



National Runaway Safeline

PORTRAIT OF A RUNAWAY

Youth who run away may be perceived as “bad” kids, but typically they’re dealing with situations that feel overwhelming, be it stressful family dynamics, bullying or abuse/neglect. It is important to understand that a youth’s reason for leaving is unique to that individual. Runaway and homeless youth come from every kind of neighborhood, rich and poor, rural and urban.

NRS MISSION

The mission of the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) is to keep America’s runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

NRS SERVICES

- *Crisis Intervention:* NRS operates a confidential 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and online services (live chat, emails and forum) at 1800RUNAWAY.org 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Staff and trained volunteers provide non-judgmental, non-sectarian and non-directive support and empower youth and families to develop a plan of action to improve their situation.
- *Information & Referrals:* NRS’ resource database of national and local service providers and programs contains countless options for youth and families to access services, such as counseling, shelter, 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 crisis services team member remains on the line with the youth, advocating on their behalf as needed.
- *Message Service:* NRS will relay a message from youth to their parent/guardian. NRS’ message service is a less intimidating means for youth to reestablish contact with their parent/guardian and often serves as the first step toward reunification. In addition, concerned adults may access the service to leave a message for the child in their life.
- *Home Free Program:* In partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., NRS helps reunite youth with their families, or get to an alternate living arrangement through a free bus ticket. More than 17,000 youth have been reunited with families through Home Free since 1995. This process is initiated by calling our hotline at 1-800-786-2929.
- *Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum:* NRS offers a free 14-module, interactive prevention curriculum available in English and Spanish. This evidence-based tool builds life skills; increases knowledge about available resources; educates about alternatives to running away; and empowers youth to access and seek help from trusted community members.
- *Prevention and Educational Materials:* NRS provides free prevention and educational materials to individuals, schools and organizations to distribute within their community. All prevention and education materials are available to order or download at 1800RUNAWAY.org.
- *Fee-Based Training:* NRS staff provide training on a myriad of topics, including sex trafficking, the *Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, NRS’ crisis intervention model and other topics listed.



National Runaway Safeline (continued)

NRS HISTORY

Founded by a group of Chicago agencies and originally named Metro Help, the hotline was established in 1971 to fill a need for comprehensive crisis intervention for young people. It was conceived as a centralized organization with 24-hour services, expertise in all youth-related issues and as an information clearinghouse of youth services.

In 1974, the National Runaway Safeline received a federal grant to establish a national hotline. During this time, NRS received 11,000 calls, demonstrating the need for this type of service. Since then, NRS' capabilities and services have grown considerably. Annually, NRS makes more than 100,000 connections to help and hope through hotline, online and offline services.

NRS receives funding from the Family and Youth Services Bureau in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, private funding is raised from foundations, corporations and individuals.

NRS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart of the National Runaway Safeline. Crisis center volunteers receive 40 hours of training and operate the hotline and online services to provide crisis intervention 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additionally, volunteers help plan events and serve on the Board of Directors and Associate Board.

STATEMENT OF NEED

About 4.2 million young people ages 13 to 25 experience homelessness every year according to Chapin Hall's Missed Opportunities reports. As millions of youth face homelessness, the National Runaway Safeline's services are needed more than ever.

More findings from these reports show:

- 1 in 10 young people ages 18 to 25 and 1 in 30 youth ages 13 to 17 will experience homelessness in a given year.
- 52% of the youth who experienced homelessness reported feeling unsafe.
- 73% of youth ages 13 to 25 who experienced homelessness had an episode lasting longer than a month.

NRS STATISTICS & TRENDS

In 2019:

- 58% of those who reached out to NRS indicated family dynamics as a reason for seeking crisis intervention. This includes conflict with rules, problems with parents or siblings, blended family, divorce or custody issues, death of a family member, and teen parenting.
- Nearly half of those who reached out to NRS were between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.
- 72% of NRS contacts discussed options for referrals and follow-up support, including NRS messaging and conference call services, referrals to youth shelters and alternative housing, and connection to supportive adults.
- Through our Home Free program, in partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., 291 youth received a free bus ride home or to a safe alternative living environment.