

Protecting Our *Children*

Today's Youth Want Someone To Talk To When Looking For Help

(NAPSA)—Despite the heavy use of texting by today's teens and young adults, nearly 80 percent of runaway and throwaway youth prefer speaking to a real person when they need help.

That's according to a recently released report, "Why They Run: An In-depth Look at America's Runaway Youth," presented by the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS).

The report includes expert studies, crisis caller trend data compiled by NRS, and results from a comprehensive research study compiled for NRS by the National Opinion Research Center that encompasses one-on-one interviews with runaway and throwaway youth. It reveals that e-mail and texting would not convey urgency or a youth's needs effectively. Youth interviewed believed that establishing trust is key and that it is best determined by hearing a person's voice.

"Even though teens mainly use social media and texting to talk with friends, it is not the preferred way to provide solutions when runaway and at-risk youths are looking for help, according to the recent study on runaway and at-risk youth," said Maureen Blaha, NRS executive director.

The report also reveals that more than 70 percent of the youth interviewed described their leaving home as occurring on the spur of the moment.

NRS offers tips for parents to help prevent their child from running away, as well as suggestions on what to do if it happens.

Runaway Prevention

- **Pay Attention:** Listen when your child is talking with you. Don't pretend to listen while you are watching television, reading the paper or using the computer.



Hearing a person's voice is an important part of establishing trust, say experts at an organization that helps runaway youth.

- **Get help for yourself.** Children often run away because of problems at home. Parents need help to deal with problems just as their children do.

On The Run

- **Notify the police:** Immediately file a missing person's report, keep records of all details of the investigation and stay in touch with authorities. Although NRS does not look for runaway youth, calling 1-800-RUNAWAY to speak to a specially trained crisis intervention specialist provides support and referrals for parents whose child has run away. It is available 24 hours a day and is anonymous and confidential.

- **Check records:** There may be some clues about your child's whereabouts. Look at phone bills, e-mail activity, social media sites, credit card activity, bus or airline tickets, bank statements and employment records.

Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org for more information or call 1-800-RUNAWAY to talk to a team member.