

## RUNAWAYS: SIGNS AND PREVENTION

Year after year, running away is the most frequent reason that Quebec teens go missing. There are three main reasons why teens run away:

- Lack of parent-child communication;
- The inability to deal with their personal problems;
- The mistreatment by their parents or others around them.



Young people may spontaneously decide to run away after experiencing an incident, a failure, a conflict or an intense emotion, such as fear of facing the consequences of their actions, anger or grief. In these circumstances, running away seems to be the only possible solution; it may even feel like an escape allowing them to avoid facing their problems.

Most of the times, children who run away have usually planned to do so in advance and are well prepared. Therefore it is important to recognize the warning signs of a child planning to run away. A youngster may show several warning signs without necessarily planning to run away. It is important to always listen to what your child has to say.

### Possible warning signs that your child is thinking of running away:

- Accumulating money and personal possessions in his room;
- Talking about running away (some youngsters try to anticipate their parents' reaction on this subject);
- Problems at school (academic or disciplinary problems);
- Family problems;
- Alcohol or substance abuse;
- A sudden change of friends or companions;
- Isolation;
- Extreme change of habits (sleeping or eating);
- Tendency to get angry (unusual or repeated anger);
- Breaking family rules;
- Depression.



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**Following are several suggestions that may prevent your child from running away:**

- Establish good communication with your child: the breakdown of dialogue exacerbates conflicts;
- Always tell your child that you love him and that he is important to you;
- Talk with him about the dangers of running away from home; ask him whether he has intentions of running away;
- Invite your child's new friends to the house to get to know his social network;
- Change your work schedule, if possible, to be home when he returns from school.



It is important to identify your child's needs. The better a parent understands his child's needs, the better he can help him meet those needs and refrain from risk-taking behaviour.

If you have difficulties communicating with your child, we strongly recommend that you seek help from appropriate resources rather than letting the situation deteriorate. You can also speak with one of our Case Managers who can provide you with pre-crisis counseling.

For more information about our personal safety workshops, offered year-round, please contact our offices or visit our website at [www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo](http://www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo)

