



Because I Love You™

Parent and Youth Support Groups

FIRST TIME RUNAWAY LETTER

(We received this letter on e-mail and wanted to share it)

Re: First-Time Runaways & Lack of Law Enforcement Support

To Whom It May To Concern,

I am writing to forward information (from Texas) regarding how runaway teenagers are dealt with here. Our 16-year-old daughter has been lying to us behind our back for a number of months regarding the kinds of friends she has been associating and communicating with. Recently, she got a car and a part-time job. She was an A student in high school. She met a boy who is about ready to turn 21. She decided to lie to us about a Saturday night movie date with her girlfriend and come to find out; she was out with this boy. When we confronted her about her lying to us, the conversation got out of control and we told her that we would have to deal with it again in the morning. Needless to say, when we awoke, our daughter had snuck out her bedroom window at night and was gone. After 24 hours, we called the police and reported her as a runaway. We called the airport to alert security and they put an all points bulletin out for her in case she tried to leave by airplane. We called the Center for Missing and Exploited Children and gave them the information about our daughter. The problem was, our daughter was with the 20-year-old boy and our worse fears were that she was naive and that there was a risk she would be violated. We took the following steps the day of discovering her disappearance:

- 1) We went to her job and intercepted her paycheck. We are still investigating a law in Texas that allows parents to confiscate minor's earnings. We still have the check and are waiting for an answer to that dilemma. By intercepting her check, we reduced her ability to exist on the outside for a considerable length of time.
- 2) We contacted the boy's mother. We informed her that we knew what was going on and that our daughter was reported as a runaway and that she was 16. His mother was surprised, but nonetheless confessed to the fact that our daughter indeed was there.

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3) The authorities came to our house and got a picture of our daughter. This did NOT do us any good because of the fact that the following day she ended up at school. Because of that, and our contacting the school, our daughter was NOT deemed a runaway any longer because

we knew where she was so the police closed her file. All we wanted the police to do was go to the school and take her down to a crisis center where she could get some counseling. Instead of doing that, they closed her file and she continued to stay gone until the clothes she had packed with her were dirty and she had to come home for more. It was at that point we confronted her and attempted to straighten out the problem.

4) We did learn two important things we wanted to share:

- A) If you know the child is at school, but you want the police to deal with him or her, vis-a-vie counseling at a crisis center, **DON'T CALL THE SCHOOL ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE RUNAWAY.** Call on the first day and leave it alone. If you call the second day and find out she is there and inform the school she is reported runaway, they will call 911 and inform the authorities she is in school and all you've done is for naught.
- B) If you don't want your minor child hanging out with an older person, go to the local Justice of the Peace and have a protective order put out on the people involved. If your minor child then associates with them, you can report that to the judge and the judge will cite the older persons with contempt, which makes them liable for fines and jail time. That should slow down the popularity of the child and they will have nowhere to turn to other than the parents. **PARENTS**, educate yourselves, or commit the child to a state-run school for runaways. Foster homes are not the answer. Our dilemma with our 16-year-old daughter is not over yet.

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