

PARENT GUIDE

ASSIST **HELP**
COMMUNICATION **YOU'RE**
NOT **HOPE**
ALONE
GUIDANCE

Help is available for
parents whose children
are at risk of running or
who have already run.

PARENT GUIDE



www.1800RUNAWAY.org
1.800.RUNAWAY

A Hotline to Help

Being a parent isn't easy. It can be especially difficult raising teenagers. Do you know where to turn if you are having problems with your child? We want you to know you're not alone. We can get you connected to the right resources. The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) through its 1-800-RUNAWAY crisis hotline, listens and offers confidential support and resources to parents whose children are at risk of running or who have already run. Here's how we help:



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Crisis Intervention: NRS operates an anonymous and confidential 1-800-RUNAWAY crisis hotline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year while our live chat service offered at www.1800RUNAWAY.org, is another option for kids in crisis to get in touch with us online. Our frontline team of staff and volunteers receive 40 hours of training to provide non-judgmental, non-sectarian and non-directive support, empowering callers to develop a plan of action to improve their situation.

Information and Referrals: A database of more than 13,000 youth and family resources provides countless options for callers to access a myriad of services, such as counseling, shelter services, alcohol/drug treatment and child protective services.

Conference Calls: When youth request assistance contacting their family or an agency that can help, NRS facilitates a conference call. The frontline team member remains on the line with the youth, advocating, as needed, on their behalf.

Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum:

NRS has created a free 14-module, interactive instructional tool, available in English and Spanish. The prevention curriculum is intended to build life skills; increase knowledge about runaway resources and prevention; educate about alternatives to running away; and encourage youth to access and seek help from trusted community members.

Prevention and Educational Materials:

NRS provides educational and promotional material free of charge to parents, individuals, schools and organizations to distribute within their community. All prevention and education materials are available to order or download at www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Message Service: NRS maintains a message service for parents and youth who want to relay a message but are not ready to communicate directly with each other. NRS' message service often serves as the first step toward family reunification. Once you leave a message for your child, you are encouraged to spread the word among your friends and your child's friends that a message is waiting at 1-800-RUNAWAY. Your child can also leave messages for you.

Home Free: In partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., NRS helps reunite runaway youth with their families through a free bus ticket home. Over 14,000 youth have been reunited with families through the Home Free Program since 1995. The process starts when your child calls 1-800-RUNAWAY. We talk to him/her about why s/he ran and why s/he feels ready to return home. Next, we place a conference call between your child and you to talk about their possible return home and determine a plan of action. As a final step, we contact Greyhound with your child to make travel arrangements.

Online Resources:

Our website, www.1800RUNAWAY.org, has tips for parents and teens, educational materials and statistics that can be easily downloaded, while our live chat service offers another option for youth and teens to get in touch with us online and a bulletin board where teens can ask questions anonymously and share their thoughts and experiences. We also offer *Switched-On*, a web 'zine and blog written by teens for teens to get youth 'Switched-On' with knowledge about their options in difficult situations.

STATISTICS

- Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away in a year.ⁱ ⁱⁱ
- Over the past three years, there has been a 56 percent increase in crisis calls identifying economic problems as a reason for the call to NRS.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One in five youth run away before reaching age 18, and half run away two or more times.^{iv}



EST.

1971

SERVING AS A RESOURCE FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS.

The National Runaway Switchboard, established in 1971, serves as the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth. With the support of more than 150 volunteers, NRS handles an average of 100,000 calls annually through its 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and online services.

OUR MISSION

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

1.800.RUNAWAY
www.1800RUNAWAY.org

3080 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657
773.880.9860 Business line • 773.929.5150 Fax
800.621.0394 TDD

ⁱ Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., & Sedlak, A. (2002). Runaway / Throwaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics. National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

ⁱⁱ Greene, J. (1995). Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors. Research Triangle Institute. HHS, ACF - ACYF.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Runaway Switchboard Crisis Caller Trends (2000-2009); Report Prepared by Jennifer Benoit-Bryan at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

^{iv} Pergamit, Michael R. "On the Lifetime Prevalence of Running Away from Home," Urban Institute Research Brief.