

Section Five: Prevention of Missing Episodes

The information contained in this section provides suggestions on how to prevent missing children incidents, based on national research and effective practices from the field.

Tip:

Increase prevention efforts in order to decrease missing episodes.

1. How can a parentally abducted, involuntary or endangered episode be prevented?

- Research suggests that Parentally Abducted, Involuntary or Endangered (PIE) children should never go places alone and should be taught to trust their own instincts and to run if they feel they may be in danger.
- Caregivers should know where the child is at all times and talk openly about safety with the child.
- Regular parent-child visits and regular worker-child visits that allow for private conversations with the child are very important.

2. How can a runaway episode be prevented?

National Research concerning runaway prevention lists a number of factors that will reduce or eliminate the number of runaway episodes:

- Placement stability.
- Providing more activities/less downtime.
- Mental health and substance abuse assessment and treatment.
- Normalcy.
- Independent living/transition planning and activities.
- Placement or visitation with sibling(s).
- Positive relationship/bond with at least one adult.
- Increased flexibility (a more flexible set of rules tied to each individual child's ability to handle more responsibility).
- Granting family visits or phone calls during holidays, weekends or during a family crisis.
- More openness regarding the child's case information.
- Attentive case management.

Tip:

- What **does not** help reduce runaway episodes is punishments, lecturing, name calling or labeling, criticizing or hassling, raising voice or yelling and isolating.
- Children are either "pulled" to run or "pushed" to run. Interviewing the child to find out why he/she is running will help stabilize the child and prevent future runs.

3. What are some effective practices to prevent children from running from care?

1. Normalcy
 - Statewide Normalcy workgroup.
 - Childnet Normalcy workgroup.
 - Memo from Sec. Lucy D. Hadi (*dated August 31, 2005*).
 - Florida Administrative Rule 65C-13.002, 65C-13.003, 65C-13.008.
2. Placement Preference Assessment

- Critical placement meetings to plan for placement in advance of return from runaway.
3. Teen Homes Certification Program
 - Program to establish specialized homes for difficult teens/runaways.
 - Program includes intensive training and maintenance requirements for selected caregivers as well as special incentives/support services as compensation for program participation.
 4. Group Home Training
 - Intensive training for group home staff aimed at teaching skills needed to work with teens.
 - Ongoing assistance and consultation by BASP regarding group home incentive systems and behavior management programs.
 5. Risk Assessment
 - The Chapin Hall study related to children who run from foster care has identified variables associated with an increased risk of running away.
 - Information can be gathered from a child/youth and their family during a variety of naturally occurring assessments and interviews to determine if a child/youth has a history of running away—good predictor of future behavior.
 6. Runaway Steering Committee
 - Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency group who meet to problem assess and address the needs to children/youth who run from care.
 - Very effective intervention for youth who run frequently and have complex needs and behaviors.
 - Youth should be included when possible to ensure the identification of needs and interventions are accurate and effective (youth-guided care).
 - Circuit Four is a good resource.
 7. Resource mapping and building/system of care to ensure individual needs of teens are met
 - Identifying and meeting the individual needs of teens in out of home care to reduce the risk of them running requires access to a variety of services and supports.
 8. Specialized Teen Counselors
 9. Teen Courts

5. What are some resources related to children who run from care?

1. National Runaway Switchboard
 - ◆ Web site: Prevention education material, free community education materials.
 - ◆ Community education and runaway prevention material.
2. Local Law Enforcement and Florida Department of Law Enforcement/Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (FDLE/MEPIC).
3. 211/Information and Referral Networks.
4. The Transition Center at University of Florida
 - ◆ Transition Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
 - ◆ Requirements for special education students.
5. Florida Department of Education web sites:

- ◆ General.
 - ◆ Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services: Clearinghouse Information Center.
6. Casey Family Foundation
 - ◆ Independent living resources/Information.
 7. Annie E Casey Foundation
 - ◆ Resources/information on child welfare.
 8. Project Safe Place
 9. Chapin Hall, Center for Children at the University of Chicago
 - ◆ Study: *Youth Who Run Away from Substitute Care*.
 - ◆ Web site.
 10. Child Welfare League of America
 - ◆ Best practice Guidelines: *Group Homes for Teenagers and Children Missing from Care*.
 11. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
 - ◆ Web site, publications, material related to abduction and safety, links to other resources.
 12. Florida Network of Youth and Family Services
 13. Adopt US Kids
 - ◆ Web site.
 14. Local Child Location Points of Contacts, Substance Abuse and Mental Health staff, and Independent Living Coordinators.
 15. Florida's Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice
 - ◆ Web site: resources on system of care, collaboration and links to other resources.
 16. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
 - ◆ Web site has a statewide cheat sheet with numerous resources
 17. Central Office Child Location staff:
 - ◆ Ed Hardy: (850) 921-7929
 - ◆ Hans Soder: (850) 487-8897
 - ◆ Reagan Rogers: (850) 922-4863
 - ◆ Greg Schmidt: (850) 410-8543

Please contact the Central Office Child Location Unit if you would like additional information on the Missing Child Report or resources related to youth who are missing from care.