

Reunification

Notify law enforcement if your child contacts you or returns home. If your child has left the area and cannot get home, the National Runaway Switchboard may be able to provide free travel assistance.

Despite the fact that you may be upset or angry, take a moment to reassure your child that you are relieved to have him/her home. Assure your child that you are committed to helping alleviate the situation that led to him/her running away. Remember that your child cannot undo the situation, and an inability to resolve the conflict may lead him/her to want to run away again.

Consider seeking crisis counseling so that your family can freely discuss any problems or strains that may have led to your child running away or that were caused by the runaway incident.

If your child repeatedly runs away, you can receive additional services such as crisis intervention and counseling by asking the courts to declare you a Family/Child in Need of Services.

It may also be necessary for your child to go to a temporary residence or runaway shelter while your family works toward resolving any problems. The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services can help locate facilities in your area and provide information on how to become identified as a Family/Child in Need of Services.



For additional information:

Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Missing Endangered Persons
Information Clearinghouse

2331 Phillips Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32308
(850) 410-8585 1-888-356-4774

Or visit our website at:
www.fdle.state.fl.us



Florida Department of Law Enforcement

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Run away



A Parent's Guide



It is estimated that 85% of missing children in Florida are runaways. Children who run away from home are at risk of falling victim to drugs, drinking, sexual exploitation and physical violence.

Children who run away often do so because they are trying to avoid problems in their lives. These may include a difficult or stressful environment, an abusive situation, the expectation of a negative reaction from parents or another problem that they believe to be severe.

Children who run away may lack the problem-solving skills necessary to identify solutions to their problems. It is important for parents and caregivers to help children develop these skills, particularly if the child is considering running away from home.

Recognizing the Signs

Children often exhibit warning signs before they attempt to run away, including:

- Hoarding or gathering money, possessions or supplies.
- Threatening to run away.
- Having trouble in school (e.g. bad grades, truancy or fighting).
- Becoming friends with people who have left home or use drugs.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Frequently arguing or fighting.



Intervention Methods

It is not always possible to prevent a child from running away, but here are some steps that may help you to begin a dialogue with your child:

- Attempt to identify the underlying reason your child is threatening to run away.
- Remind your child that running away will not solve the problem.
- Help your child come up with methods to solve his/her problems and offer your support.
- Listen to what your child has to say without interrupting, even if you disagree.
- Stay calm, even if your child becomes angry or raises his/her voice.
- Take a time-out when a conversation becomes too heated and re-approach the problem once everyone has calmed down.
- Make it clear that you will search for your child until he/she has safely returned home.
- Consider seeking family counseling or other health/medical services, including substance abuse treatment if you believe your child is using alcohol or drugs.
- Contact your local runaway hotline or the National Runaway Switchboard to receive advice and tools tailored to your situation.

What to do if your child Runs away

- Conduct a preliminary search for your child.
- Contact law enforcement to report your child missing.
- Contact the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse.
- Call your child's friends, school, relatives or anyone else who may have information regarding his/her whereabouts.
- Check places your child likes to spend time, including shopping centers, parks, athletic facilities, clubs and neighborhoods.
- Pass out flyers with your child's picture, and ask local stores, hospitals, shopping malls and truck stops to display the flyer.

It is important to remember that running away in and of itself is not a crime. Filing a missing persons report will not cause your child to be in trouble with law enforcement nor will it appear on future criminal history checks.

National Runaway Switchboard
1-800-RUNAWAY
1-800-786-2929

Florida Network of Youth and Family Services
(850) 922-4324

Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse
1-888- FL MISSING
1-888-356-4774