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Voluntary versus Involuntary Runaways: Basic Demographics and Characteristics

Darcia A. Colburn
Illinois Wesleyan University

Doran French, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Poster Presentation 7

**VOLUNTARY VERSUS INVOLUNTARY RUNAWAYS:
BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Darcia A. Colburn and Doran French*

Department of Psychology, Illinois Wesleyan University

The concern for runaway youth is not a recent concept, but there is a new concern that youths are leaving home earlier than ever. According to the National Network for Youth, 38% of runaways are under the age of 14 (Isaacs, 1997). Clinicians, as well as researchers, who have worked with the population of runaway youth recognize that there are two distinct groups (i.e., voluntary and involuntary). Previous research has neglected the difference between those youths who have left home on their own initiative (voluntary) and those youths who were forced to leave their home (involuntary). I hypothesized that involuntary youth will predominantly be male and older in age. I examined a number of variables to assess if there are differences between these two groups of runaways. The major difference that emerged was that involuntary females had a significantly higher incidence of crime, especially violent crimes, than voluntary female runaways.