

Runaway Youth Checklist

Call the police.

- File a missing person's report.
- Ask the police to issue an Amber Alert, if applicable.
- After a few hours, contact the following agencies to ensure the youth's information was received:
 - Minnesota Missing Persons Clearinghouse: (651) 739-7000
 - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: 1-800-THE-LOST

Collect photos of the youth.

- Find up-close, candid, color photos of the youth's face and shoulders. If these aren't available, find something close. School photos will work.
- Make 20 color copies of the photos and keep the originals in a safe place.
- Keep electronic copies of the photos on your computer so you can easily e-mail them.
- Give copies of the photos to the police and anyone helping with poster production.

Contact the National Runaway Safeline.

- Call 1-800-786-2929. You can leave a message for the youth, and they can leave a message for you as well.
- If the youth decides they want to come home, this service can assist with free bus tickets home.

Talk to the youth's friends.

- Friends may know about the youth's intention to run and may have information.
- Assure friends that the youth is not in trouble, that you are only worried for their safety and want them to come home.

Write everything down.

- Use a notebook to record all incoming and outgoing calls, mail, messages, etc., about the youth. Get Caller ID if you don't already have it.
- Make lists of family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and acquaintances who may have information. Contact these people and express your desire to find the youth.

Share this list and any information you receive with police.

Other Tips

- If the youth has access to bank or credit card accounts, check with the bank or credit card companies to see if there have been any recent withdrawals or transactions. Pay close attention to gas station transactions.
Do not cancel or close these accounts!
- Get an answering machine or voicemail to ensure the youth has a way of contacting you if you are not home. Consider recording an outgoing message directly addressing the missing person and asking them to come home.
- If the youth uses a cell phone, check the call history on the billing statement for numbers frequently called. This might provide clues as to people who might have information about the youth's intentions.
- NCMEC and/or JWRC can help with creating posters of the missing person for you to distribute. If you decide to make your own, **do not list your home phone number** on the posters. The number of calls you receive may overwhelm you when you're already emotional. Let the police sort through the calls.
- Assign a family spokesperson to deal with media and other calls to your home so that all information comes and goes through one central person. JWRC can act in this role.
- Think honestly about the reasons the youth may have run away. Be prepared to make changes when the youth returns home. Consider family counseling and other help with reunification. JWRC can provide resources for this.
- Take care of yourself. Remember to eat, rest, and exercise. Seek out counseling and therapy to help process your emotions. Ask others to help with daily chores and duties. Reach out to organizations you belong to for support, such as faith communities, clubs, and community groups.