



NN4Y Fast Facts: Public Awareness Guide

The National Network for Youth, the nation's leading organization on youth homelessness, has developed this list of practical considerations when interacting with youth in runaway situations or experiencing homelessness. We compiled this list in response to requests from service providers and individuals who encounter homeless youth in the course of their service delivery, business operations, or daily life. We hope these considerations, generated by youth who have experienced homelessness and by youth services agencies that support them, will be a resource to help you help homeless youth in your community meet their survival and support needs, find safe places to call home, and, ultimately, to thrive.

Homeless Youth want a *Connection to Family*.

I Am a Homeless Youth. I...

1. ...may have a connection to my biological family, or a desire to reconnect to them.
2. ...may come from a poor family, or my family may have money.
3. ...want some other people in my life to call *family*.
4. ...can still take care of my own child. I can be a good parent. I may need some help in learning how since I may not have had a good role model in my own childhood.

Homeless Youth want a *Safe Place to Live*.

I Am a Homeless Youth. I...

5. ...may come from a city. But I may also come from a rural town, suburb, Indian reservation, border colonia, or foreign country.
6. ...may have traveled miles from home, but I may also have traveled just a few blocks.
7. ...may have left on my own because it was safer for me to be out. But I also may have been kicked out of home because my family didn't understand or accept me.
8. ...may get caught up in the wrong crowd for self-protection. But I am not violent or a gang member. I'm just hanging on the street because I don't have another place to go.
9. ...sometimes do things I don't want like provide sex in exchange for a place to live, food, or money. My situation can get really desperate.
10. ...am no different from other youth. I simply don't have a safe place to live.



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Homeless Youth want *Self-Sufficiency*.

I Am a Homeless Youth. I...

11. ...usually just have too much stress and competing priorities to operate at the same pace as my peers with safe places to live. I am not dumb or unmotivated.
12. ...want to work to support myself. But I probably need some help building work skills and help finding a job, just like any other young person looking for a first job.
13. ...need to take care of getting a safe place to live and a source of food and clean clothes first before I can focus on finding a job or completing my school.
14. ...want to wear clean clothes and take regular showers. If I look grungy, it's because I don't have regular access to these basic things.

Homeless Youth want *Help from Caring Adults*.

I Am a Homeless Youth. I...

15. ...may use alcohol or drugs or have a mental illness. But if I do, it doesn't mean that I don't want to get help.
16. ...sometimes act tough because that is a skill I developed to survive without a safe place to live. But, I know to behave differently if you give me positive attention.
17. ...may need your help to fit in with my peer group who have stable housing. Providing me with resources and supports can help make this possible. I don't want to be an outsider.
18. ...may be reluctant to ask for help right away because I may not trust you. So please ask me first if I need help. And be patient while my trust in you strengthens.
19. ...might ask you for spare change. But you should not feel guilty if you don't want to give me money. You could buy me a sandwich instead. Or help me make a telephone call to find an agency that will help me out. Or just say hello and wish me well.
20. ...don't want to be judged by you. You don't know enough about me to reach conclusions.
21. ...have a voice and like to make choices. Don't assume you know what's best for me. Ask me what I want before you intercede on my behalf.

Homeless Youth want a *Future*.

I Am a Homeless Youth. I...

22. ...have dreams and goals. I can succeed in life despite the hardships I have faced.
23. ...am not disposable. I am a human being. Be happy I am alive.

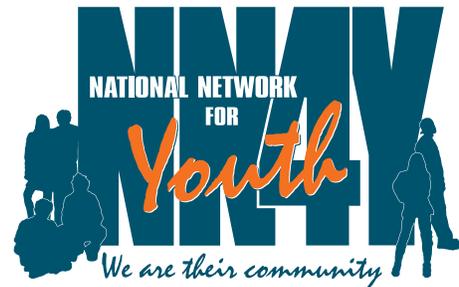
If YOU encounter a homeless youth or a youth in crisis who requests or agrees to your assistance, and you don't know what to do next, please contact the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY; or contact your local 2-1-1 human services information resource and referral service. Ask to be connected to a youth services agency or public agency in your community that is standing by ready to help.



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National Network for Youth

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y), founded in 1974, is a nonprofit membership organization that champions the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth through advocacy, innovation and member services. NN4Y provides its members and the general public education, networking, training, materials and policy advocacy with federal, state, and local lawmakers. NN4Y is committed to ensuring that opportunities for development and permanence be made available to youth who face greater odds due to abuse, neglect, exploitation, homelessness, lack of resources, community prejudice, differing abilities, barriers to learning, and other life challenges.



NN4Y's membership includes community-based, faith-based, and public organizations that provide an array of services to youth and families in the U.S. states and territories as well as some international locations. NN4Y's organization members provide the full gamut of preventive, interventive, and developmental supports to youth and families in high-risk situations, including street-based crisis intervention, emergency shelter, transitional and independent living arrangements, permanent housing, individual and family counseling, lifeskills, parenting, and health and wellness education, physical and mental health treatment and care, and education, workforce development, arts, and recreation services. Collectively, NN4Y member organizations serve over 2.5 million youth annually. In addition, youth, youth workers, and regional and state networks of youth-serving organizations belong to NN4Y.

National Network for Youth
info@nn4youth.org • www.nn4youth.org

1319 F Street, NW • Washington, DC 20004-1106
202-783-7949 • Fax 202-783-7955

603 Stewart Street Suite 920 • Seattle, WA, 98101-1263
206-382-4949 • Fax 206-382-6072