

**Definition:** A runaway youth is someone who is under age 18 and has chosen or has been forced to leave their home. Frequently this choice is made to flee circumstances at home, but also takes place when a youth is convinced to leave by another person.

**Risk of Sexual Exploitation:**

Runaway youth are typically approached by a drug dealer or pimp within the first 36 hours on the street, leading to sexual exploitation and other negative experiences.

**This brochure is meant to help families and friends locate and reconnect with youth who have run away.**

**The content found here acknowledges the complex situations that lead to youth running away.**

**Information is based on the research and recommendations of the Safe Harbors Youth Intervention Project (SHYIP).**

## Resources for Help and Healing

National Runaway Switchboard 800-RUNAWAY (786-2424) • Assistance for families and youth, support, counseling

Ain Dah Yung Center 651-227-4184 [www.aindahyung.org](http://www.aindahyung.org) • Native American specific emergency shelter for youth

Bridge 24 hr. hotline 612-377-8800 • 24hr access point for youth and families in need

Children's 24 hour Crisis Response and Intervention 651-774-7000 [www.co.ramsev.mn.us/hs/ChildrenMentalHealth](http://www.co.ramsev.mn.us/hs/ChildrenMentalHealth)

Crisis Connections 24 hr. hotline 612-379-6363 • Crisis counseling, information, referral

Face To Face 651-772-5555 [www.face2face.org](http://www.face2face.org) • Various services and connection to Safe-Zone drop in center

Pt. Northwest 24 hr. hotline 763-493-3052 YMCA • Provides both urban and suburban outreach services

Regions Hospital ER Crisis Program 24 hr. hotline 651-254-1000 • Crisis intervention, referral

StreetWorks 612-252-2735 24hr voice mail • Outreach to youth who are on the streets

TeenPRIDE 24 hr. hotline 612-728-2062 or 888-PRIDE-99 • Counseling, advocacy, referrals

**What can you do when a young person runs away?**

**Tips for Families and Friends**



Product of the Safe Harbors Youth Intervention Project

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**The entire experience of running away can be frightening for everyone involved including the youth, their families, and their friends.**

### **General Suggestions:**

- 1) Remain calm—think clearly about why and where he/she would go.
- 2) Take action to locate he/she in the first few hours you realize they have runaway.
- 3) Offer candid and direct information when asked by law enforcement and outreach professionals concerning what may have led him/her to run.
- 4) Think about what will happen when you are reunited. Note that once found, the problems that prompted them to leave must be addressed and resolved before moving on.

**In all you do, show love and concern, not anger or fear!**

## **What Can Be Done?**

### **Work with Law Enforcement:**

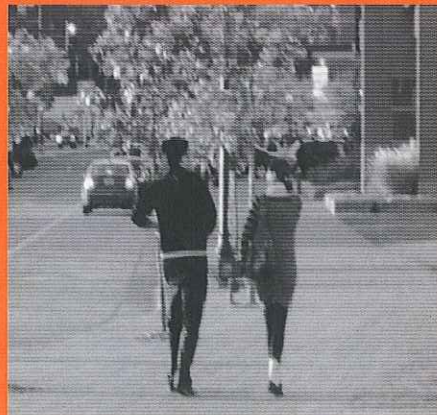
- 1) *Contact law enforcement and make a report.*
- 2) *Request that the youth's name be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.*
- 3) *Provide law enforcement workers with a recent photograph of the youth*

### **Connect with Other Family, Friends, and Community:**

- 1) *Check with friends, school, neighbors, and relatives for clues about his/her whereabouts.*
- 2) *Ask teachers and school staff if they have noticed any unusual behaviors.*
- 3) *Contact the young person's friends. Stress that the youth on the run is NOT IN TROUBLE but that you want them to be safe and to get help.*

### **Work with Outreach Workers:**

- 1) *When appropriate, circulate flyers, pictures, and information about the youth.*
- 2) *Meet personally with local Outreach Workers and shelters. See Resource for contact numbers.*



## **If the Youth Contacts You and Wants to Return**

### **1) Be Open to Change**

On some level, changes must be made to better the situation so the teen does not run again.

### **2) Address Potential Underlying Problems**

Contact the local department of social services, family services, or agencies that help families. Members of the clergy, school personnel, or the law-enforcement community can also direct you to available resources.

### **3) Agree Upon an Adult To Contact**

Identify a "safe" adult for the youth to go to if they are considering running again. Be sure that the contact is aware and accepting of their role.

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**When a youth returns, it is recommended that family and close friends receive follow-up services to help them cope and offer support.**