

Running Away/ AWOLing Focus Group

110 youth were interviewed at **8** placements

Why do youth run away from home?

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Family problems
- To have sex
- Gangs
- To see boyfriend/girlfriend
- Conflict
- Angry and irritated
- Depressed
- More freedom
- Bullying
- Feeling unsafe
- Peer pressure
- Drugs and alcohol
- Suicidal
- Bored
- Kicked out of the house
- Money
- To go to a party
- To rebel
- Not enough food

Age of first time running away from home

7 **
8 **
9 ***
10 ***
11 *****
12 *****
13 *****
14 *****
15 *****
16 ***
17 **

Who's idea was it AWOL?

84% of youth reported it was their idea to AWOL, while **11%** reported it was someone else's idea to AWOL, and **5%** reported it was both their idea and someone else's idea to AWOL.

Did you AWOL by yourself or with someone?

60% of youth reported they AWOL'd by themselves, while **40%** reported they AWOL'd with someone else.

How did you return from AWOL?

49% of youth were picked up by law enforcement, **46%** of youth returned on their own, **4%** of youth were returned to the group home by family, and **1%** of youth went to a DCFS office

How many times have you AWOL'd from a group home?

0 *****
1-5 *****
5-10 *****
10-15 *****
15-20 **
20+ *****

Did you go home while AWOL?

78% of youth reported they did not go home while AWOL. **22%** of youth reported going home while AWOL.

Where did you go while AWOL?

- A friend's house
- A funeral
- Home
- Los Angeles
- Las Vegas
- El Paso, TX
- Long Beach
- Boyfriend's house

Why do youth AWOL from group homes?

- Bored
- Bullying
- Fighting
- Placement feels unsafe
- Peer pressure
- Drugs and alcohol
- To have sex
- To see friends
- Conflict with staff
- Feeling like no one cares
- They miss their family
- To see boyfriends/girlfriends
- Being unhappy
- Someone died

"I ran away from placement because I didn't feel like I was getting help and no one cared."

"When you're angry and triggered, it's not helpful when staff are telling you that they'll help you pack your bags and open the front door."

How can group homes prevent youth from AWOLing?

- Have more incentives
- Do more fun outings
- Have staff that want to talk to us
- Give us more money in allowance
- Recognize the youth who are doing well
- Have more staff available
- Allow us to have more privacy
- Allow us to have cell phones
- Give us more freedom
- Allow us to watch TV and movies that are age appropriate
- Have more consistent rules between DCFS and Probation
- Allow us to go outside and get some fresh air - we spend too much time inside with the same group of girls all day long
- Allow us to walk off campus by ourselves
- Have more interesting groups

How can group home staff support youth when returning from placement ?

- Don't judge us
- Be nice
- Give us some space
- Ask us if we're hungry
- Be supportive
- Listen
- Let us talk to a family member
- Don't be so quick to give us consequences
- Don't bring up us AWOLing all of the time
- Be a shoulder we can cry on

"Ask us, 'Is there anything I can do to help?'"

"Think in your head why is this child running away - what has happened in this child's life to cause so much disturbance?"

The Los Angeles Probation Department and Nola Brantley Speaks sponsored the CSEC focus group. This information was compiled by Nicole Klasey and Jessica Midkiff.