A runaway youth is a child who leaves home without permission and stays away overnight or longer.

A homeless youth is a child for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

A throwaway youth is a child who is asked or told to leave home and is prevented from returning home by a parent or other household adult and is out of the household overnight.

One out of seven children will run away sometime between the ages of ten and eighteen. (National Runaway Switchboard).

One in five teenage girls is a victim of dating violence. JAMA, Silverman, Raj, Mucci, and Hathaway, 2001

Teen Dating Violence

Dating violence is the use of abusive behavior between one dating partner or ex-partner against another for the purpose of gaining power and control. Dating violence can include many forms of abuse: physical, verbal/emotional, sexual or financial.

Karen’s Story

Karen is a seventeen year-old teenage mother that disclosed her experiences of being in a violent relationship with a boyfriend. Karen recalls that she was unable to leave the abusive relationship right away because she was not ready. She also talked about his extreme jealousy and how he would monitor who she spent time with--always suspecting that she was trying to date another guy. She talked about the physical abuse being bad, but that the emotional abuse was also very difficult to deal with. She states that it took her time to realize that this relationship was not for her and she needed to make better choices for her toddler child.

Karen often received criticism from family and friends urging her to leave him but it was very difficult because she cared for him a great deal. Karen states that often other people did not take her seriously because she was young. She states that she attempted to reach out for help but was scared because she needed to think about how she would survive and be safe. One day, Karen found the courage and desire to leave the abusive relationship. Today she can express her experiences with her fellow peers as she speaks of the need to be more aware of abusive relationships. In addition, Karen expressed her concerns regarding confidentiality and respecting and individual’s choice to not leave if they are not ready.
The Facts


• Youth are at an increased risk of being physically and sexually abused while on the streets (Whitbeck, L.B. & Hoyt, D.R. (1999). Nowhere to Grow: Homeless and Runaway Adolescents and Their Families. New York: Aldine de Gruyter).


• In a Chicago-based study by the Center for Impact Research, 30% of youth respondents identified domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness (Levin, R., Bax, E., McKean, L., & Schoggen, L. (2005). Homeless Youth on Homelessness. Chicago, IL: Center for Impact Research).


Charlotte’s Story

Charlotte was involved in a domestic violence relationship with the father of her six month-old daughter. As a former foster care youth, she had not had a stable home since she had aged out of the system. After one particular physical incident, she left his mother’s home (where she had been living without heat or hot water with him and his family) and ended up on the streets. She was living in a laundromat, but the owner ultimately discovered her and called the police. She was assigned a social worker and was accepted to a transitional living program for young mothers. After entering the program, she was able to finish high school and start college within her first three months in the program. Her daughter was able to get on a regular schedule and learned how to walk at ten months-old.

“...It is different if you are in a house because your mom and dad live in there and he cannot come to the house and fight you and beat your butt; but then if you are on the streets, he can find you at anytime ... anytime, all day.”—Local homeless teen

For help in your area:

NATIONAL TEEN DATING ABUSE HOTLINE
1-866-331-9474
NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD
1-800-RUNAWAY

Developed by participants of the Dating Violence among Runaway and Homeless Youth Learning Resource Team convened by MANY and PCADV under HHS Grant #90EV0342, Administration for Children, Youth and Families