



National Runaway Switchboard (NRS)

www.1800runaway.org



At A Glance:

- **Company:**
National Runaway Switchboard offers a variety of services to keep runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets
- **Location:** Chicago, IL
- **Industry:** Nonprofit; Human Services Provider
- **Challenges:**
 - Transition several years of call records and resources from aging client/server product to modern solution
 - Minimize software training time
 - Support a variety of custom call record fields reflecting humanitarian service goals
- **Software switched from:**
FoxPro MS-DOS
- **Results with NetSuite:**
 - 200 call center reps can access NetSuite from an on-site, eight-station call center
 - NetSuite Professional Services helped transition over 16,000 resources and call data dating back to mid-1990s to NetSuite
 - Intuitive, Web-based NetSuite interface easily learned during standard 40-hour agent training period
 - Internal staff have successfully customized dozens of fields and screens to suit unique needs

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— *Maureen Blaha, Executive Director
National Runaway Switchboard*

The Results:

National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) is a successful NetSuite Giving client, having adopted NetSuite in 2005 and managing a volunteer-led, vital youth services resource with the help of the leading on-demand business operating platform ever since.

"By being reliable and easy-to-use, NetSuite allows us to spend more of our time focused on recruiting, training, and retaining the volunteers who can help us," says Maureen Blaha, executive director of NRS.

The Web-based interface is easy for NRS volunteers, many of whom are retirees who volunteer two-hour shifts every week, to learn. Because of its unique operating model, NRS has created numerous custom fields and call center metric analyses, most of which were created and customized by NRS staff. In particular, NetSuite's pop-up help fields have smoothed out the learning curve compared to the company's old text-based solution, making it easier for agents to effectively use the software.

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The Challenges:

Founded in 1971 as a non-profit service provider, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) became, in 1974, the national communication system for runaway and homeless youth and operates the nationwide 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org Web site providing a range of services to runaway and at-risk youth and their families.

"In 1974, Congress recognized that kids who run away from home should not be caught up in the juvenile justice system, and that we as a society could do better by providing a

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— Gordon Vance

Director of programs

National Runaway Switchboard

single resource for crisis intervention and referrals to local support resources; thus, the national communication system for runaway and homeless youth was created,” Blaha says.

Over the years NRS had built a text-based call center application based on FoxPro for MS-DOS. The system met the needs of hotline callers and agents for a time, but updates and maintenance became increasingly difficult and time-consuming, requiring the intervention of technical experts for even minor changes. And as computer literacy patterns have changed, volunteers were increasingly uncomfortable with the stark DOS screens, complicating their work.

“We needed to move to more modern technology to continue to give us more options, to better secure and manage our data, and to improve our ability to respond to the runaway crisis,” says Gordon Vance, director of programs.

As a not-for-profit organization with a national mandate, the National Runaway Switchboard has limited resources and must run its operations as efficiently as possible without compromising the time and care behind its services. “We’re not like an airline call center where all we want to do is book a reservation and get off the phone as quickly as possible,” Blaha says. “A replacement call center solution had to be both easy to maintain, and easy to learn and to use for the volunteers who help staff NRS’ hotlines.”

The Solution:

After a year-long search which included the prospect of updating the old DOS screens to Windows, National Runaway Switchboard decided to modernize on the Web-based, on-demand NetSuite platform.

In addition to making NRS more effective, NetSuite has also brought order and accountability to NRS’ informational mailing campaigns. The organization sends over 500,000 pieces of educational collateral to individuals and service providers each year. NetSuite’s inventory capabilities make it easier to manage a cost-effective inventory and account accurately for its educational material distribution.

NetSuite manages for NRS a database of over 16,000 service providers across the country, ranging from counseling services to youth shelters to transportation. Agents are able to rapidly query the database to pair up a caller in need with a desired service, and NRS is able to update and add providers much more easily than its previous database allowed. This not only cuts down on the expense and inconvenience of managing the call record system, but makes it easier for agents to accommodate callers during a period of crisis.

“We are providing crisis intervention and/or referrals for youth in crisis. That often includes outbound conference calling to arrange for services, mediated calls with family members and family reunification,” Blaha says.



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