

## RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAM

The Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Inc. / Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY) has been serving area families since January 1984. This is a 24-hour, 7-day a week crisis program for youth, up to age 21, and their families in Oneida County. **The main focus of the RHY Program is to mediate issues between youth and family and to reunite them by facilitating a plan to improve the situation whenever possible.** The program works with youth who are homeless, have runaway, have been thrown out of their homes or are at risk of the above. RHY is a voluntary program: a youth needs to request services.

The program is composed of staff and volunteers specially trained to provide a continuum of care to youth. This continuum includes:

- Short-term residential services (1-30 days)
- Nonresidential services
- Crisis counseling and mediation services for youth, up to 21 years of age, and their families
- Referrals to other agencies/services
- Advocacy with other agencies/services
- Community education for youth
- Aftercare
- All services are confidential and *FREE*



## THE YOUTH

There is no such thing as a “typical” runaway youth. They come from all areas of our community: urban or rural; upper, middle and lower income families; diversified ethnic and religious groups. Many of these youngsters are not out on the streets by choice. All too often they have been literally thrown out of their homes by parents or step-parents who no longer want to be bothered with them. Many others run to the streets because they have been abused physically, mentally or sexually. Still others have been left behind because their caretaker has been incarcerated, institutionalized or is deceased. These youngsters are not running away from their issues, but are running to a solution. They enter the RHY Program ***voluntarily because they need and want help.***

No one can force a youth to participate. To access services a youth must either call or walk into one of the two RHY offices. They will then meet with a worker who will assess their needs and either refer to a Host Home, work with them on a non-residential basis or refer to an alternate agency if needed.

RHY helps youth get the services and support that they need. The program advocates for them with other agencies, such as the Department of Social Services and the court system. If needed, they are referred to medical help, specialized services and offered food and clothing. Once the basic needs are met and the youth is stable, work begins on reunification. This occurs through family mediations which give all parties a chance to discuss the issues and possible solutions. Staff facilitates these mediations and makes referrals to outside agencies as needed. Follow-up and after care are provided whether a youth returns home or alternative living arrangements are found.

## INTERIM VOLUNTEER HOST HOME FAMILY

Since 1984 the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program has relied on the generosity of the Interim Volunteer Host Home Families. Host Families open their hearts and their homes to youth in crisis. They provide temporary shelter, food and a warm, nurturing atmosphere. Although the program can house youth for up to 30 days, the average stay in a Host Home is 2-5 days (this is the individual decision of each youth). The Host Family provides supervision of the youth when he/she is not in school or with staff.

As with the youth, there is no such thing as a typical Host Home Family. They too come from diversified backgrounds, religions and ethnicity. They may be single, married, working or retired. They may have children of their own at home or are empty nesters. However, as different as they are, they share commonalities: they are inspiring, caring and understanding.

The program allows great flexibility to the Host Families; they decide how often and for how long they are available to house a youth. RHY staff will always take into consideration the Host's schedule, whether it be work, vacation or prior commitments. All information concerning the Host Families is strictly confidential. Their names, addresses or phone numbers are never given out. The youth's parents are informed that their child is safely housed, but will not be told where or with whom the child is placed. While a youth is in a Host Home, staff is in daily contact with both the host and the youth. RHY staff is available 24-hours a day for Host Families and youth for any questions or concerns

## To APPLY AS A HOST FAMILY

Any interested Oneida County resident will be considered for participation in the Volunteer Host Home Family Program regardless of economic standing or family composition. A family's initial interview with RHY is informal and is intended only to provide information about the program. Later in the application process, all interested families must be cleared through the New York State Central Register for Abuse and Neglect, furnish personal references, a physician's statement of good health and sign a statement that they haven't been convicted of a crime.

RHY Staff are Mandated Reporters to the NYS Central Registry for Abuse and Neglect. All information provided by youth is strictly confidential unless youth discloses issues of abuse or are a threat to themselves or to someone else.

## **RHY IS VOLUNTARY**

**24-Hour Crisis Hotline**

**339-4960**

**or**

**797-8500**

**Collect Calls Accepted**

## MISSION STATEMENTS

Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Inc. is dedicated to empower people toward positive self-sufficiency.

The mission of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is to provide safety for youth, help them stay off the streets and reunite with families whenever possible.

**Amy Turner, C.C.A.P.**  
**Executive Director**

### Two Locations:

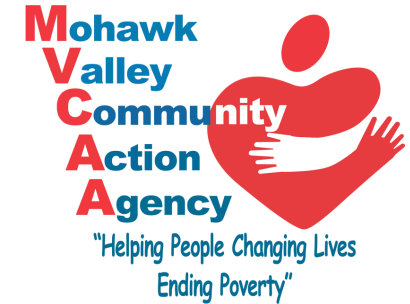
1721 Black River Blvd  
Rome, NY 13440  
315-339-2649

6 Steuben Park  
Utica, NY 13501  
315-624-0821

**24-Hour Service**  
**Collect Calls Accepted**

Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Inc./Runaway and Homeless Youth Program is a nonprofit agency that receives government grants to advocate for Youth in Oneida County.

Funded by: New York Office of Children and Family Services via the Oneida County Youth Bureau, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, local municipalities, the United Way of the Greater Utica Area, Rome United Way of Western Oneida County, Inc. and through private donations.



# **Runaway and Homeless**



## **Youth Program**

### Two Locations:

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Rome, NY 13440 Utica, NY 13501  
315-339-2649 315-624-0821

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