

Warning signs and reasons your child may run away

The majority of cases of missing children in Canada are recorded as runaways, usually teens or pre-teens who are often in conflict with the family or facing other difficulties in their lives. Steps can be taken to try and prevent having children run away.

Here are some thoughts for parents and caregivers:

Why do children run away from home?

- Family dynamics
- Involvement with high-risk peer groups
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Abuse or bullying
- Teen pregnancy

Signs to look watch for:

- Change in mood or behavior
- Rebellious or reckless behaviors increasing
- Excessive time spent online
- Problems in school (struggling with grades, skipping classes, discipline issues, etc.)
- Drastic changes in appearance
- Becoming involved with gangs or unexpected change in groups of friends
- Self-harming behavior
- Saving money or keeping belongings in a bag/packing up belongings

Prevention tips:

- Ensure communication is healthy within your family
- Address home issues, particularly with major upheavals such as divorce, remarriage, separation, or other things such as substance abuse issues
- Pay attention to your child's relationships and engage other adults in your child's life to support and alert you if they notice a change of behavior that you may not notice or see
- Record your child's information – the Sign4I app from Quebec-based missing children's organization Réseau Enfants-Retour / The Missing Children's Network <https://www.reseauenfantsretour.org/>, is available for Android and iOS