



National Runaway Prevention Month Messaging Guide

National Runaway Prevention Month 2014

Compiled by the National Runaway Safeline and the National Runaway
Prevention Month Task Force

About this Guide

This messaging guide is not intended to give parameters or limits to National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) partner agencies' and task force members' content during the month of November. Instead, it is intended to serve as a resource that allows participating agencies to easily access content during each week day in November. The National Runaway Safeline (NRS) will be following this editorial calendar in terms of themes and content, but may have additional content throughout the month. This guide contains key pieces of messaging for NRPM and also day-to-day suggestions for content. Please email Samantha Owens, Community Engagement Specialist, at sowens@1800RUNAWAY.org with any additional questions.

Key Messages

In July, task force members discussed what the overarching messages for NRPM should be. The task force came up with the following:

- 1.) The theme of NRPM 2014, that these 'different' groups of underserved youth (LGBTQ, foster youth, homeless youth, abused youth) actually overlap and intersect quite a bit. We, as a country, need to think about how we can better serve youth in general, rather than putting youth into 'boxes.'
- 2.) This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Though a lot has been done in the past 40 years, we still have a long way to go.
- 3.) RHY youth are not 'bad kids,' they are typically good kids caught in bad situations.
- 4.) Runaway and homeless youth are not limited to urban environments. There are runaway and homeless youth in every community: urban, suburban, and rural.
- 5.) Runaway and homeless youth often do not look like the stereotype of an adult homeless person. They often try to hide their situation and therefore the issue remains invisible.
- 6.) Young people on the street are often perceived as 'bad kids' if/ when they engage in risky behaviors. The reality is that many of these young people do not engage in these behaviors until they are already on the streets, and only do so for survival or to cope.
- 7.) This is a solvable problem.
- 8.) Rather than taking it into their own hands, the public can help runaway and homeless youth by connecting them with services that are evidence-based.
- 9.) There is a positive social return on investment for those willing to invest in ending youth homelessness. Catching a young person before they turn to a lifetime on the streets saves society money in social programs and medical expenses.

Structure of the Weekly Guide

This weekly guide is arranged by week, then by day. The guide covers days Monday through Friday. Each week has a 'theme' or a 'piece' as part of piecing it all together. The themes are as follows (in order): introduction/ abuse, trafficking, system involved youth, and LGBTQ youth.

The idea behind the guide is to have the messaging flow and build on itself, rather than being piecemeal. The overall setup of the guide is as follows:

Monday

Mondays are devoted to introducing audiences to that week's focus. We will introduce the audience through statistics and trends. Mondays will tend to be data-heavy.

Tuesday

Tuesdays are meant to connect the issue addressed to other issues affecting youth. For example, 'youth living on the street who have been abused in the past are more likely to be victimized on the street.' Tuesdays are about framing the issues within a greater context, exploring consequences, and making people understand *why* they should care about the issue at hand.

Wednesday

Wednesdays are designed to put faces and stories to the 'issues.' Through telling stories from each agency, promoting pieces of media that address the issue being discussed, and asking people to share their own stories, we are humanizing complex issues, further making the public understand *why* they should care.

Thursday

On Thursdays, the content is designed to let people know how they can get involved in the short-term, by highlighting upcoming events and ongoing NRPM social media campaigns.

Friday

Fridays are focused on long-term involvement. National and local agencies will use the momentum built during the week to get people involved as donors, volunteers, and advocates.

Week One: Introduction and Focus on Abuse (11/03 – 11/07)

Monday 11/03

- Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away in a year.
- 47% of runaway / homeless youth indicated that conflict between them and their parent or guardian was a major problem. (Westat, Inc. 1997. National Evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth. Washington, DC: US Dep't of HHS, Admin on Children, Youth and Families).
- Over 50% of youth in shelters and on the streets reported that their parents either told them to leave or knew they were leaving but did not care (Greene, J. (1995). Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors Research Triangle Institute. HHS. ACF - ACYF).
- Within the dysfunctional family environments cited by runaway and homeless youth, abuse is often a factor. Verbal abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse before the age of 18 are all correlated with higher run away rates. (NRS Longitudinal study http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/NRS_Longitudinal_study_report- FINAL.pdf)
- 80% of runaway and homeless girls reported having ever been sexually or physically abused. 34% of runaway youth (girls and boys) reported sexual abuse before leaving home and forty-three percent of runaway youth (girls and boys) reported physical abuse before leaving home. See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.wn296V0j.dpuf.

Tuesday 11/04

- If all of America's runaways in the United States lived in one city, it would be the fifth largest city in the U.S. (after New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston). Putting this number in context shows the real scale of this problem. These numbers are truly unacceptable and it is up to everyone, from outreach workers to government officials to members of the general public, to tackle it.
- Studies such as NRS' *Why They Run* report have shown that runaway and homeless youth are typically not bad kids, they are good kids running from bad situations.
- A common misconception is that youth sleeping on the street are there by choice. In fact, there is a huge gap between services available and services needed. In NRS' database, we have 727 shelters across the country. Compare this number to the between 1.6 and 2.8 million runaways in a year and the gap in services becomes evident.
- Childhood abuse increases youths' risk for later victimization on the street. Physical abuse is associated with elevated risk of assaults for runaway and homeless youth, while sexual abuse is associated with higher risk of rape for runaway and homeless youth. See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.wn296V0j.dpuf
- Over 70% of runaway and throwaway youth in 2002 were estimated to be endangered, based on 17 indicators of harm or potential risk. The most common endangerment component was physical or sexual abuse at home or fear of abuse upon return. The second most common endangerment component was the youth's substance dependency. http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.wn296V0j.dpuf

- In conclusion, the majority of young people on the street are not there because they want to be. They are there because they have nowhere else to go. Runaway and homeless youth are often endangered, with the risk of victimization on the street increasing for youth who have been victims of abuse in the past.

Wednesday 11/05

- Suggested movies: *Freedom Writers*, *Gimme Shelter*, *Precious*, *Short Term 12*, *Inocente*
- Suggested books: *Almost Home*, *Girlbomb: A Halfway Homeless Memoir*, *Homeless at Age 13 to a College Graduate: An Autobiography*, *My Orange Duffel Bag*, *The Glass Castle*
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to share their stories
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to suggest additional pieces of media on social media

Thursday 11/06

- #tbt: Post a picture of you as a teenager on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram for 'throwback Thursday.' Use the caption 'I remember what it's like' and the hashtag #NRPM2014. If space allows, include a link for your followers to find out more at [1800RUNAWAY.org/ national-runaway-prevention-month](http://www.1800runaway.org/national-runaway-prevention-month). Consider making the photo your profile picture for the month of November to draw even more attention to NRPM. See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_national_events/#sthash.0XR CNTJ0.dpuf
- Agencies promote their upcoming events.
- NRS to promote upcoming task force member events (local agency events) if information has been given.

Friday 11/07

- These problems are solvable, with increased resources and advocacy.
- National NRPM partners to highlight: Break the Cycle, Futures Without Violence, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, National Safe Place, Prevent Child Abuse America, RAINN.
- Call to action nationally: learn more about runaway and homeless youth across the country at [1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800runaway.org) and learn about agencies working with runaway and homeless youth in your area.
- Call to action nationally: check out our 10 easy ways to make a difference during NRPM: http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/10_easy_ways_to_make_a_difference/
- Call to action locally: Get involved through volunteering, donating, and/or advocating. Local agencies to highlight upcoming fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Week Two: Trafficking (11/10 -11/14)

Monday 11/10

- Children who are victims of CSEC and youth over 18 who engage in sexual acts as a result of coercion, fraud, or force are also considered to be victims of human trafficking under federal statute. This applies to children and youth engaged in pornography, sexual entertainment industries, “survival sex” (trading sex to meet youth’s basic needs for food and shelter), and prostitution. Children are considered to be victims of trafficking even when they seem to be engaging willingly in sexual acts. CSEC is the most common form of human trafficking of U.S. citizens and runaway and homeless youth are often its victims. (NCHE Issue Brief: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Youth Homelessness http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/5dc068b9cfebb00db6_wsm6ijj9g.pdf)
- Nine percent of runaway youth in a non-random sample of over 1,600 youth reported engaging in survival sex at some point in their lives. - See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.5mnDvJR0.dpuf
- Approximately 10% of shelter youths and 28% of street youths report having participated in survival sex. Survival sex includes the exchange of sex for shelter, food, drugs, or other subsistence needs. This compares to 4% of the overall adolescent population (NN4Y human trafficking fact sheet [http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/Homeless%20Youth%20and%20Trafficking%20Data%20\(NN4Y\)%20\(7-2-2014\).pdf](http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/Homeless%20Youth%20and%20Trafficking%20Data%20(NN4Y)%20(7-2-2014).pdf))
- Runaway and homeless children are vulnerable to CSEC both because of their young age and their circumstances. High numbers of youth who are homeless report having been solicited for prostitution and pimps have been known to actively target locations where homeless children and youth congregate, including on the streets, at foster care group homes, and at runaway and homeless shelter programs. Homeless youth are often its victims. (NCHE Issue Brief: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Youth Homelessness http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/5dc068b9cfebb00db6_wsm6ijj9g.pdf)

Tuesday 11/11

- In a 2013 study, The Institute of Medicine found that homelessness is the largest risk factor for CSEC and sex trafficking of minors. (Institute of Medicine report can be found at <http://www.iom.edu/reports/2013/confronting-commercial-sexual-exploitation-and-sex-trafficking-of-minors-in-the-united-states.aspx>)
- Additionally, 48% of runaway and homeless youth who engaged in a commercial sex activity said they did it because they didn’t have a safe place to stay. (NN4Y human trafficking fact sheet [http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/Homeless%20Youth%20and%20Trafficking%20Data%20\(NN4Y\)%20\(7-2-2014\).pdf](http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/Homeless%20Youth%20and%20Trafficking%20Data%20(NN4Y)%20(7-2-2014).pdf))
- Expanding access to emergency housing options can reduce the risk that runaway and homeless youth will be victims of CSEC but further progress requires minimizing the length of time young people remain homeless. This can be achieved by helping homeless children and youth quickly reunify with family and quickly connecting those who cannot be reunified to long-term transitional housing and support services. (NCHE Issue Brief: Commercial Sexual

Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Youth Homelessness
http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/5dc068b9cfebb00db6_wsm6ijj9g.pdf

Wednesday 11/12

- Suggested movies: *Gimme Shelter*, *Where the Day Takes You*
- Suggested books: *Miles From Nowhere*, *Kicked Out*
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to share their stories
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to suggest additional pieces of media on social media

Thursday 11/13

- National Candlelight Vigil. Youth service agencies, community groups, and individuals will be hosting candlelight vigils to show solidarity with youth in crisis. Host your own candlelight vigil in your neighborhood, at your school, your workplace, your place of worship, etc. This event is low cost and high impact. - See more at:
http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_national_events/#sthash.uvEXPTw1.dpuf
- Participate in NRS' Community Contest this month. In 2014, the community contest transitioned to a social media contest. Winners are now chosen by photos of activities with the hashtag #NRPM2014. Entries will be judged on the creativity and effort expressed in the photos. Community Contest Winners will be honored on NRS' social media pages as well as our website. See more at
http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_community_contest/#sthash.fEcCplQ.dpuf
- Agencies promote their upcoming events.
- NRS to promote upcoming task force member events (local agency events) if information has been given.

Friday 11/14

- These problems are solvable, with increased resources and advocacy.
- National organizations to highlight (note that these organizations are not partners): Covenant House, GEMS, Polaris Project.
- Call to action nationally: learn more about runaway and homeless youth across the country at 1800Runaway.org and learn about agencies working with runaway and homeless youth in your area.
- Call to action nationally: check out our 10 easy ways to make a difference during NRPM:
http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/10_easy_ways_to_make_a_difference/
- Call to action locally: Get involved through volunteering, donating, and/or advocating. Local agencies to highlight upcoming fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Week Three: System Involved Youth (11/17 – 11/21)

Monday 11/17

- Approximately 12 to 36 percent of youth ages 18 or 21 exiting the foster care system become homeless, which in 2010 translated to approximately 28,000 youth. (Dworsky, Dillman, Dion, Coffee-Borden, & Rosenau, Housing for Youth Aging out of Foster Care: A Review of the Literature and Program Typology, March 2012, Retrieved at: http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/interim/hsg_foster_care.html)
- Over 30% of respondents who had been in foster care as an adolescent had also run away from home compared to 8.1% of individuals who had not been in foster care (NRS Longitudinal Study http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/NRS_Longitudinal_study_report- FINAL.pdf)
- Young people who have been in foster care are 3 to 10 times more likely than their peers to experience homelessness. ("Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood" (abstract). American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 103, No. S2 (December 2013)).

Tuesday 11/18

- Youths feel that caseworkers do not provide the support they need. They feel that caseworkers should visit more often and find out how the youth is doing. Caseworkers should take time to talk to the kids to understand them and try to make things better. Youths feel they are not asked their opinion and that caseworkers rely on the foster parent or a visual inspection to determine if everything is fine. Basically youths wanted caseworkers to listen to the youth, try to understand, be reasonable, and be flexible. (Why They Run http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run/)
- Most youths do not hate the system or blame it for having to remove them from their home; they just want it to work better. (Why They Run http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run/) Again, this goes to show that these are not bad kids, they are good kids in bad situations.

Wednesday 11/19

- Suggested movies: *One Heart*, *Short Term 12*, *The Blindside*, *The Homestretch*.
- Suggested books: *The Language of Flowers*, *Foster Girl; A Memoir*, *Three Little Words: A Memoir*.
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to share their stories
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to suggest additional pieces of media on social media

Thursday 11/20

- 'Wear Green' Day: Most people have something green in their closet; whether it is a t-shirt, tie, pair of socks, etc. Coordinate a 'wear green' day with your friends, coworkers, students, and/or classmates on November 20th. This is a fun and easy way to get people to learn more about NRPM. For added impact, take a photo of your group wearing green and post it to social media with the hashtag #NRPM2014. Tag NRS and we could share your photo! - See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_national_events/#sthash.uvEXPTw1.dpuf

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http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_community_contest/#sthash.fEcCcpIQ.dpuf
- Agencies promote their upcoming events.
- NRS to promote upcoming task force member events (local agency events) if information has been given.

Friday 11/21

- These problems are solvable with increased resources and advocacy.
- National Partners to highlight: Boys and Girls Clubs of America Coalition for Juvenile Justice, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth, National Center for Homeless Education, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, National Network for Youth, National Resource Center for Youth Services, School Social Workers Association of America.
- Call to action nationally: learn more about runaway and homeless youth across the country at 1800Runaway.org and learn about agencies working with runaway and homeless youth in your area.
- Call to action nationally: check out our 10 easy ways to make a difference during NRPM:
[http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/10_easy_ways_to_make_a_difference /](http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/10_easy_ways_to_make_a_difference/)
- Call to action locally: Get involved through volunteering, donating, and/or advocating. Local agencies to highlight upcoming fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Week Four: LGBTQ (11/24 – 11/28)

Monday 11/24

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth ran more often than heterosexual youth. (Why They Run http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run/)
- For LGBTQ youth, some parents can't accept their child's sexual orientation and throw them out of the house. Other youth remain in the home, but face difficulties due to lack of acceptance within their families, which may lead them to run. (Why They Run http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run/)
- Family rejection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity was the most frequently cited factor contributing to LGBT homelessness. The next most frequently cited reason for LGBT youth homelessness was youth being forced out of their family homes as a result of coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. (Williams Institute study can be found here: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf>)
- LGBTQ youth are significantly overrepresented on the streets. According to a 2012 study, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. (Williams Institute study can be found here: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf>)
- Five of the top six factors identified as barriers to improving services related to reducing LGBT homelessness related to a lack of funding. The top three barriers were a lack of state, local, and federal funding, in that order. (Williams Institute study can be found here: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf>)

Tuesday 11/25

- One study* concluded that LGBTQ homeless youth experience an average of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence toward them than their heterosexual peers ('National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Homeless Youth' NN4Y, NAEH) Cochran, Bryan N., Stewart, Angela J., Ginzler, Joshua A., and Ana Mari Cauce. 2002. Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents With Their Heterosexual Counterparts. American Journal of Public Health 92, no. 5: 773-777. Rew, Lynn, Tayler-Seehafer, Margaret and Maureen Fitzgerald. 2001 Sexual Abuse, Alcohol and Other Drug Use, and Suicidal Behaviors in Homeless Adolescents. Issues in Contemporary Pediatric Nursing 24: 225-240)
- One study* found that LGBTQ youth may have twice the rates of sexual victimization on the streets as non-LGBTQ homeless youth, and LGBTQ youth report double the rates of sexual abuse before age 12. Rew, Lynn, Whittaker, Tiffany A., Taylor-Seehafer, Margaret, and Lorie R. Smith. 2005. Sexual Health Risks and Protective Resources in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Homeless Youth. Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing 10, no. 1: 11-20.
- One study* found that LGBTQ homeless youth are also more likely to attempt suicide (62 percent) than their heterosexual homeless peers (29 percent). *Van Leeuwen, James M., Boyle, Susan, Salomonsen-Sautel, Stacy, Baker, D Nico, Garcia, JT, Hoffman, Allison and

- Christian J. Hopper. 2006. Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Homeless Youth: An Eight City Public Health Perspective. *Child Welfare* 85, no. 2: 151-170. See also, Whitbeck, Les B., Chen, Xiaojin, Hoyt, Dan R., Tyler, Kimberly A. and Kurt D. Johnson. 2004. Mental Disorder, Subsistence Strategies, and Victimization Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Homeless and Runaway Adolescents. *The Journal of Sex Research* 41, no. 4: 329-342.
- LGBTQ youth suffer disproportionately when they age out of the foster system. For example while many youth who age out of the foster care system suffer economic hardship, 38 percent of LGBTQ youth report not being able to pay their rent in the past year compared to 25 percent of heterosexual youth. See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.5mnDvJR0.dpuf
 - LGBTQ youth who age out of the foster care system report high levels of food insecurity with 34 percent of youth reporting that they had been hungry but couldn't afford food at some point during the past year compared to 14 percent of heterosexual youth. See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/third_party/#sthash.5mnDvJR0.dpuf
 - LGBTQ youth are therefore not only more likely to leave home, but to have a harder time once they are on the streets.

Wednesday 11/26

- Suggested movies/ documentaries: *Boys Don't Cry, Saved!, The Homestretch*
- Suggested books: *Kicked Out, Street Kids: Homeless Youth, Outreach, and Policing New York's Streets, With No Direction Home: Homeless Youth on the Road and In the Streets*
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to share their stories.
- Prompt followers/ volunteers/ staff/ local agencies to suggest additional pieces of media on social media.

Thursday 11/27

- Thunderclap: On Thanksgiving, while people reflect on what they are thankful for, NRS is asking that everyone across the country to 'pay it forward' by participating in our online thunderclap. If you have never heard of a thunderclap, you can think of it like the online version of those 'funds raised' thermometers. Except, instead of measuring money, thunderclaps measure impressions. Learn more about thunderclaps at thunderclap.it - See more at: http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/nrpm_national_events/#sthash.eBCPLzci.dpuf ***NRS TO DISTRIBUTE THUNDERCLAP LINK**
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- Agencies promote their upcoming events.
- NRS to promote upcoming task force member events (local agency events) if information has been given.

Friday 11/28

- These problems are solvable with increased resources and advocacy.

- National NRPM partners to highlight: CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, National Safe Place, True Colors Fund.
- Call to action nationally: learn more about runaway and homeless youth across the country at 1800Runaway.org and learn about agencies working with runaway and homeless youth in your area.
- Call to action nationally: check out our 10 easy ways to make a difference during NRPM: http://www.1800runaway.org/promote/prevention_month/10_easy_ways_to_make_a_difference/
- Call to action locally: Get involved through volunteering, donating, and/or advocating. Local agencies to highlight upcoming fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- Thank you to everyone for participating in NRPM 2014.