

Overview of runaways and current
runaway practices used with youths
housed at Québec rehabilitation centres
for young people with adjustment
problems

English summary

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This is the English summary of the guidance entitled *Portrait des fugueurs et des pratiques actuelles en matière de fugues auprès des jeunes hébergés en centre de réadaptation pour jeunes en difficulté d'adaptation au Québec* published in September 2017.

The complete version of this guidance (in French) is available on the website of INESSS in the *Publications* section.

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SUMMARY

In January 2016, the situation with girls who had run away from an integrated health and social services centre (CISSS) was widely publicized. Parents subsequently turned to the media, both mainstream and social, to find their child and to express their strong worries. Some of them indicated that running away was one of the reasons for having placed their child and were concerned that the rehabilitation centre was unable to ensure their youth's protection.¹ The Minister for Rehabilitation, Youth Protection, Public Health and Healthy Living, Lucie Charlebois, appointed André Lebon as an independent external auditor with the task of drafting a report on the situation with runaway episodes linked to sexual exploitation and of making recommendations. Upon examining the Lebon report recommendations, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) asked the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux (INESSS) to draft a report on runaway best practices and prevention and intervention tools for youths living in rehabilitation centres for young persons with adjustment problems.

This document constitutes the first step toward drafting that report. It presents statistical data on running away, profiles of runaways, and the current clinical and organizational runaway prevention and intervention practices.

To provide this overview, descriptive and bivariate analyses using statistical data were performed on different variables concerning the aspects of running away and the characteristics of runaways. As well, latent class analyses were performed, from which profiles of runaways were identified.

Furthermore, the organizational and clinical practices were analyzed on the basis of a consultation carried out by the MSSS, a telephone survey and telephone interviews with CISSSs and CIUSSSs, and a review of the Quebec's literature on intervention, specific programs and methods of collaboration pertaining to the phenomenon of running away

Here are some of the findings and statistics from this overview:

- On the 31st of march 2016, 21 714 children were under the care of Québec's youth protective services. Of them, 2497 (11.5%) were housed in intermediate resources or rehabilitation centres [INESSS, 2016]. Therefore, youths housed in rehabilitation centre accounted for a small portion of all the youths under the care of the Director of Youth Protection. It will also be noted that the total number of all youths placed in rehabilitation centres decreased by 18.8% between 2012-2013 and 2015-2016.
- The proportion of runaways among all housed youths remained relatively stable during the 4 years in question, varying from 23.0% to 25.8%.
- However, the rate of runaways from rehabilitation centres increased over the years, from 91.8 runaways per 100 placed youths in 2012-2013 to 117.9 in 2015-

¹ The term "youth" is used here to refer to children and adolescents, who can be up to 18 years of age, housed in rehabilitation centre, which include group homes and living units.

2016. This 28.4% increase is attributable mainly to an increase in the rate of runaways registered in living units, especially those under regular supervision.

- From 2012 to 2016, a large majority of runaway episodes were of short duration, with 65.8% of all those recorded for this period being of less than 24 hours. Of these, close to three-fourths (72.5%) were of less than 8 hours. The episodes of long duration accounted for one-fifth (18.9%) of all episodes having lasted for more than 72 hours.
- In 2015-2016, runaway youths housed in rehabilitation centres ran away mainly once (34.2%) or two or three times (26.3%). Those who ran away between 4 and 29 times accounted for slightly more than a quarter of all runaways (27.3%), while those who ran away at least 10 times were in the minority (12.2%).
- Statistical analyses have revealed four distinct runaway profiles. Each is characterized by the duration and frequency of the episodes and by the circumstances surrounding the youth's return. They are Caught runaways, One-time runaways, Chronic runaways and Passed-curfew runaways. This typology provides a better understanding of these youths who, occasionally or frequently, leave, without permission, the rehabilitation centre where they are staying.

Here are a few of the interventions identified and courses of action proposed:

Practices and Interventions	Courses of Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running away can meet various needs, and the level of risk involved varies. A balance must therefore be struck between the youths' protective needs and their need for autonomy. Certain regions have developed specific practices and tools to better help them understand the meaning of their running away and search for other ways to meet their needs. • In rehabilitation, and from a preventive perspective, certain program activities target the risk factors associated with running away. During a runaway episode, the caseworkers try to maintain contact with the youth. Priority should also be given to working with the parents to find solutions. Similarly, all the players involved – CISSS/CIUSSS caseworkers, community organizations, and police departments – should work together to ensure the youth's safety. • Intervention in runaway cases has changed over the years, from a punitive approach to one that is more compassionate and focused on helping and supporting the young runaway. The 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involvement of both the youth and their parents is essential to the rehabilitation process. To maintain or strengthen this commitment, the intervention team should ensure that the parents are informed, listened to, advised and consulted during a runaway episode. Their place and role before and during the episode and when the youth returns are to be strengthened. • Teens with no clear plan in life are at greater risk for alienation because their future is uncertain. It is essential to involve them and the people they consider significant in developing a realistic life plan. This plan, which is at the centre of the intervention, is therefore a tool to be leveraged to help the youth plan for a positive future and embark on a stimulating rehabilitation process. • Dialogue, partnership and collaboration are essential for supporting young runaways or youths at risk for trying to run away. Advances in practices involve the development and formalization of collaborative agreements between

Practices and Interventions	Courses of Action
<p>support provided upon a youth's return is aimed at taking care of them, helping them understand the meaning of and reasons for their having run away, and finding other ways to meet their needs.</p>	<p>institutions, youth community organizations, the school network and police departments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would seem important to clarify the guidelines for using social media when there is a search for a young person or for communicating with them while they are on the run. • Clinical concerns regarding the level of static or dynamic supervision of youths with a runaway problem underlie the need to review the conditions of placement in an intensive supervision unit.

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