National Runaway Safeline®

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE

Lessons Learned: Providing Crisis Services over Digital Platforms

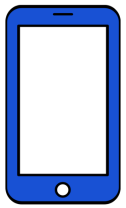
Christopher Smith, Director of Marketing & Communications
Sam Gillis, Chief Program Officer

April 23, 2024 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. ET

Data & information provided by the National Runaway Safeline (NRS). Any use or reference to this information should be credited to NRS.

Poll Question #1

Is your organization **currently using** digital platforms to engage with young people?



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National Runaway Safeline

- NRS works to ensure that young people who have run away, are experiencing homelessness or facing crisis are safe and off the streets.
- Provides resources, educational tools and training opportunities focused on prevention and early intervention for young people 10-24, their families and supportive adults, including leading National Runaway Prevention Month each November.
- Operates the federally designated National Communication System for young people 12-21 who are experiencing crisis, have run away or are considering leaving home, and are experiencing homelessness.
- National Youth Advisory Board of young people with lived expertise to guide programs, services and communications strategies.
- Each year, NRS makes over 125,000 connections to offer help through hotline, online and offline resources.

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Free & Confidential 24/7 Services

1-800-RUNAWAY:

- **Hotline calls**
  - Translation services available in over 200 languages
  - Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) for deaf or hearing-impaired contacts
- **Live texting**
- Trauma-informed, solution-focused crisis intervention
- Information and referrals
- Message Service
- Conference calls
- Home Free family reunification and transportation program

1800RUNAWAY.ORG:

- **Live chat**, **email**, and **online forum**
- Trauma-informed, solution-focused crisis intervention
- Information and referrals

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NRS Resources & Referrals

NRS maintains a national database of approximately 6,500 agencies and services, including:

- Basic Centers/Shelters
- Transitional Living Programs
- Maternity Group Homes
- Street Outreach Programs
- Food Pantries
- McKinney-Vento Liaisons
- Legal Resources
- Mental Health Resources
- Medical Assistance
- Residential Treatment
- Substance Use Treatment
- Child Protective Services
- Law Enforcement
- Other Crisis Hotlines

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Free Prevention & Educational Resources

Available at 1800RUNAWAY.ORG:

- National & state level data and reports
- Educational and outreach materials
- *Let's Talk* Runaway Prevention Curriculum
- *Let's Talk* Podcast
- NRS blog
- National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) resources

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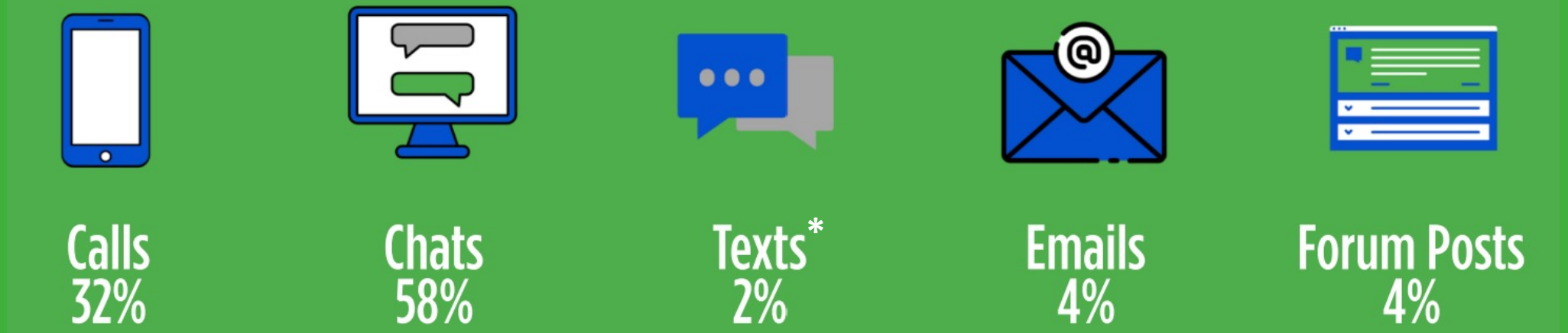
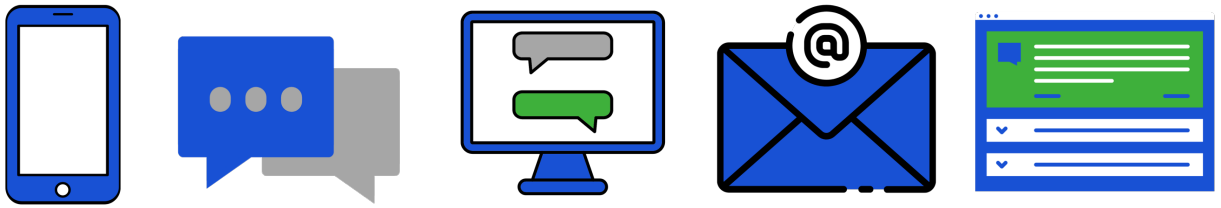
Key Data & Trends

How Crisis Contacts Reached NRS

2023



*Live Texting platform launched in September 2023



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Top Issued Identified

2023

75%
Family Dynamics

26%
Economics

26%
Emotional/Verbal Abuse

22%
Mental Health

20%
Peer/Social Issues

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Social Media Metrics

2023

Total Social Media Impressions (Views) = 227,928

- TikTok = 29,045
- Instagram = 73,769
- Facebook = 87,669
- LinkedIn = 29,401
- YouTube = 8,044

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Online Forum Metrics

2023

Total NRS Forum Visits = 162,265

- Legal Issues = 87,214
- Family Issues = 48,583
- Parenting = 2,859
- Relationships = 4,335
- *Others* = 19,274

Forums	Topics
Categories	
Family Issues Having problems at home with a parent or sibling? Talk about it here.	5,687
Legal Issues Is running away illegal? How old do I have to be before I leave home? What is emancipation? We can address these legal questions and more about runaway and homeless youth on this board.	4,056
Parenting An opportunity for parents to share thoughts, ask questions, and learn about resources to help with parental issues.	274
Relationships Relationships can be wonderful and hard at the same time. Drop us a line and let us know how we can help.	489

I want to get away. #1
04-14-2024, 03:40 PM

Big tw: abuse, mental issues, pedophiles, etc.

I want to run away at almost 14.
My boyfriend's parents are willing to take me. I don't even know where to start honestly. I guess I should start from the very beginning. This is gonna be a long post and I just need some advice. When I was a child, I was neglected from ages 1-5. I've been homeless at one point, and we were very poor and had a roommate and their family. My mother and father would just spend their days barely getting by, only drinking and doing drvgs. My brother would take care of me, only being 2 years older than me. My father decided he didn't want a part of our life anymore, and moved to another state. We stayed in my mother's care. I don't have many memories from then, but none of them were good. Eventually, my father reached out and had met my stepmom, and wanted us back. We went to go visit him for my birthday, and I didn't understand at the time, but the court decided that our mother wasn't a fit parent, and we were living with a registered s3x offend3r. I don't know if he did anything to me or my brother, but I have a very small handful of memories from being a child, as a trauma response. I remember never being happy, and hating my body even at a young age. I was bullied for my "unique emo" fashion sense. I ended up trying to k1ll myself in 4th grade, and Wrote a suicide note in the teams chat. I've made many attempts over the years, never succeeding and engaging in SH/ed. My father used to be nice, but living with my stepmom made him cruel. My step brother who is 6.5 months younger than me would s3xually abu$e me for his own enjoyment for years on end. I couldn't tell anyone. Nobody would believe me, or say it's just "boys being boys". My father was also weird with me, doing things including pulling a skirt up I was wearing over a bathing suit while I was bending over to get ice for a glass of water out of the freezer, making comments on my "nice feminine body developing well", etc. It came out this year that 3-5 years-ish ago, my father t0uch3d my sisters inappropriately. One of them is manipulated by him, and believes that although it was wrong, he is a "better person" and "it's in the past". I need to get away from there. My parents and step brother are abusive, my sister filed w restraining order against my dad, who was out of the house for 3 weeks, and I don't know how much more I can take. My mental health has been over sighted by my brother showing signs of mental health while I bottled up, and I don't blame him but it caused A lot of harm to me. I can't file for emancipation or get adopted by my boyfriend's family without their consent and an attorney. I'm too scared to act out slightly around them. I need some advice.

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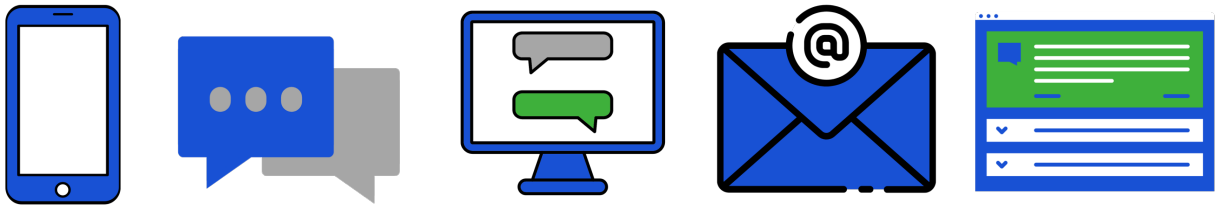
The Crisis Intervention Model

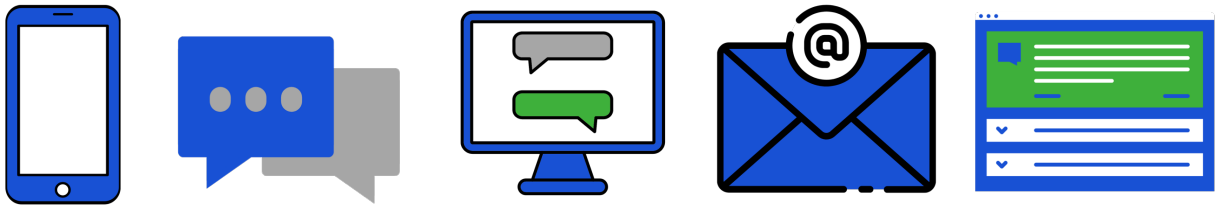
Poll Question #2

Is your organization currently using digital platforms to provide crisis intervention services for young people?



Poll Question #3

Is your organization **currently exploring** using digital platforms to provide crisis intervention services for young people, or **actively setting up** the service?



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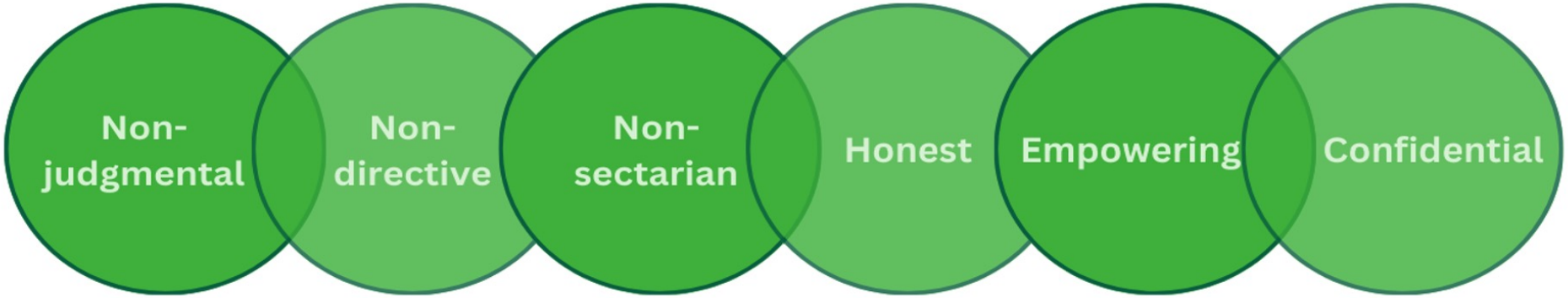
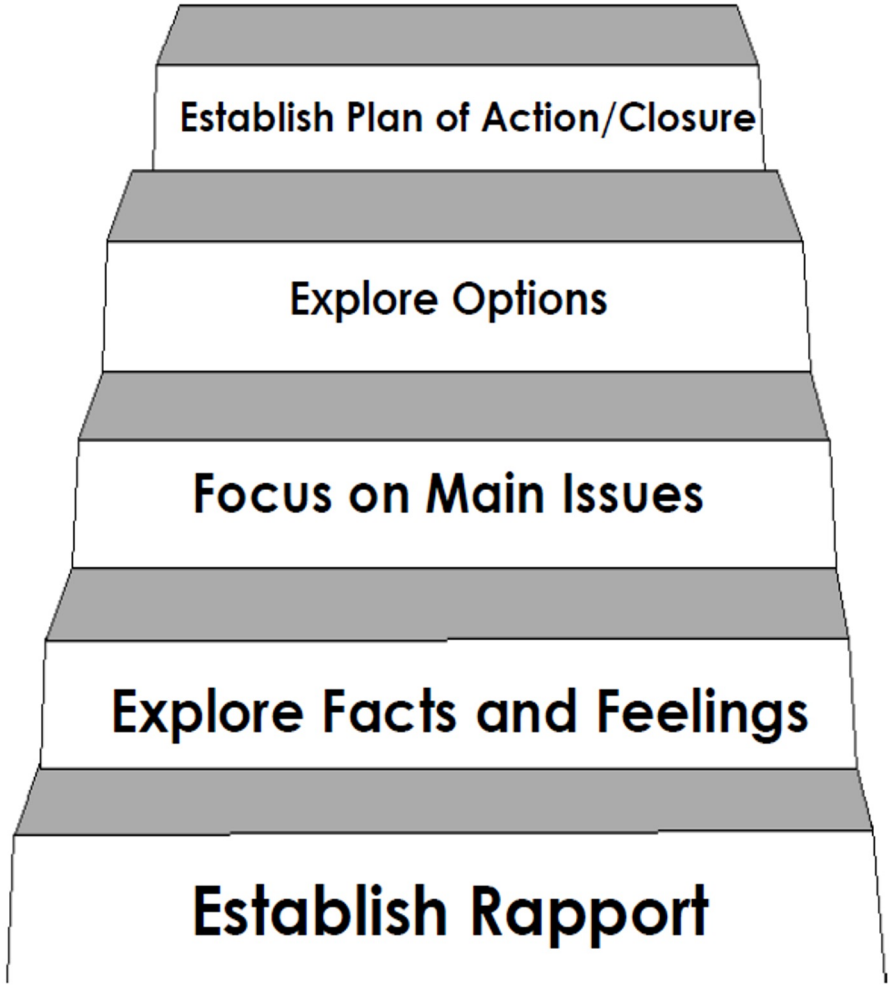
NRS Philosophy



NRS Approach

- NRS uses a five step, solutions-focused **Crisis Intervention Model** to respond to crisis contacts
- Incorporates the following approaches:
  - Trauma-informed care
  - Harm reduction
  - Positive Youth Development
  - Solutions-Focused Brief Therapy

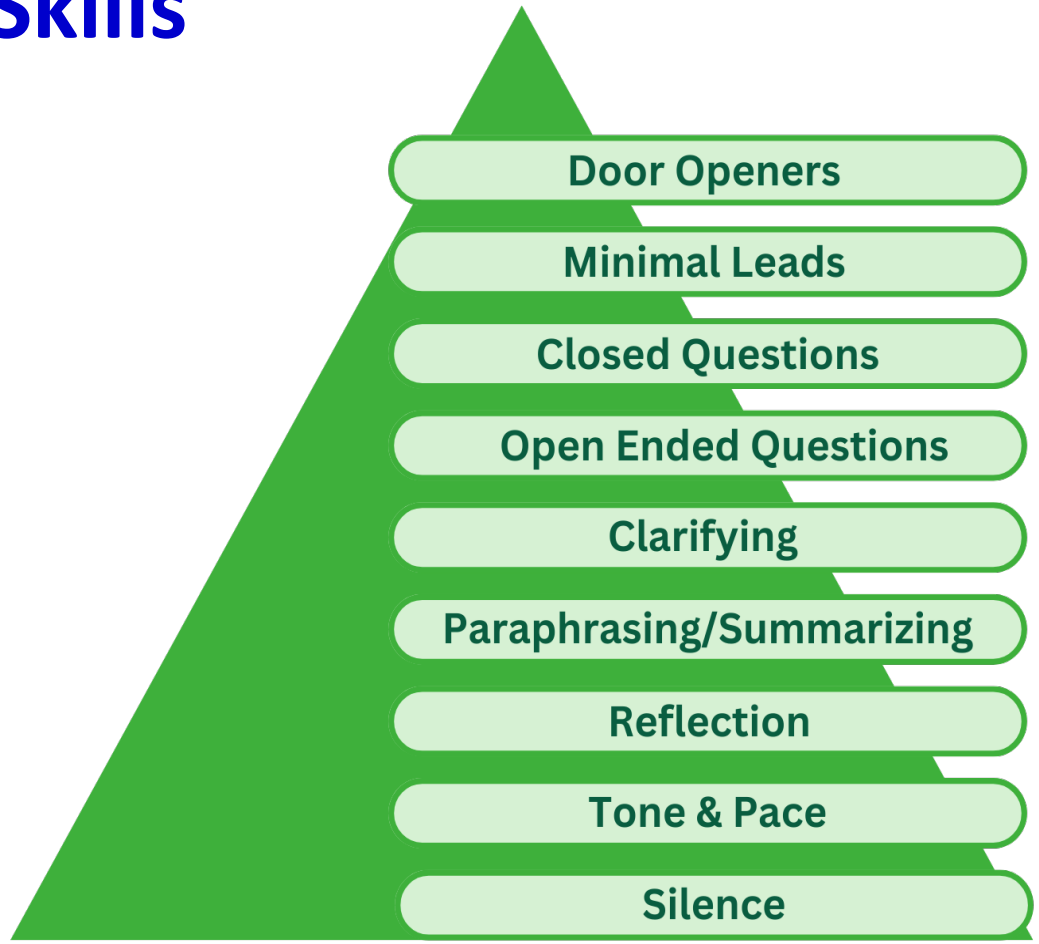


Uses Active Listening Skills

Active listening is a proactive and interactive process:

- Demonstrates interest
- Shows empathy
- Builds rapport
- Checks accuracy of information shared
- Encourages deeper conversation

"I hear you." "I understand."



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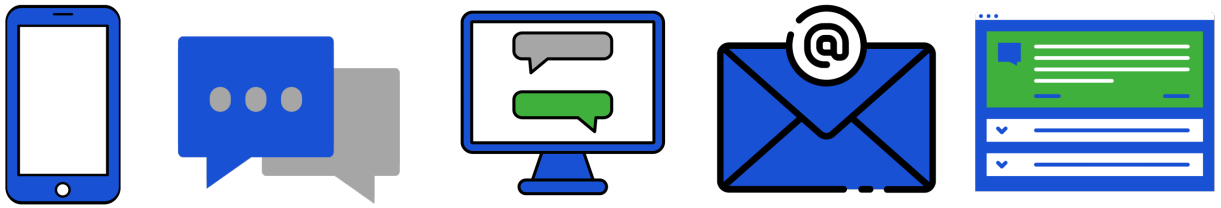
Lessons Learned from Digital Platforms

Poll Question #4

What type of communication is represented most in conversation?



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Types of Communication

Verbal (content and words)	**8%**
Para-verbal (volume, tone, rate/cadence)	**37%**
Non-verbal (proximity, posture, movement)	**55%**

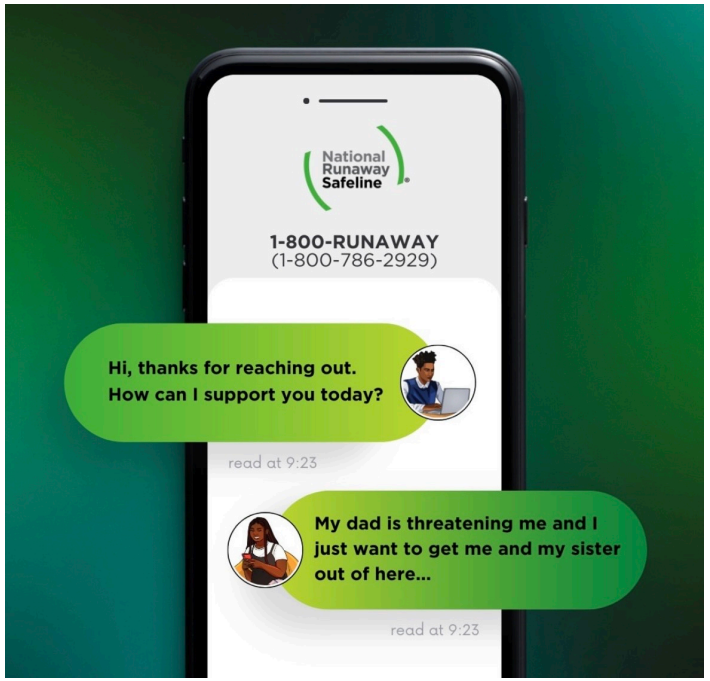
Child & Youth Care: Foundations, Academy for Competent Youth Work (2015)

Crisis Intervention Considerations: Live Chat & Live Text

- Communication must be even more intentional to build rapport and relay information
- Remember to personalize the conversation – refer to yourself as “I” throughout the conversation, not as “we” or the organization you represent unless talking broadly what the organization does
- Tone may be harder to communicate and understand
- Silence and long pauses may be harder to interpret
- Behavioral/emotional cues may be harder to identify
- Age/development may be more difficult to gauge (if not communicated directly)
- Use developmentally appropriate language – avoid “big” or complicated words

Crisis Intervention Considerations: Live Chat & Live Text

- Helpful to send shorter, streaming messages instead of long paragraphs to hold attention and keep the conversation going
- Check your spelling
- Emojis:
  - Pro: Use of emojis may assist with rapport building and create relatability
  - Con: Meaning of emojis (bi-directionally) may be difficult to interpret
- Remember: you can ask for clarification when needed



Crisis Intervention Considerations: Live Chat & Live Text

- Safety Tips:
  - As with any type of crisis intervention, establishing immediate safety and how long you have to talk is critical
  - Determine if young person alone/if anyone harmful is around them
  - Ask young person to think about if anyone else has access to their phone
  - Encourage young person to delete texts or internet history if they are worried about anyone finding out about your conversation
  - Utilize conversation time-out warnings (i.e. “if I don’t hear from you in 10 minutes I will have to stop sending messages and wait for you to reach back out”)
  - Confidentiality Reminder: It may be more difficult to determine if someone claiming to be the young person to get information reaches back out over chat or text

Technical Considerations: Live Chat & Live Text

- Initial auto-replies:
  - Communicate that there may be a short wait before the young person is able to connect directly with an advocate
  - Ensure to provide instructions for emergencies when there is no time to wait to connect
- Important to communicate when the conversation becomes “live” and when the conversation is ending
- Possibility of collecting basic information before connecting directly with the young person (pre-chat surveys and/or chat bots – note: NRS does not use chat bots)
- May have the ability to send post-conversation surveys

Technical Distinctions: Live Chat vs. Live Text

- Young person can generally keep texting before an advocate can engage in conversation (may not be possible in a chat service)
- Young person can retain the transcript of the text conversation (often not the case with a chat service, otherwise there is an option to disable the ability to save transcripts)
  - A young person may think they can pick up conversation where it left off. This may or may not be relevant depending on your service model. If your service requires you to start a conversation as new after a certain amount of time, it is important to communicate this to the young person.
  - Helpful for saving information and/or resources provided

Auto-reply Examples: Live Text

- Initial SMS Auto-reply:

  Thank you for reaching out to the National Runaway Safeline (NRS).

  We received your text but there may be a short wait time before we can respond. Please do not send more texts until we text, "Hi, I'm here now." We will be with you soon.

  At any time if you would like to end the conversation with NRS, please let us know.

- Second SMS Auto-reply:

  If you are in need of immediate services or want to speak with someone over the phone, please call 1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929). If you or someone else is hurt and you need help right now, please call 911.

Auto-reply Examples: Live Text

- <u>Leaving the Conversation:</u>

  I'm leaving the text thread now. Please call or text us any time at 1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929) or chat us at 1800Runaway.org if you would like to talk again. We're here to listen and here to help.

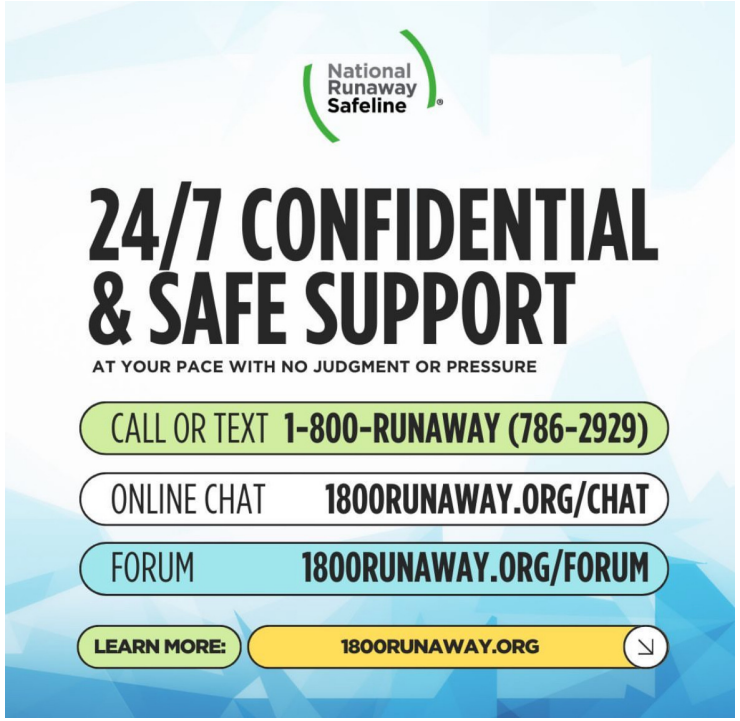
  Please note that if you reach back out we will start the conversation as new.

Crisis Intervention Considerations: Email

- Consider the tips for chat and text
- Determine how fast you are able to respond and set a standard
- Publicly post and/or set up an initial auto-reply that includes expectations for a timeframe for a response
- May have the ability to send post-conversation surveys

Crisis Intervention Considerations: Public-facing Digital Platforms

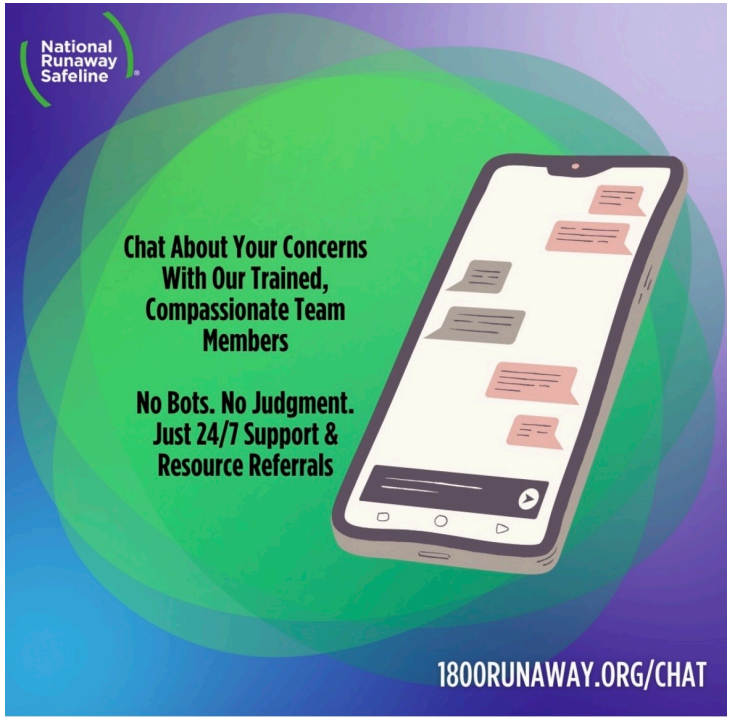
- Public-facing platforms, such as websites, social media, and forums are important for spreading awareness about crisis intervention services and directing young people to where they can receive them
- Consider how you can re-direct conversations to a confidential space
- When using these platforms, consider what you can respond to in a timely manner
- Communicate and/or post expectations for a time-frame for a response
- Determine what you can moderate:
  - Can you review posts, comments, question submissions, etc. before they are public?
  - Moderating content can prevent Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from being published



Crisis Intervention Considerations: Public-facing Digital Platforms

What should you do when a young person reaches out for support over social media?

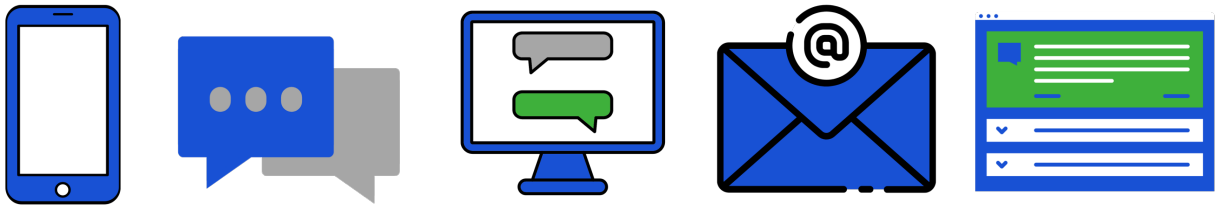
- Provide instructions for emergencies when there is no time to wait to connect
- Re-direct young person to the appropriate channels for support (your organization's crisis services phone number, work phone, etc.) when applicable
- Use judgment when replying – Should this be a public post or a DM? What about a public post first communicating you will DM the young person?
- If the communication is in a private space, like a DM, does your organization allow you to conduct the conversation in that platform? If so, consider some of NRS' lessons learned from chat and text platforms, as this interface is similar



Practice Scenario

Sierra, a 17-year-old young person you've worked with before, sends you a text that she ran away from home two weeks ago and is sleeping on an old friend's couch. He recently made her start "pulling her weight" and is getting increasingly controlling. Sierra wants to go somewhere else but doesn't know where to turn. Sierra says she doesn't want to go back home because her mom is physically and emotionally abusive.

What are some things to be mindful of when supporting Sierra over a digital platform such as texting? Please submit your thoughts in the chat.



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Prevention (& More!) Resources

Educational & Outreach Materials

Download our free materials below or complete the order form at the bottom of this page, and we will send the requested materials to you by mail. Please allow 4-5 weeks for delivery.

- Download All Promotional Materials (14MB)
- Social Media Graphic 1
- Social Media Graphic 2
- Social Media Graphic 3
- NRS General Brochure
- Street Outreach Card
- Stress Bookmark
- NRS Pull Tab Flyer
- Home Free Flyer

MATERIALS ORDER FORM

NAME *

FIRST | LAST

EMAIL *

ENTER EMAIL | CONFIRM EMAIL

ORGANIZATION NAME

ORGANIZATION LOCATION

CITY | STATE

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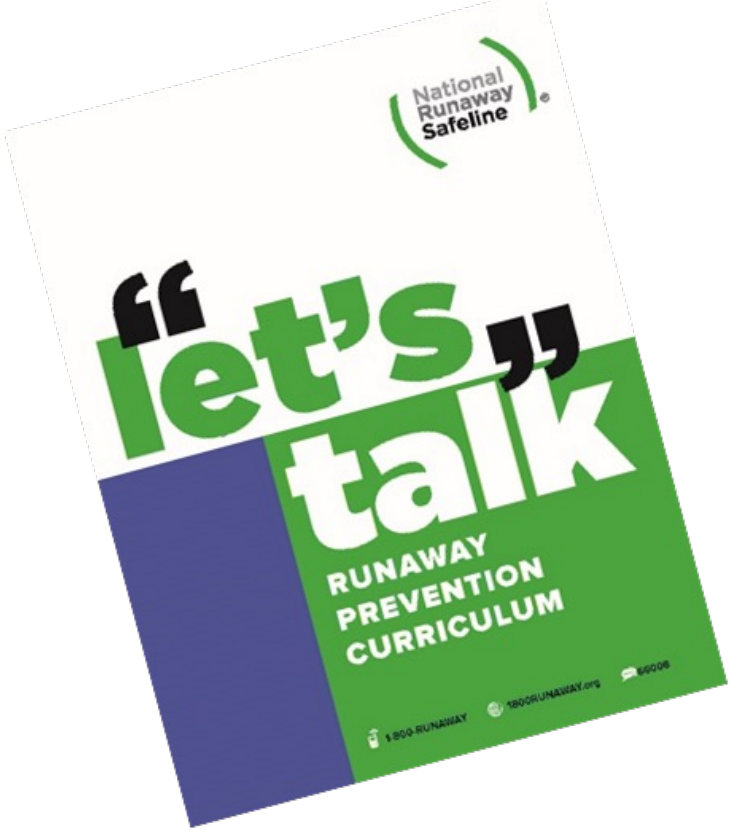
Let's Talk Runaway Prevention Curriculum

A 16-module life skills curriculum, available for download at 1800RUNAWAY.ORG.



Goals:

- Build life skills
- Educate young people about alternatives to running away
- Encourage young people to seek help from trusted adults
- Increase knowledge about prevention and resources

Audience:

- Youth ages 12-20
- Available in English and Spanish
- For use in schools, after school programs, RHY programs, youth groups, etc.

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Service Providers: Join the NRS Resource Database!

The National Runaway Safeline maintains a comprehensive database of agencies and services that serve and support youth ages 12-21 across the United States and its territories. We refer youth and families in crisis to appropriate partners listed in this database and collaborate with many of the organizations on prevention and educational programming.

The types of organizations and programs included in our database include (but are not limited to):

- Youth Shelters
- Legal Aid Assistance
- Afterschool Programs
- Support Groups
- Community Mental Health Services
- School Supportive Services
- Drug and Addiction Services
- Wraparound Services
- Street Outreach Programs
- Transitional Living programs/ Independent Living Programs
- Drop-in Centers
- Depression and Suicide Prevention and Intervention Programs
- Crisis Stabilization

Submit a request to be included in our resource database or update information for your program here: https://www.1800runaway.org/service-providers/partner-with-us

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Let’s Talk Podcast

The *Let’s Talk* podcast series was launched in November 2021 as part of National Runaway Prevention Month. *Let’s Talk* is aimed at elevating the voices of young people as they share their stories and highlight the complexities and intersections that are witnessed by the 4.2 million young people experiencing homelessness across the United States each year.

www.1800runaway.org/lets-talk-podcast (transcripts available)

LISTEN ON Spotify

Listen on Apple Podcasts

Listen on Google Podcasts

1-800-RUNAWAY

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Thank you for listening.

For additional questions, please email:

Christopher Smith
Director of Marketing & Communications
csmith@1800runaway.org

Sam Gillis
Chief Program Officer
sgillis@1800runaway.org

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