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Dianne S. Fergusson, Ph.D.
S. C. Department of Youth Services
Division of Planning, Research & Grants

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In the past few years national attention has been focused on the runaway juvenile. A number of behavioral scientists have addressed themselves to the problem of analyzing runaway behavior in an effort to understand why youths run away from home.

A significant study published in 1974 by the Behavioral Research and Evaluation Corporation offers an analysis of the characteristics of runaway youth. This study analyzes runaway cases from 1973 and 1974 data in the National Evaluation of Youth Service Systems, a representative sample of non-runaway Denver youth, and cases from a runaway shelter in Nebraska. The authors of the study offered the following observations as general traits of runaway youth:

- 1) Runaways had a poorer home situation than nonrunaways.
- 2) Runaways often felt that their parents didn't care for them.
- 3) Runaways lacked positive labelling by parents and peer groups.
- 4) Runaways were often associated with delinquent peer groups.
- 5) Runaways had a lower self-concept and were more socially alienated than nonrunaways.

While these characteristics are probably generally applicable to the majority of runaways, one must remember that a great many other factors are involved in causing runaway behavior. Other studies have examined background data on runaways and have noted that runaway youth cannot be isolated in one social class nor can runaway behavior be attributed simply to one or two causes.

Many times runaways leave a perfectly good home and social environment in order to seek adventure and new experiences. The study quoted above suggested that running away could be a reaction to middle-class affluence or a search for adventure as well as an adaptive response to an unpleasant situation.

With increasing public awareness of the existence of a large subculture of runaway youth has come increasing public interest in providing services for these youth. A great many programs for runaways--ranging from hotlines for crisis intervention to runaway shelters for short-term care and treatment--have been initiated by private and public sponsors.

The South Carolina Department of Youth Services is in the process of establishing its first runaway shelter. Located in Charleston and operated by the Regional Youth Bureau there, this program is scheduled to accept its first runaways in the fall of 1975. The Charleston runaway shelter is funded by a grant from the Office of Youth Development in HEW. This program will hopefully serve as a model for similar runaway shelters to be established in other areas of the state in the future.

In an effort to determine the scope of the problem and to gather data to justify the need for facilities to serve runaway juveniles in the state, the Department of Youth Services has initiated a series of studies on the runaway problem in South Carolina. In June of 1974 the Division of Planning, Research and Grants released the first of this series. This first study dealt with the runaway problem in four counties located in the eastern part of the state: Horry, Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester. In November, 1974, a second study, a survey of the runaway problem in Richland County, was completed.

The present study is an analysis of the runaway problem in Florence County, and as are the previous ones, is also based primarily on statistical data gathered from law enforcement and the courts. No case studies have been included.

Florence County is located in the northeastern area of the state. Urbanization in the county is concentrated in the city of Florence, the largest city and county seat. Two (2) other small cities, Timmons ville and Lake City, have also shown growth patterns. Increased industrialization and the proximity of interstate highways continue to be key factors in the growth trends being experienced by the county and its cities.

The total population of Florence County grew between 1960 and 1970 from 84,438 to 89,636, demonstrating an increase of 6.15%. The age range of seven (7) through seventeen (17) years accounts for 22,577 or approximately twenty-five (25%) percent of Florence County's population.

The reporting facilities contacted for this study were those in the county who kept records on runaways. These included three law enforcement agencies--Florence County Sheriff, Florence City Police, and Lake City Police--as well as the Florence County Family Court. The scope of the study has been restricted to the compilation and evaluation of statistics on numbers of runaways apprehended in the county during 1974, and to interviews with personnel of the courts and law enforcement who have been directly involved with runaways.

Sexual and racial distributions similar to those indicated in the two previously mentioned runaway studies were apparent from the data collected in this survey. Table I analyzes the age, race, and sex distribution of runaways apprehended in Florence County in 1974. As expected, the majority of the runaways were between the ages of fourteen (14) and sixteen (16). Of the total of 129, 109 or eighty-five (85%) percent were in these age groups. Fifteen year olds accounted for the greater number of runaways apprehended.

Whites accounted for the majority (94.6%) of the total. Contrary to expectations, however, the majority of the whites were male. Females accounted for only 44.3% of the whites and approximately the same percentage of the total number apprehended as runaways in Florence County. The small number of black runaways, 5.4% of the total, were almost evenly distributed between male and female.

Refer to Table I

Table II shows the distribution of runaways reported from the different facilities. The largest number of runaways were reported by the Family Court. These figures include juveniles who were brought to court as runaways from home and from correctional institutions. (Only two of the runaways included in this total are included in another facility's report. One 15-year-old white male and one 13-year-old black female were reported both by the court and by Florence City Police.)

Of the 56 runaways seen by the court in 1974, only eighteen (18) were from South Carolina. The remainder were from a number of eastern states. The chief probation officer who supplied these statistics pointed out that almost all of these cases were involved in traffic violations ranging from illegal hitchhiking and auto theft to speeding and automobile accidents. Running away was cited as a secondary factor in bringing them to the attention of the court even though in many cases the act of running away was the reason for the subsequent action. This explains the lack of duplication among the various reporting facilities. Those cases reported by law enforcement were only charged with having run away and were returned to the parents without referral to the court.

TABLE I
 Analysis of Runaways
 Distribution by Age, Race and Sex

Race/Sex	Age 10 and Under		Age 11		Age 12		Age 13		Age 14		Age 15		Age 16		Totals	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
White/Male	6	8.8%	0		1	1.5%	1	1.5%	14	20.6%	21	30.8%	25	36.8%	68	52.7%
White/Female	1	1.8%	0		2	3.7%	5	9.3%	12	22.2%	23	42.6%	11	20.4%	54	41.9%
Black/Male	0		0		0		2	50.0%	0		0		2	50.0%	4	3.1%
Black/Female	1	33.3%	0		0		1	33.3%	0		1	33.3%	0		3	2.3%
Totals	8	6.2%	0		3	2.3%	9	6.9%	26	20.2%	45	34.9%	38	29.5%	129	100.0%

It is interesting to note the differences in the sexual distribution of the runaways reported from the different facilities. Females accounted for the majority of runaways reported from the law enforcement agencies: 65% from Florence City Police, 51.1% from the Florence Sheriff's Department and 60% from Lake City Police Department. The reverse of this distribution was evident in the statistics obtained from the Florence Family Court where the majority of the runaways, 71.5%, were male.

No doubt there are a number of factors that contribute to these differences in sexual distribution between law enforcement and the courts. Possibly the existence of a protective attitude on the part of law enforcement toward females may be a contributing factor as may be the fact that a large number of those males reported by the Family Court were also often involved in traffic violations and auto theft. Statistics from our evaluation centers and operating facilities suggest that females are rarely committed on such charges as auto theft.

Refer to Table II

Table III analyzes the distribution of runaways by reporting facility and area of residence. The runaways were almost evenly distributed between Florence County residents and out-of-state residents, with only a small percentage of juveniles reported from other areas of South Carolina. Out-of-state runaways accounted for 43.4% of the total and 46.5% were from Florence County. Only 10.1% of the runaways were from other areas of the state.

Florence City Police reported more runaways from out of state than from Florence County or other areas of South Carolina. The reverse of this distribution was evident in the report from the Florence Sheriff's Department,

TABLE II

Analysis of Runaways
By Race, Sex and Reporting Facility

Reporting Facility	W/M	%	W/F	%	B/M	%	B/F	%	Totals	%
Florence City Police Dept.	7	35.0%	13	65.0%	0		0		20	15.5%
Florence Sheriff's Dept.	19	44.3%	20	46.5%	2	4.6%	2	4.6%	43	33.3%
Lake City Police Dept.	4	40.0%	6	60.0%	0		0		10	7.8%
Florence County Family Court	38	67.9%	15	26.8%	2	3.6%	1	1.7%	56	43.4%
Totals	68	52.7%	54	41.9%	4	3.1%	3	2.3%	129	100.0%

however, where only fourteen (14%) percent of the runaways were from out of state while 79.1% were from Florence County. All of the runaways reported by the Lake City Police Department were from Florence County.

Refer to Table III

According to law enforcement agencies contacted for information during the course of this study, all runaways were returned to their parents or guardians as soon as possible. Any juveniles who could not be released for several hours or overnight were detained in the juvenile section of the county jail.

The majority of those runaways processed by the Family Court were also returned to their parents. Of the total of 56 runaways seen by the Family Court in 1974, 43 or 76.8% were returned directly to their parents. An additional 8.9% were released on probation. Two (2) runaways, 3.6% of the total, were sent to the Reception and Evaluation Center in Columbia for evaluation and four (4) others, 7.1% of the total, who were runaways from correctional institutions, were returned to those institutions. The remaining two (2) runaways in the 1974 court caseload were returned to the custody of the Department of Social Services in their home states.

Refer to Table IV

The findings of previous runaway studies, both in South Carolina and other parts of the country, suggest that there are certain times of the year when juveniles tend to run more often than others. October, for example, has consistently been a month of heavy runaway activity. Most authorities attribute this occurrence to the beginning of the school year which may bring about increased pressures on the juveniles who respond by running away.

TABLE III

Analysis of Runaways

Distribution by Reporting Facility & Area of Residence

Reporting Facility	Florence County		Area of Residence South Carolina		Out-of-State		Totals	
		%		%		%		%
Florence City Police Dept.	6	30.0%	2	10.0%	12	60.0%	20	15.5%
Florence Sheriff's Dept.	34	79.1%	3	6.9%	6	14.0%	43	33.2%
Lake City Police Dept.	10	100.0%	0		0		10	7.9%
Florence County Family Court	10	17.9%	8	14.3%	38	67.8%	56	43.4%
Totals	60	46.5%	13	10.1%	56	43.4%	129	100.0%

TABLE IV

Analysis of Runaways

Florence County Family Court
Distribution by Race, Sex & Disposition

	R & E Center	%	Returned to Parents	%	Probation	%	Correctional Institutions	%	Other	%	Totals	%
W/M	1	2.6%	29	76.3%	3	7.9%	3	7.9%	2	5.3%	38	67.8%
W/F	0		13	86.7%	2	13.3%	0		0		15	26.8%
B/M	1	50.0%	0		0		1	50.0%	0		2	3.6%
B/F	0		1	100.0%	0		0		0		1	1.8%
Totals	2	3.6%	43	76.8%	5	8.9%	4	7.1%	2	3.6%	56	100.0%

Table V analyzes the monthly distribution of runaways apprehended by law enforcement in Florence County. Monthly distribution data was not available from the Family Court. The chief probation officer said that the runaway cases through the courts were fairly evenly distributed throughout the twelve months. She had not noted a heavier concentration in any one month.

As was expected, the data from the law enforcement agencies indicated that the months coinciding with the opening and closing of the school year were the periods of heaviest activity. The months of September, October, and May accounted for 39.9% of the runaways apprehended by law enforcement. The heaviest activity was reported during October; eleven (11) runaways or 15.2% of the total were apprehended during that month. The month of least activity was February in which only one (1) runaway was apprehended.

Refer to Table V

The findings of the Florence County Runaway Study are similar to those of the two earlier ones and reinforce the general conclusions that have been drawn previously about the runaway problem in South Carolina. Runaways from all three areas tend more often to be white and between the ages of fourteen (14) and sixteen (16). In only one of the studies, however, the four-county area study prepared in June, 1974, were there more females than males. In both the Richland County and Florence County studies, the runaways were predominantly male.

Another difference found among the areas surveyed thus far was in the origin of the runaways. Only in the Richland County study was there a notably low percentage of out-of-state juveniles. Out-of-state runaways accounted for 54% of the total in the four-county study and 43.4% in the

TABLE V

Monthly Distribution of Runaways
Apprehended by Law Enforcement

Reporting Facility*	Jan %	Feb %	Mar %	Apr %	May %	June %	July %	Aug %	Sept %	Oct %	Nov %	Dec %	Totals %
Florence City Police Dept.	1 50.0%	0	0	2 10.0%	3 15.0%	0	1 5.0%	4 20.0%	1 5.0%	5 25.0%	2 10.0%	1 5.0%	20 27.4%
Florence Sheriff's Dept.	6 14.0%	1 2.3%	2 4.7%	0	5 11.6%	3 7.0%	5 11.6%	4 9.3%	7 16.3%	6 13.9%	3 7.0%	1 2.3%	43 59.0%
Lake City Police Dept.	2 20.0%	0	0	0	0	0	3 30.0%	1 10.0%	2 20.0%	0	2 20.0%	0	10 13.7%
Totals	9 12.3%	1 1.4%	2 2.7%	2 2.7%	8 11.0%	3 4.1%	9 12.3%	9 12.3%	10 13.7%	11 15.2%	7 9.6%	2 2.7%	73 100.0%

Florence County study. These figures contrast sharply with the Richland County study where only 5.5% of the runaways were reported from out of state. The location of the three areas is probably the primary factor in accounting for these differences in out-of-state runaways. The presence of I-95 in Florence County makes it a necessary junction on what has been identified as one of the major runaway routes in the nation. A number of juveniles from northern and eastern states who are heading toward the beaches of Florida utilize the interstate highway system. The four-county area offers a more scenic north-south route and Myrtle Beach, located in Horry County, is in itself a major attraction for runaways.

In Florence County, as in the other five South Carolina counties surveyed thus far, a runaways service to provide short-term shelter and counseling and assistance to runaway juveniles is seen as a pressing need. The presence of the large number of out-of-state runaways makes this situation especially acute since these juveniles must sometimes be detained overnight or several days awaiting the arrival of their parents or guardians.

According to local authorities, the presence of interstate highways in the county contribute greatly to the number of runaways, especially juveniles from out of state, who are apprehended. The chief probation officer for the Family Court explained that they have noted an increase in the number of out-of-state runaways seen by the court since 1973 when I-95 was opened.