

Going Home Free Program for America's Runaway Youth

Written by Robert ID2898
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The National Runaway Switchboard, established in 1971, serves as the federally-designated national communication system for homeless and runaway youth. Recognized as the oldest hotline of its kind in the world, NRS, with the support of more than 150 volunteers, has handled more than 3 million calls in its 35-year history and handles an average of 100,000 calls annually. NRS provides crisis intervention, referrals to local resources, and education and prevention services to youth, families and community members throughout the country 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Over 10,000 youth have been reunited with their families through NRS' Home Free program done in collaboration with Greyhound Lines Inc.

America's Runaway Youth: mid-year statistics show kids are running from family issues; Calls through 1-800-RUNAWAY continue to rise.

Of more than 8,500 calls with youth, handled by the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS), a disturbing 56 percent of children report being a runaway, throwaway or homeless youth. The information is according to mid-year data collected by the national non-profit organization, which handles crisis calls with runaway and at-risk youth and their families.

Data also showed that calls with females occurred 77 percent of the time, 44 percent of youth callers reported being in a crisis situation, or were seriously considering running from home at the time of the call, and 43 percent of youth ran from home because of family dynamics (divorce, remarriage, problems with siblings) and abuse (substance, physical, sexual).

NRS also reports a 13 percent increase from a year ago of all calls handled by NRS front-line team members of staff and volunteers in the NRS Call Center. All calls (incoming and outgoing) include runaway, at-risk youth, parents, relatives of runaways, teachers, social service agencies, and law enforcement officers.

Going Home Free:

The NRS Home Free program, a partnership with Greyhound Lines Inc., continues to help runaway youth. There were 235 bus tickets issued January through June 2006, 87 percent of the tickets were for out of state destinations, 60 percent were for female travelers, and 36

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percent were for 17-year-olds. Forty-eight percent of the youth who used the NRS Home Free program reported family dynamics as the top reason for leaving home.

The NRS crisis hotline is 1-800-RUNAWAY. For more information, visit <http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>