

MODULE

12

# “let’s talk”

## COMMUNITY RESPONSE & RESPONSIBILITY



### LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Discuss how an individual or community is directly and indirectly affected by someone running away.
- Learn how different people in a community can help if a young person decides to leave home or is contemplating running away.
- Discuss ways that an individual can provide service to their community.

## DEFINE THE ISSUE

The National Runaway Safeline knows the journey of a young person experiencing homelessness or of a young person running away doesn't impact just their most immediate connections, but all of the communities they are apart of. Module 12 is designed to highlight the connection between individuals and recognize the roles that community members might take to support young people in crisis.

## ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



## MODULE ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
A. Who's Connected to You?	20 minutes	Discussion/Activity
B. Twenty Questions	15 minutes	Discussion/Exercise
C. What Can I Do for My Community?	10 minutes	Discussion/Brainstorming



Total time required: **45 minutes**

## MATERIALS

- Poster paper or chalk/dry-erase board
- Markers or chalk
- Ball of yarn
- Twenty Questions Subjects (copy and cut before distributing)
- “Community Roles and Responsibilities” handout (pages 1-3)
- “What I Can Do to Help” worksheet



Realities of Running Away + National Safe Connections



Consider showing the companion film, *American Street Kid*.



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Coordinator at **773-289-1723** or **[prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org)** for support and technical assistance.

## ACTIVITY 12A

### WHO'S CONNECTED TO YOU?



20 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the first part of the activity.

**STATE** The first part of this activity will demonstrate how many of us may be affected, either directly or indirectly, when a young person runs away.

**ASK** Would everyone please stand up?



If a participant is not mobile, have them raise a hand to respond to the question. If confidentiality is an issue, ask participants to close their eyes or put their heads on a desk or table. They can then raise their hands in response to the questions and you will report the number of responses.

**STATE** If you are comfortable sharing/participating, please sit down (or raise your hand and keep it raised) if you have ever run away, no matter how you choose to define it. This could mean running to a different state or even running to your friend's house as a child.

Next, please sit down (or raise your hand and keep it raised) if you know someone who has run away.

Finally, please sit down (or raise your hand and keep it raised) if you have ever thought about running away.

**OBSERVE** the responses. Most participants will probably be sitting or raising their hands by now. If you had people raise their hands, count the number and report to the group.

**STATE** Thank you for participating. As you can see, youth leaving or running away is a widespread issue that affects us all in some way. You might not personally have run away, but you may know someone who has or who has considered it.

Now that we've seen how many of us have been affected by someone running away, we're going to do an activity that will help us better understand how other people in a community are affected in these situations.

**DIVIDE** participants into groups of five to seven people. Have each group form a circle.

**STATE** In the activity, I, along with one person from each group, will be "Angel," a 14-year-old boy who has run away from what he considers home. The others will be people in Angel's community.

**ASSIGN** one person in each group to be "Angel," or ask someone to volunteer. Give each "Angel" a ball of yarn.

**ACTIVITY 12A** →

## ACTIVITY 12A CONTINUED

**STATE** This activity can be re-traumatizing and triggering for some and contains a story of abuse, so feel free to opt out of this activity if you are uncomfortable. Each of us portraying Angel will tie the yarn around our waist.

**TIE** the yarn around your waist and make sure the other “Angels” do the same.

**STATE** Now I want to tell you a bit more about Angel. His parents are in a physically abusive relationship. Angel recently ran away from home after his father drank too much and severely beat his mother while Angel’s best friend was present.

Angel, who was also there, was overwhelmed by many different feelings. He was angry at his father, embarrassed that his friend witnessed this event, scared that it might happen again, and frustrated with his mother for not pressing charges against his father.

Before running away, Angel had been a great student who earned A’s and B’s. He hoped to be the first in his family to attend college. Now he is not quite sure what lies ahead.

Each of you should think about which members of Angel’s community may be affected by his decision to run away. When you have thought of someone who may be affected by Angel’s decision, the ball of yarn will be passed your way. As you wind it around your waist, introduce yourself as the character you’re portraying and share how Angel’s decision to run away has affected you directly or indirectly.

**ASK** Who might be someone in Angel’s community? For example, you might be the officer with the local police department who has to start a missing person’s file for the youth who ran away. How are you involved in the situation?

**WAIT** for a response. When someone responds, toss or hand the yarn ball to them.

**STATE** I’m going to toss the ball of yarn to (name). All the other “Angels” should do the same to the person in your group who volunteered. They are going to wrap the yarn around their waist. Then, someone else will state how they are involved and receive the ball next. We’ll continue taking turns until everyone has received the ball of yarn at least once.

**ASK** Are there any questions?

**RESPOND** to questions.

**STATE** Okay, let’s complete our circles.

**CONTINUE** the activity until everyone has had a chance to respond.

**STATE** Look at our circles now. In some way or another, we’re all connected. With one single person missing from our circle, our connection would be broken.

Think about how it would affect the rest of us if one person was removed from this circle.

**LEAD** a discussion about how one person’s absence from the circle would affect the others.

**ASK** Do you have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## ACTIVITY 12B

### TWENTY QUESTIONS



15 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the activity “Twenty Questions.”

**STATE** We’ve thought about how a runaway incident might affect one’s family and friends. Now let’s consider how those people, and the community around them, might act when there is a runaway incident.

**DIVIDE** the group into smaller groups of three or four. Have each group assign one person to be “it.”

**HANDOUT** the “Twenty Questions Subject.” To each group

**STATE** if you are “it,” don’t show your slip of paper to anyone else in your group or say what’s on it. The person with the paper is going to play the role of the person or people listed on the slip.

The rest of the group is going to ask YES/NO questions to try to determine who this person is. The purpose of the game is to figure out what role this person plays and then guess who they are.

Asking more than 20 questions is OK, but the person with the slip must count how many questions past 20 the group asks. The group that gets the answer with the fewest questions wins.

Once you’ve determined who “it” is, work together to determine ways in which the person could assist during a runaway situation. Consider what the person’s motivations might be in assisting a family of a runaway.

Ready? GO!

**MONITOR** the activity. If participants are having difficulty coming up with questions, questions might include:

- Do you take reports on people who have run away?
- Do you help spread the word about a runaway incident?
- Are you close to person who ran away?
- Are you in an authority role?
- Are you someone the young person might turn to on their own?

Once the participants have had 5-7 minutes to complete the exercise, call them back together.

## ACTIVITY 12B CONTINUED

**STATE** Who was the “it” in your group? Give two or three ways that your “it” may assist in a runaway incident.

**DISCUSS** responses.

**HAND OUT** “Community Roles and Responsibilities” handouts. You can read the handout or arrange for different participants to read parts of it.

**ASK** What questions or comments do you have?

**DISCUSS** responses.

**HAVE** groups report the number of questions needed to identify the person or people on their slip of paper.

**STATE** If you or someone you know is affected by a runaway incident, contact the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-RUNAWAY or 1800RUNAWAY.org.

20 QUESTIONS SUBJECTS

POLICE	JUDGE
SCHOOL	COUNSELOR
FAMILY/ FRIENDS	MEDIA <i>TV, Radio, Newspaper, Website</i>
NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE (NRS)	SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY
CARE <i>Foster Care, Residential Care</i>	NATIONAL SAFE PLACE NETWORK



## ACTIVITY 12C

### WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY COMMUNITY?



10 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the “What Can I Do for My Community” activity.

**STATE** I’m going to ask you a series of questions for you to respond to.

**ASK** First, what does community mean to you? How do you define it?

**ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to respond.

**ASK** How do you feel about your community?

**ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to respond.

**ASK** What can you do to make your community better?

**ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to respond.

**ASK** Who has been involved in some sort of community service? What types of activities did you do? How did it make you feel?

**ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to respond.

**STATE** There are many ways we can help our community. Some examples of communities pulling together are the volunteers that help build houses for Habitat for Humanity® or those who help after a natural disaster, such as a hurricane or an earthquake. Does anyone have other examples they would like to share?

**ALLOW** 4-5 minutes for participants to respond.

**STATE** Let’s brainstorm some creative ways WE could serve our community. Remember, a community can be a large group or a small group.

**HAND OUT** “What I Can Do to Help” worksheets and have participants write down the responses.

**STATE** As you can see, we can help in big or small ways. Remember that every little bit counts. I encourage all of you to invite your friends or family members and do some sort of community service.



Ask the class to consider how they could volunteer as a class or incorporate the information into a service learning project.

**ASK** Do you have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## COMMUNITY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES (PAGE 1)

### Police

**Responsible for taking a runaway report. Want to find the youth and reunite the family.** Will take a runaway report if the youth is under 18 (in most states), may follow up on leads or search for the youth (in some cases), and may refer the parent or legal guardian to other agencies or hotlines for further help.

If your local law enforcement agency won't enter information about a missing child into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will. The Missing Children Act of 1982 mandates that they will. You can contact your nearest FBI field office for help. Regardless of what you have been told, there is no law requiring a waiting period for reporting a missing child to law enforcement or for entering the child's information into NCIC. But, because some law enforcement agency procedures may still involve a waiting period, you may have to go to the FBI yourself to have the child entered into NCIC.

### Judge

**Has legal responsibilities and may mandate legal consequences for the youth who has run away, including community service or detention in some cases.** This is referred to as "Minor in Need of Supervision" or "At-Risk Youth Petition" in some states.

### School

**May have legal responsibilities regarding runaway youth and privacy. May be able to offer support to the parents or guardians, the runaway's siblings, and friends.** May connect parents or guardians with other youth who may know where the youth is. May offer services to the youth and their family when the youth returns.

### Counselor

**Wants to support the family and youth.** Can support a family going through a runaway incident. Can help parents or guardians consider what to do when the youth returns home. Can work with the youth when they return home.

### Family/Friends

**Varies, but may want to support the family and youth. May also want to help a runaway youth stay hidden due to safety or loyalty.** Can offer support to the family of a runaway. May decide to share with the family information they know about the youth. May act as a mediator or liaison between the family and the runaway. May follow leads for the parent or guardian. May give messages to the runaway. May offer places for the runaway to stay. May stay in touch with the youth for the parent's sake. May look for resources or make calls for the parent or the runaway.

## COMMUNITY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES (PAGE 2)

### Media (TV, Radio, Newspaper, Website)

**May want to increase awareness of runaway situations and help in the recovery of a runaway youth.** May help spread the word about a runaway incident by releasing information to the public.

### Spiritual Community

**Can offer support and guidance to youth and their families.** May assist in spreading the word about a runaway youth or help search for the missing youth. May offer financial assistance or take up a collection for families needing this type of support. May keep the youth and family in their thoughts and prayers. Can sometimes offer shelter for youth who find themselves without a place to stay.

### Care (Foster or Residential)

**Responsible for making a runaway report if a youth runs from care. May work with the youth to find the best possible setting for them to live in.** May work with a youth's biological parents, family, and others involved in the youth's life to find them. A youth's running away may affect others living in care, including foster siblings or peers in a residential facility. A youth running from this type of care will likely face consequences.

### National Runaway Safeline

**Operates the confidential 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and online crisis services at 1800RUNAWAY.org 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.** Our services, including live chat, text, email, and forums, provide easy ways for young people in crisis to connect to help. Our team of staff and volunteers receive 40+ hours of trauma-informed training to provide non-judgmental, non-sectarian, and nondirective support, empowering young people to develop a plan of action to improve their situation. NRS provides crisis intervention, referrals to local resources, and education and prevention services to youth, families, and community members throughout the country. In partnership with Greyhound, NRS offers the Home Free program to reunite youth with their family through a free bus ticket home or to another safe living arrangement.

## COMMUNITY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES (PAGE 3)

### National Safe Place Network ([www.nationalsafeplace.org](http://www.nationalsafeplace.org))

**Provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for young people in crisis through a network of sites.** Can provide youth with a safe place in the community through businesses and other sites displaying the yellow and black Safe Place sign or the TXT 4 HELP service. Offers a network of such sites throughout the country. Can help a youth get access to counseling, shelter, or other services.

## WHAT I CAN DO TO HELP

**Directions:** Brainstorm ways – big or small – that you can serve your community.


## ACTIVITY 12

### SUMMARY

- STATE**
- Some of us may be affected, either directly or indirectly, by a young person who runs away.
  - The community of a young person who has run away can be helpful to them in a variety of ways.
  - A community may include police, schools, family, friends, social service agencies, media, and others. Each plays a role in assisting the young person in crisis.
  - We can all help our communities in other ways, including major commitments and smaller efforts. All of them are important.

## HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. Twenty Questions Subjects
- B. Community Roles and Responsibilities (Pages 1-3)
- C. What I Can Do to Help

## REFERENCES

- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. (2004). *Just in case . . . runaway*. Retrieved 2014 from <http://ag.hawaii.gov/cpja/mcch/publications/just-in-case-runaway/>
- National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth. (1996). *Reconnecting youth and the community: A youth development approach* (Contract No. 105-92-1709). Retrieved 2014 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED402402.pdf>
- National Runaway Switchboard. (2001). *Runaway prevention curriculum for classroom and community educators*. Chicago, IL: NRS.
- National Runaway Switchboard. (2004). *National runaway switchboard runaway prevention and education presentation module*. Retrieved 2006 from [http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org/educators/prevent\\_mod.html](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org/educators/prevent_mod.html)

## RESOURCES

- Youth.gov offers information about risk and protective factors for youth (<https://www.youth.gov>)
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children provides services nationwide for families and professionals in the prevention of abducted, endangered, and sexually exploited children (<http://www.missingkids.com/>).
- National Clearinghouse on Homeless Youth & Families (NCHYF) is a free information service offering those interested in youth issues information and links to better serve young people, families, and communities (<https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/>).
- National Runaway Safeline (NRS) works to keep America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. NRS operates the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services and provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).
- National Safe Place Network provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers, and businesses (<http://nationalsafeplace.org>).
- VolunteerMatch is a leader in the nonprofit world, dedicated to helping everyone find a great place to volunteer (<http://www.volunteermatch.org>).