster system at 21 years old. The youth who were aged out of foster care at 21 years old had a 42.4% lower chance of becoming homeless than those who were no longer in foster care.²⁸
- **Recommended activity from our [Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):**
"Who's Connected to You?" activity in Module 8: Community Response and Responsibility.



YOUTH FROM VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Youth from vulnerable communities, including Native American, Hispanic, African American, LGBTQ+ and youth with disabilities are at higher risk of running away and becoming homeless. According to the 2017 Missed Opportunities report by Chapin Hall:⁷
 - LGBTQ youth have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness
 - African American youth have an 83% higher risk of experiencing homelessness.
 - Hispanic, non-White youth have a 33% higher risk of experiencing homelessness.
- A significant portion of those who reach out to the National Runaway Safeline are from vulnerable populations. In 2019, 15% self-identified as Black or African American, 11% self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, 6% self-identified as Multi-racial, and 1% self-identified as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.
- **Recommended activity from our [Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):**
“Becoming an LGBTQ Ally” in Module 12: Sexuality & Sexual Orientation.



Visit 1800RUNAWAY.org/NRPM to download our NRPM social media graphics.



EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

- Experiencing homelessness increases a young person’s likelihood of dropping out of school by almost 87%.¹⁹
- Not having a stable living arrangement or experiencing homelessness greatly impacts the education of youth. Some of the barriers to education and attending school are:
 - Due to living situations changing, sometimes youth have to transfer schools. Proper records such as previous transcripts, proof of residency, and medical records slow down the process of placing youth in the correct classroom.²⁰
 - Transportation barriers exist, whether it be transferring schools or continuing at a young person’s school of origin. The 2000 Report to Congress cited transportation as a number one barrier to homeless youth remaining and enrolling in school.²¹
 - Homeless children’s education is also impacted by a lack of school supplies and clothes to wear to school, poor health, and hunger.²²
- Luckily, when implemented correctly, the McKinney-Vento Act greatly helps homeless youth. [Click here to access your State Coordinator for Homeless Education](#) contact information; this will also link to each state’s McKinney Vento Liaison Directory.
- **Recommended activity from our [Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum](#):**
“Road Map: Got Yours” in Module 14: Future Life Planning.

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