

Signs that a child may be thinking about running away.

Changes in behaviors or “friends.”

- Increased and/or secretive Internet (email, chat, blog, instant messaging, website) activity;
- Isolation from family members and/or friends;
- Increased or decreased time spent with friends and/or changed friends;
- Involvement with “uncharacteristic” individuals or groups;

- Increased telephone calls, mail, instant messaging or email, especially from unknown people;
- Disinterest in school, truancy and/or declining grades;
- Disregard for established rules (home and/or school);
- Being unusually discontent, argumentative or depressed;
- Other changes that are uncharacteristic.

Disclosure/Other Signs.

Some children will hint that they want to run away; others will threaten to run. Some will say nothing before leaving. Signs of planning may include searching web sites for information about possible destinations, withdrawing funds from an account or setting aside needed belongings. It is important to confront suspicions immediately. Reveal genuine concern, not anger.

Initial Action

If you are confident that your child ran away and was not abducted:

- ✓ Contact your child's friends, neighbors, relatives, school staff, and employer/co-workers (if applicable) to determine if they have any information. Also, ask them to notify you immediately if they hear from your child.
- ✓ Check locations frequented by your child.
- ✓ Carefully review information stored on computers, data storage devices, PDAs and cell phones. Include website history, e-mail, instant messaging, chat and blog activity.
- ✓ Check your child's room, school locker/desks for clues.
- ✓ Determine if possessions are missing, including withdrawals from bank accounts.
- ✓ Check area medical and transportation facilities.
- ✓ If your child has run away before, contact the person that he or she was with during the episode. Also, check locations where he or she stayed during the episode.
- ✓ Notify the police and provide them with all available details. This includes a recent photo and detailed description of your child. Ensure that his or her name and biographical information are entered into the New York State and National Crime Information Center computer networks.

✓ Contact the NYS DCJS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse at 1-800 FIND-KID.

✓ Keep a list of people and agencies contacted, including steps that you have taken and information received.

Follow-up Action

✓ Call the *National Runaway Switchboard (1-800-621-4000)*. Determine if your child has left any messages and be sure to leave one.

✓ Contact runaway shelters in areas where you suspect that your child may be.

✓ Regularly contact the investigating officer(s) to discuss action being taken and findings.

✓ Periodically contact neighbors and your child's friends to determine if they have become aware of any pertinent information.

✓ If your child calls, record “Caller ID” information, conversation details and the time and date. Immediately provide this information to the investigating police agency and the Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse.

✓ Avoid being confrontational or judgmental - strive to keep lines of communication open. Provide your child with the *National Runaway Switchboard* telephone number if he or she is not ready to return home. They can also arrange for shelter and transportation home.

When Your Child Returns Home

- ✓ Promptly notify all involved in the search that the child has returned.
- ✓ Show genuine love and concern - not anger or fear.
- ✓ Take time to listen to and discuss your child's viewpoint.
- ✓ Try to determine what, within or outside of the family, caused the episode.
- ✓ Take action to resolve issues which contributed to the child leaving. If needed, seek advice or assistance from a counselor.
- ✓ If warranted by circumstances, take the child for a medical exam, including testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

If Online Enticement is Suspected

- ✓ Do not delete or modify information located on computers or other electronic devices used by your child. Call law enforcement and request that specially trained cyber crime investigators examine computers for evidence. Have information ready for police, including:
 - ✓ The child's passwords and service provider account information, personal and school email accounts, instant messaging and social networking sites.
 - ✓ A list of filtering and monitoring software with passwords.

The NYS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse (MECC)

Services generally fall into three categories: support for law enforcement, assistance provided to left-behind family members and community outreach.

- **The 1-800-FIND-KID hotline** operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In addition to case intakes, missing child lead information received on this line is immediately disseminated to investigating police agencies.

- **The statewide missing and unidentified person repository** is continually updated by MECC with information submitted by law enforcement agencies.

- **Investigative assistance** provided to law enforcement agencies includes:

Flagging missing child birth and educational records.

Electronically distributing missing child posters via high speed broadcast fax/email systems. When a child is deemed to be "endangered," the *NYS AMBER Alert* and *DCJS Missing Child/College Student Alert Programs* are used to provide the most rapid and widespread public dissemination of information possible. Distribution includes police agencies, television and radio stations, NYS Thruway toll booths and service areas, border crossings, train stations, airports and bus terminals.

Placing missing child photographs and biographical information on the DCJS and NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) web sites.

- **MECC collaboration** with the NCMEC, other state clearinghouses, other State agencies, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts can provide nationwide assistance to police agencies and family members.

- **MECC community outreach** includes: developing and distributing educational literature and making presentations at professional conferences and schools.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:

**NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
4 Tower Place
Albany, NY 12203**

1-800-FIND-KID

Missing child photographs and biographical information and additional child safety information can be viewed on our website.

www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us

Contributions made to the NYS MECC Fund made reproduction of this brochure possible. Contributions can be forwarded directly to the fund at the address listed above. Also, the NYS Tax Law now allows individuals to donate to the MECC Fund when filing state income tax returns. Every penny of your contribution goes directly to support the work of the Clearinghouse and local efforts statewide.

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RUNAWAY CHILDREN

