

## Ending Runaway Crisis: Keeping Kids Safe At Home

(NAPSA)—There are ways to keep children safe, healthy and living at home. Still, between 1.6 and 2.8 million American youths run away each year.

According to the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS), nearly 50 percent of youth calls handled through its 1-800-RUNAWAY crisis hotline deal with family dynamics (divorce, remarriage, problems with siblings) and abuse (substance, physical, sexual).

“It’s a national crisis and most parents in this country don’t realize that their own child may be at risk,” said Maureen Blaha, executive director of NRS, the federally designated national communication system for homeless and runaway youths. “There are warning signs—dropping grades, rebellious behavior, breaking rules—and there are several things a parent can do to help prevent a child from running away from home.”

The national nonprofit group offers the following tips for parents:

- **Discuss Feelings:** When parents share their feelings, children know it is safe to share their own. Talk about what it feels like to be a parent. Share with your children the things you need from them. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, too.

- **Create Responsibility:** Give your child choices, not orders. Help children understand the consequences of actions. When punishments need to be administered, ask what they think would be appropriate. Make sure the punishment fits the “crime” and it is consistent with other actions you have taken.

- **Understand Your Child:** Sympathize with what your children are going through. Look at life from their point of view.



**Front-line team members help runaway and at-risk youths and their families through an anonymous and confidential national crisis hotline.**

- **Don’t Always Give The Answers:** Help your children find their own answers or solutions to their problems. You can help them by discussing options. Play “what if” to help them develop problem-solving skills.

- **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. Children know the difference.

- **Administer Positive Praise:** Describe your child’s positive and negative behaviors and how they affect others. Be specific and give praise to reward good behavior. Also, acknowledge your child’s struggle to grow and mature.

Visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org) for more information, or call 1-800-RUNAWAY to talk with a trained front-line team member.