

Children's Administration



CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE



Youth Missing from Care



- Children's Administration needs to account for the whereabouts and safety of every child or youth for whom they are responsible.
- Youth on the run have a heightened risk of harm.
- Every youth missing from care deserves immediate attention from child welfare, law enforcement, and other legal and social service professionals involved with and responsible for the youth.

Why Youth Run



Youth are running to or from something. Some of the top reasons youth give for running away are:

- See friends, boyfriend, girlfriend
- See or be with family
- To take drugs or alcohol
- Do not want to be in foster care (loss of their family ties or independence)
- Feel no connection to caregiver or group home (Attachment difficulties or placement and youth not a good match)

WHO'S AT RISK TO RUN?



Research indicates youth with the following characteristics are at higher risk for running:

- Entered care as an adolescent
- Recent change in legal status (dependent to legally free)
- Been in care 1-2 years, or 5 plus years
- Age 12 or older (highest risk are 15-17 year olds)
- Has multiple placements (higher number, higher risk)
- History of running (after first run more likely to run again)

WHO'S AT RISK TO RUN (cont)



- Placement was a result of neglect
- Disconnected, unable to form positive relationships

History of:

- ✓ Alcohol/substance abuse
- ✓ Mental health, behavioral problems, delinquency
- ✓ Impulsivity, externalization of behaviors

What can You do to Reduce Runs



Strategies to reduce or eliminate potential youth from running include:

- Develop a youth run prevention plan with the caregivers, youth, and anyone else working with the youth
- Provide targeted interventions to help reduce the potential reasons for running
- Transition planning with specific goals for youth
- Engage youth in permanency plan (solution focused)
- Openness about case plan and information
- Involvement in activities, clubs, teams, positive supports
- Help youth develop positive relationship with an adult

Examples of Interventions



- Look at increasing school supports if youth is struggling with their educational outcomes
- Ensure youth's Independent Living Skills Plan is in line with needs and wishes of the youth and an ILS Provider is involved in the case
- Review current placement and youth's lack of engagement. Work with youth and caregiver to alleviate issues and if not possible, look at other more suitable placement options

Examples of Interventions (cont)



- If youth runs to see friends, whenever appropriate, work with the caregiver to increase activities and time they have with their friends or see if any of the friends' family that the youth is running to can be a suitable placement
- If a youth runs to see biological family, look at current safety issues, and if possible place with family or increase family visits. A youth (with help from an attorney) may choose to pursue reinstatement of parental rights if they are legally free
- If the youth runs to take drugs, refer for a substance abuse assessment and treatment if recommended.

What Caregivers Can Do To Reduce Risk



- Have open and ongoing communication
 - Provide sense of normalcy
 - Increase activities/less down time
 - Ensure youth have a voice and choice
 - Support a sense of belonging and safety
- Increase flexibility and responsibility
- Promote an environment of caring and support
- Help youth gain skills needed for their future
- Provide meaningful activities and opportunities

Examples of Interventions for Caregivers



- Look for everyday opportunities to bond with the teen.
- Attend the youth's school activities such as sporting events or practices, when you can.
- Ask about homework, school projects and help them. Look for chances to learn about the teen's latest hobby or interest.
- Help support these interest and hobbies.
- Make it clear you care about the youth's ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- Get to know the youth's friends and their parents, when possible.

Examples of Interventions for Caregivers



- Foster youth should be treated the same as biological children. Such as:
 - Including foster youth in all family vacations and gatherings.
 - As much as possible, allow the youth to participate in social functions at school, community centers, and other appropriate teen activities.
 - Have clear house rules which apply to all the children in the home. Promote an environment of caring and support.
 - If impossible to do every night, schedule at least one weekly family dinner that accommodates the youth's schedule.

Examples of Interventions for Staff & Caregivers (cont)



- Helping a youth gain skills needed for their future shows you are invested in their life and what they want to achieve.
- Be supportive and involved in their Independent Living Plan.
- Allow a youth to express their opinions and (whenever, possible) decisions regarding their life.
- Be flexible and increase their responsibilities when possible.

Examples of Interventions for Staff and Caregivers (cont)

- Teens need your guidance, but you can involve them in setting rules and consequences.
 - Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and be consistent in following through.
 - Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.
- Your words and actions help a teen feel secure.

Don't forget to say and show how much you care.

Information To Provide a Youth



- Have an open discussion about them wanting to run
- Help them find realistic alternatives to running
- Express your concerns and emphasize their need to be safe if they decide to run and provide them information such as:
 - Local Crisis Residential Center, Walk in Center, Project Safe Place, Hope Program phone numbers
 - WA Central Intake Hotline number (1-866-363-4276)
 - Children of the Night (1-800-551-1300)
 - National Runaway Switchboard (1-800-786-2929)

What to Do When Youth Run



Caregivers must follow procedures outlined in WAC 388-148-0123. This WAC provides:

- When to report Children Missing from Care
- Who you contact when children are missing from care
 - Assigned Social Worker
 - Local Law Enforcement
 - WSP Missing Children Clearinghouse
(1-800 543-5678)
- What information to provide when filing a report

What to Do When Youth Run (cont)



Social Workers must follow policy and Procedures outlined in Children's Administration Policy 4550.

This policy provides guidance on:

- Reporting and notifications
- Debriefing
- Prevention and intervention efforts
- Documentation

While Youth is Missing



Remember, youth run from or to something. Data indicates most youth run to:

- Family, Friends, relatives (people they know)
- Streets (current or old hangouts)

Therefore, it is important to know:

- Who and how to contact family, relatives and friends
- Knowledge of youth's hangouts

While Youth is Missing (cont)



- Some youth continue to attend school while on the run and contact other professionals involved in their life. Such as:
 - GAL/CASA, Attorney, Mentors, School teachers, Counselors
- Youth may visit local shelters, youth centers, or other places designed to help street youth. Contacting or visiting these programs may help get information on youth.

When a Youth Returns From a Run



- Conduct a debriefing within 2 calendar days of their return.
- Develop a run prevention plan with the youth and caregiver within 7 calendar days.
- Engaging a youth is vital when they return.
- It's important for youth to feel welcome, supported, and cared about.
- Their immediate needs should be met.
- It is important to talk to the youth about their run.
- The main focus is determine if the youth is ok and to gather enough information to develop a plan to help the youth not want to run from care.
- Remember to focus on a solution and be nurturing.

Debriefing



Some questions to ask during the debriefing:

- Are you OK?
- Do you need any support, services, medical attention?
- What do you need right now to feel safe?
- Who should I contact to let them know you are safe?
- Is there anything I can do to make it easier to stay?
- Was there anything that would have changed your mind?
- What did you hope would happen when you left?

Debriefing (cont)



- Did you have a plan on how to take care of yourself and did it work out? This can help lead to:
 - Where they went ?
 - What they did?
 - Who they contacted?
 - What happened to them while on the run
- What made you decide to return?
- What are your plans for the near future?
- What do you want to see happen in next 3 months?

Debriefing (cont)



- It is important to use the information obtained in the debriefing to prevent a future run.
- Provide targeted interventions which address identified issues which led to the youth running.
- Request the court to appoint an attorney or a *GAL/CASA* for the youth, if one has not already been appointed.

Resources to Provide a Youth



- **Washington State Patrol Missing Children Clearinghouse:** 1-800-543-5678. Voicemail for after hours (360) 704-2404
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/crime/mischild.php>
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:** 1-800-843-5678 www.missingkids.com
- **National Safe Place:** <http://nationalsafeplace.org/>
If you need immediate help and don't know where to turn, please **TXT 4 HELP**. Text the word **SAFE** and your location (address/city/state) to number 69866 for help

Resources (cont)

- **The National Runaway Switchboard:**(1-800-786-2929)

Provides 24/7 crisis intervention services, message relay, conference calls, free travel arrangements home, translation services and other online resources

www.1800runaway.org

- **Children of the Night:** Provides 24/7 assistance to children between the ages of 11-17 who are needing to be rescued. Children are counseled over the phone until transportation arrives to take them to a safe shelter (1-800- 551-1300)

www.childrenofthenight.org



To the world you might be one
person
But to one person you might
be the world
Thank you for all you do for
youth!