

child

RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND MISSING YOUTH IN DELAWARE:
INCIDENCE, REPORTING, AND SERVICES

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June, 1986

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I. PREFACE

The following people deserve a special "thank you" and acknowledgment for their assistance in this important research project: Mr. Joseph M. Dell'Olio, Executive Vice-President of CHILD, Inc. - for his guiding spirit and energy in making this project happen; Dr. Robert Wilson of the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware, who graciously volunteered his time on this task; Mr. Stephen Groff of the University of Delaware - whose help proved invaluable throughout the entire course of the research; and Mrs. Deborah Galla, a supervisor at the Division of Child Protective Services and graduate student at the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware, who worked along side me for the past year in every phase of this work. To Dr. Louis Beccaria - a special debt of gratitude for his assistance in editing this report. Special thanks are also due to the members of the Task Force on Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth, and their chairman, Colonel Daniel Simpson, Superintendent of the Delaware State Police, for their insight and guidance throughout the research project (see Appendix B for list of members). The staff of CHILD, Inc., always professional and committed in carrying out their mission, were supportive in spirit and administration throughout the project.

Helaine Gordon
Research Consultant

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CHILD, INC.

CHILD, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors and administered by an Executive Vice-President. It was incorporated in 1963 as the Boy's Home of Delaware; and in 1973, the agency charter was expanded and the name was changed to The Child Foundation. In 1976, the agency was again renamed to CHILD, Inc.

Currently, CHILD offers the following services:

1. Children's Emergency Shelters: At the Governor Charles L. Terry, Jr. and Franklin Street Emergency Shelters, CHILD offers protection and emergency temporary shelter to children in the custody or care of the Division of Child Protective Services. Individual and group counseling is available to children at either shelter.
2. Parent Education Program: Provides 18-hour course to parents and future parents which covers: family communication, discipline, child development, stress and strengthening the parent-child relationship. CHILD also offers a specialized program for parents of developmentally disabled children and a specialized Home Visitors Program (in-home parent aide services).
3. Family Violence Program: Provides --
 - a. 24-hour Hotline (762-6110)
 - b. Counselor-Advocacy
 - 1) 24-hour emergency services and crisis intervention counseling
 - 2) Related service brokering
 - c. Emergency Shelter service for women and children who are victims of family violence
 - 1) Emergency 30-bed shelter facility -- 30 day program
 - 2) On-site counseling
 - d. Children's Program
Provides assessment, referral, crisis counseling and constructive, non-violent activities for children and mothers at the battered women's shelter
 - e. Men's Program (Project for Men Who Batter)
 - 1) On-call 24 hours/crisis intervention counseling
 - 2) Individual and group counseling
4. Child and Family Advocacy: Wherever and whenever needed to:
 - a. Safeguard the rights of children
 - b. Improve those systems which provide services to children and their families
 - c. Be ever vigilant of the treatment of children in our community and institutions

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSTITUTE AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS: MARTHA VERGE DUPONT, CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT
DONALD E. PEASE, ESQ., VICE-PRESIDENT/HENRY E. I. DU PONT, SECRETARY • TREASURER/MARGARET R. HENRY

JOSEPH M. DELL'OLIO, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

5. Runaway Youth Program: ("FIRST BASE") Providing 24-hour Runaway Hotline (654-0808) counseling, related emergency shelter services, family counseling to runaway youth and their families, and a Statewide Task Force on Runaway and Missing Children and related preventive services.
6. Specialized Foster Care for Delinquent Girls: In April 1985, CHILD initiated this project which offers specialized foster care for low-risk delinquent girls.
7. Victim Therapy: Provides individual and group counseling/therapy to female victims of relationship violence. The primary goal of the program is to aid in the successful adjustment of the person who has been victimized, including the prevention of further victimization.

II. SUMMARY

Phase I: Survey of Community Professionals

Incidence of Suspected Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth

•Runaways

The survey respondents indicated that within the twelve month period prior to the survey (October 15, 1984 to October 15, 1985) a minimum of 1,812 youth were suspected of being runaways¹. Of this number, over 1,467 (81%) were thought to be involved in multiple episodes. Thus, it appears that a large portion of the total suspected population may be experiencing personal or parental problems (or both) sufficiently serious to view the problem as more than just a temporary emotional reaction to a given situation.

Most runaway episodes (53%) were for less than two days; another 38% were thought to be two to three days in length.

•Homeless Youth

The suspected homeless population was seen as much smaller than that of runaways, numbering 281.² As with runaways, multiple episodes were in the vast majority. Over 227 (81%) of the youth identified were suspected of being homeless at least twice. Over one-third believed the average time away from home to be less than two days while another one-third believed it to be longer than three days.

•Missing Youth

Survey participants identified 124 children as being missing;² 51 or 41% were thought to be kidnapped by a parent. Another 17% (21) were suspected of being kidnapped by another person(s). It should be noted that during the period of this study, no children were "snatched" by strangers according to the State Police.

¹The number reported here is a conservative, minimum figure. Several questionable survey responses, if included in the findings, would have raised this figure as high as 4,280. The more conservative statistic was judged to be more realistic and verifiable.

²It is possible that some duplication exists in the numbers reported by the agencies; the extent of any possible duplication is difficult to specify.

Reported Cases

The volume of suspected runaways who were said to be reported was very high - 1,716. The greatest number of these 1,092 (64%) were reported to police.

The volume of homeless youth, however, was over five times less; i.e., 311, with most cases (186 or 60%) being reported to the Division of Child Protective Services.

As with runaways, missing youth tended to be reported to the police rather than to Child Protective Services. Overall, between 50 and 90% of suspected runaway, homeless and missing youth cases were reported, according to the respondents.³

(When one eliminates the figures the police report to their own agencies, the general reporting figure becomes even lower - possibly 20%. National statistics would lean heavily toward the lower reporting figures.)

Demographic Profiles

Data reported concerning the demographic question was very limited. That which was reported demonstrated the following:

•Runaways: Whites, more than Blacks, run away. When they do, it is most often boys between the ages of 13 to 15. Boys 16 to 17 years old also run away in large numbers compared to other age groups.

While girls do not run away as frequently as boys, similarly to the boys, they most often are 13 to 15 year olds.

Runaways were said to be fairly evenly distributed between the low income and middle income groups. More frequently their running originated in suburban New Castle County and they were subsequently found there.

•Homeless: The typical homeless youth is a white male between the ages of 16 and 17. White females, however, follow close behind in numbers, but are somewhat younger. Most homeless youth, by far, were from low-income families (under \$13,000 a year). Their homelessness usually started out in New Castle County but they were found most times in Sussex County.

³This range is affected by the minimum - maximum of suspected runaways (1,812 to 4,280) indicated by the survey respondents.

Missing Youth: Male children, more than females, were said to be missing. They most frequently were white and 10 to 12 years old - much younger than the homeless and runaway populations. Their family incomes were low (under \$13,000). Their missing status began more often in Sussex County but they were found out of state.

Major Related Factors

The following indicators were viewed by 75% or more of the respondents as being highly related factors to the problem of runaway and homeless youth: emotional abuse, physical abuse, psychological problems, drug/alcohol abuse, delinquent behavior and chronic school absences.

Sources of Information

Respondents ranked information sources according to those they believed would most help them learn about runaway and homeless youth. Almost 40% thought peers would be the primary source of information, while another third said the child himself/herself would be. Lesser sources in order of their importance were school officials, social service agencies, police, neighbors, health care agencies and clergy.

Places to Which Youth Run

Over 55% of those participating in the survey noted that runaways or homeless youngsters more often would first go to a friend's house than anywhere else.

Reporting and Handling Procedures

Almost 6 out of 10 respondents (58%) noted that their agency did not have a policy on reporting. However, 55% said that an official report is made by them when a suspected case of running away, homeless or missing youth is encountered. The majority of people saying this were school personnel.

Reports of their suspicions go first to Child Protective Services; next in priority order are parents, then police, then a hotline.

Factors Involved In Not Reporting

Primary among the indicators considered "very important" in ^{not} reporting suspected cases were:

- Not being familiar with reporting procedures
- Not wanting to get involved
- Situation considered to be a family matter
- Lack of services once agency response is made
- Fear of personal/legal retribution
- Lack of confidence in agency to properly respond

Staff Training

Only one-fourth of the respondents said their agencies conducted any type of staff training related to the identification and reporting of runaway, homeless or missing youth. Reading material was the primary training source over workshops/seminars or even instructions at staff meetings.

Factors Contributing to the Problems

By far, poor communication between youth and their parents was seen, by the professionals as the most outstanding factor promoting runaway and homeless youth situations.

Several other factors having a basis in family relationships were also thought to be significant contributors by over 75% of those answering. They were: neglect and abuse, anger, alienation, youth's poor self-concept, family stress and parental demands.

Service Needs and Service Delivery Problems

Among the three classifications of services - residential, counseling and supportive - the various residential services were viewed more than the other two as being unsatisfactory. In this group, foster care and long-term placement programs for troubled youth were looked upon as the most unsatisfactory services.

Over one out of two surveyed, however, also saw the state of Delaware's capability for emergency shelters, group homes, residential treatment centers and transitional living as being unsatisfactory to adequately address youth needs.

Service Priorities

Service priorities reported by those in the survey as the five most necessary to properly address the problem were:

- 24-hour crisis intervention
- Individual/family counseling
- Emergency shelters
- Parent education
- Foster care

Service Delivery Problems

No less than one-third offering an opinion thought that each problem among those twelve listed in the questionnaire was "very serious."

There were three problem areas that over one of every two respondents thought were very serious in Delaware, and these relate directly to resource allocation on the part of both public and private agencies. They are: lack of youth-oriented community resources, lack of manpower required to adequately handle identified cases, and a lack of emergency shelters for temporary placement of runaways and homeless youth.

Denial of Services

Over 91% of the respondents said that the constraints of money, time, personnel, space or agency policy never caused them to deny services to a runaway or homeless youth.

Improvements of the Service Network

Optimism abounded. Ninety-nine percent (99%) had hope that Delaware's service delivery network could be improved for the benefit of youth.

Prevention Strategies

Some of the more frequently made suggestions by the surveyed professionals for future advocacy were:

- State funding for elementary school counselors
- Educating parents and school professionals about runaway behavior
- More parent education to improve communication between youth and their parents
- Work early with parents to prevent parent-child alienation
- More public awareness about the severity of the problem
- Channeling high risk youth and their parents into family counseling

Phase II: The EYE Magazine Youth Survey

The majority of those who chose to return questionnaires were teenage girls in the 13 - 14 year old range. Over half of the teenagers knew of a friend who had run away.

Only a very small number of survey respondents themselves had actually run. Most of those who had run away were female and had done so only once for a relatively short period. They tended to be 13, 15 or 16 years old. In more than one-half of the runaway episodes, according to the responding teenagers, the incident was not reported to the police or to Child Protective Services.

Running away was viewed most frequently as only a moderately serious social problem. When youth ran away, they ran most often, by far, to the security of a friend's house than any other place. Their running is a result most often of family problems but sometimes of physical/sexual abuse.

Of the various services in the youth services delivery network, the respondents believed most often that emergency shelters, 24-hour crisis counseling, and individual/family counseling were the three most essential services that should be provided for runaways.

Phase III: Delaware Household Survey

The 300 people surveyed throughout the state generally speaking saw running away as a serious problem but were somewhat divided over its degree of severity.

Concerning the adequacy of services to address the problem, only about 4 of every 10 of those interviewed offered an opinion. Among these, however, only slightly more (23%) felt services were not satisfactory than satisfactory (19%).

Services viewed as most needed were: emergency shelters, 24 hour crisis hotline, individual/family counseling and quicker police follow-up in locating runaway youth.

Citizens, similarly to the community professionals surveyed, looked at running away as a criminal justice reporting matter rather than as a social problem. Over 65% of them (196) indicated the police would be their first reporting choice.

Slightly more than one-half (55%) indicated that they felt there were circumstances when a child under 18 should be away from home.

Over 96% noted they would not harbor a teenager whom they knew to be a runaway. Only 1% of those who had children between the ages of 10 - 17 (25% of survey sample) had a child run away. Thirteen percent of them, however, said they knew of such children. Interestingly, there was wide variation on reporting these runaways. Almost 40% said "no" they did not while over 50% said they did report them. When they reported, the respondents volunteered that they more often reported to the police than Child Protective Services.

Parental conflict and break-up was considered the primary reason for running away by 56% of the householders. When youth ran away over 6 of every 10 answering believed they fled to a friend's house to seek refuge.

Only three people of the 300 interviewed said they were aware of a child being abducted in the past year, and of those three, two were known to have been abducted by a parent. In the third case, the respondent did not know the circumstances of the abduction.

III. INTRODUCTION

This CHILD, Inc. research project has been funded by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Human Development Services/Administration for Children, Youth and Families under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and CHILD, Inc. It is part of a total service effort to provide coordinated networking and statewide outreach regarding the counting and reporting of runaway, homeless and missing children and the service delivery system established to help them.

The reason for this research study is best described in the Federal Register, Vol. 49, No. 42, Thurs., March 1, 1984, page 7716. "Many runaway and homeless youth are uncouned by any official system or survey. It is difficult to track and count persons who have no permanent address, particularly youth with no work history or social security number, and who may be inclined to conceal their real names."

Police and juvenile probation personnel consistently advise that only one in four or five runaway or homeless youth whom they see is ever arrested, detained, or officially counted, and that many runaways are not reported as missing by their parents. Other studies have found that only one in six runaways is reported as missing by parents or guardians. . . state participation could play a vital role in developing and coordinating better reporting and counting of runaway and homeless youth in their states and region. . . The magnitude of the problem within a state requires a more accurate assessment before effective prevention and outreach strategies can be developed."

In Delaware, reports on runaways are filed with the State Police. The number of reports increased from 976 in 1980 to 1,485 in 1983, and was down slightly to 1,240 in 1984. These totals include duplications which may distort the true picture of the number of runaway children. Furthermore, it is estimated in Delaware (as it is nationally) that only one in four or five runaways is reported as such to the police. The State Division of Child Protective Services also records statistics on runaways but only for those youth active within their system.

Thus, in order to arrive at a fuller knowledge of the true extent and nature of the runaway, homeless and missing child problem, it is necessary to go beyond the current limited reporting to these agencies and undertake a comprehensive statewide survey.

IV. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this study is to build on the reported cases of runaway, homeless and missing youth in Delaware by determining the actual numbers of these youth currently going unreported. In short, the mission is to determine the true magnitude and nature of the problem.

In association with the goal, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

- To develop a profile of the typical Delaware youth who is a runaway, homeless or missing child and currently going unreported to authorities.
- To identify the reasons for lack of reporting of these youth.
- To identify the service delivery gaps for runaway, homeless and missing children in Delaware's youth service system.
- To develop from the study's research data policy implications for the state's governmental and youth service leadership to consider for the improvement of reporting and service delivery for these youth.

V. METHODOLOGY

Phase I: Survey Questionnaire to Professionals

The research project began in April, 1985, and was completed in May, 1986. It was designed to be as comprehensive as possible. Consequently, three separate areas of inquiry were pursued: (1) a Survey Questionnaire sent to community service providers such

as schools, police, day care, social service agencies, health care organizations, and recreational programs statewide; (2) a questionnaire for junior and senior high school students distributed through The EYE Magazine; and (3) a survey of 300 random households statewide conducted by the University of Delaware's College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy. The combination of these three research vehicles was considered to be appropriate to achieving the specific project objectives noted earlier.

The survey questionnaire on runaway, homeless and missing youth requested information in four primary areas: (a) incidences of runaway, homeless, and missing youth identified by respondents; (b) respondents' knowledge of reporting and handling procedures; (c) respondents' professional judgment on factors contributing to the runaway, homeless and missing youth problem; and (d) respondents' views on service needs and service delivery problems.

The questionnaire was designed to be as brief as possible and to be answered in approximately 20 minutes. Included in the questionnaire were definitions of runaway, homeless and missing youth commonly used by the National Network of Runaway and Homeless Youth Services. This was done to insure that all respondents were answering the survey questions from a common and standardized base of reference. Respondents were instructed to refer to these definitions while answering the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire was reviewed and critiqued by a group of community citizens and professionals functioning in an advisory capacity to the project as the Task Force on Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth. (See Appendix B for a list of Task Force members.)

Subsequent to this review and critique, the survey instrument was mailed statewide to all schools, police departments, social service agencies dealing with youth, day care facilities, health care agencies, and recreational organizations.

A total of 615 questionnaires were distributed and 196 were returned - a 32% response rate. The total returned included 61 surveys which were either unanswered or returned with too few answers to be of research use. Consequently, the analysis that follows for Phase I was undertaken from the 135 usable (22%) or valid questionnaires.

Phase II: The EYE Magazine Questionnaire

In order to have input from the youth population on the problems of runaway, missing and homeless children, a questionnaire was printed in a student newspaper, The EYE Magazine, published by the Resource Center of the YMCA. This newspaper is distributed to all high schools and several junior high schools throughout the state, with circulation numbering approximately fifteen thousand (15,000). On the advice of several EYE youth staff workers, a prize drawing was offered as an incentive for returning completed questionnaires. In addition, a letter was sent to the parochial and public schools by the State Director of Guidance and Pupil Services, encouraging the students to complete the questionnaire. Four (4) junior highs who do not receive the EYE were each sent twenty-five (25) questionnaires and a specific teacher was asked to have a class fill them out. Eighty-six (86) returns were received from those four (4) schools while eighty-seven (87) others came from the general EYE circulation - a total of 173 were received. These represented statewide returns from nine (9) high schools, four (4) junior highs and one (1) college.

Phase III: Delaware Household Survey

The third portion of the project was a telephone survey of 300 households by the Delaware Household Survey research team of the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware. Using a statistically sound proportion based on the population of each county, 200 households were selected from New Castle County and fifty (50) each from Kent and Sussex. The selections within that framework were random but each respondent had to reside in the state and be eighteen (18) or older.

The goal of this portion of the project was to reach the average member of a household in the community and elicit responses from them about runaway, homeless and missing youth. Ten (10) questions dealt with a profile of the respondent. Sixteen (16) questions were asked which dealt specifically with the project topic. Not everyone responded to all 16 questions for runaway, homeless, and missing youth because there was a skip pattern involved so that if certain questions did not pertain to the particular respondent, the researcher moved on to others. (See Appendix E for Survey questions).

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Phase I: Survey Questionnaire to Professionals

1. Description of Participating Agencies/Individuals. A distribution of the agencies which chose to participate in the project by returning completed and usable questionnaires is listed below in the following tables. A brief profile indicates that schools in suburban New Castle County responded the most to this survey.

Table 1: Type of Agency

<u>Agency Type</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Schools	76	56
Social Service	27	20
Law Enforcement	20	15
Health Care	6	4
Day Care	3	2
Church	1	1
Recreational	1	1
Other	1	1
TOTAL	135	100%

Table 2: Location of Agency⁴

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Wilmington	42	31
New Castle County	72	53
Kent County	47	35
Sussex County	48	36
TOTAL	135	100%

⁴With many agencies there is an overlap in areas served. In cases where an agency had offices in more than one of the above locations, location was determined by site of the main office.

2. Incidence Data

A. Incidence of Runaway Children. To arrive at an informative answer to the dimension of the problem, the research questionnaire sought out information on the number of youth suspected of running away, the frequency of the episodes, as well as the average length of the runaway period.

Fifty-three (53) agencies said they suspected no one of being a runaway youth in the daily course of their work over the twelve (12) months prior to the survey (October 15, 1984 to October 15, 1985). However, the remaining 82 agencies reported a total of 1,812 suspected runaways.

Of these nearly eighteen hundred (1,800) youth, 748 (41%) were thought to have run away twice with another 719 (39%) identified as having run away three or more times during the period. When these multiple episodes of running away are added together (1,467), it becomes evident that a goodly portion of the total suspected population - over 80% - might be experiencing personal or parental problems (or both) sufficiently serious to look upon the runaway problem as more than a temporary emotional reaction to a given situation.

In terms of the average length of runaway episodes, forty-two (42) or 51% of the eighty-two agencies noting suspected runaways judged the period to be less than 48 hours while another thirty (30) (37%) believed the average period was two to three (2-3) days. Only seven (7) (or 8%) noted that the average runaway period was over three (3) days in length. Three (3) agencies (3%) expressed no opinion.

B. Incidence of Homeless Youth. While the responses to the survey did not reveal a suspected homeless youth population nearly as large as that of runaways, nevertheless, the volume was very substantial for a state the size of Delaware.

Of those returning questionnaires, forty-eight (48) agencies revealed that they suspected over 281 children as being homeless in the previous twelve (12) months according to the study's definition. They also reported that 238 (85%) of them were suspected of being homeless at least twice.

While six of the fifty (50) agencies responding with information on homeless youth said they "did not know," 18 of them (36%) noted they believed the average homeless stay to be less than two days; another ten (or 20%) mentioned less than 72 hours as the average homeless episode. Sixteen (16) agencies (32%) said they believed that in homeless youth cases, the length of homelessness averages more than three days. The remaining professionals responding expressed no opinion.

C. Incidence of Missing Youth. The 232 professionals who responded to the portion of the survey questionnaire with knowledge of suspected missing youth identified 124 children according to the missing child definition utilized for the research. Of this number, fifty-one (51) youth (41%) were thought to be missing by reason of kidnapping by a parent. Another twenty-one (21) (17%) of them were suspected of being kidnapped by another person(s). It should be noted that during the period of this study, no children were "snatched" by strangers according to the State Police.

D. Incidence Summary. When the above volunteered responses from community professionals, on these three categories of youth as viewed as a whole the data revealed that within the twelve- (12-) month study period, over 2,217 youth were not able to be found at one time or another or were otherwise displaced.⁵

In addition, with regard to runaway and homeless youth, a substantial number of them are suspected of being involved in these situations more than

⁵ It is possible that there was duplication in the numbers reported by the agencies; the extent of any possible duplication is difficult to specify. However, if one were to make an assumption of possible duplication even as high as 25%, the resulting 1,663 youth would still be a very significant number for the size of Delaware.

once and, not infrequently, more than three times. The professionals responding believed that children become missing in Delaware, for the most part, because of parental kidnapping. In general, the responses related to length of running away or homelessness. Note that more professionals perceive homelessness episodes to be of longer duration than those of running away.

3. Reported Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth

When asked to indicate the number of youth suspected of being runaway, homeless or missing whom they knew had been reported to the police, Child Protective Services or another agency, the following data was noted:

Table 3: Reporting of Suspected Cases

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u> ⁶	<u>Missing</u>
CPS	553 (32%)	186 (60%)	29 (27%)
Police	1,092 (64%)	125 (40%)	73 (70%)
Other	<u>71 (4%)</u>	<u>-0- (0%)</u>	<u>3 (3%)</u>
TOTALS	1,716 (100%)	311 (100%)	105 (100%)

The above data provide an interesting observation. The volume of suspected runaways and missing youth reported to police far exceeds the number reported to Child Protective Services. This appears to say that these situations are perceived to be criminal justice matters. Conversely, children suspected of being homeless tend to be reported to a Child Protective Services as a social problem rather than a criminal justice one.

⁶These figures were reported by respondents as cases they thought they reported. This has resulted in an over-estimation because the total reported cases of homeless youth (311) is larger than that for suspected cases (281). This discrepancy may be attributable to separate record-keeping methods within the same agencies.

4. Demographic Profile of Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth

There was inadequate reporting by respondents on the questions specifically concerned with the age, income level and location of runaways, homeless, and missing children. The following data, therefore, represents only the barest sample and profile - a profile which might be altered if fuller reporting was done by the survey participants.

Table 4: Profile of Runaway Children

<u>Age</u>	<u>AGE/RACE/SEX (N=441)</u>					
	<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>
0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-9	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.25%)	-	-	-	-
10-12	16 (3.6%)	5 (1.1%)	1 (0.25%)	18 (4.1%)	6 (1.4%)	-
13-15	100 (22.7%)	39 (8.9%)	-	95 (21.6%)	21 (4.8%)	4 (1.0%)
16-17	52 (11.8%)	14 (3.2%)	1 (0.25%)	44 (10.0%)	19 (4.3%)	2 (0.5%)

Table 5: Profile of Homeless Children

<u>Age</u>	<u>AGE/RACE/SEX (N=63)</u>					
	<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>
0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-9	-	4 (6.3%)	-	-	-	-
10-12	1 (1.6%)	3 (4.8%)	-	-	2 (3.2%)	-
13-15	8 (12.7%)	3 (4.8%)	-	9 (14.3%)	2 (3.2%)	1 (1.6%)
16-17	11 (17.5%)	6 (9.5%)	-	8 (12.7%)	4 (6.3%)	1 (1.6%)

Table 6: Profile of Missing Children

AGE/RACE/SEX (N=35)

<u>Age</u>	<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>
0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-9	2 (5.7%)	-	-	3 (8.6%)	1 (2.8%)	-
10-12	7 (20.0%)	-	-	-	-	-
13-15	2 (5.7%)	3 (8.6%)	-	3 (8.6%)	2 (5.7%)	-
16-17	5 (14.3%)	-	-	7 (20.0%)	-	-

Table 7: Income of Households with Runaway, Homeless or Missing Children

<u>Income Bracket</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u>	<u>Missing</u>
Low (under \$13,000)	148 (41.7%)	29 (67.5%)	5 (62.5%)
Middle (\$13,000 - \$35,000)	170 (47.9%)	13 (30.2%)	2 (25.0%)
High (over \$35,000)	37 (10.4%)	1 (2.3%)	1 (12.5%)
Total	355 (100%)	43 (100%)	8 (100%)

Table 8: Origin of Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children and Where They are Found

<u>Location</u>	<u>Runaway</u>		<u>Homeless</u>		<u>Missing</u>	
	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Found</u>	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Found</u>	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Found</u>
Wilmington	52	42	13	6	--	--
New Castle	176	216	22	12	--	--
Kent	34	42	3	4	--	--
Sussex	68	75	15	14	6	--
Out of State	5	9	1	5	2	7
Don't Know	7	16	15	14	2	5
Total	342	400	69	55	12	10

Demographic Profile Summary

Runaways. With regard to runaways, from the limited information reported in the survey, it appears that whites, more than black youngsters, run away. When they do, it is most often boys between the ages of 13-15 who do the running. Boys 16-17 years old also run away in large numbers compared to other age groups.

While the volume of female runaways is only slightly behind that of the males, white females, likewise, tend to run away much more frequently than black females. Similarly to the boys, the 13-15 year old age group was said to runaway the most with the 16-17 year old girls comprising the second highest group. There tended to be a fairly even distribution of runaways between the low-income group (under \$13,000 per year of family income) and middle-income group (\$13,000 to \$35,000 per year of family income.) Runaways more frequently originated in suburban New Castle County and were found there more often also than any other major geographical location in or out of state.

Homeless. The typical homeless youth, from the limited reported survey data, is a white male between the ages of 16 and 17. White females, however, follow close behind in number; they show a slight tendency to be somewhat younger than homeless males. The greatest number, by far, were from families in the under \$13,000 income level.

Youth said to be homeless according to the survey's definition most often originated in suburban New Castle County outside Wilmington. Slightly more of them were subsequently found in Sussex County than in their home county.

Missing. It is difficult to draw a profile with the sparse demography data reported. However, from that information which was reported, male youngsters more than females were more often suspected of being missing. Whites more than blacks tended to be involved and were more frequently in the 10-12 age group - making them a younger population than runaways and homeless youth. These missing youth were thought to be from a lower income level (under \$13,000 per year of family income). Their missing status originated in Sussex County; they were found out of state.

Factors Related to Runaway or Homeless Behavior. When asked to rate the strength of social factors as indicators that would cause one to suspect a runaway or homeless problem, the following percentages were reported by survey respondents. These percentages reflect the respondents' professional judgment that a particular factor was either very strongly or somewhat strongly related. Those factors which 75% of the respondents listed as most related were:

93% emotional abuse	78% delinquent behavior
92% physical abuse	78% chronic school absence
90% psychological problems	
85% drug/alcohol abuse	

Those factors viewed as being related but somewhat less so, were those which achieved a less than 75% rating from respondents. They were:

73% depression	58% suicide attempt
68% disciplinary problems	56% hitchhiking
66% prostitution	53% physical condition
	51% poor academics

Sources of Information on Runaway or Homeless Youth. Respondents were requested to rank from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important) those information sources that would best make them aware that a child was runaway or homeless⁷. The following percentage of people ranked these factors as the primary source:

38% peers	7% neighbors
32% child himself/herself	6% health care agency
19% school personnel	2% clergy
17% social service agency	2% other
14% law enforcement agency	

Places To Which to Run. On the question of where a child goes most often when running or homeless, respondents viewed the friend's house, by far, as the number one place. Sixty-three (55%) answered with this response. Another nineteen (17%) saw the "friends-streets" (neighborhood) as the next most prominent place with twelve (11%) mentioning staying with friends-relatives. Only six (5%) thought that youth would roam the streets. While various other possibilities were mentioned, those were the ones most frequently cited.

⁷ The reader will note that the percentages add to over 100%. This is so because some respondents rated, rather than ranked, their answers. Therefore, many assigned the number one to more than one selection.

5. Reporting and Handling Procedures

A. Written Procedures. Respondents were asked whether their agency had a written policy/procedure for reporting youth suspected of being runaways, homeless or missing. Seventy-eight (58%) indicated that they did not have such a policy while 52 (39%) noted they did; five (4%) did not know.

B. Official Report Sent. Only 88 respondents answered this portion of the survey. Of this number, slightly more than one-half (55%) indicated that an official report is made by them when a suspected case is encountered.

C. Persons Notified. Of the four main choices given for response, respondents noted the following order of priority for notifying persons:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
•Child Protective Services	101	75
•Parents	96	71
•Police	94	70
•Hotline	39	29

D. Factors Involved in Not Reporting Suspected Cases. Respondents were asked to rate how important the following factors were in suspected cases of runaway, homeless or missing youth not being reported. The percentages reveal the rate at which the 135 respondents believed that these factors were "very important" to agencies or individuals:

- .46% Unfamiliar with proper reporting procedures
- .45% Not willing to get involved
- .45% Situation considered a family matter
- .40% Lack of services once agency response is made
- .36% Fear of personal/legal retribution
- .35% Lack of confidence in agency to properly respond
- .20% Fear of child being sent to juvenile corrections
- .16% Conflict between child seen as victim vs. child as delinquent
- .14% Belief that child would have a delinquent record

E. Staff Training. Over three out of every four survey respondents mentioned that their agency does not conduct training in the identification and reporting of suspected cases of runaway or homeless youth.

Of those agencies that did have training, it was provided to the following degree:

84% Reading material provided
47% Staff sent regularly to seminars/workshops
41% Instruction at staff meetings
78% Other training vehicles

6. Factors Contributing to Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth

Respondents were asked to give their professional opinion as to how important the following twenty (20) social factors were in contributing to the problem of runaway, homeless and missing youth. The number and percentage of the 135 respondents answering the question reflect those who indicated that the factor "always" or "often" was a contributing cause:

<u>Contributing Factors</u>	<u>Number Responding</u>	<u>Percentage Responding</u>
Poor Communication	102	90%
Neglect and Abuse	94	83%
Anger	87	77%
Alienation	84	76%
Poor Self-Concept	86	76%
Family Stress	87	76%
Parental Demands	85	75%
Lack of Coping Ability	82	71%
High Family Mobility	65	61%
Child's Drug/Alcohol Abuse	64	57%
Lack of Parental Supervision	63	56%
Parental Conflicts	59	53%
Depression	58	52%
Parental Drug/Alcohol Abuse	57	51%
Poor Peer Relations	45	40%
School Related Problems	39	34%
Freedom and Adventure	38	33%
Youth Thrown Out by Parents	34	31%
Family Economic Problems	23	21%
Pregnancy of Youth	22	20%

By far, poor communication between youth and their parents was seen as the most outstanding characteristic promoting the runaway and homeless youth situation. Several other factors having a basis in family relationships were also thought to be significant contributing factors by over 75% of those responding. These factors were: neglect and abuse, anger, alienation, youth's poor self-concept, family stress and parental demands.

7. Service Needs and Service Delivery Problems

A. Service Type. Respondents were asked to give their professional assessment of the service delivery currently available in Delaware to address the runaway, homeless and missing youth problem. Of those who expressed an opinion about these various services, the following information resulted.⁸

<u>Service Type</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>		<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Residential				
•Emergency Shelters	34	43	41	51
•Foster Care	32	35	59	64
•Group Homes	31	36	51	59
•Transitional Living	11	21	27	51
•Long-Term Placement	12	19	39	63
•Independent/Supervised Living	10	18	27	49
•Residential Treatment Cntrs.	21	29	44	60
Counseling Services				
•24 Hr. Crisis Intervention	45	56	28	35
•Drop-In Centers	16	25	18	29
•Pregnancy/Sexual	66	73	23	26
•Individual/Family	59	59	40	40
•Group	43	48	42	47
•Mental Health	44	46	48	51
•Drug/Alcohol	68	65	34	32
Support Services				
•Information/Referral	56	66	28	33
•Outreach	23	36	35	55
•Mail Drops	8	24	16	49
•Medical Treatment	38	55	29	42
•Legal Assistance	26	41	35	56
•Employment Training	22	33	39	58
•Education Assistance	43	56	51	40
•Child Advocacy	33	47	33	47
•Parent Education	36	44	40	49
•Nutritional Services	36	56	22	34

Among the three classifications of service - residential, counseling and supportive - the various residential services were viewed more so than the other two as being unsatisfactory. Among residential services, foster care and long-term placement programs for troubled youth were seen as the most unsatisfactory services. However, over one-half of the respondents also saw the state of Delaware's resources for emergency shelters, group homes, residential treatment centers and transitional living as being unsatisfactory to adequately address youth service delivery needs.

⁸ Data reported here does not include the small percentage whose paid service was not existent or those who noted they "did not know how to answer the question."

Within the different types of youth-oriented counseling services, over one-half of those offering an opinion believed the level of mental health service delivery to be inadequate. Supportive services, to which over 50% of the respondents believed more attention should be paid, were youth outreach, legal assistance and employment training/assistance.

B. Service Priorities. Respondents were asked to offer their professional opinion (from the service list noted in the previous table) on the top five service priorities, whether currently available or not in Delaware, for runaway and homeless youth. The following services received the largest number of responses from those people offering an opinion as to their being among the top priority needs.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
•24 Hour Crisis Intervention	70	60%
•Individual/Family Counseling	64	55%
•Emergency Shelter	63	54%
•Parent Education	38	33%
•Foster Care	37	32%

While 24-hour crisis intervention was listed most often among the top five priorities, emergency shelters were listed as most often number one.

C. Service Delivery Problems. The Survey Questionnaire asked respondents to indicate, from the following suggested list, problems which might presently be having an effect on Delaware's service delivery network for runaway and homeless youth. The data noted below indicates the percentage of those professionals offering an opinion on each item who believed the specific problem to be "very serious."

<u>Service Delivery Problem</u>	<u>Number</u> ⁹	<u>Percentage</u> ⁹
Lack of manpower to handle cases	67	66%
Lack of resources committed to youth	67	64%
Lack of adequate shelters	61	58%
Confusion over agencies roles	51	47%
Lack of clear procedures to deal with problem	43	45%
Frustration/apathy from chronic runaway behavior	43	43%
Lack of adequate follow-up when cases are reported	46	43%
Runaways can't be detained long enough for treatment	37	42%

⁹The number and percentages are affected by the amount of "don't know" responses to each problem listed as a choice.

<u>Service Delivery Problem</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Lack of awareness of what to do when suspected case occurs	47	39%
Misconceptions and lack of understanding of problem	38	38%
Lack of cooperation among agencies	33	35%
Conflict of philosophy among agencies	30	33%

The above data demonstrates that, in general, a significant percentage of professionals believe there are "very serious" service delivery problems in many different aspects of the delivery network. No less than one-third of the respondents who offered an opinion to each item thought that any one of the suggested problem areas was "very serious."

The three problem areas about which over one-half or more of the respondents believed "very serious" service delivery problems exist in Delaware relate directly to resource allocation on the part of both the public and private agencies. The professionals said that not enough community resources are directed to youth, that the necessary manpower does not exist to adequately handle identified cases, and once identified, there is a lack of emergency shelters for runaways and homeless youth.

D. Denial of Services. Those surveyed were asked if their agency ever had to deny services to runaway or homeless youth because of constraints related to money, time, agency policy, personnel, space, or other reasons. Of the 121 professionals giving a "yes" or "no" response, 110 or 91% of them said services had never been denied.

E. Improvement of Service Network. While forty (40) people said they "did not know," 99% of the remaining respondents expressed the optimistic opinion that Delaware's service delivery network for runaway and homeless youth could be improved.

F. Prevention Strategies. As a final question in the survey, professionals tendered their thoughts on what strategies or services might be implemented to prevent runaway/homeless behavior in the future. The following are some of the more frequent ideas offered. They are worthy of serious consideration for future advocacy efforts:

- State funding of school counselors from elementary level on
- Educate parents, school professionals, and others about symptoms of runaway behaviors
- More parent education to improve communication between youth and parents
- Work early with parents to prevent parent-child alienation
- Develop more public awareness of the severity of the runaway/homeless youth problem
- Channel high risk youth and their parents into family counseling

Phase II: The Eye Magazine Youth Survey

1. Data from Youth Respondents. Over 173 teenagers responded voluntarily to the survey questionnaire (see Appendix D) contained in The Eye Magazine.

Females responded at a higher rate than males. While 57% (98) who sent back completed surveys were girls, 43% (74) of those participating were teenage boys.

A wide range of ages - from 12 to 20 - were reflected in the survey participants. The bulk of them, however, were 13 and 14 year olds. Fifty-nine (59) (38%) were in their first teenage year while fifty-five (55) (35%) 14 year olds participated.

When asked if they knew a runaway youth, over one-half of the 173 who returned questionnaires (i.e., 92 or 53%) noted they had.

Ninety of the responding youth volunteered that they knew a total of 90 friends who had run away for more than 24 hours. The greatest majority of these 90 friends (79 or 88%) ran away only once according to those answering this item. The remaining 12% had multiple episodes of running away.

By virtue of the fact that only 10 (11%) of the survey respondents said they had run away themselves, the survey responses took on the character of significant

outside observers rather than participant observers. Over 91% of the 92 people offering an answer to this item said a friend had run away.

According to the respondents, over twice as many of their "friend-runaways" were female than male (58 vs. 29). Of the 82 runaways identified by age, the majority of them (56 or 68%) were known to be 13, 15 or 16 years of age.

In terms of length of time the identified runaways stayed away from home, 60% (53) of the 88 responses to this item indicated that their friends stayed away less than one week when they ran away. Virtually all of the remaining runaways (31 or 35%) according to those surveyed, were away more than one week but no longer than six months.

When asked if these incidents were reported to the police or to Child Protective Services, 50 or 56% of the 90 answering said "no", they were not.

In regard to the seriousness of the runaway problem, those youth electing to voice their opinion in the survey (170) demonstrated a wide variation in their response as noted below:

<u>Seriousness</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Very Serious	58	34%
Moderately Serious	74	43%
Not Very Serious	35	21%
Not a Problem	<u>3</u>	<u>2%</u>
TOTAL	170	100%

Respondents were asked their opinion about where runaways would tend to go when leaving home. The following choices were ranked most frequently by those giving an answer to each choice as the number one place to which runaways would go:

<u>Place</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Friend's House	120	80%
Relative's House	19	15%
Streets/Parks	16	13%

Other choices which received only minimal consideration as the first place to which a runaway youth would go were an official agency/shelter, beach, church/clergy, and Y.M.C.A./Y.W.C.A. For the most part, the surveyed youth seem to be saying that youth feel safer going to unofficial/informal resources rather than more official/formal agencies one might ordinarily regard as helpers in this situation.

The responses to "Why do youth leave home" were very telling.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Family Problems	110	69%
Physical/Sexual Abuse	35	27%
Drug/Alcohol Problems	20	16%
Peer Pressure	17	14%

Of the respondents who ranked the various choices given, the above four problems were ranked first more frequently than the others (i.e., poor peer relations; school problems; desire for independence; asked to leave by parents; pregnancy).

The 173 responding teenagers were asked to relate what they thought were the most needed services to address the runaway problem. The following ranking resulted from a response of "yes" to the services listed below:

<u>Needed Services</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Emergency Shelter	121	70%
24 Hour Crisis Counseling	116	67%
Individual/Family Counseling	98	57%
Drug/Alcohol Counseling	85	49%
Pregnancy/Sexual Counseling	84	48%
Medical Assistance	75	43%
Educational Assistance	66	38%
Mental Health Services	64	37%
Employment Services	47	27%

2. Summary. The majority of those who chose to return questionnaires were teenage girls in the 13 - 14 year old range. Over half of the teenagers knew of a friend who had runaway.

Only a very small number of survey respondents themselves had actually run away. Most of those who had run away were female and had done so only once for a relatively short episode of less than a week. They tended to be 13, 15 or 16 years old.

In more than one-half of the runaway episodes, according to the responding teenagers, the incident was not reported to the police or to Child Protective Services.

Running away was viewed most frequently as only a moderately serious social problem. When youth run away, they are said to run, by far, more often to the security of a friend's house than any other place. Their running is a result most often of family problems but sometimes of physical/sexual abuse.

Of the various services in the youth service delivery network, the respondents believed most often that emergency shelters, 24-hour crisis counseling, and individual/family counseling were the most essential services that should be provided for runaways.

Phase III: Delaware Household Survey

To gain a third perspective on the runaway youth problem from the general public, a statistically sound survey of 300 people proportionally based upon Delaware's three counties was undertaken.

Those surveyed demonstrated the following attitudes about the seriousness of the problem:

<u>Seriousness</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Very Serious	107	36%
Somewhat Serious	114	38%
Just a Little Serious	28	9%
Not at all Serious	6	2%
Don't Know	45	15%

Generally speaking, they saw running away as a serious social problem but were somewhat divided over its degree of severity.

Regarding whether or not services were satisfactory to adequately address the problem, almost 60% of the 300 surveyed said that they did not know. Among the almost 42% who did offer a judgment, only slightly more (23%) felt they were not satisfactory than satisfactory (19%).

Those contacted were asked their opinion as to which services were most needed to deal with running away. While only 84 people felt informed enough to offer an answer, those services cited most frequently were shelter, 24-hour crisis telephone counseling, individual/family counseling and quicker police follow-through to locate runaway youth.

It is interesting to note each person's perception of the runaway problem was revealed by his/her response to the question: "Where would you go for help to report a runaway or missing child?" The vast majority (196 or 65%) indicated that the police would be the first choice. There were a number of other social agency-oriented responses but none near the volume of "police." Citizens, it appears, look at running away as a criminal justice reporting matter rather than a social problem.

Another question asked if under any circumstances it would be appropriate for a child under 18 to live away from home. Over one-half of the respondents (165 or 55%) believed that there were circumstances where this would be appropriate. Some of those situations noted were parental/family problems, presence of child abuse, poor home conditions, school, where a youth is very mature, responsible, and has a job. Others were the presence of incest/alcoholism/drugs in the home and family financial problems.

Respondents were next asked if they would ever allow a teenager whom they knew to be running away to stay at their home overnight without parental permission. Almost 96% of them said "no."

While one-quarter of the 300 interviewees had children at home between the ages of 10 and 17, only slightly more than 1% had a child in the home who had run in the past year. When asked if they knew other children between the same ages who left home overnight without permission with the intention of running away, respondents (13%) noted they had. These respondents, however, were well divided over the issue of reporting these youth. Almost 4 in 10 said "no" while 51% said "yes" when asked if the episode was reported to the police. While a similar percentage said "no" to reporting to Child Protective Services, a lesser percentage (34%) reported to Child Protective Services than did so to police.

In an attempt to get a reading on why children leave home, the 41 respondents who indicated they were aware of a runaway were asked to relate their opinion on the causes. Thirty-six (36) people offered responses. Those responses most frequently mentioned were:

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Parental Conflict or Break-up	20	56%
Parental Neglect/Abuse	6	17%
Emotional Stress	5	16%

The 300 survey participants were asked where a child would go when he/she ran away. These answers resulted:

<u>Where Stayed</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Friends	26	63%
Shelter	1	2%
Family	2	5%
Other; Don't Know; N/A	<u>271</u>	<u>30%</u>
TOTAL	300	100%

This data from the general public is consistent with that generated from the community professionals and youths surveyed in the other phases of this study. They also overwhelmingly saw friends' houses as the primary place to which runaway/homeless youth would go.

Finally, the household survey participants were asked if they were aware of a child being abducted in the past year. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the survey sample (300) indicated "no." Of the three who said "yes", two identified a parent as the perpetrator. All three cases were reported to the police.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the findings in the three phases of this research project, a number of points can be highlighted about runaway, homeless and missing youth in Delaware:

For a state the size of Delaware, the number of suspected runaways, homeless and missing youth is substantial - even allowing for a significant amount of duplication in the figures of those surveyed.

Little staff training takes place among professionals in youth serving agencies.

The service delivery system needs more attention from public and private officials.

Community education about the problem and how to deal with it is fairly lacking.

Consequently, a number of steps might be taken in the state of Delaware through a concerted public/private partnership effort to bolster the way in which the youth service delivery system responds.

1. A sustained public education campaign should be put in place to raise awareness about the extent, nature and scope of the problem in Delaware.
2. More state funding for elementary school counseling so that children can deal with their concerns at an early age and not feel compelled to choose running away as an option in their teen years.
3. Through the schools, promote programs that help youth and parents deal with alienation and communication gaps.
4. Regarding missing children:
 - a. Make parental kidnapping of children a felony in Delaware;
 - b. Work to have missing children automatically entered into the FBI computer network;
 - c. Police should not wait to get involved in these cases.¹⁰

¹⁰ In fact, during the course of this study, the Delaware Police have initiated a state-wide policy of entering a missing persons case as soon as it is reported. Also, the Delaware State Police have set up a missing persons clearinghouse which has created a better system of reporting and follow-up statewide.

5. More clearly defined reporting procedures in terms of both when and to whom to report.

6. Greater public sector funding responsibility should be assumed for such vital services as 24-hour crisis intervention, telephone counseling, youth mental health services, family counseling, emergency shelters, parent education, foster care and long-term placement programs.

VIII. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX B - TASK FORCE ON RUNAWAY, HOMELESS & MISSING YOUTH

APPENDIX C - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE TO PROFESSIONALS

APPENDIX D - THE EYE MAGAZINE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUTH

APPENDIX E - HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

APPENDIX A

Definitions of Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth

Runaway - any youth 17 years or younger who is outside the home at least overnight of his/her own volition, with the intent to run, and without parental/guardian permission.

Homeless - any youth 17 years or younger, who has been abandoned, left home, or been urged to leave home with full knowledge/approval of parents/legal guardians or who is without a place of shelter where he/she receives appropriate adult supervision.

Missing - any youth 17 years or younger, whose whereabouts are unknown, who is away from home without parental/guardian permission, and who is probably the victim of an abduction. This would include custody abductions.

APPENDIX B

TASK FORCE ON RUNAWAY, HOMELESS & MISSING YOUTH

Colonel Daniel Simpson
Chairman (of Task Force)
Superintendent of the
Delaware State Police

Mr. Jody Ambrosino
Hodgson Vocational
Technical High School

Dr. Carol R. Baker
Executive Director
Turnabout Counseling Center

Ms. Barbara Brown, Director
Foster Care Review Board

Ms. Sheila Colpo
Milford Public Library

Ms. Cathy Devaney
Executive Director
CONTACT of Wilmington

Mr. Joseph J. Duffy
Executive Director
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
of Delaware, Inc.

Ms. Janis Fehnel
Director of Treatment
Services, Family Court

Lt. Stan Fletcher
City of Wilmington
Police Dept.

Mr. Leonard Goode
Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.

Mrs. Helaine Gordon
CHILD, Inc.

Mr. William J. Harness
Human Resources Manager
Scott Paper Company

Mr. Rod Hegman
Identification Technician
Delaware State Police

Sister Joan Hoolihan
Migrant Education

Mr. Jim Kane
Criminal Justice Council

Dr. Janet Kramer, Director of
Adolescent Medicine, Christiana Hosp.

Ms. Dorothy Loftus, Director
Div. of Child Protective Services

Col. John R. McCarnan, Chief of Police
New Castle County Police Department

John R. McDonough, Div. of Probation
and Parole, Dept. of Corrections

The Honorable Harris B. McDowell III
State Senator

Ms. Barbara Morgan, Director
The Resource Center of the YMCA

Ms. Brenda Postley, Director
Delaware Adolescent Program, Inc.
of Kent County

Mr. Michael R. Rabasca, Director
Statistical Analysis Center

Mr. John Rago, Executive Assistant
Dept. of Services for Children,
Youth and Their Families

Dr. Warren Rhodes, Professor of
Psychology, Delaware State College

Dr. Frank H. Shavlik, Executive
Director, People's Place II

Ms. Lucy Siegel, Director
Office of Adolescent Medicine
Dept. of Public Health

Sarah Swords of CHILD, Inc.

Mr. Thomas Welch, Director
Vocational Education Division
Dept. of Public Instruction

Ms. Beverly Williams
Aid-in-Dover

R. Blaine Morris of CHILD, Inc.

Joseph M. Dell'Olio, Executive Vice-
President of CHILD, Inc.

Ann Altemus of CHILD, Inc. staff

Survey Questionnaire to Professionals



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
RUNAWAY, HOMELESS AND MISSING
YOUTH PROJECT

CHILD, Inc.
11th & Washington St.
Wilmington, DE 19801
655-3311

The Delaware Task Force on Runaway, Homeless and Missing Children and the research staff involved in this project thank you in advance for your cooperation in this endeavor.

Please refer to the following definitions when completing this questionnaire:

1. Runaway: Any youth, 17 years or younger, who is outside the home at least overnight of his own volition, with the intent to run, and without parental/guardian permission.
2. Homeless: Any youth, 17 years or younger, who has been abandoned, left home, or been urged to leave home with full knowledge / approval of parents / legal guardians or who is without a place of shelter where he receives appropriate adult supervision.
3. Missing: Any youth, 17 years or younger, whose whereabouts are unknown, who is away from home without parental/guardian permission, and who is probably the victim of an abduction. This would include custody abductions.

A. General Descriptive Items

1. Name of your agency _____
2. Check the category of your organization:
☐ School
☐ Health Care
☐ Recreational
☐ Law Enforcement
☐ Social Service
☐ Other (Specify) _____
3. Check the area served by your agency:
☐ City of Wilmington
☐ New Castle County
☐ Kent County
☐ Sussex County

B. Incidence of Runaway, Homeless,
and Missing Children

You may not be able to give exact answers to some of the following questions. If this is the case, please give the closest estimate possible.

4. Of the total number of children (under 18 years of age) dealt with in the past year (Oct. 15, 1984 thru Oct. 15, 1985), how many would you consider or have you suspected to be runaway, homeless, or missing?
 - a. Number of Runaways
☐ Of this number, how many ran away twice?
☐ How many ran three or more times?
 - b. How long is the average runaway episode?
☐ Less than 48 hours
☐ 48 to 72 hours
☐ More than 72 hours
 - c. Number of Homeless
☐ Of this number, how many had two episodes?
☐ How many had three or more episodes?

d. How long is the average homeless episode?

_____ Less than 48 hours

_____ 48 to 72 hours

_____ More than 72 hours

_____ e. Number of Missing

_____ Of this number, how many were suspected
of being kidnapped by a parent?

_____ How many were suspected of being kidnapped
by someone other than a parent?

5. Of the number that you noted above, how many do you
know were reported to the police, Division of Child
Protective Services or other agency?

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u>	<u>Missing</u>
Division of Child Protective Services	_____	_____	_____
Police	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

6. Of those children suspected of being runaway,
homeless, or missing but who were not reported, estimate
the number in the following categories.

<u>RUNAWAY</u>				<u>Female</u>		
		<u>Male</u>			<u>Black</u>	
<u>Age</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>		<u>Other</u>
0-5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6-9	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10-12	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13-15	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16-17	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

<u>HOMELESS</u>				<u>Female</u>		
		<u>Male</u>			<u>Black</u>	
<u>Age</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>		<u>Other</u>
0-5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6-9	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10-12	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13-15	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16-17	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

MISSING

<u>Age</u>	<u>Male</u>			<u>Female</u>		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other</u>
0-5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6-9	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10-12	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13-15	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16-17	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Of those children suspected of being runaway, homeless, or missing but who were not reported, estimate the number that fall into the following income brackets.

<u>Income</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u>	<u>Missing</u>
Low (under \$13,000)	_____	_____	_____
Middle(\$13,000-\$35,000)	_____	_____	_____
High (above \$35,000)	_____	_____	_____

8a. Of those children suspected of being runaway, homeless, or missing from your jurisdiction but who were not reported, estimate how many were found in each of the following areas. Use numerical figures.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u>	<u>Missing</u>
City of Wilmington	_____	_____	_____
New Castle County	_____	_____	_____
Kent County	_____	_____	_____
Sussex County	_____	_____	_____
(incl. beach areas)	_____	_____	_____
Out of State	_____	_____	_____
Don't Know	_____	_____	_____

8b. Of those children found in your jurisdiction and suspected of being runaway, homeless, or missing but who were not reported, estimate how many originated from each of the following areas. Use numerical figures.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Runaway</u>	<u>Homeless</u>	<u>Missing</u>
City of Wilmington	_____	_____	_____
New Castle County	_____	_____	_____
Kent County	_____	_____	_____
Sussex County	_____	_____	_____
Out of State	_____	_____	_____
Don't Know	_____	_____	_____

9. The following factors are said to be related to runaway or homeless behavior. Based on your experience, rate each item as an indicator (items that would cause you to suspect) that a child is runaway or homeless.
(1=very strong 2=somewhat strong 3=weak 4=don't know)

_____ physical neglect/abuse
 _____ emotional neglect/abuse
 _____ sexual abuse
 _____ psychological problems (alienation,
 poor peer relations)
 _____ disciplinary problems in school
 _____ suicide attempt
 _____ physical condition
 _____ poor academic achievement
 _____ delinquent behavior
 _____ drug and alcohol use
 _____ prostitution
 _____ hitchhiking
 _____ depression
 _____ chronic absence from school
 _____ other (specify _____)

10. Of the following sources of information, which are important in putting you in contact with or making you aware of a child who is runaway or homeless.
(1=most important to 10=least important)

_____ family (including foster parents)
 _____ peers
 _____ social service agencies
 _____ health care agencies
 _____ clergy
 _____ neighbors
 _____ child (self)
 _____ law enforcement agencies
 _____ school personnel
 _____ other (specify _____)

11. Where does a child go most often when running or homeless (friend's house, shelter, other relatives, streets, etc.)? _____

C. Reporting and Handling Procedures

12. Does your agency have an established written policy/procedure for reporting youths suspected of or acknowledged to be runaway, homeless, or missing?

_____ No
_____ Yes

13. How is a suspected/acknowledged case handled? Please explain how the decision to report is made, the criteria used, and the reporting procedure.

a. Is an official report sent?

_____ No
_____ Yes

If yes, by whom? _____

b. Are the parents notified?

_____ No
_____ Yes

14. If you encountered a child whom you suspected of being runaway, homeless, or missing, whom would you notify? Check all that apply.

_____ Police
_____ Parents
_____ Division of Child Protective Services
_____ Runaway Hotline
_____ Other (specify _____)

15. Are there circumstances where there would be a deviation from written policy?

_____ No
_____ Yes

If yes, please explain. _____

16. It is estimated that the actual number of runaway, homeless, and missing children is far greater than the number of reported cases.

Indicate how important you think each of the following factors is in suspected cases not being reported.

(1=very impt. 2=somewhat impt. 3=unimpt. 4=don't know)

- ☐ citizens/agencies are not willing to get involved
- ☐ citizens/agencies are unfamiliar with proper reporting procedures
- ☐ lack of confidence in the ability of mandated agencies to adequately respond to reported cases.
- ☐ lack of proper services available once mandated agency responds to a report.
- ☐ individuals believe that the child will be sent to juvenile corrections.
- ☐ situations involving runaway and homeless youth are considered to be "family" matters.
- ☐ conflict of philosophy between agencies - child seen as victim vs. child seen as delinquent.
- ☐ individuals believe the child will have a delinquent record if reported.
- ☐ fear of legal or personal retribution.
- ☐ other (specify _____)

17. Does your agency conduct any staff training related to the identification, reporting, etc. of suspected runaway or homeless youth?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

18. If yes, indicate below the kind of training provided:

- ☐ instruction provided at regular staff meetings.
- ☐ staff sent regularly to seminars/workshops.
- ☐ reading material distributed to staff.
- ☐ other (specify _____)

D. Contributing Factors

19. The following items have often been identified as contributing factors to the problem of runaway, homeless, and missing youth. Based on your experience, indicate how often each item is a major contributing (causal) factor.

(1=always 2=often 3=sometimes 4=rarely 5=never)

- _____ neglect/abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- _____ parental demands
- _____ high family mobility
- _____ lack of coping ability for emotional stress
- _____ depression
- _____ anger
- _____ feelings of alienation
- _____ desire for freedom and adventure
- _____ poor communication between parent & child
- _____ pregnancy
- _____ family economic problems
- _____ school related problems
- _____ poor peer relations
- _____ poor self-concept
- _____ lack of supervision
- _____ parental drug/alcohol abuse
- _____ drug/alcohol abuse by child
- _____ parental conflict/break-up
- _____ high level of family stress
- _____ "thrown-out" by parents
- _____ other (specify _____)

E. Service Needs and Service Delivery Problems

20. Examine the following services associated with runaway and homeless youth. Indicate your view of the level of service delivery currently available in Delaware, using the following scale.

(1=satisfactory 2=unsatisfactory
3=service nonexistent 4=don't know)

- a. Residential Services
- 1. _____ emergency shelter
 - 2. _____ foster care
 - 3. _____ group homes

(1=satisfactory 2=unsatisfactory
3=service nonexistent 4=don't know)

a. Residential Services (continued)

- 4. _____ transitional living
- 5. _____ long-term placement
- 6. _____ independent/supervised living
- 7. _____ residential treatment centers

b. Counseling Services

- 8. _____ 24-hour crisis intervention for youth and families
- 9. _____ drop-in centers
- 10. _____ pregnancy/sexual counseling
- 11. _____ ongoing individual/family counseling
- 12. _____ group counseling
- 13. _____ mental health
- 14. _____ drug and/or alcohol counseling

c. Supportive Services

- 15. _____ information/referral
- 16. _____ outreach
- 17. _____ mail drops
- 18. _____ medical treatment
- 19. _____ legal assistance
- 20. _____ employment training/assistance
- 21. _____ educational assistance
- 22. _____ child advocacy
- 23. _____ parent education
- 24. _____ nutritional services

PLEASE USE THE NUMERICAL LISTING FROM QUESTION #20
TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS

21. Identify what you feel should be Delaware's
top five service priorities whether currently
available or not, for runaway and homeless youth
by number from the list above.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

22. What services (see #20) did your agency provide?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

23. Below is a list of problems which might presently have an effect on the service delivery network in Delaware. Rate the seriousness of each problem using the following scale.

(1=very serious 2=somewhat serious

3=not at all serious 4=don't know)

- _____ lack of awareness by individuals/agencies of what to do when a suspected case occurs
- _____ lack of adequate follow-up when a case is reported
- _____ lack of adequate shelter facilities
- _____ runaways can not be detained long enough to offer appropriate treatment
- _____ confusion over appropriate roles of various agencies
- _____ conflict of philosophy between agencies
- _____ frustration/apathy resulting from chronic runaway behavior
- _____ lack of necessary manpower to handle reported cases
- _____ lack of commitment of resources to youth
- _____ lack of clear procedures within agencies to properly deal with runaway/homeless youth
- _____ lack of cooperation between & within agencies
- _____ misperceptions/lack of understanding of the runaway/homeless problem due to lack of available information

24. Has your agency ever had to deny services to runaway or homeless youth because of constraints of time, money, agency policy, personnel, space, etc.?

_____ No

_____ Yes

If yes, please explain: _____

25. Do you feel that the service delivery network for runaway, homeless and missing youth in Delaware could be improved?

☐ No
☐ Yes
☐ Don't Know

If yes, what changes or new services would you recommend? _____

26. What services or strategies might be implemented to prevent runaway/homeless behavior in the future?

Thank you for your time and cooperation. If you have any questions concerning this questionnaire, please call Mrs. Helaine Gordon at 655-3311. We would appreciate it if you would give us your name and telephone number in case we should need to reach you for any further information. All information will be strictly confidential.

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 15th

APPENDIX D

The EYE Magazine Questionnaire for Youth

Your Initials _____ Birth Date _____

Sex _____ Your School _____

1. How do you rate the problem of runaway and homeless youth in Delaware?
Very Serious Moderately
Not Very Serious Not a Problem
2. Have you or anyone you know ever run away from home for more than 24 hours?
(For friends - how many?) Please list friend's age and sex.
SELF FRIEND
3. How long were you or that person away from home?
Overnight More than a week - Six months
Six months or more
4. How many times have you or a friend run away? (For more than one friend, list times for each)
5. When you or your friend ran away, was the incident reported to the police or Child Protective Services?
No If not, why?
Yes
6. Where would a runaway or homeless youth stay? (Rate in numerical order with #1 the most likely place.)
Relative's house Clergy/Church
Streets/Parks Y.M.C.A.
Friend's House Official Agency/Shelter
Beach Other (explain)
7. What would be reasons for leaving home in the first place? (Rate in order as above)
Family problems Desire for Independence
Drug/Alcohol Problems Physical or Sexual Abuse
Peer Pressure Asked to Leave by Parents
Poor Peer Relations Pregnancy
School Problems Other (explain)
8. What services do you feel should be provided to runaway and homeless youth?
Emergency Shelters
Medical Assistance
24 Hour Crisis Counseling
Employment Assistance & Training
Pregnancy/Sexual Counseling
Individual/Family Counseling
Drug/Alcohol Counseling
Educational Assistance
Mental Health Services
Other (explain)

APPENDIX E
CHILD, Inc.
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

1. Are there any children between the ages of 10 and 17 living in your household?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

If No, go to #3

If Yes,

2. In the past year, have any of the children left home overnight without permission and with the intention of running away?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

3. Do you know of any children between the ages of 10 and 17, other than those in your own household, who have left home overnight without permission and with the intention of running away during the last year?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

If No to #2 and #3, go to #9

If Yes to #2, ask #4-#8 in reference to children in the household

If No to #2 and Yes to #3, ask #4-#8 in reference to other children

4. Were the police contacted?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

If No,

- 4a. Why was the child not reported?

_____ didn't know to whom to report
_____ believed child would be sent to juvenile corrections
_____ believed child would obtain a criminal record
_____ feared personal or legal retribution
_____ didn't want to involve officials in family matter
_____ other (specify: _____)
_____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

5. Was the Division of Child Protective Services contacted?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

If No,

- 5a. Why was the child not reported?

_____ didn't know to whom to report
_____ believed child would be sent to juvenile corrections
_____ believed child would obtain a criminal record
_____ feared personal or legal retribution
_____ didn't want to involved officials in family matter
_____ other (specify: _____)
_____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

6. Was the child encouraged to leave home?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK

7. Why did the child leave home?

_____ parental neglect/abuse	_____ emotional stress
_____ family stress	_____ desire for adventure
_____ poor grades in school	_____ other school-related problems
_____ lack of supervision	_____ parental conflict/break-up
_____ delinquent behavior	_____ other (specify _____)
_____ Ref _____ NA _____ DK	

8. Where did the child stay?

☐ friends
☐ shelter
☐ street
☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

☐ family
☐ beach
☐ other (specify _____)

9. Under any circumstances do you think it would be appropriate for a child under the age of 18 to live away from home?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

If No, go to #11

If Yes,

10. When would this be appropriate?

☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

11. Have you ever allowed a teenager, that you knew to be running away, to stay overnight at your house without their parent's permission?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

12. Are you aware of any children who have been abducted/kidnapped during the last year either by a parent or a stranger?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

13. If you were faced with a situation involving a runaway, homeless, or missing child, where would you go for help?

☐ police
☐ runaway hotline
☐ CHILD, Inc.
☐ Child Protective Services
☐ other (specify: _____)
☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

14. How serious a problem are runaway, homeless, and missing children in Delaware

☐ very serious
☐ somewhat serious
☐ just a little serious
☐ not at all serious
☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

15. Do you feel that services for runaway, homeless and missing children in Delaware are satisfactory?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

16. What services do you think are needed?

☐ Ref ☐ NA ☐ DK

NOTES

