

## Mission Statement

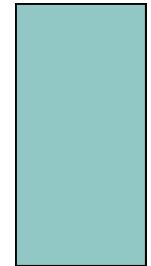
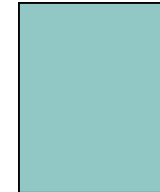
The mission of the Human Services Coalition of Cayuga County is to bring together human service providers, public and private organizations, and individuals to address the needs of the community through interagency coordination, information sharing and collaboration.

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This brochure is available for download at  
[www.human-services.org](http://www.human-services.org)

## Our Youth

A Resource Guide for Parents and Adolescents



Prepared by the Children and Family Task Group of the  
Human Services Coalition of Cayuga County

### About this Guide....

This resource guide is for adolescents and their parents who seek assistance and need to know how and where to begin to look for help. This guide is meant as a starting point and should not be taken as a comprehensive guide to all services offered in Cayuga County and the surrounding areas.

We have included agencies that should be able to direct you in your search for help. Many of these agencies have numerous programs; not all programs are listed. The agencies listed can make a determination of eligibility and appropriateness for a given service and can help you with referrals.

Sometimes it is difficult to fit an adolescent's problem with a specific category, as they may have several issues occurring at the same time. We have divided the guide into several different sections, but it may be helpful to read through the descriptions under all the headings and see which services might be of the most help to you.



For more information, please visit the **Human Services Coalition's** website at [www.human-services.org](http://www.human-services.org). A web-based copy of the **Living in Cayuga County Directory** can be found there. Print copies of the Directory may also be requested by contacting **Human Services Coalition of Cayuga County** at (315) 253-9743.

Finger Lakes Region 2-1-1 is another free resource that provides confidential human service and referral information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can be reached by dialing "2-1-1".



### When school is in session, 14 and 15 years olds may not work:

- More than 3 hours on any school day
- More than 8 hours on a non-school day (Saturday, Sunday, holidays)
- More than 18 hours in any week
- More than 6 days in any week

There are exceptions to the above, please refer to the NYS Department of Labor website.

### Minimum Wage

The General Industry Minimum Wage Act provides that all employees including domestic workers with certain specified exceptions, must be paid at least at least \$7.25 per hour as of July 2009.



### How to Obtain Working Papers

To obtain working papers, you must first get information and an application form from your school office. If you are not in school or you are applying during a vacation period, obtain the address of a certificating office school nearest your home. In completing the application, you will need:

- The signature of your parent or guardian
- Your birth or baptismal record for proof of age, and
- A doctor's certificate showing that you are physically fit to work

For full time work certificates, please refer to the NYS Department of Labor website.

## Resources

### Cayuga Works Career Center

Youth Employment and Training Programs (315) 253-1135  
[www.cortland-co.org/cayugaworks/cayugahome.asp](http://www.cortland-co.org/cayugaworks/cayugahome.asp)

### Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency

Youth Achieving at Work Program (315) 252-0038  
[www.csaa.com](http://www.csaa.com)

### Cayuga County Employment & Training Dept.

(315) 253-1590

### NYS Department of Labor

[www.labor.state.ny.us](http://www.labor.state.ny.us)



## Employment of Minors

### Minimum Age For Employment

The following rules have certain exceptions and are subject to employment certificate regulations which can be found on the NYS Department of Labor website.

- Minors not yet 14 may not be employed at any time, neither after school nor during vacation
- Minors 14 and 15 years old may work after school hours and during vacations, but not in factory work. They may do clerical or delivery work in any enclosed office of a factory, and in dry cleaning, tailor, shoe repair, and similar service stores
- Minors age 16 and 17 years of age, if not attending school, may work full time throughout the year. Factory work is permitted for minors 16 years of age or older
- NYS prohibits minors under the age of 18 to be employed or assist in any occupation of construction work, including wrecking, demolition, roofing, or excavating operations and the painting or exterior cleaning of a building structure from an elevated surface (please refer to the NYS Department of Labor website for more details on state and federal prohibited occupations)



### Hours of Work

The number of hours a minor may work per day and per week depends upon the young person's age, the type of work being performed and whether school is in session. 16 and 17 year olds may not work past 10pm on the night before a school day without permission from a parent and a certificate of satisfactory academic standing from their school. Minors may not work during the hours when they are required to attend school.

## Table of Contents

Adolescent Sexuality	4
Sexual Orientation	6
Teenage Pregnancy	7
Bullying/Harassment	9
Childhood Obesity	11
Eating Disorders	12
Developmental Disabilities	13
Domestic Violence	15
Child Abuse	17
Legal Responsibilities	18
Gangs	21
Suicide	23
Internet Safety	25
Running Away	27
Mental Health	29
Substance Abuse	31
Truancy/Dropping Out of School	33
Sexual Assault/Abuse	35
Volunteer & Community Service	37
Employment of Minors	38
Mission Statement	40



## Adolescent Sexuality

We live in a world filled with messages about sex. Music, TV, radio and the internet all carry confusing information and misinformation. Early sexual behavior is especially risky for adolescents. This is a time when bodies and emotions are changing and making good decisions is more important than ever. Adolescents may also be confused about their own sexual identity. Parents are the most important factor in helping their young people make positive decisions. Sometimes parents find this role difficult.

### The following tips may help:

- Start early by talking to your child
- Be available, be open, and initiate conversations
- Use correct names for sexual organs and behaviors
- Take advantage of teachable moments
- Reassure them that they are normal
- Set positive examples
- Respect their privacy and feelings
- Give accurate and honest answers
- Admit if you do not know the answer
- Help them learn how to set their own limits

### Sex is an important part of mature intimacy and love.

The reasons adolescents may have sex:

- Curiosity about sex
- Hope to become more popular
- Getting pressured into something sexual by their partner or peer group
- Thinking sex is glamorous as it is shown on television, movies, books, and magazines
- For something to do - a recreational activity
- They think they're loved



## Volunteer & Community Service

### What is a volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who works for the community or for the benefit of others primarily because they choose to do so and generally without payment. Community Service is the service volunteered by individuals or groups to benefit a community or its institutions.

### Why Volunteer?

- To help others
- To get a job or into the college you want
- To learn about an activity or organization that interests you
- To beat boredom or overcome a loss you have experienced
- To gain perspective on life
- To fulfill a personal mission
- To learn new skills
- To fulfill a requirement

**Volunteering and Community Service strengthens your community. It 's a wonderful way of giving back to where you live.**

**How to volunteer:** Volunteering isn't like school. Instead of having the choices made for you about where to go and what subjects to learn, you get to choose what really interests you and who (or what) is most deserving of your time. Here are some tips: After you've discovered what interests you, decide how much time you want to spend and what fits into your schedule. If school, sports, or other commitments prevent you from devoting time every week – then look for volunteer opportunities you can take part in once in a while.

### Resources

**Human Service Coalition of Cayuga County** (315) 253-9743  
*List of Volunteer Opportunities* [www.human-services.org](http://www.human-services.org)

**Partnership for Results**  
*Youth Service Learning Project (YSLP)* (315) 730-5069

**Volunteer Match** [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

**Indicators of Sexual Abuse**

Physical indicators

- Pain, itching or bleeding of the genital area
- Torn or stained clothing
- Trouble walking or sitting
- Bladder or urinary tract infections
- Pregnancy
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Unlike cases of physical abuse, physical evidence of sexual abuse is rare, except in the most extreme cases.

Behavioral Indicators

- Aggressive or hostile acting out
- Avoidance of specific people or places
- Abnormal or sophisticated sexual knowledge
- Sexual seductiveness or aggressiveness – equates sexual behavior with affection
- Sleep disturbances (nightmares or night terrors)
- Seems withdrawn or depressed
- Sudden weight gain or loss

If an adolescent shows signs of these physical or behavioral indicators, it is not always an indication of sexual abuse, but it may be a sign that there is something upsetting going on in their life. Talking and listening to the adolescent may clarify their concern and give you the opportunity to address the issue.

**Resources**

**Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc.**

S.A.V.A.R. (Sexual Assault Victim’s Advocate Resource) (315) 253-9795

**The New York State Register of Child Abuse**

Non-Mandated Reporters (800) 342-3720  
Mandated Reporters (800) 635-1522

**Emergency Police or Medical Assistance**

Call 9-1-1

**Birth Control**

If your son or daughter is sexually active they run the risk of becoming pregnant or contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Encourage them to talk to you. Try not to be judgmental; present them with the facts. While the only definite way not to contract an STD or become pregnant is abstinence, if they do choose to be sexually active encourage responsibility and protection for both themselves and their partner.

Birth control methods are only effective if used consistently, properly, and according to directions.

**“Try not to be judgmental when talking to young people”**

**Birth Control Statistics:**

<u>Method</u>	<u>Effectiveness</u>
Abstinence (saying “no”)	100%
The Pill	97%
Condom	88%
Spermicide	79%
Sponge	72%
Withdrawal	72%

**Resources**

**Contact your family doctor for assistance**

**East Hill Family Medical, Inc**

Family Planning (315) 253-8477  
Education (315) 253-4516

**Planned Parenthood, Rochester/Syracuse Region**

(315) 475-5540

**SafeTeens. Org** —Health information

[www.safeteens.org](http://www.safeteens.org)



## Sexual Orientation

### Gay, Lesbian & Transgender Youth

Sexual Orientation is more than just sexual behavior. Orientation includes emotional, romantic and affectional attraction. Ongoing research shows that sexual orientation is not caused by anything you or your parents have done and cannot be changed by anything you or your parents do. Telling (coming out) takes great courage.

#### What to consider as a parent:

- Your child is not a different person because you know about their sexual orientation
- Your child needs to know that you love them and that your love and support of them as an individual is strong and available in difficult times
- Work out ways to deal with some of the problems, like who and how to tell
- Make contact with other parents of gay and lesbians for support and guidance
- Consider counseling as a support for both of you, not to change your child
- Acknowledge the courage your child has shown in talking to you and the fears they must be feeling. They need you more than ever now. If you can't acknowledge your child's sexual orientation, you may lose them

## Resources

### Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

[www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html](http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html)

### Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG)

<http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=194&srcid=-2>

### AIDS Community Resources

(315) 282-0005 ext 12



## Sexual Assault/Abuse

Statistics tell us that 1 out of 3 girls and 1 out of 5 boys will be sexually abused/assaulted by the time they are 18. It is important to empower adolescents with sensible safety rules which make them less vulnerable to victimization.

Adolescents are less vulnerable to sexual exploitation when they know the safety rules and can turn to caring adults for help. Safety rules are especially important with increased independence and activity away from family which can make them more vulnerable to victimization.

#### Safety Rules that Work:

- **Check First**- always tell an adult where you're going.
- The **buddy system** takes on even more meaning as adolescents realize that it is safer and more fun to be with someone else. Friends help friends by listening and encouraging them to get the help that they need. They can be strong together against someone who wants them to do something that doesn't seem right or is dangerous.
- **No-Go-Tell** still applies when an adolescent finds themselves in an uncomfortable or dangerous situation. When gut instinct, or whatever, says that things aren't right - saying no, getting away and talking to a trusted adult is the best solution to avoid trouble.

#### What to do if an adolescent is sexually assaulted or abused:

- Remember that if a parent overreacts or becomes angry, the adolescent may feel guilty or blamed.
- Listen to what the adolescent has to tell you without "interviewing", delving for information or passing judgment.
- Tell them that the assault/abuse is not his/her fault.
- Seek medical care immediately.
- Call law enforcement to report the offender so that the adolescent is protected and others aren't hurt by the perpetrator.
- If the adolescent is abused by a parent, guardian or caretaker, the abuse needs to be reported to Child Protective Services.
- The adolescent would most likely be helped by talking to a counselor or victim's advocate, but let him/her be a part of the decision-making to seek counseling.

Some students report that dropping out is gradual process of disengagement that could be reversed with more challenging coursework and support from school and family.

**What can parents do to help:**

- Pay attention to any reports from the school regarding your adolescent’s attendance
- Be involved in your adolescent’s life and emphasize the importance of education and attending school
- Watch for signs of substance abuse
- Look for signs of social isolation
- Listen to your adolescent and look for signs that he/she is being bullied or victimized
- Seek counseling for family issues or help your adolescent to get counseling for mental health issues
- Become involved in your adolescent’s education – help with homework and participate in school activities
- Work with school personnel to resolve problems that arise involving your adolescent’s academics or activities during the school day
- Access whatever services are available to help stabilize the family so adolescents can continue in school and not leave to work
- Find help for adolescents who are having academic difficulty at school
- Talk to your adolescent about the problems associated with teen pregnancy and early sexual activity
- Maintain open communication with your adolescent and allow him/her to discuss their problems with you

**Resources**

**School district personnel are the best resource**

- Cayuga Onondaga BOCES** (315) 253-0361
- Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc.** (315) 253-9795
- CHAD** (Confidential Help for Alcohol & Drugs) (315) 253-9786
- Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency** (315) 255-1703
- Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services** (315) 253-1011



**Teenage Pregnancy**

**A teenager may be pregnant if you notice these warning signs:**

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Missing a period  | Wearing baggy clothing |
| Weight gain       | Mood change            |
| Sexual acting out | Frequent urination     |
| Feeling bloated   | Nausea or vomiting     |
| Fatigue           |                        |

**Signs of early pregnancy can vary from woman-to-woman. If you think a teenager may be pregnant, these are the next steps to follow:**

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| See a doctor                   | Start prenatal care     |
| Sign up for childbirth classes | No drinking or drug use |
| Exercise regularly             | No smoking              |
| Take your daily vitamins       | Eat healthy             |

Prenatal care is the care that you give yourself as well as the care that you receive from a medical professional.

*Remember that second-hand smoke is dangerous*

**Resources**

**Contact your doctor for assistance**

**Booker T. Washington Community Center, Inc**

*Baby Think It Over* (315) 253-3207  
[www.btwcc.org](http://www.btwcc.org)

**M.O.M.S. – Medicaid Obstetrical Maternal Service**

**Cayuga County Health & Human Services**

*Health Services* (315) 253-1560  
*Human Services* (315) 253-1011

<http://cayugacounty.us.hhs.doh>

**Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc.**

*TASA (Take a Step Ahead)* (315) 252-0038  
*Healthy Families Program* (315) 283-9011

[www.cscaa.com](http://www.cscaa.com)

## Resources (Cont'd)

### Planned Parenthood - Rochester/Syracuse Region

(315) 475-5540 ext. 223

[www.pprsr.org](http://www.pprsr.org)

### The Pregnancy Care Center of Greater Cayuga County

(315) 255-2778

### East Hill Family Medical, Inc.

(315) 253-1456

“Signs of early pregnancy can vary from woman-to-woman.”

[www.easthillmedical.com](http://www.easthillmedical.com)

## Child Care

Finding appropriate and affordable childcare is a difficult task for parents, especially adolescent parents. There is no one kind of childcare program that is best for all young people. Some thrive in a center based program; others are happier with the smaller group size and homelike atmosphere of a family daycare home; still others do best with a caregiver in their own home. If you're



exploring the option of daycare centers/group care, plan to visit more than one program, and if possible bring your child along. Whatever the setting, the key factor in choosing childcare is the quality of the care itself with knowledgeable, loving caregivers.

## Resources

Cayuga County Home Day Care Association (315) 252-1306

Child Care Solutions (315) 446-1220 or 1-888-729-7290

[www.childcaresolutionsscny.org](http://www.childcaresolutionsscny.org)

NYS Children & Family Services Daycare Search

[http://it.ocfs.ny.ny.gov/ccfs\\_facilitysearch/](http://it.ocfs.ny.ny.gov/ccfs_facilitysearch/)



Truancy is clear warning that adolescents may drop out of school. It is often the first indicator that they are giving up and losing their way. When skipping school, they are telling their parents, school officials, and the community at large that they are in trouble and need help if they are to keep moving forward in life.

Adolescents who become truant and eventually drop out of school put themselves at a long term disadvantage in becoming productive citizens. High school dropouts are much more likely to be on welfare, unemployed or have lower incomes than high school graduates.

Adolescents who become truant and eventually drop out of high school too often set themselves up for a life of struggle.

**Truancy** is not just the result of adolescents deciding that it would be more fun not to go to school on occasion. Chronic truancy can be related to a number of family and personal factors including:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Victimization including being the subject of bullying
- Mental health issues
- Poor academic performance
- Family difficulties at home
- Teenage pregnancy
- Boredom in the classroom
- Ineffective teaching staff
- Need to work due to low family income



These changes often signal that something harmful is going on—and often that involves alcohol or drugs. You may want to take your adolescent to the doctor and ask him or her about screening for drugs and alcohol. This may involve the health professional asking your adolescent a simple question, or it may involve a urine or blood drug screen. However, some of these signs also indicate there may be a deeper problem with depression, gang involvement, or suicide. Be on the watch for these signs so that you can spot trouble before it goes too far.

**What can parents do?**

- Be aware if more than one of the listed red flags occur in your adolescent
- Communicate with school officials to find out if there are any changes in your adolescent’s behavior or performance at school
- Maintain an open, communicative environment with your adolescent
- Seek counseling early if substance abuse is occurring
- Provide a good role model in terms of the responsible use of substances
- Do not encourage or overlook use of substances such as alcohol by your adolescent or excuse it as an example of growing up

**Resources**

**Talk with the School Counselor for assistance**

**CHAD (Confidential Help for Alcohol & Drugs, Inc.)** (315) 253-9786

**Alcoholics Anonymous & Ala-teen & Al-Anon**

*Local Meeting Information* [www.upstate.edu/library/al-anon](http://www.upstate.edu/library/al-anon)

**Prevention Network**

*Reality Check* (315) 569-5063  
[www.preventionnetworkcny.org](http://www.preventionnetworkcny.org)

**National Institute on Drug Abuse** [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

**New York State Smokers Quitline** [www.smokefree.com](http://www.smokefree.com)

**National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**  
[www.ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov)



**Bullying/Harassment**

Every day in the United States 160,000 young people and teens stay away from school because they are being bullied. A person can experience bullying in a number of ways:

- Name calling
- Nasty teasing
- Threats and extortion
- Physical violence
- Damage to belongings
- Malicious rumors being spread about him/her
- Being deliberately and frequently left out of social activities
- Receiving or being the subject of cyberbullying (harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices)

Victims of bullying may demonstrate the following signs:

- Headaches and stomachaches
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Excessive caution
- Low self-esteem
- They rarely defend themselves or retaliate
- A lack of social skills
- A lack of friends
- Social Isolation
- Physical weakness

Bullies...

- Like inflicting injury on others
- Have little empathy for their victims
- Deny their actions and say they were provoked
- Often receive physical punishment at home
- Learn to handle problems by hitting
- Lack parental involvement and warmth
- Are generally defiant towards adults
- Are frequently anti-social

**What can you do?**

- Talk to the victim's and the bully's teachers and other school staff
- Ask your school to set up safe zones where a victim of bullying can go to stand so that school staff will recognize immediately that intervention is needed
- Recognize that both bully and victim may be in need of counseling and, if possible, help to make that happen
- Always praise young people for kind acts and for cooperating
- Always reinforce that violence and physical force are unacceptable
- Teach young people through role modeling how to behave and interact with others without bullying
- Praise young people for reporting incidents and ensure that they will be comfortable reporting further incidents
- Monitor your young people's internet access and cell-phone usage, as these may be hidden media for bullying

**Resources**

**Your school district administration, teachers and counselors**

**Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc** (315) 253-9795

**Second Step**

*Violence Prevention Program*

[www.cfyoungpeople.org/programs/ssp/overview/](http://www.cfyoungpeople.org/programs/ssp/overview/)

**Other Websites:**

[www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

[www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)

[www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)



The use of alcohol and/or other chemicals are a detriment to an adolescent's health and wellbeing. Early use of alcohol can permanently damage their ability to think and can increase dramatically, the risk that the adolescent will become dependent on alcohol at some point in his/her lifetime. A 2009 survey conducted by Partnership for Results in the Auburn School District, indicated that for all students who admitted the use of alcohol in the past 30 days, started drinking at an average age of 14 or younger. Reported alcohol use within the past 30 days by 12th graders was 42%, 10th graders 32% and 8th graders 11%.

**Red flags that might indicate alcohol/drug use:**

- Physical injuries including vehicle accidents, wounds, unexplained or repeated injuries
- Dilated/pinpoint pupils, tremors, perspiring, tachycardia, slurred/rapid speech all possibly indicating current use
- Persistent cough/frequent colds
- Risky behavior
- Unkempt appearance/poor hygiene
- Marked fall in academic/extracurricular performance
- Suicide talk/attempt; depression
- Lack of motivation
- Periods of paranoia
- Unexplained mood swings
- Track marks, injection sites
- Increased acne/skin rashes
- Unexplained weight loss/pale circles under eyes
- Change in sleep/eating habits
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Missing prescription drugs—especially narcotics and mood stabilizers

**Warning Signs, Con't:**

- Threats to harm self or others
- Frequent outbursts of anger or aggression
- Threats to run away
- Aggression towards others; skipping school, stealing,

If any of these problems last for an extended period of time, and especially if others involved in your adolescent's life are concerned about these problems, they should receive a mental health evaluation.

**Resources**

**Contact your family doctor for assistance**

**Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc.** (315) 253-9795

**Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center**  
(315) 253-0341

**Seneca Cayuga ARC** *Karl D. Warner Clinic* (315) 255-2285

**Cayuga Home for Children** (315) 253-5383

**Partnership for Results, Inc.** (315) 282-0005

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**  
*Support for caregivers and information* (315) 255-7443

**Finger Lakes Region 2-1-1** Call 2-1-1

**Mental Health Services for Children & Adolescents**  
*List of providers* [www.human-services.org](http://www.human-services.org)

**National Mental Health Information Center**  
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>

**NIMH Child and Adolescent Mental Health**  
[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health)



childhood obesity

Adolescents should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week. Some examples of moderate intensity physical activity include brisk walking, playing tag, jumping rope, playing soccer, swimming and dancing.



Behavior and environment play a large role in causing adolescents to be overweight and obese. Parents can make small changes in their family's behaviors and environment that can prevent or reduce your adolescent's risk of becoming overweight or obese.

**Overweight and obese individuals are at increased risk for many diseases and health conditions, including:**

- Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems

**To help your adolescent maintain a healthy weight:**

- Encourage healthy eating habits by providing fruits, vegetables and whole grain products
- Switch to low-fat or non-fat dairy products
- Choose lean meats
- Serve reasonably-sized portions
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water and limit sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat

**Resources**

**Contact your family physician**

**Auburn YMCA-WEIU** (315) 253-5304

**Cato Recreation Center** (315) 626-6735

**Champions for Life** (315) 252-9305

**Websites:** [http://connectforkids.org/obesity\\_resource](http://connectforkids.org/obesity_resource)  
[www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html)



## Eating Disorders

If you notice a significant change in your adolescent's weight it is important to address it in a comforting way. It is important to be supportive and to listen. Make yourself more involved in what has been happening recently in your adolescent's life to see if there might be a correlation. Some examples of eating disorders include:

**Anorexia nervosa**- where people think they are too heavy, but they really are quite thin and they try to starve themselves or eat very little for fear of gaining weight.

**Bulimia**- is binge eating in which people use excessive exercise, throwing up, laxatives or diuretics as a way of controlling weight.

**Compulsive overeating**- is a condition in which people eat more and more and become heavier and heavier. This kind of eating is not because of hunger, but for many different reasons such as being upset or worried about something, needing attention or not feeling good about one's self.

### Did you know?

Both males and females have been diagnosed with having eating disorders. Athletes have also been known to have eating disorders. Eating too much food or not eating enough food can have harmful consequences. Overeating, excessive dieting, vomiting or using laxatives and diuretics to control weight and a disturbed body image are early warning signs that something may be going on with your adolescent.

## Resources

### Contact your family physician

**Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc** (315) 253-9795

### Ophelia's Place

Outreach, Advocacy & Educational Services (315) 451-5544

[www.opheliasplace.org](http://www.opheliasplace.org)

### Websites:

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

[www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/resources/eating\\_disorders.html](http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/resources/eating_disorders.html)



## Mental Health

### Mental and Emotional Health Is Important

An adolescent with good mental and emotional health is able to cope with and adjust to the ordinary demands of everyday living in an acceptable way. Adolescents who have good emotional and mental health are in control of their thoughts and behaviors. They feel positive about themselves and have good relationships.

### Adolescents Can Have Mental Health Problems

Like adults, adolescents can have mental health disorders that interfere with the way they think, feel, and act. When untreated, mental health disorders can lead to school failure, family conflict, drug abuse, violence, and even suicide.

Studies show that at least one in five children and adolescents have a mental health disorder. At least one in 10, or about 6 million people, have a serious emotional disturbance.

Parents are usually the first to recognize that their adolescent has a problem with emotions or behavior. The decision to seek professional help can be difficult and painful for a parent. The first step is to talk with the adolescent.

### Warning Signs:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Unable to cope with problems and daily activities
- Marked change in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Many physical complaints
- Vandalism
- Sexual acting out
- Depression - sad or negative mood
- Strong fear of gaining weight, restricting food, purging/vomiting food after eating
- Frequent nightmares
- Marked change in school performance

## HOMELESSNESS

Homeless youth are under 21 years of age, unaccompanied or with their family. Unaccompanied youth may have:

- lost family support
- been thrown out of the home
- no wish to live at home

Often, youth in this situation have no one to depend on for emotional and financial support and must learn independent living skills to be successful on their own. Youth who are living from place to place with no permanent means of financial and emotional support, and no guardian to care for them, are considered homeless. There are programs to assist youth who are homeless find shelter, food, clothing, stay in school and other necessary services. These programs will attempt to have youth and their parent/guardian work together on their problems. They can also assist youth in learning the necessary skills to live successfully on their own if the parents are unwilling or unable to care for them.

Homeless families with youth have no permanent home. They can access programs that can help them find shelter and other services.

## Resources

### Contact the School Homeless Liaison Officer

**Chapel House Homeless Shelter** (315) 255-2060  
*(17 & younger, with family members or 18 and older)*

**Cayuga Counseling Services**  
*C.A.R.E.S. Runaway/Homeless Youth Services* (315) 253-9795

**Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency**  
*Youth Intervention Services* (315) 252-0038  
*TASA (Take A Step Ahead)* (315) 252-0038

**Cayuga Homeless H.O.P.E.** (315) 255-3447

**National Runaway Switchboard** (800) 621-4000

**Emergency Police Assistance** Call 9-1-1

## Developmental Disabilities

Many young people may have difficulty with spoken or written language, memory, attention, concentration, organizational skills, physical coordination, or social behavior. However, a consistent pattern of behaviors could be a possible indication that the child may have a disability. Consultation with a child's pediatrician/ family doctor and /or your local school district's Committee on Special Education is recommended.

### Developmental

Multiple and diverse processes that can effect and shape a child's growth and personality.



### Special Education

Specialty designed individualized or group instruction or special services/programs to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.

### Educational Services can be defined as follows:

Special education services and programs are provided through Cayuga County Health and Human Services, Early Intervention Services, community agencies and your local school district.

### Developmental indicators include but are not limited to:

- Hyperactivity / distractibility
- Disorganized thinking and memorization
- Poor social skills
- Poor visual motor coordination
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor short-term memory
- Difficulty with abstract reasoning or problem solving
- Physical limitations

## Developmental Disabilities —can't

### Academic indicators include, but are not limited to:

- Poor performance on group or individual tests
- Reversal in reading /writing
- Difficulty in copying accurately from a model
- Difficulty listening and following verbal or written instructions
- Behavior that interferes with student learning

### Life After School

Students with a disability and who have been in the public school program have a transition plan as part of their program. The plan is a part of their IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) services and contact with a VESID counselor would have been made through the school. VESID will work with other agencies that can help your adolescent plan for a career or work with employers or colleges to make sure that he/she receives reasonable accommodations when needed.

## Resources

Contact your school first to see what resources they have available

<b>Seneca-Cayuga ARC</b>	<b>(315) 255-2285</b>
<b>E. John Gavras Center</b>	<b>(315) 282-0562</b>
<b>Options for Independence</b>	<b>(315) 255-3447</b>
<b>VESID (NYS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor)</b>	<b>(315) 428-4183</b>



## Running Away

Adolescents run away from home for a variety of reasons. Running away from home is rarely the result of one argument or one fight. As a parent/adult, you may be confronted with your own adolescent running away, or you may have an adolescent staying in your home who has run away.

### Runaways are at high risk for:

- Drug abuse,
- Prostitution
- Crime
- Violence
- Dropping out of high school

### If your adolescent runs away, it is important for you to take action to locate him/her immediately:

- Check to see if s/he is at a relative's or friend's home.
- Speak with the parents of your adolescent's friends to see if they know where your adolescent is.
- If you cannot locate your adolescent immediately contact 911 and report your adolescent missing.
- If you can locate him/her, attempt to listen to the reasons for leaving and ask for outside help to work through the problems.

### Reasons to run away:

- Parent/child conflict
- Child abuse
- Substance abuse
- Family stress
- Mental illness
- Domestic violence



### Internet Safety Tips

- Establish clear, simple, and easy to read house rules regarding internet usage
- Check into safeguarding programs that your online service provider offers
- Websites for young people are not permitted to request personal information without a parent's permission. Talk to young people about what personal information is
- Talk to young people about never meeting in person with anyone they first "met" online
- Talk to young people about not responding to offensive or dangerous emails or other communications. Report them to local law enforcement
- Keep the computer in the family room or other open area
- Adults should educate themselves about computers and the internet
- Let your young people show you what they can do online and visit their favorite sites with them
- Help young people use child-friendly search engines
- Be aware of other computers your young person uses outside of the home
- Young people should not complete a profile for a service provider and screen names should be non-descript
- Talk to your young people about what to do if they see something that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused

**Learn how to safely use Blogs, Chat rooms, Facebook, Instant Messaging, Email, Peer-to-Peer, Twitter, Cell phones/Text Messaging**

### Resources

Safe Teens.com

[www.safeteens.com](http://www.safeteens.com)

Net Smart Workshop

[www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)

Wired Safety

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)

Web Wise Kids

[www.webwisekids.org](http://www.webwisekids.org)



## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is about more than just physical violence. Emotional, psychological and sexual abuse may be part of domestic violence, equally as damaging and not okay.

### Does your boyfriend/girlfriend, partner or family member...

- Make you afraid?
- Isolate you from friends or family members?
- Make threats to you, your family/friends or pets?
- Control all finances?
- Prevent you from getting or keeping a job?
- Degrade or humiliate you?
- Continually criticize you?
- Destroy your personal property?

If any of these apply to you then you may be a victim of abuse. You are not alone. All persons have the right to live in an environment that is free from violence and the fear of violence. Often times, if there are signs of abuse during dating, it could indicate future abuse in a marital relationship. Help is available.

### Signs of an Abusive Relationship

- Harms you physically in any way, including slapping, pushing, grabbing, shaking, smacking, kicking, and punching.
- Tries to control different aspects of your life, such as how you dress, who you hang out with, and what you say.
- Frequently humiliates you or makes you feel unworthy (for example: if a partner puts you down but tells you that he or she loves you).
- Coerces or threatens to harm you, or self-harm, if you leave the relationship.

**“All persons have the right to live in an environment that is free from violence and the fear of violence.”**

**Signs of an Abusive Relationship—Cont’d**

- Unwanted sexual advances that make you feel uncomfortable are also red flags that the relationship needs to focus more on respect. When someone says stuff like “If you loved me you would...” that’s also a warning of possible abuse. A statement like this is controlling and is used by people who are only concerned about getting what they want—not caring about what you want. Trust your intuition.
- Twists the truth to make you feel you are to blame for your partner’s actions.
- Demands to know where you are at all times.
- Constantly becomes jealous or angry when you want to spend time with your friends.

**Resources**

**Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency**

*Domestic Violence Intervention Program*  
 24-hour hotline      1-800-253-3358

**Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc.**

*SAVAR*  
 24-hour hotline      (315) 252-2112

**Emergency Police Assistance**      9-1-1

**Auburn Police**      (315) 253-3231

**Cayuga County Sheriff**      (315) 253-1222

**New York State Police**      (315) 255-2766

**Auburn Memorial Hospital**      (315) 255-7011



**Internet Safety**

Adult advice to young people regarding internet usage usually consists of the following:

- Do not give out personal information
- Do not visit certain websites
- Only respond to emails that are recognizable
- Do not talk to strangers

Young people seldom receive more specific guidance on what is safe and unsafe online behavior. While young people do not often seek out online pornography, which they find disturbing, they are still frequently exposed to it. Young people are often reluctant to tell their parents if they experience harassment online.

Young people report that they want their parents to:

- Teach them to have online responsibility
- Educate them about possible online dangers
- Trust them

Parents and young people should review and sign an internet safety pledge together. (sample pledge at [www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledge.htm](http://www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledge.htm))

Natural characteristics of young people make them vulnerable to victimization:



- Lack emotional maturity
- Taught to obey adult requests
- Naturally curious about “forbidden” topics

**Helpful basic guidelines:**

- Listen with your full attention-take your time, be patient
- Speak slowly, softly, calmly
- Acknowledge the pain
- Reassure, be positive
- Identify individuals (s)he can trust for support and help
- Formulate a plan for getting help, building hope
- Remove lethal means and substances safely and immediately
- Offer help/hope in any way you can-know your own limits
- Do not allow yourself to be the only person who can help

**Avoid:**

- Acting shocked
- Reacting with anger
- Interrupting and offering advice
- Minimizing or discounting the problem
- Arguing about suicide being “right” or “wrong”
- Judging, condemning
- Causing guilty feelings
- Getting over involved or owning the problem

**Never:**

- Ignore the behavior
- Promise total confidentiality or agree to keep a secret.
- Try to forcefully remove a weapon
- Leave a youth alone if you think there is an imminent danger of suicide.

**Resources**

**CONTACT** Telephone Counseling Service (877) 400-8740  
**Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (800) 273-8255  
**Finger Lakes Region 2-1-1** Dial 2-1-1  
**Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center**  
*24-hour Crisis Line* (315) 253-0341  
**Cayuga Counseling Services** (315) 253-9795  
**Emergency Medical or Police Services** Dial 9-1-1

**Websites:**

**The Jed Foundation** [www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)  
**Society for Prevention of Teen Suicide** [www.sptsnj.org](http://www.sptsnj.org)



Child Abuse

The effects of child abuse can last a lifetime. If you or someone you know is struggling with issues of past abuse, there are people who can help.

It is important to be aware of the signs of child abuse and report if you are suspicious of abuse occurring. If you think that a child between the ages of 0 -18 is being abused you can report your concern to the local Child Protective Unit or call the New York State Central Register.

Remember that without an official report, local authorities do not have the authority to intervene.

The following are some possible indicators or warning signals of abuse. No one of these behaviors alone is necessarily an indicator of abuse. They are warning signals that alert us that something distressing is occurring in the child’s life. The source of the problem needs to be explored and the child needs help and support.

**Abuse Indicators:**

- Avoids physical contact with others
- Refuses to undress for gym or for physical exams
- Wears clothing to conceal injury
- Gives inconsistent versions of occurrence of injuries
- Seems frightened of parents or others
- Often late or absent from school
- Comes too early to school, seems reluctant to go home after
- Overly compliant, withdrawn, gives in readily
- History of running away from home

**Resources**

**Contact your doctor**

**Child Protective Services** (315) 253-1207

**New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment** (800) 342-3720



## Legal Responsibilities

Each state has particular laws that deal with acts committed by youth and adults. Just because someone is under a certain age (16 in New York State) and considered a juvenile does not mean that laws do not apply to them. A criminal record can affect a person later in life—some schools or employers may not accept you. What you might think is a harmless prank or “no big deal”, could hurt your future.

### Theft

Taking things that do not belong to you without the permission of the owner is theft. Theft is also referred to as the crime of “stealing”. When items stolen are taken from a store, it is often called “shoplifting”. There is no difference between shoplifting and theft.

### Drug Laws

The possession or use of marijuana is against the law and penalties include fine, probation or jail. The penalties for offenses involving hard drugs, such as cocaine, speed and crack or large amounts of marijuana, can be very serious, especially when a federal law is broken. The selling of any illegal drug is a very serious offense.

### Alcohol Laws

It is against the law to serve or permit liquor to be served to minors (under 21) anywhere, including in the home. It is against the law for minors to have alcohol in their possession in a public place or in a car at any time. Anyone over the age of 16 who helps a minor to obtain alcohol can be charged with a felony crime punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine.

### Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

In New York State the penalty for a first offense conviction of driving while intoxicated may include jail time, a fine, loss of driving privileges and a requirement to participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program. In addition to the criminal penalties, it is likely that insurance rates of the convicted driver will be higher for a period of up to ten years. Depending on the situation, your parents may be responsible for any penalties, fines or damages.

### Vehicular (Car) Injury or Manslaughter

If you are driving while intoxicated and injure or cause the death of another person (manslaughter), you may be charged with a felony crime. If convicted, you may be fined and/or imprisoned.



## Suicide

If someone talks about suicide, take it seriously. Friends or a family member may tell you they are thinking of killing themselves and ask that you keep it a secret. This is a secret you cannot keep. You can be a better friend or relative by telling someone—a parent, teacher, counselor, clergy, or someone who will listen and believe you. You might also encourage the person talking about suicide to talk to an adult he or she trusts.

If you think someone may be suicidal, don't be afraid to ask. Mentioning suicide will not give people the idea or push them over the edge; it can actually prevent it from occurring. A suicidal person is not beyond help, in fact, the crisis period usually lasts a short time. With the proper help a suicidal person can get better.

### Examples of suicide related questions:

- Has this person shown any of the following warning signs?
  - giving away prized possessions
  - doing poorly in school
  - talking about wanting to die
  - isolating themselves from family and friends
  - taking unnecessary risks
  - abusing drugs or alcohol
  - sudden happiness after lengthy depression
  - Feeling hopeless
- Has this person ever threatened or attempted suicide before?
- Does this person have a plan to commit suicide?
- Ask—Are you planning your suicide?
- Ask—Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Ask—When people are in as much pain as you seem to be, they sometimes want to end their life. Are you feeling that way?
- Ask—You seem very unhappy, are you thinking about ending your life?

**“If you think someone may be suicidal, don't be afraid to ask”**

**Why do kids join gangs?**

- Low self-esteem
- Financial opportunities (i.e. profits from drug distribution and other illegal activities)
- Peer pressure
- Thrill seeking
- Media glorifying violence

**What can parents do to prevent their young people from joining a gang?**

- Develop open and frequent communication
- Encourage young people to become involved in athletics and other health-oriented activities to establish a sense of belonging
- Monitor/limit young people’s exposure to violence contained in television, music, and video games
- Cultivate respect for others’ property and pride in community
- Don’t let young people stay out late or spend a lot of time unsupervised in the street
- Become involved in his/her education and in your community



**Resources**

**Contact Your School Counselor**

**Cayuga County Sheriff’s Department—  
Local Gang Task Force**

(315) 253-5276



**Pranks**

A simple prank, such as removing hubcaps or spraying graffiti, can bring a serious charge of theft or vandalism against youth. You may be arrested. Penalties can include a fine, restitution (paying for damages), probation or jail time.

**Weapons Laws**

Unlawful use of a weapon is a possible felony under New York State law. Using a dangerous weapon in committing a crime can lead to life in prison. The law’s definition of a “weapon” includes guns (all types), switchblades, gravity knives, sticks, cane swords, and concealed blades (for example, a razor blade). An item such as a nail file can be viewed by police and the courts as a weapon, depending upon how it is used. A person who is stopped by the police and found to have a gun or other weapon can be arrested and charged with possession of a concealed weapon. It is always against the law to have possession of a concealed weapon without the proper permit.

**Arrest**

If you, or someone you’re with, is stopped or picked up by the police, here are things you need to know.

- Do not resist arrest. The most important thing to do is cooperate. Your attitude and cooperation will have a direct effect on how you are treated.
- You do not need to say anything to the police in answer to their questions without your parent present (if under 16) and/or advice from an attorney. You will be asked to give the police your name, address, phone number, date of birth, parent or guardian’s name and how to reach them. Beyond this, you do not have to volunteer anything.
- You do not need to sign anything without advice from your parents (if under 16) or an attorney.
- If you give permission to any search, you are allowing the police to fully search you.
- You have the right to a lawyer. If you cannot afford one, the court will appoint one for you.
- Ask the police to call your parents or other adult.

**Financial Responsibility**

Parents are legally responsible for the financial support of their adolescent until their 21st birthday. If parents are unwilling or unable to financially support their child, they or the child may apply for public assistance. If your adolescent damages property or injures another individual, the parent can be held financially responsible for costs incurred by the victim and or the victim's family.

**Leaving Home**

Parents are legally responsible for the care of their adolescent until his/her 21st birthday. Parents may seek to file a PINS on a son or daughter up to age 18 who is habitually away from home without permission.

**Contracting**

If a youth under the age of 18 signs a contract (i.e., to purchase a stereo, buy a car, rent an apartment) it may not be legally enforceable against the minor. It is for this reason that most people will require an adult co-signer when entering into a contract with a minor.

**Education**

In New York State, the law requires that a youth be in attendance in an approved/licensed educational program from the beginning of the school year in which the student turns 6 to the end of the school year in which s/he turns 16. After completing the school year in which s/he turns 16, s/he has a right to decide whether or not to continue in school. If a child chooses to leave school, but a parent wants the child to remain in school, the child has the legal right to decide. A child is legally allowed to stay in school up to age 21 if s/he has not received a high school diploma or is otherwise ineligible.

**Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)**

In New York State, if a youth is under the age of 18 and shows a pattern of disobedience, running away, curfew violations, drug or alcohol abuse, or severe school truancy, s/he can be brought to the attention of the Juvenile Justice System. Most PINS complaints are made by the parents or school districts.

**Resources**

**Contact your School Counselor to see what resources are available to assist you**

<b>Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc.</b>	(315) 253-9795
<b>Cayuga County Probation Department</b>	(315) 253-1246
<b>Auburn Police</b>	(315) 253-3231
<b>Cayuga County Sheriff</b>	(315) 253-1222
<b>New York State Police</b>	(315) 255-2766



Gang members communicate in many different ways. They have their own language which contains phrases, hand signs, tattoos, markings, and graffiti. Markings may include scars, burns, symbols, and tattoos. The initial clue that someone may be affiliated with a gang is color of clothing. Usually, a gang member can be identified by what "colors" they wear. Sometimes the "colors" correlate with the colors of a sports team. Street gangs are targeting young people at an earlier and earlier age. It is critical that parents, teachers, and community members recognize the signs of gang involvement. Gangs often leave evidence of their presence to "mark" their territory.

**General Warning Signs**

- Wearing certain colors and sports team apparel
- Special hand signals
- Change in behavior or deviant behavior
- Grades drop/truancy
- New "friends"
- Phone calls from unknown people
- Unexplained money and jewelry
- Slang terms
- Drawing symbols and graffiti on books, clothing, and walls
- Nicknames and street names
- Evidence of drug abuse
- Carrying weapons
- Admits membership

**Why do kids join gangs?**

Each case is individual, but some reasons include:

- Security, protection and a sense of belonging
- Lack of family, community, or youth support system (too much unsupervised time)
- Sense of status or respect
- Living in a gang infested community or having family members in gangs