YOUTH-CENTERED HARM REDUCTION & CRISIS SUPPORT PLAN

Trauma-Informed Safety Plan for Adolescents Who Run Away

KLASEY CONSULTING

> **Running Away Is a Survival Response—Not a Moral Failure:** Young people leave home or placement for real reasons: escalating conflict, feeling unsafe or rejected, trauma triggers, or needing relief from overwhelming stress **(National Runaway Safeline, 2022)**. Rather than judging or lecturing, this collaborative plan respects your dignity and voice **(SAMHSA, 2014)**. It helps you recognize early urges to leave, try safer cool-down alternatives first, and stay protected from street dangers and exploitation if you ever do leave.

Youth Name / Pronouns: _____	**Date Created / Reviewed:** _____
Collaborating Supporter / Role: _____	**Safe Place I Keep This Plan:** _____

Step 1: Recognizing My Flight Triggers & Early Warning Signs

Noticing what happens right before the urge to run hits gives you a chance to pause and choose what keeps you safest:

Trigger or Signal Area	What Usually Happens Before I Want to Leave
Situations & Conflict Triggers (e.g., arguments at home/placement, feeling unheard, identity rejection, school stress)	
Body & Nervous System Cues (e.g., heart racing, pacing, feeling trapped, shaking, shutting down/numbness)	
Thoughts & Feelings (e.g., "I need to get out right now," "Nobody wants me here," panic, anger)	

Step 2: Safer "Pause & Cool-Down" Alternatives Before Leaving

When your nervous system is in fight-or-flight mode, taking a short, planned break can create breathing room without putting you in danger on the street:

Cool-Down & De-Escalation Options	My Pre-Agreed Cool-Down Plan
☐ Step into a separate room, backyard, or porch for 15–30 minutes ☐ Use paced breathing, cold water on my face, or headphones with music ☐ Take a pre-approved walk around the block with my phone charged ☐ Use a signal or code word with caregivers/staff meaning "I need space, not a lecture" ☐ Call or text a trusted supporter or **1-800-RUNAWAY** to talk through options	**My "Need Space" Code Word / Signal:** _____ **Safe place nearby to cool down (library, park, relative's house):** _____ **Time I agree to check back in:** _____

Step 3: Harm Reduction — If I Do Leave, How I Stay Protected

If you leave anyway, your safety matters more than anything else. Youth away from home face heightened risks of exploitation and trafficking **(NCTSN, 2019)**—use these steps to protect yourself:

Protection Area	Concrete Harm-Reduction Steps
Essential Go-Bag Items	☐ Phone, charger/portable power bank, and written list of safe phone numbers ☐ Photo ID / school ID, health insurance card, and essential prescribed medications ☐ Warm layers, sturdy shoes, water bottle, snacks, and emergency cash/transit card
Street & Exploitation Safety Boundaries	☐ Avoid getting into cars, hotel rooms, or private homes with strangers or people met online ☐ Be cautious of anyone offering "free" housing, money, gifts, drugs, or quick protection with strings attached ☐ Stay in well-lit, staffed public spaces (libraries, youth drop-in centers, Safe Place sites) and keep location sharing on with one trusted person
Safe Check-In Agreement	Even if you are not ready to come back, sending a brief text (even just an emoji or "I'm safe") to a trusted person lets them know you are alive without forcing an argument.

Step 4: Safe Places, Trusted Contacts, & 24/7 Confidential Youth Hotlines

Keep these numbers saved in your phone and written on paper in case your battery dies **(ACF / FYSB, 2021)**:

Safe Person / Youth Resource	Name / Location	Phone / Text / Access Info
Trusted Adult / Relative / Mentor (Someone who listens without judgment)		
School Counselor / Caseworker / Clinician		

Safe Person / Youth Resource	Name / Location	Phone / Text / Access Info
Local Youth Drop-In Center / Safe Place (Look for yellow & black "Safe Place" signs)		**Text "SAFE" + your location to 4HELP (44357)**
National Runaway Safeline (24/7 confidential support, shelter referrals, free bus home via Home Free program)	24/7 Call, Text, or Live Chat	**Call or Text: 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929)** Chat: 1800runaway.org
The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ Youth) (24/7 affirming crisis & housing support)	24/7 Call, Text, or Chat	**Call: 1-866-488-7386** **Text START to 678-678**
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline | Trafficking Hotline	24/7 Free Confidential Support	**988:** Call or Text **988** **Trafficking:** 1-888-373-7888 / Text 233733

Step 5: Safe Return & Reconnection Agreement (No-Shame Welcome)

What Helps Me Return Safely (Agreed with caregivers/staff: calm welcome, food/rest first, problem-solving later)	

Sources & Clinical References

1. National Runaway Safeline (NRS). (2022). *Youth Experiences Survey & Prevention Curriculum: Understanding Why Youth Run Away*. National Runaway Safeline / Family and Youth Services Bureau.
2. Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB). (2021). *Runaway and Homeless Youth Program: Trauma-Informed Care & Safety Planning Resources*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
3. National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). (2019). *Child Sex Trafficking: Trauma-Informed Screening, Assessment, and Care Guidelines*. National Center for Child Traumatic Stress / SAMHSA.
4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Partner with Klasey Consulting

Interested in trauma-informed trainings for youth-serving teams, caregiver workshops, or safety planning protocol consultation? Contact us at **info@klaseyconsulting.com** to learn more about our trainings and consultation services.

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