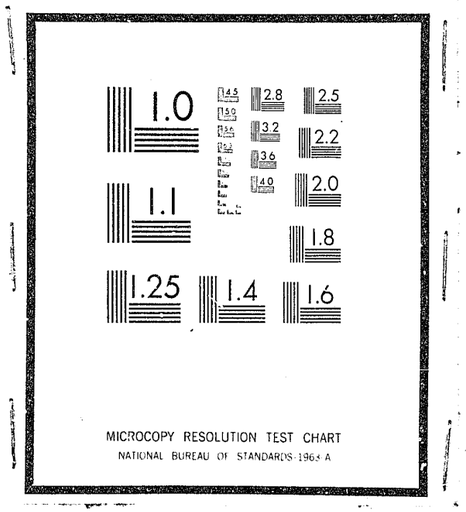

RUN-AWAY YOUTH

IN THE WASHINGTON AREA

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
1225 CONNECTICUT AVENUE N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

OCTOBER 1974

RUNAWAY YOUTH IN THE WASHINGTON AREA

REPORT AND ANALYSIS

PREPARED BY:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

metropolitan washington
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This report was prepared under a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration entitled "Criminal Justice Planning in the Washington Metropolitan Area." The report is a survey of the nature and extent of the runaway youth problem in the Washington metropolitan region, including an analysis of statistics and other information from each jurisdiction. Local and national responses to the runaway issue are also described.

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PREFACE

In 1972 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) received a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to undertake a project entitled "Criminal Justice Planning in the Washington Metropolitan Area." The goal of this project is to help prevent and reduce crime, and to improve the performance of the criminal justice systems in this interstate metropolitan area.

The grant, administered by COG's Public Safety Department, involves five general and twenty-one specific planning, research and coordination activities; three of these relate to children or young people. One activity calls for a survey of the nature and extent of the runaway youth problem in the metropolitan area. Research on this subject was suggested by COG's Board of Directors and by various other elected officials. The runaway problem was viewed as an important public safety issue on which there is insufficient up-to-date information.

The following sources were contacted to obtain information on runaway youth in this area: the three area runaway houses; all local police departments and juvenile courts; various social and youth service agencies that deal with runaways; individuals in the metropolitan community who work with young people; and the criminal justice state and regional planning agencies in this area. COG would like to thank all resource persons for their aid and cooperation in preparing the study.

SUMMARY

...The runaway issue still exists in the nation and in the Washington area, but today's youth are different from their counterparts of three to five years ago:

+ They are younger: 14 to 16 is the age range now, with an increasing number of 11 to 13 year olds. A few years ago the age range was 15 to 17.

+ The majority are females now, also a change from the past. According to police and others interviewed for this report, that trend could be explained in part by the fact that missing females are probably more likely to be reported by their parents or picked up by the police. They also may be more inclined to seek out a runaway house than their male counterparts.

+ More runaways today leave home because of family problems, rather than to seek adventure at a youth mecca such as Georgetown or Dupont Circle.

+ Runaways are local--that is, more often from within the metropolitan area than outside the region. They generally stay within the region too, rather than going long distances.

...There is no overall runaway profile. Running away is not exclusively a white middle-class experience, as is frequently thought. It touches all economic levels, races and religious backgrounds.

...The major reasons for fleeing, as given by both youth and parents, are: disagreement with parents about choice of friends, personal lifestyle (including clothes, hair length) and other matters; pressure to achieve scholastically; poor communication within the family; emotional problems of young people; allegedly overly restrictive parental rules (e.g., curfews).

...Most runaways return home within a week or two. A great number do not come to the attention of runaway houses or counselling agencies. Instead they seek aid from peers and other unofficial sources.

...The Washington area is one of 20 in the nation designated by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare as having a high incidence of runaways. Though reported runaway cases in this area totalled fewer than 9,000 in 1973, it should be noted that half the incidents in any given area probably go unreported. Figures for each jurisdiction are as follows:

Montgomery County	1,791	
Prince George's County	3,000	(estimated)
Fairfax County	2,028	
Arlington County	250	(estimated)
Alexandria	380	
Fairfax City	111	
Falls Church	33	
Herndon	30	
Vienna	68	
Prince William County	405	
Manassas	17	(estimated)
Leesburg	5	

No comprehensive records were maintained by the District of Columbia or Loudoun County, Virginia. D.C. police officials believe that few District young people run away; therefore the Department collects data for all missing persons from D.C. but not for runaways as a group. Loudoun County has no formal mechanism for reporting runaway cases.

...Nationally, a Runaway Youth Act was proposed in 1972 and has now been incorporated into the 1974 Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act. Under this measure funds will be provided for facilities offering temporary shelter and counseling. In addition, the National Institutes of Mental Health recently granted research and demonstration funds to runaway houses across the country, including all Washington area runaway facilities.

...Locally there are now three area runaway houses, one each in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. They are the D.C. Runaway House, Second Mile Runaway House in Hyattsville, Maryland and Alternative House in McLean, Virginia. In addition, a handful of Youth Service Bureaus and similar agencies offer supplemental assistance to the runaway houses in the form of counseling and occasional shelter for runaways.

...Conceivably, additional runaway facilities may be set up under the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Such facilities might help reduce to some extent the crossing of jurisdictional lines by those youths who find the District shelter more accessible than existing suburban houses. Additional facilities might also help reduce the substantial police involvement in the runaway issue, which is viewed by many as a problem for social service rather than law enforcement agencies to address.

RUNAWAY YOUTH IN THE WASHINGTON AREA 1/

I. Introduction and Background

Every year an estimated 1 million American young people run away from home, though only about half that number are reported. 2/ Literature on the current runaway phenomenon goes back to the early 1960's, but the issue received heightened public attention in the late 1960's and early 1970's. It was then considered an expression of the "hippie" or "flower child" subculture. At that time runaways not only increased in numbers but also became more visible. They flocked to certain sections of major U.S. cities (among them Georgetown and Dupont Circle in Washington), and became known as "street people."

As a result of that phenomenon, running away has been stereotyped as almost exclusively a white, middle class experience. However, many individuals and organizations working with youth declare that the act of leaving home is not limited to young people of a particular economic level, racial group or religious background--nor is it caused by one type of family or school-related problem. In effect, there is no runaway profile, though there have been noticeable changes and trends in the kinds of runaways over the years.

1/ The term "runaway" is viewed by at least one youth advocacy group, the Childrens Rights Organization, as creating a negative image of young people in that it implies ownership of youth by their parents. However, the term is used widely to describe those persons under 18 who flee from their families, and it is in fact an accurate reflection of the legal status of American youth today. Rightly or wrongly, young people are legally responsible to their parents until they reach the age of majority, as defined by state law. Thus the use of this generally recognized term is adhered to in this report.

2/ Source: National Director of Runaway Centers, published January 1974 by the National Youth Alternatives Project, Washington, D.C. The same figure was cited in the 1972 congressional hearings on the proposed Runaway Youth Act.

In the 1960's the runaway was most often an older teenager (16 or 17); by 1972 the average age had dropped to 15. 3/ Currently there is an increasing incidence of early- and even pre-teen runaways. The ratio of boys to girls has also tipped, with the latter now holding a slight edge. Young people are also running for different reasons and to different places, as will be discussed later.

Running away is viewed by many as less frequently a search for adventure than an escape from a situation considered unbearable by the youth. The act may be a conscious or unconscious appeal for help; an attention-getting device; a desperate move to get away and reappraise problems; or, in some cases, an attempt to threaten and manipulate parents. Runaways have been described by one youth worker in this area as follows:

> "They are the unwanted, the over-protected, the ignored, the pampered. They are, as they wander the streets of our cities, the living witnesses of every conceivable problem or abuse that a family with children can endure." 4/

Several explanations have been offered as to why the runaway problem has become a national concern of increasing dimensions. Most experts attribute the phenomenon to the rapid social and economic changes this country has undergone in the last quarter century or so. Among these changes is a perceived loss of authority and structure in American institutions such as family, church and school--particularly the first. The modern American family is viewed by many as less able to effectively serve as the all-purpose "shock absorber" described in Alvin Toffler's book, Future Shock.

According to the U.S. News and World Report, in 1970 one out of three American marriages ended in divorce, compared to one out of four in 1960. An even higher figure--four divorces for every ten marriages--was given in recent congressional hearings on the American family. 5/ The results of divorce are often fractional or reconstituted families that may not satisfy a child's needs. Further, it is generally perceived that in marriages which do not end but are unhappy for the partners, the children often suffer from the hostile situations.

3/ 1972 congressional hearings on proposed Runaway Youth Act.

4/ Testimony by William Treanor at January 1972 Senate hearings on runaway bill.

5/ American Families: Trends & Pressures, 1973, report of the Committee on Labor & Public Welfare, U.S.Senate, 1974,p. 181.

Economic factors have also played a part in the changing character of the traditional family. For example, 42% of women with children under 18 were in the U.S. work force in 1972, and 7% of all American husbands held two jobs. In the same year, one-fifth of the country's population was not living where it had the year before, and job opportunities played a significant role in that migration. The possible impact of all this was described as follows:

> "The family unit has become so geared to upward--and outward--mobility, critics say, that it is increasingly unable to provide for the emotional needs of youngsters, or to bridge a 'culture gap' between generations that is widening." 6/

Another problem area often cited is the effect of television, which is seen as promoting alienation among family members by discouraging the kind of communication and interaction that provides emotional stability and support. Finally, there is the disease of alcoholism, which racks families in myriad ways, and the runaway is only one of its multiple victims.

When asked why they run away, young people themselves usually give these kinds of responses:

+ too much pressure to "achieve" in school by the parents' standards rather than the young people's

+ parental disapproval of friends and the youth lifestyle (including clothes, language, mores, and hair length)

+ unreasonable rules by parents (e.g., regarding curfews)

+ poor communication at home

Undoubtedly the bases for these complaints are rooted not only in the family but in the changing American culture, and the pressures that it exerts on both children and parents. The youth of this country is reacting to those pressures in ways more serious than running away--e.g., higher juvenile crime rates and the increasing abuse of alcohol, now the number one teenage drug. 7/

6/ U. S. News & World Report, April 24, 1972, p. 38.

7/ Washington Post, February 3, 1974, quoting a recent Public Affairs Pamphlet on young alcoholics.

Nevertheless, the runaway problem is a matter of concern for both family and society, and it shows no signs of abating significantly in the near future.

Those young people who flee face a host of difficulties and dangers--most of them stemming from a lack of money, adequate shelter and counseling to work out their problems. They are usually unable to get jobs or good medical attention, and they are exposed to disease, drug misuse and crime, of which they are often the victims.

Some 73 centers providing shelter and counseling have been set up across the country to deal with the runaway's needs. However, many areas still lacked such facilities as of mid-1974. 8/ Social service agencies, notably the Travelers Aid Society, have provided counseling and referral for short-term shelter, but such assistance is limited because of underfunding, understaffing, and lack of capability to provide follow-up services.

To help remedy this lack, the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) provided $1½ million for runaway demonstration projects, and $800,000 for research during 1974. All three runaway houses in the Washington area received training or service grants under this program.

Secondly, a national Runaway Youth Act was proposed in 1972 by Senator Birch Bayh (D.-Ind.). This bill, which authorized $10 million a year to finance temporary shelters for short-term care and counseling, was combined with the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. However, unlike the other provisions of that law, which will be administered by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the runaway component will be handled by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Further, no appropriations were made for runaway activities, which will be funded under existing HEW programs.

A third legislative initiative on runaways is still pending. Senator Walter Mondale's (D.-Minn.) Youth Programs Act was also proposed in 1972 but is still in a congressional committee. This bill would provide funds to youth agencies across the country for such services as hotlines, medical aid and the operation of shelters.

Finally, there have been two emergency responses to the problem. Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar Weinberger announced in July 1974 that a $100,000 grant would be given a Chicago-based

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8/ National Directory of Runaway Centers, 1974

organization, called Metro-Help, to set up a national hotline for runaways and their families. The experimental six-month project began in August and is expected to receive more than 5,000 calls each month. The toll-free number is: 800/621-4000.

Another national hotline for runaways, "Operation Peace of Mind," was established in Houston following the mass murders uncovered there last summer. Youths calling the toll-free number 800/231-6946 can send messages to their families without fear of their calls being traced.

II. The Runaway Problem in Metropolitan Washington

According to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), the Washington metropolitan area is one of twenty in the nation designated as having a high incidence of runaways. The region has a large youth population, along with many military and other transient families, which often produce runaway children.

The November 1971 issue of Washingtonian magazine estimated about 10,000 runaways in the area for the year 1971. This estimate was made from interviews with D.C. Runaway House staff and other youth workers. Statistics from area police (excluding D.C. and Loudoun County) for 1973 indicate a rough estimate of only 8,118 runaway incidents reported that year (see Table 1). Since it is generally conceded that runaways are grossly unreported, it is probably safe to assume that the 10,000 figure is still true for this area, and could conceivably be much higher.

D.C., Maryland and Virginia all have legal provisions making parents responsible for children under 18; these provisions either explicitly or implicitly indicate that young persons are subject to the authority and supervision of their parents, and may not leave home without parental consent. There are no local laws regarding runaways per se, except prohibitions against loitering. In all area jurisdictions, running away is considered to be a "missing persons" incident unless it is repeated several times and the youth is deemed beyond control or incorrigible. In that case the individual usually goes to a juvenile court.

In spite of the seemingly insignificant legal import of one-time runaway acts, they cause many police hours spent in searching for the youths and closing their cases. Furthermore, young people on their own in the streets often generate more police involvement by becoming linked with crimes large and small. This includes both crimes committed against them or those perpetrated by them as hungry, tired people with no place to go for shelter.

The Interstate Juvenile Compact is the mechanism for returning runaways who cross jurisdictional lines and will not return home voluntarily. Generally these young people come from Virginia or Maryland to Washington. The Compact works in this way:

(1) Parents of the runaway must go before the court having jurisdiction over him or her. They must swear to a petition that the young person has fled to another jurisdiction (parents using the Compact must already know where the child is);

(2) The court of jurisdiction issues a custody order, which is sent to the director of the Interstate Compact for the same state;

(3) The Compact director forwards the order to his or her counterpart in the state where the youth is believed to be located. It is then sent to the appropriate court in that area, where a custody order is issued authorizing that jurisdiction's police to pick up the runaway, who must then go to court for a preliminary hearing. The Compact procedure thus serves as the equivalent of extradition for an adult;

(4) At the hearing, the judge decides whether to release the youth to the parents, or to turn him/her over to the court where the family resides or to another institution, such as a runaway house or foster home.

The purpose of the Compact is to assure that a juvenile is not treated as a criminal; it provides for the young person to be returned home under a protected status. As of early 1974, only two states in the nation had not ratified the Compact; in this region all three jurisdictions are members.

Most of today's area runaways are from within the metropolitan region, as compared to the heavy influx of youth migrating here from other places during the late 1960's. Like their counterparts elsewhere, the new Washington area runaways are younger than in previous years, and they are less able to get jobs and remain on the streets than are 16 and 17-year olds. Therefore, they generally return home within a week or two. However, many are repeaters, who leave home again and again and never really work out their problems because the situation which initially caused them to leave has not changed.

The phenomenon of intra-metropolitan runaways is in part a reflection of the large youth population in this area. The 1970 census found that 35% of the region's 2.8 million people were under 18. The northern Virginia suburbs as a whole had about the same percentage of young people, though individual counties such as Prince William and Loudoun had even higher proportions (44% for the former, 30% for the latter).

In Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, Maryland, the combined figure was 37% under 18. Only in Alexandria (28%), Arlington (23.8%), and D.C. (15%), did youth make up less than 30% of the population. (See Table 1).

RUNAWAY YOUTH BY JURISDICTION

District of Columbia: Total Population, 1970 Census - 756,510
Population Under 18 - 15% or 112,131

The Metropolitan Police Department keeps no statistics on runaway youth per se. Those figures are included in the Department's

missing person records, which are broken down by age group and include D.C. residents only. When young people flee to the District from the suburbs, their home jurisdictions maintain records on them.

The District youth who leaves home temporarily is generally not considered a significant part of the metropolitan runaway phenomenon. A number of police officers, social and youth service people and community youth workers say that running away is primarily a white suburban experience, and that the black teenagers or pre-teens in the District--whatever their economic level--have different ways of dealing with family or school problems.

These commentators note that the urban environment is less isolated than the suburbs and provides more temporary escape routes for restless or troubled young people. For example, there are many easily accessible places for youth to seek entertainment or just "hang out" in the city.

Community workers in D.C. also point out that, among the city's lower income families, children are less sheltered than their more affluent counterparts, and may be staying with relatives off-and-on or spending a good deal of time "in the streets" at an early age. Thus they may have less need to make a dramatic break from their families.

Despite these and other theories about why black young people (especially those in the inner city) do not run away, the fact is that a number of them do. In 1973 the D.C. Runaway House had a 10% black clientele, most of whom came from the District. The Travelers Aid Society helped 325 runaways in 1973, and about half of those who fled because of family problems were black--though they were from areas outside this one.

Other D.C. social service agencies also came in contact with black runaways, but on a smaller scale. These included the Northeast Neighborhood House, the 24-Hour Youth Assistance Center in northeast, and Teen Haven in N.W. The 24-hour center kept about 25 runaways in its facility over a one-year period. The other two agencies could not provide shelter on an official basis, but did offer individual and family counseling and referral services for their small runaway caseloads. (See Chart of Runaway Resources--Table 9).

The Southeast 24-Hour Youth Assistance Center, which was started in December 1973, has dealt with about 8 young people who left their homes overnight because of family problems but were not actual runaways because their parents knew where they were and consented to their staying at the Center. These youths received counseling as well as temporary shelter while at the Southeast facility.

In addition to the above cases, the D.C. Superior Court reported that in FY 1973 it handled, through counseling, referral or adju-

dication, 503 cases of D.C. youth described by their parents as "beyond control;" about a quarter of these were habitual runaways.

For 11 months of FY 1974, the total caseload for the Superior Court went up to 630 "beyond control" cases, but of these only 19% were sent through the court system. The others received counseling or referral services, or their cases were not prosecuted for other reasons.

The above statistics for the District suggest that the forces causing white suburban youth to leave home and family can also motivate their core city counterparts, though perhaps not in the same proportions.

Maryland
Prince George's County: Total Population, 1970 Census - 660,567
Population Under 18 - 37% or 245,531

Second Mile Runaway House in Hyattsville estimated in its 1972 annual report that about 250 young people leave their homes each month in the county. This figure is comparable to those from the County Police Department's Youth Division. The police indicate that 1,681 youth, about 240 a month, ran away during the period from July 1973 to February 1974. (A police missing persons unit was created in 1973, and that was the first year for which statistics were formally reported).

The majority of these young people were white (74%) and female (56%). The biggest age group was between 15 and 16 (47%), with 13 and 14 year-olds also significant in number (31%). A notable 25% were black with women taking the lead 226 to 204 (See Table 2).

In a special survey taken for the period September 1970 through August 1971, a total of 2,375 young persons in the county were reported as runaways, with whites (83%) outnumbering blacks more than in 1973, and females holding a slight edge (51%) over males. The age group most often represented was again 15-16 (45%), with another strong showing by the 13-14 year-olds (33%). (See Table 2). This data includes repeated cases of fleeing; thus the totals do not represent individuals but rather incidents of running away.

Prince George's County police say that most of their runaways stay away one or two days and eventually return to their families. The average age is probably about 14½ to 15 for both females and males, with the former running away more often than the latter. (They are also more likely to run to D.C. than are males, according to the police Youth Division). Two to three times more white youth than black are reported as having run away, but there is an increasing number of the latter group in a county that is now about one-quarter black.

Police in this county list the reason for running as given by the parents rather than by the young people. Generally they cited domestic problems (trouble with family, parents and/or home life), though school difficulties often surfaced, too. Drug and alcohol problems on the part of the youths were seldom given as reasons for fleeing.

During FY 1973, 306 of Prince George's County's runaway cases were handled at the juvenile court level. They were primarily female, white and aged 14 or 15. (See Table 2).

Many of these received counseling at their intake hearings with the court's juvenile services staff, and their cases were terminated at that level. However, 137 went through the court process; they represented runaway repeaters or those who refused to return home. Generally they were placed on probation under the supervision of the court's juvenile services staff. Some were committed to various county facilities, such as a training school or Second Mile Runaway House.

As of January 1, 1974, runaways and other non-delinquent young people in Maryland cannot be sent to institutions for delinquents; they must be placed in facilities such as Second Mile, foster or group homes, or similar living situations.

Maryland
Montgomery County: Total Population, 1970 Census - 522,809
Population Under 18 - 36% or 189,009

The twenty-eight member juvenile section of this county police department dealt with 1,723 runaways in 1972, and 1,791 in 1973. The latter figure included 14 individuals under 11 years old, all of them males. At the end of 1973, 14 of that year's runaways for the county had not been found. In an attempt to locate them, the police even sent their dental charts to Houston, Texas (following the mass murder of young people there in the summer of 1973).

In the first two months of 1974, police reported 251 runaways; sex, age and race breakdowns are available only for those arrested (85). That number included 25 between 11 and 14, 16 of them female (see Table 3).

The county's biggest runaway problem seems to be the younger age group of females (13 and 14 year-olds). That may be due in part to the tendency of parents to report missing girls more readily than boys. The juvenile division head attempts to assign as many female runaway cases as possible to the three women detectives on his staff of 28 (a total of 6 female detectives is anticipated in FY 1975).

Other trends in Montgomery County:

+ Runaways are primarily from middle income families, which make up most of the county's population.

+ Most of the county runaways are local youths who do not go far from home and are away only a short time, often staying with nearby friends. They generally return to their families eventually.

+ While there is some incidence of shoplifting and occasional burglary by runaways, crime involvement by them is minimal--probably because they do not stay out in the streets very long, generally have some money (or borrow some from friends), and are not as exposed to the "crime" scene, either as victims or actors.

+ There are no police statistics on drug involvement by runaways, but the consensus among officers of the juvenile division is that drugs are probably a small percentage of the reasons for fleeing from home.

+ As many as one-third of the county's runaways may be repeaters. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the number of repeaters was even higher.

+ The number of teens and pre-teens who flee is increasing each year. The head of the juvenile division feels that pressures on young people are probably greater than in previous years. For example, many parents expect too much from their children scholastically because of the demands of an increasingly specialized, technological society. Montgomery County and other area police usually notice an upswing in runaways around the time of mid-term or final school exams.

The Montgomery County Police Department is unusual in that it operates its own counseling program for youth. After a runaway is found, a conference is scheduled for parents, the young person and police. Appropriate county social services are recommended at this session, and out of the cases counseled at this level, less than a third go to court (they are usually repeaters).

The reputation of the officers in this section is extremely good and this police effort is seen by many as a good example for other jurisdictions to follow.

If a case seems to require extended counseling, the police turn it over to the county pre-adjudication unit, in another effort to keep runaways out of court. However, it is inevitable that runaways

do make it to juvenile court. In 1972 there were 607, with 15 and 14 year-olds predominating (see Table 4). Between November 1973 and March 1974, 339 young people classified as Children in Need of Supervision (CINS), most of whom were runaways, were handled informally by the court. Some 152 were detained or placed in a shelter.

Northern Virginia

Alexandria: Total Population, 1970 Census - 110,938
Population Under 18 - 28% or 30,628

"It's that time of year when our days and our nights are made of runaways," said Sgt. Kathy Salvas in a spring 1974 interview with the Alexandria Gazette. 9/ Sgt. Salvas, who works for the police youth division, noted that during periods of good weather the city of Alexandria has to deal with 40 or 50 runaways a month. There is also about one aggravated case a month, whatever the weather--a situation where the young person's departure from home requires more than the usual number of police hours to settle.

As in other jurisdictions, Alexandria runaways are generally first timers and most remain in the area, supported by friends and even other relatives in some cases. According to police, the experienced or repeat runaways go further away each time. The latter are formally charged by the police as runaways, whether their families agree to that action or not. First timers are usually not charged unless the family requests it. Only a missing persons bulletin is issued on them; this does not entail a court appearance by the youth when found, nor does the young person acquire a juvenile record.

Alexandria police affirm the statement of many involved with youth that there is no "typical" runaway. In Fiscal Year 1973 there were 380 reported cases, with 121 of those being repeaters. Of those cases, 174 were arrested and referred to court. Race, sex and age statistics were available only for the latter group.

Among those 174, 31% were black, the majority of them black females (see Table 5). White females outnumbered white males even more so; they were the largest single group of arrested runaways. Thirteen to fourteen year-olds made up 45% of the 174 youth; they were the biggest individual age group, with 15-16's a close second. (See Table 5).

9/ May 20, 1974 Edition

For the first nine months of FY 1974, Alexandria police reported 82 runaways arrested, including 45 blacks and 37 whites. 10/ Females outnumbered males 50 to 32. This time black females were the largest single group of runaways; and the biggest age grouping was 13-14 year-olds, as in FY 1973. Individuals aged 12 and under totalled nine for this period (see Table 5).

The Alexandria Juvenile Court received 183 runaway complaints during Fiscal Year 1973, compared to 255 complaints the preceding year. A detailed description of the sex, age and race of these individuals was not available.

Virginia
Arlington County: Total Population, 1970 Census - 174,284
Population Under 18 - 23.8% or 41,564

Arlington police reported only 1,603 cases for the 5½ year period from January 1968 through June 1973 (more recent statistics are now being compiled). No age or race breakdowns were available, and a sex breakout was not provided for the 125 cases in the first six months of 1973. However, for the previous five years, females began to outnumber males starting in 1971 (see Table 6).

The relatively small number of runaways here may be in part a reflection of the county's fairly low juvenile population--only 23.8% of Arlington's residents are under 18, the second lowest percentage for any jurisdiction in the metropolitan area. (See Table 1).

Arlington's Juvenile Court (Intake Division) handled 42 runaway cases between January 1 and April 30, 1974: 36 whites and 6 blacks. There were 145 runaways in 1973 and 114 in 1972, with the majority for each year being white. (See Table 6).

For all periods except the first four months of 1974, females were represented more than males by a slight margin. Since October 1973, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen-year-olds have been the principal runaways who have come to the court's attention.

Virginia
Fairfax County: Total Population, 1970 Census - 455,021
Population Under 18 - 39% or 178,919

Excluding Fairfax City and Falls Church, this area had a 39% popu-

10/ These figures could be explained by the theory of some community workers that black youths in trouble with the law are more likely to be arrested (and institutionalized) than their white counterparts.

lation under 18 in 1970. The total number of teenage runaways has dropped since 1971, when the figure was 3,207. In 1972 it was 3,072, and last year 2,028. For the first two months of 1974, 328 were reported. (No age, sex or race breakdowns were available from police for any of these years.)

The Fairfax County Juvenile Court's Intake Department received 450 runaway cases in FY 1970, 535 in 1971, 537 in 1972, and 556 in 1973 (no breakdowns available). However, not all of these went through the full court process. For the first half of FY 1974 there were 260 complaints filed, and the Court has projected an estimate of 562 for the whole fiscal year.

The Court points out that, since Alternative House for runaways was opened in McLean in early 1973, the amount of counseling for runaways done by the Court has been reduced. However, the number of complaints received by the Court has remained more or less constant.

Virginia
Falls Church: Total population, 1970 Census - 10,772
Population Under 18 - 32% or 3,396

In 1973, Falls Church police reported only 33 runaways: 26 females and 7 males. There were two who were 12 years of age or under; nine between 13 and 14 years old; eighteen between 15 and 16; and four 17 year-olds. (No racial breakdown was available).

In most of these cases, the youths ran away because of family problems, and July was the most popular month for running, according to the police.

In January 1974 there were eight cases, including six females and two males; four 14 year-olds, two in the 15-16 age bracket, and two aged 17.

Of all 1973 and 1974 cases reported, two out of five or 40% of the runaways were located in other states. Also, some of the individuals mentioned above ran away twice in the same year, and for the same reasons.

The Falls Church Juvenile Court came in contact with only five of the city's runaways during 1972, and another five in 1973.

Virginia
Fairfax City: Total Population, 1970 Census - 21,970
Population Under 18 - 41% or 8,926

Here again the phenomenon seems to have decreased since 1971, when there were 144 reported runaways. By 1972 the total had dropped

to 109, and leveled off at 111 in 1973. The cases here are about evenly divided between females and males, though the former may be somewhat younger than the latter. Males, however, may stay away from home longer than females.

Unlike Falls Church, Fairfax City does not have its own court system; therefore runaways who reach the court level are processed through the County juvenile court, and statistics on them are included in the preceding section.

Virginia
Herndon
and
Vienna: Population Statistics Included in Fairfax County

These cities are under the Fairfax County court system, but each has its own police force. Herndon police reported an estimated nineteen runaways in 1972 (11 males, 8 females); thirty in 1973 (13 males, 17 females); and seven between January 1 and early April 1974 (2 males, 5 females). (See Table 7).

Vienna police reported a notable and unexplained drop from the 1971 high of 98 cases to 69 in 1972 and 68 in 1973. All these figures include a high incidence of repeaters, with some individuals running away three or four times a year.

The police department notes that most of Vienna's runaways stay in the general area, and only a few of the young people go to one of the three area runaway houses. (See Table 7 for breakdowns).

Virginia
Loudoun County
and
Leesburg: Total Population for County, 1970 Census - 37,150
Population Under 18 - 39% or 14,573

Despite the relatively high percent of young people in this area, detailed statistics on the nature and extent of the county's runaway problems were unavailable from either the county police or the juvenile court. This is primarily due to fairly recent reorganizations and revision of reporting procedures in that area. The Loudoun County police did indicate that the age range of runaways in that vicinity is 14 to 16; that there are slightly more females than males; and that many are frequent repeaters.

The Leesburg Town Police reported only five runaways during 1973 and none in 1972.

Virginia
Prince William County
and
Manassas: Total Population, 1970 Census - 111,102
Population Under 18 - 44% or 49,135

For Prince William County, the average is about 500 runaways a year, and the age range is 8 to 17. Three years ago the average age was between 15 and 17; now both females and males are younger.

In 1972 the county had 660 runaways; by 1973 the number had dropped to 405. (See Table 8). During the latter year, the young people stayed away an average of seven to ten days, though time away from home ranged from overnight to six or eight months. There were many second and third-time flights; they are part of the 405 total.

As of early 1974, female runaways were outnumbering males. Most of these were local youth, as in previous years. Few went to the three runaway houses in the region, all of which are well removed from this far suburban county.

Despite its heavy caseload and small staff (two people), the police department's juvenile office attempts to help runaway youth and parents work out their problems, and families are often referred to counseling sources. However, in Prince William as in Alexandria, a repeated runaway is eventually charged by the police and taken to court--with or without the parents' consent.

In addition to the county statistics, Manassas officers dealt with 34 runaways in 1972 and 1973 together--all of them white youth. Fifteen were males, nineteen females. Fifteen and sixteen-year-olds were the primary age group.

Runaway cases that went to court in Prince William County numbered 42 in FY 1973, including 4 repeat incidents. The female/male ratio was more than two-to-one, and all individuals were white except one. Sixteen-year-olds were most numerous, followed by those aged fifteen. There were few under 15 or over 16. (See Table 8).

For the period July 24, 1973 to March 19, 1974, the runaway total in juvenile court was 39, including three repeaters. Females again outnumbered males slightly (21 cases to 17). There was no detailed age information available for this period.

III. Area Resources for Runaways: D.C. Runaway House

"We are the people our
parents warned us about."

graffiti from the walls of D.C.
Runaway House

On the corner of 18th Street and Riggs Road, N.W. stands a three-story, white brick and stone building that has served for six years as the District's haven for runaway youth. One of the first such houses in the country, this refuge grew out of efforts by two District youth and community workers. They were the Rev. Tom Murphy, now with the Metropolitan Ecumenical Training Center, and William Treanor, currently a D.C. school board member and himself a one-time runaway youth.

Rev. Murphy is now a minister-at-large in the Washington suburbs, and was working in the DuPont Circle area for the Church of the Pilgrims in 1968. At the church he set up a "drop-in" counseling center for young people; the runaways who came there received both counseling and emergency shelter. The need for better shelter facilities soon became obvious, and in the summer of 1968 Murphy teamed up with Bill Treanor to launch Runaway House. (Treanor was at that time working with the Poor People's Campaign).

Initial funding came from private foundations, local churches, individuals, a few social service agencies, and some public money. In early 1974 staff people indicated that they served about 1,000 youths a year on an annual budget of some $25,000. That service did not include meals. They were provided only one or two nights a week by local church groups, and some canned goods have also been donated.

As of early 1974, three full time staff counselors were being given $75 a week--when it was available. However, in June the house received $47,500 from N.I.M.H., and there is also a possibility of foundation or other private funds in the future.

As the 1972 congressional hearings on the Runaway Youth Act, Bill Treanor testified that the D.C. house sheltered more than 3,000 people from age 10 to 17 between 1968 and 1972. In early 1974 the total was up to 4,000, though that included repeaters.

In 1973, 707 teenagers and pre-teens came to the house. This was a drop from 1972, though the staff thinks the figure may go up again in 1974. The majority of 1973 youth were older teens (55% were 16 to 17), but an increasing number were 13 and under (10%). While the average age at present of those come to Runaway House is 15, the age range is 14 to 16, compared to 15-17 two years ago. There were more females than males in 1973, and the former were also somewhat younger than the latter.

Most of these people came from Maryland (33%) or Virginia (30%), with 10% from D.C. Other areas accounted for 27%. In 1973 10-15% of the clientele was black.

There was some decrease in the suburban influx to D.C. after the Maryland and Virginia houses opened. However, many suburban runaways still come to the D.C. house, perhaps because it is better

known, or because it has no requirement that the youths notify their parents of their whereabouts. (The other two houses do have such rules).

A comfortable capacity for the three-story house is about 15, so runaways generally move on within a week, making way for others. A majority (65%) returned to their families in 1973, but 10% to 15% of those were back at the D.C. house within a year or so.

Twenty percent of those who fled to D.C. last year kept on running or were returned to an institution. The latter are part of a group called "throwaways" by the D.C. house staff. They are young people with no families to return to, who have been in a variety of institutions--including detention centers, where they were mixed with experienced criminals. Twelve percent of those who came to the D.C. house last year were escapees from institutions.

Counselors work with both throwaways and runaways to help them find jobs, schools and better living situations. Key services include 24-hour, walk-in crisis counseling, as well as individual, family and group consultations. Casework with local agencies and advocacy for young people in court are other forms of assistance offered by House staff.

D.C. Ruanway House is also able to link runaways to a full range of services other than shelter and counseling. The mechanism for doing this is Special Approaches in Juvenile Assistance (SAJA), the umbrella organization that serves as a parent agency to the House.

SAJA is connected with such youth services as the Job Cooperative, the Free High School, two group foster homes, and two day care centers in the area. It also administers a paraprofessional training program that uses Runaway House as a core training site for youth workers from all over the country.

Where SAJA services are lacking, there is referral by the House to places such as the Washington Area Free Clinic or legal aid groups.

According to House personnel, those who come to the D.C. shelter are often from broken families, military families or those with a strict religious background. In 1973, 50% of the young people gave family problems as their reason for running away and 19% cited school difficulties. Few of these young people had been involved in serious delinquent acts, but many had been in juvenile court as runaways--three times as many as two years ago.

As of early 1974, the D.C. House staff included its full time counselors, a dozen or so volunteers and some unpaid consultants. The counselors had an average age of 24 to 25, and most of their backgrounds included work experience with teenagers and a college degree. They were receiving about 12 hours of formal training in counseling techniques.

The counselors were running the house collectively, with no one person serving as director. However, they were answerable to the SAJA board.

Rules applying to house residents were as follows:

+ No sex, drugs, alcohol or weapons in the house

+ Males not allowed on women's floor and vice versa

+ Midnight curfew; 3:30 - 7 p.m. "quiet hours" for staff (residents are to be out of house then)

+ Individual clean-up in morning

Infractions of these rules have not been a major problem to date; the house's biggest problem area has been its policy that the youths who come there do not have to notify their parents of their whereabouts if they do not wish to do so. (The other two houses require such notice within a specific time period. The 1974 legislation on runaway houses calls for notifying the parents only if such action is required by State law).

In the past, the no-notice proviso has been the principal area of friction between the house staff and various area police officers, who have generally felt that the staff is often uncommunicative and uncooperative. However, monthly meetings have been initiated among staff, police and the D.C. Corporation Counsel's office, and the tension between the first two groups seems somewhat abated at present.

As for problems with the surrounding community, the staff says that there have been no significant ones affecting Runaway House.

In terms of long-range aid for its clients, the D.C. House can provide ongoing family counseling as well as possible placement in one of its group foster homes, or referral to other group settings. The latter include traditional two-parent family arrangements, communal living and single-parent situations.

Second Mile Runaway House, Hyattsville, Maryland

Opened in 1972, this is the second oldest of the three area runaway houses. It grew out of a social concerns group at the First United Methodist Church in Hyattsville, which donated space for a drop-in counseling center and hotline telephone for runaways. This was started in February 1972, a short time before the house opened a few blocks away.

The first staff members of Second Mile's counseling effort were Les Ulm and Joel Wilcher, also the moving spirits behind founding the house. The counseling center is still open eight hours a day all week, and Les Ulm serves as Project Manager for both this program and the house operation.

Second Mile has purchased a 2½ story, 4-bedroom house, which can shelter up to 15 runaways. The residence is located in an older area of Hyattsville, and according to Les Ulm there has been no major problem as far as the neighbors are concerned.

Second Mile helped 450 runaways between the beginning of its operations in 1972 and early 1974, when this report was researched. There are an average of about 25 youths a month, approximately the same as in the beginning. Of these, an estimated 10% keep on running. During the first year of operation, 60% of the program's intake were females. Some 95% were white, and the average age was 14 for females, 14-15 for males (the black youths were a little older).

The program has no statistics on family occupations, income and religious background, but one impression of the staff has been that a strict religious background was a rather prevalent phenomenon among Second Mile clients. A spot check also revealed that about half of the youth were from broken or reconstituted families (e.g., step-parents).

The following reasons for fleeing were cited:

+ Poor communication with parents, including lack of trust by parents and a tendency to "harass" their children

+ Too much pressure about school work

+ Need for personal freedom, including choosing one's own friends without parental disapproval

+ Use of alcohol by parents

Eighty percent of this program's runaways came from Prince George's County--three-fourths from the northern section. Ten percent were from the rest of the metropolitan area, and a small percentage from out of the State. They were referred from a variety of sources: area hotlines and coffeehouses, school counselors and police, other youth and social service people, and by word-of-mouth.

The young people stayed at Second Mile anywhere from three days to two weeks (the maximum allowed). Sixty to seventy percent went back home, but ten percent of those returned to Second Mile later. There was minimal involvement with either drugs or crime, according to house staff.

Services provided at the house and counseling center are mainly for youths between 12 and 18. They included:

+ Temporary shelter

+ Eighteen-hour-a-day telephone hotline

+ Referrals for medical, psychiatric and other aid as needed

+ Individual, group and family counseling involving both an advocate for the youth and a neutral third person--this includes "preventive counseling" for families in which the runaway problem is about to occur

+ Long-term group homes for those unable to go home

Rules pertaining to residents include:

+ Notice to parents of whereabouts within 24 hours

+ No drugs or sex in the house

+ No taking advantage of others in house (e.g., "ripping off" someone else's property)

+ Cooperation with staff and a serious attempt to work out problems

+ Attendance at 9:30 nightly "rap" session for whole house

+ 9:30 curfew week nights; 12 a.m. on weekends

+ Residents expected to use their time at the house constructively, seeking jobs or schooling along with working out their problems

As of early 1974, the board that oversees Second Mile activities includes some sixteen individuals from Prince George's County churches, social service agencies and other sources. The house staff was composed of two house managers paid $75 a week, a part-time live-in counselor and some twenty volunteer counselors giving about eight hours a week to the project. Volunteers went through ten hours of initial training and twelve hours on the job. All staff participated in ongoing monthly training (four hours a month).

While there were no regular meetings or other formal methods of communicating with area police, Second Mile staff reported a generally good working relationship with them. Some runaway cases

are even referred to the House by local police, who generally confirmed the staff's assessment of the relationship between the two groups.

In 1972, annual expenditures for Second Mile totaled about $18,000 (1973 figures not yet available). The initial operation began with a $5,000 seed grant from the County, followed by $2,000 generated through various fundraising efforts. Two local churches then helped with the monthly house payments, and in October 1972, a $10,000 grant was received from the Meyer Foundation. A year later there were second-round monies from the County and the Foundation. As of early 1974, Second Mile has provisional status, to be renewed each year, as an agency receiving money through the area Health and Welfare Council.

Alternative House for Runaways, McLean, Virginia

Unlike the other two houses, this one is located in a semi-rural area. It is a large and beautiful old farmhouse, which has been designated a historic building (it served as a temporary place of detention during the Civil War). Surrounding the house are a field on one side and a small cemetery on the other, with suburban homes down the road.

The house was donated on a loan basis for thirty months by the Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, located nearby. It has a capacity of about ten. Opened in late 1973, the current director is Joseph Fedeli. Previously two other homes had been used, and a "drop-in" counseling center was opened in October 1972.

Alternative House's three-phased program is for youth under 18, and consists of (1) preventive counseling for individual teens and their families; (2) temporary shelter with meals; and (3) follow-up, which seeks to effect family reconciliation or, if that is impossible, an alternative living situation for the young person.

House residents must contact their parents within 24 hours after coming there. A counselor assists with this call by explaining the program to the parent or guardian. Youths are then given three days to work on their problems, with individual, family and group counseling available, as well as referral help from the house staff. The residence period is limited to two weeks, though exceptions can be made. Six to eight days is the average length of stay.

Other requirements include no sex, drugs, alcohol or weapons in the house. Attendance is required at group meetings every evening including weekends, and there are specific work tasks for all in running the house. School attendance is expected if possible, and curfew is at 10 p.m.

Alternative House is staffed by three counselors, one night resident, an assistant director and a director. A college education or equivalent experience is required for counselors, a masters degree or the equivalent for the director.

Program volunteers and paraprofessionals are also used; they range in age from 18 to 50 and serve as both peer-volunteers and peer parent-volunteers. Both staff and volunteers are trained in short-term crisis intervention counseling.

The program is currently in its second year of funding by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). In the past, money has also come from the county Mental Health/Mental Retardation Services Board and miscellaneous community groups. The 1973 budget was about $65,000. Incorporated as Juvenile Assistance, McLean (JAM), Alternative House has a governing board of sixteen area residents from a variety of backgrounds.

In 1973 Alternative House had 152 residents, and 73% of them were females. The average age for residents was 15, though the age range went from 12 to 19. Only two black youths spent time at the house. Most of the residents were from Fairfax County; only 33 came from other areas.

Repeated runaways formed a large number of those who stayed at the House last year. Some 102 individuals had run away 262 times prior to coming there. Fifty-eight of the young people had been involved with the police before and 45 with the courts. During 1973, the majority (56%) of Alternative House's 152 clients returned home after their flight. However, 41 people ran away again after being at the House, and 18 of those were re-admitted later during 1973.

Friends were the largest single source of referral to the house, followed by the court, the Fairfax County Roving Leader program (a juvenile delinquency prevention project) and the police. Family problems were given by 116 youths as their reasons for leaving home; 16 said drugs and 9 listed school difficulties.

In terms of follow-up to the House program, ex-residents are called at three-week, three-month and six-month intervals by counselors, and an alumni group meeting is held regularly for those who wish to attend. Fifty-six of the 152 residents in 1973 have done so.

Alternative House reports a mixed relationship with the police, but many area officers are complimentary of the way the house is run. Liaison has been developed and increased by staff visits to local police stations and reciprocal visits by police to the house.

In early 1974, the house secured from the northern Virginia juvenile court an important ruling on guidelines for holding runaways. These rules provide that, when a youth does not wish to return home but the parents refuse permission for the runaway to stay at Alternative

House, the house staff calls the Court intake office for an appointment. A decision is obtained as to whether the Court favors return to the home or care at the House. That decision has a strong influence on parents, though they may still file a petition for a hearing on the matter.

If the court is closed, the house has permission to keep the runaway overnight or over the weekend without parental consent, but house staff must call the court as soon as possible thereafter. They must also tell the police of the runaway's whereabouts, and must inform the parents of their right to file a petition.

In conclusion, it should be noted that Alternative House has a comprehensive program and an idyllic setting for those young people who come there for help. However, they are primarily Fairfax County residents, and the far reaches of northern Virginia are not yet benefitting from the House's services.

Other Area Resources for Runaways

As of mid-1974, prior to passage of the runaway provisions in the Juvenile Justice Act, there were no immediate plans for establishing additional runaway houses in this area. There was such an effort in Montgomery County, but the logistics of setting up a house proved so involved that the plan was curtailed. St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Silver Spring now hopes to create a position on its staff for a person who would provide counseling to runaways, along with referral for emergency shelter.

As for other resources for area runaways, there is the limited number of youth service centers mentioned earlier in the section on the District of Columbia. However, these centers are small and serve primarily young people from the immediate neighborhood or vicinity.

In Maryland, both the Family Service Agency of Montgomery County and the Rockville Free Clinic have provided counseling and shelter referrals for runaways. The first is a private agency that assisted 64 youths in flight during fiscal year 1974; housing was provided with parental permission for periods of one to five days in private residences.

In addition to providing medical services, the Free Clinic refers some twenty runaways per year to a network of private homes for one or two day stays.

In Alexandria, Virginia, a nonprofit group called Fold, Inc. runs Interim House, which offers shelter up to 90 days for runaways and other youths referred there by the court system. Since Interim House opened in August 1973 it has helped 45 young people, with about 30% of those being runaways.

Finally, there are several Youth Service Bureaus in Maryland. These agencies have been set up in recent years in an effort to prevent youth from entering or re-entering the criminal justice system by providing them with comprehensive services and alternatives to delinquency. The Bureaus in this area offer counseling, crisis intervention and referral services for runaways, but do not provide shelter. 11/

One of the Youth Service Bureaus most active in the local runaway picture is the Bowie Involvement Program for Parents and Youth (BIPPY), which has estimated that it receives about two inquiries a week concerning runaway youth. In the nine-month period from July 1973 through March 1974, BIPPY counseled or placed in emergency housing some 35 runaways. They were white youths in the age range of 12 to 17, and females outnumbered males slightly.

BIPPY staff members cite the following as being among the major reasons for young people fleeing:

+ Unsatisfactory home environment

+ Family pressure

+ Peer group influence

+ Curiosity and lack of direction or leadership

+ Medical or legal problems

+ Excess leisure time

The staff also expresses concern that only a fraction of the Bowie area runaways are seeking their services or those of some other responsible agency. They believe that many teenagers and younger individuals are instead seeking help from their peers or other unofficial sources.

In addition to the houses and agencies mentioned above, there are a number of churches, service agencies, hotlines and other places where runaways may receive counseling and informal kinds of assistance. However, aid to runaways is not their primary function. Thus, the resources identified here are the major ones--the places to which most area youth workers would refer runaway cases. (See Table 9).

11/ A few of the 150 or so Bureaus across the county do offer shelter, according to the 1973 report of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards & Goals

As for those running from outside the Washington region, the agency that has served their needs the longest is the Travelers Aid Society. The D.C. Society helped 325 runaways in 1973, mostly through referral services and individual counseling. It has staff at the two area airports and at Union Station; its main office downtown is accessible to the Washington bus stations.

In its long history of service (since 1913), the D.C. branch of Travelers Aid has consistently seen 200-300 runaways a year. During the 1960's and 1970's there have been three types of people who left home:

+ The adventurer, "Huck Finn" variety--often young children in the company of older ones. This group includes both black and white youth.

+ Those young people with severe family problems. Probably the largest group now, they include all economic levels and are about evenly divided between blacks and whites.

+ Members of the "Youth Culture", a predominantly white group that appears to be vanishing in 1974. According to the D.C. Society, running away is "no longer a lifestyle."

Out-of-the-area runaways coming to the Washington Travelers Aid office are from 9 or 10 up to 17 years old, and there are slightly more females than males now.

Nationwide, the Society served 300,000 people under the age of 18 in 1971, and a sizeable percentage of those were runaways. However, the agency believes that they see primarily those who want to go back home, and that is just the tip of the iceberg as far as the runaway picture is concerned.

At present, the Federal Bureau of Investigation keeps statistics on runaways for the nation, but only for those cases resulting in arrest. Only one-third to one-half of reported runaways are arrested. 12/

Hopefully an accurate assessment of the national runaway picture will come out of current and future endeavors by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). HEW is required under the 1974 Juvenile Justice Act to file, by June 30, 1975, a special report with the U.S. Congress on the dimensions of the runaway problem nationally. In the interim, HEW is also funding a pilot survey in Denver, in an attempt to locate families that have experienced the runaway phenomenon.

IV. Assessment and Conclusions:

The job of a runaway house has been described as providing emergency,

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12/ Less than 200,000 arrests were included in the FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 1972. The breakdown of those was 56% female, 85% white and 41% under 15.

temporary shelter for young people, along with counseling to help them work out their problems and hopefully return home. While some people question the right of these houses and their staffs to act as surrogate parents, the fact is that they do exist, and they are at least a better alternative than the streets. At best, they can be catalysts for reconciling emotionally bruised families.

It is no answer to suggest, as some individuals do, that runaway youth should simply "shape up," go home and obey their parents. Whoever is to "blame"--parent or child or both--there is often a serious problem within the family and an arbitrary, single-answer solution will not solve it. Well-managed runaway houses with comprehensive counseling programs can help both parents and young people find the solutions to their difficulties.

In the Washington area, most runaway house staffs seem to be performing a difficult job with a good deal of dedication and a number of obstacles facing them, especially insecure or insufficient funding.

If one were to evaluate the three area houses, the choice for the most extensive program would probably be Alternative House. It is also the most financially comfortable, with a sizeable grant from LEAA.

The D.C. Runaway House has been the most plagued financially. It has been unable to offer regular meals for its residents, and there have been periods when the staff members worked without regular pay, which is something of a testament to their dedication. However, Federal funding has recently been received, and private money is also anticipated in 1974. This will relieve some of the house's economic strain.

Despite its past and present difficulties, the D.C. sanctuary is the oldest and best known of the three area houses, and many young people will continue to go there, at least until there are similar, well known facilities closer to their homes.

Second Mile House in Maryland is perhaps the middle ground between the other two residences. Its community support has been demonstrated in the form of regular though not luxurious grants since its inception. Organizationally, the Second Mile program is somewhat similar to that of Alternative House though less extensive.

Some problems and criticisms have been shared by all three houses. A major problem area is the charge by some police and parents that many house staff members are more prone to youth advocacy than support of the parents. This can create mistrust and defensiveness on the part of the parents, who may not choose to enter into a counseling relationship with people whom they perceive are not on their side of the controversy.

This kind of problem can be alleviated in part through such techniques as the use of parent-peer counselors, which Alternative House has employed. Also noteworthy is the fact that the D.C. House plans to funnel part of its recent N.I.M.H. grant into parent-oriented programs, which could help dispel parental distrust of the house operation.

Another problem is the repeated runaway phenomenon. All three houses report some incidence of repeaters, who either come back to the same house or run even further the next time. While this could suggest that the houses are not doing their job of getting the young people back home successfully, it is probably more accurate to say that some of the cases seen by runaway house staff are so serious that a sustained, long-term effort is needed to work them out--an effort that most houses have not had the time or resources to undertake. (A plan for aftercare counseling of runaways and their parents is required under the 1974 runaway legislation).

Still other family problems may be so far advanced that a foster home is the only solution. Until those youths find an alternative living situation they will continue to run.

In the past two or three years, the number of Washington-area runaways has dropped in some localities, increased in others but remained more or less constant for the region. It is a problem of changing character that does not seem to be disappearing with time. Though the establishment of runaway houses in Prince George's County and Fairfax County has taken some pressure off the D.C. House, there is still some movement of suburban youth to the District. Thus the issue remains interjurisdictional in nature as well as a problem for each locality.

There have recently been some attempts to face the runaway issue at the national level, and those efforts may impact on the Washington scene. For example, additional facilities could be created in this area under the runaway provisions of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. They would supplement the three existing houses and the handful of youth service agencies that deal with runaways on a more limited basis.

The creation of more runaway facilities might help reduce to some extent the crossing of jurisdictional lines by those youth who find the District shelter more accessible than the existing suburban houses. However, it is possible that certain geographical areas may continue to have an appeal to young people and this may remain a problem for the District, in view of the initial attraction of Georgetown and Dupont Circle for runaways.

The existence of more facilities providing shelter and counseling might also lead to reduced involvement by police forces in the runaway issue. Though only one-third to one-half of reported run-

aways are arrested, all runaway cases together consume a substantial portion of police time. Many people, including some police officers, feel that this is a family problem, not one of law enforcement, and that it should be worked out with social service agencies rather than the police.

One senior police official interviewed for this report indicated that runaway houses, if properly run, could be an asset to the community, since there would be less chance of harm to the young people involved, and less waste of police time looking for them.

As long as police must remain involved in the runaway issue, it is encouraging to note that police and runaway houses are making efforts to keep lines of communication open. Regular meetings and expansion of attempts to cooperate can help remove misunderstandings and tensions that may arise regarding individual cases. Furthermore, an adequate plan for assuring proper relations with law enforcement personnel is a requirement for receiving funds under 1974 runaway legislation.

In a book written just after the height of the modern runaway experience, Lillian Ambrosino declared that the urge by youth to flee must be anticipated, and that society should begin to think of providing safe, constructive sanctuaries for those young people who feel they must leave home. The author went on to say:

> "If and when society as a whole recognizes the human need for relief, then running away will be understood as a sign of health as well as a cry for help." 13/

Whether running away signifies a sign of health, a cry for help, neither or both, it is an undeniable reality of modern American life. The Council of Governments hopes that this report will help remove current public misconceptions about the runaway youth phenomenon. It may appear to be less visible now than a few years ago, but running away remains an important issue for the criminal justice system and the community to address.

13/ Runaways, by Lillian Ambrosino, 1971, Beacon Press (Boston) p. 6.

v. APPENDICES

TABLE 1

REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES IN WASHINGTON AREA[a]

JURISDICTION	PERCENT OF POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS OLD	1973 POLICE DATA	1973 JUVENILE COURT DATA (COMPLAINTS RECEIVED)	1973 RUNAWAY HOUSE DATA (Persons who received shelter)
District of Columbia	15%	No Data Collected	125 (FY)	707 (D.C. Runaway House) 35 estimated (Other D.C. Shelters)
Prince George's County	37%	3000 est.[b]	306 (FY)	300 est.[c] (2nd Mile House)
Montgomery County	36%	1791	600 est.[d]	
Fairfax County	39%	2028	556 (FY)	152 (Alternative House)
Alexandria	28%	380 (FY)	183 (FY)	
Arlington County	24%	250 est.[e]	145	
Falls Church	32%	33	5	
Fairfax City	41%	111	Data Included In Fairfax County Court Data	
Herndon	Population Data Included In Fairfax County	30		
Vienna		68		
Prince William County	44%	405	42 (FY)	
Manassas	Population Data In Prince William County	17 est.[f]	Included in Prince William Court Data	
Loudoun County	39%	Data Not Avail.	Data Not Avail.	
Leesburg	(Pop. Data Incl. in Loudoun County)	5	" " "	
TOTALS		8118	1962 (24% of Cases Reported to Police)	1194 (15% of Cases Reported to Police)

(a) Figures represent cases or incidents reported rather than individuals, many of whom are repeaters.
(b) Based on estimates of 250 runaways a month in county, along with partial police data for 1973.
(c) 450 for period from early 1972 through early 1974.
(d) Estimate based on 1972 data.
(e) 125 up to July 1973.
(f) Actual figure is 34 for both 1972 and 1973, with no breakdown for each year.

TABLE 3

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES

I. POLICE STATISTICS - JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1974

Total number of cases: 251

Total number of arrests: 85 (34%)

Breakdown for arrest cases: 80 White, 5 Black

Age Breakdown:

	Male	Female	Totals
Under 11	1	0	1
11-12	0	1	1
13-14	8	15	23
15	6	23	29
16	12	13	25
17	3	3	6
Totals	30	55	85

II. POLICE STATISTICS - 1973

Total number of cases: 1791

Total number of arrests: 672 (38%)

Breakdown for arrest cases: 621 White, 51 Other (Primarily Black)

Age Breakdown:

	Male	Female	Totals
Under 11	14	0	14
11-12	17	13	30
13-14	97	110	207
15	83	130	213
16	75	76	151
17	30	27	57
Totals	316	356	672

TABLE 2

BREAKDOWN OF REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

I. PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY POLICE

	TOTAL	SEX		RACE			AGE					
		Females	Males	Black	White	Other	12 & Under	13-14	15-16	17		
7/73 - 2/74	1681	941 (56%)	740 (44%)	430 (25%)	1239 (74%)	12 (1%)	171 (11%)	524 (31%)	795 (47%)	191 (11%)		
9/70 - 8/71	2375	1243 (52%)	1132 (48%)	391 (16%)	1976 (83%)	8 (1%)	279 (12%)	779 (33%)	1072 (45%)	245 (10%)		

II. PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY JUVENILE COURT - FY 1973

TOTAL	SEX		RACE			AGE					
	Females	Males	Black	White	Other	12 & Under	13	14	15	16	17	Over 18
306*	199	107	41 (13%)	261 (86%)	4 (1%)	17 (6%)	39 (13%)	78 (25%)	75 (24%)	64 (21%)	30 (10%)	3 (1%)

* Number of complaints referred to court. 137 of those were processed through the court.

TABLE 4

MONTGOMERY COUNTY JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS ON RUNAWAY COMPLAINTS

Calendar Year 1972 - Runaways Referred: 607

Age	Referred
10 & Under	1
11	5
12	34
13	78
14	134
15	188
16	114
17	53
Total	607

November 1973 through March 1974:

339 Children in Need of Supervision (CINS) complaints - most of them runaways - referred to court.

152 of those cases were detained or placed in a shelter.

(No further breakdowns given.)

TABLE 5

ALEXANDRIA RUNAWAY CASES REPORTED

I. POLICE CASES, FY 1973:

Runaways Reported: 380

Runaways Found: 376

Runaways Arrested And Referred To Juvenile Court: 174

Breakdown For Those Arrested:

TOTAL	White	Black	White Males	Black Males	White Females	Black Females	10 And Under	11-12	13-14	15	16	17
174	121	53 (31%)	42	20	79	33	1	14	78 (45%)	43	32	6

II. POLICE CASES, FY 1974 (Through March):

Runaways Arrested: 82

Breakdown for Those Arrested:

TOTAL	White	Black	White Males	Black Males	White Females	Black Females	10 And Under	11-12	13-14	15	16	17
82	37	45	16	16	21	29	8	1	41	18	13	1

III. ALEXANDRIA JUVENILE COURT CASES REFERRED):

FY 1972 - 255 Complaints relating to runaways

FY 1973 - 183 Complaints relating to runaways

TABLE 6

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES

I. POLICE STATISTICS:

Year	Males	Females	Total
1968	173	155	328
1969	145	135	280
1970	202	164	366
1971	141	146	287
1972	101	116	217
To 7/73			125
TOTAL	(Including 6 Open Cases)		1603

II. JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS

Year	Males	Females	Black	White	Total
1972	53	61	16	98	114
1973	63	82	8	137	145
1974 (to 4/30)	22	20	6	36	42

TABLE 7

HERNDON AND VIENNA, VIRGINIA REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES

I. HERNDON POLICE STATISTICS - 1972

Age	Males	Females
11-12	2	0
13-14	2	3
15	2	5
16	5	0
Totals	11	8

II. HERNDON POLICE STATISTICS - 1973

Age	Males	Females
11-12	1	0
13-14	3	6
15	3	3
16	4	6
17	2	2
Totals	13	17

III. HERNDON POLICE STATISTICS - 1974 (through mid April)

5 Females, 2 Males (No Age Breakdown)

IV. VIENNA POLICE STATISTICS - 1971

Total runaway cases - 98 (No breakdowns available)

V. VIENNA POLICE STATISTICS - 1972

Total runaway cases - 69
- °Includes 31 Females, 38 Males, 67 Whites, 2 Blacks
- °Most prevalent age group: 14-16 year olds

VI. VIENNA POLICE STATISTICS - 1973

Total runaway cases - 68
- °Includes 32 Females, 36 Males, 67 Whites, 1 Black
- °Over 1/2 were 14 years old, though age range was from 9 to 17

VII. VIENNA POLICE STATISTICS - 1974 (through mid-June)

Total runaway cases - 34
- °Includes 18 Females, 16 Males, 34 Whites, 0 Blacks
- °14-16 year olds were most prevalent age group

TABLE 8

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA REPORTED RUNAWAY CASES

I. POLICE STATISTICS - 1973

Total Runaway Cases - 405, including 395 White, 10 Black

Age Breakdown:

Age	# of Cases
10 and Under	3
11-12	20
13-14	129
15	113
16	95
17	45
Total	405

II. JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS - FISCAL YEAR 1973

Age	White Males	White Females	Black Males	Black Females	Total
12	0	2	0	0	2
13	0	1	0	0	1
14	0	4	0	0	4
15	5	7	0	0	12
16	6	12	1	0	19
17	1	2	0	0	3
Unknown	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	13	28	1	0	42*

* Includes approximately 4 repeated runaways.

III. JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS - JULY 24, 1973 THROUGH MARCH 19, 1974

39 Cases, including 17 males, 21 Females and 1 unidentified
(Age breakdowns not available; Total also included 3 repeated runaways)

TABLE 9

AREA RESOURCES FOR RUNAWAY YOUTH

LOCATION	AGENCY	# RUNAWAYS SEEN PER YEAR	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN
D.C.	D.C. Runaway House 18th & Riggs Road, N.W.	707 in 1973	Temporary shelter; individual and family counseling; medical and legal referrals; advocacy in court; foster home placement; casework with city and court agencies.
D.C.	Travelers Aid 1015 - 12th Street, N.W. (Also bus & train stations, airports)	325 in 1973 (mostly from out of Washington area)	Individual counseling; referrals for shelter and other services.
D.C.	24-Hour Youth Assistance Center * 285 - 55th Street, N.E.	Approximately 25 between February 73 and April 74	Temporary shelter; individual and family counseling; referrals.
D.C.	N.E. Neighborhood House* 1016 - 9th Street, N.E.	15 to 20 between April 73 and April 74	Individual, family and job counseling.
D.C.	Teen Haven * 1430 Newton Street, N.W.	Only about 10 in seven years since agency opened	Individual and family counseling; recreation facilities; referrals.
Maryland	Second Mile Runaway House Hyattsville, Maryland	450 between early 1972 and early 1974	Temporary shelter; individual and family counseling; drop-in-center; referrals for other services.
Maryland	Bowie Involvement Program For Parents and Youth (BIPPY), Prince George's County**	Approximately 35 from July 73 through March 74	Counseling and referrals.
Maryland	Sunshine Company Montgomery County**	Estimated 10 per month	Referral and counseling; drop-in-center.
Maryland	Family Service Agency of Mont. Co.	64 in FY 1974	" " " " "
Virginia	Alternative House McLean, Virginia	152 in 1973	Temporary shelter; individual and family counseling; referrals; follow-up calls to runaways.
Virginia	Interim House- Alex.,Va.	approx. 13 from 8/72-9/74	Temporary shelter only.

* Note that these agencies provide a variety of services to young people, and the small number of runaways seen by them does not adequately reflect their entire caseload for the year.

** Both these programs are Youth Service Bureaus. Other area Bureaus may also be providing counseling and referral aid for runaways, but only these two were contacted in researching this report.

END

7 documents