

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding the
Runaway Assistance Program**

March 23, 2015

This FAQ is provided to you by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) in partnership with the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. This document will be periodically updated as new information becomes available.

Q: What is the Runaway Assistance Program (RAP)?

A: RAP is a new program to assist Police Officers who are dealing with runaways during the hours that juvenile court is closed, (evenings, weekends and holidays). RAP provides a safe place where police can bring a runaway child, age 17 and under.

Q: How do I access the Runaway Assistance Program?

A: After consultation with probation, and if the Police Officer determines a child cannot be safely delivered to a parent or other responsible adult, (including DCF), the Police Officer (or dispatcher), may call Mass211 by dialing “2-1-1” from any phone. After following the appropriate prompts, the officer will be directed to a Runaway Assistance Program (RAP) Specialist who can assist the officer in identifying a safe location for a runaway child.

Q: Which agencies are involved in the Runaway Assistance Program, and what is their role?

A: RAP is a collaborative program with three primary components:

- **Emergency Service Programs (ESPs):** ESPs are funded by EOHHS, the Department of Mental Health, and Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership, (through a contract with EOHHS). ESPs provide a safe location where a police officer can bring a runaway child. The ESP will conduct an assessment of the child. EOHHS has identified 21 ESP community based locations for the Runaway Assistance Program. Mass211 will maintain an updated list of ESPs (and the cities and towns they serve), that are participating in the program.

- **Non-secure Alternative Lock-up Programs (ALPs)** Non-secure ALPs are funded by the Department of Children and Families. ALPs will provide a placement, (foster home or group home), for a runaway child during the hours that juvenile court is closed, (evenings weekends and holidays). ALPs will transport a runaway child to court on the next working day that court is open. Four ALP providers cover all geographic regions of the state. Mass211 will maintain an updated list of ALPs, (and the cities and towns they serve), that are participating in the program.

- **Mass211:** Mass211 is a 24/7 information and referral service accessed by dialing “2-1-1” from any phone. Mass211 provides police officers with access to the Runaway Assistance Program. Mass211 acts as the “dispatcher” for the Runaway Assistance Program. When Mass211 receives a call from a Police Officer regarding a runaway, a Mass211 Runaway Assistance Specialist will direct the Officer to the nearest participating ESP location, and will contact the ESP, as well as the ALP that is responsible for providing services to the runaway. Mass211 acts as a clearinghouse for information related to a particular case. Police, ESPs and ALPs may contact Mass211 at any time to

inquire about the status of a child who has been referred to the Runaway Assistance Program. If anyone has questions related to the Runaway Assistance Program, Mass211 can provide answers directly, or coordinate a response to the question.

Q: How is this program being rolled out?

A: The program rollout will occur in three phases, and is centered on the availability of Emergency Service Program locations.

1. **November 21, 2014 - December 31, 2014:** This was the initial phase of the rollout and served as the start of the program pilot. In this phase, 56 communities and two ESPs (Advocates Inc. in Framingham, and Lahey Health Behavioral Services in Salem) were involved.
2. **From January 1, 2015 - March 31, 2015:** During this phase the pilot was expanded by adding an additional ESP, (Lahey Health Behavioral Services in Lawrence).
3. **April 3, 2015:** All cities and towns will have access to an ESP location for the Runaway Assistance Program.

Q: What if a child is experiencing a medical or psychiatric emergency?

A: This program does not apply to a child who is experiencing a medical or psychiatric emergency. Police Officers should follow their existing policies and procedures established by their local police department for handling medical or psychiatric emergencies.

Q: What if the child is known to be in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF)?

A: If the police officer becomes aware that a child is in the custody of DCF, the Police Officer should call the DCF Hotline at 1-800-792-5200. The hotline will handle all cases involving children who are in DCF custody.

Q: Does this program replace any legal requirements related to runaways?

A: No. All current laws related to runaways remain in effect. This program is intended to be an additional support to existing practices.

Q: What is the protocol that Police Officers should follow to access this program?

A: Please see the attached "Police Officer's Protocol."

Q: Who can I contact to answer questions regarding this program?

A: Please call Mass211 by dialing "2-1-1" from any phone. If Mass211 cannot directly answer the question, they will coordinate a response from someone who can answer the question.

When the Juvenile Court is closed...
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Runaway Assistance Program (RAP)

POLICE OFFICER'S PROTOCOL

Effective April 3, 2015

The MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services is offering a new program to assist Police Officers who are dealing with runaways **during the hours that juvenile court is closed (evenings, weekends and holidays)**. After consultation with probation, and if the Police Officer determines a child cannot be safely delivered to a parent or other responsible adult (including DCF), the Police Officer may:

DIAL 2-1-1

1. During the hours that juvenile court is closed, a Police Officer (or dispatcher) dials 211; and when prompted, dials "1-1" to speak to a Runaway Assistance Program (RAP) Specialist.
2. The Mass211 RAP Specialist will provide the Police Officer with name and address of the closest available **Emergency Service Program (ESP)**.
3. The Mass211 RAP Specialist will then arrange a four way **conference call** among the **Police**, the **ESP** and the appropriate **non-secure Alternative Lock-Up Program (ALP)**. (Translation services may be immediately accessed in over 140 languages, if needed). The Mass 211 RAP Specialist will be the call moderator.
4. This call will determine the condition of the runaway child, and next steps.
5. Police Officer will drive the child to the local ESP for evaluation.
6. The ALP will be dispatched to the ESP.
7. ESP staff will greet the child and the Police Officer. (The Police Officer may leave at this point).
8. The ESP will conduct an assessment of the child and then provide assessment information to the ALP.
9. The ALP will arrange placement for the child, and arrange transportation to court on the next working day.