

The Missing Children's Network Launches a Website to Prevent the Sexual Exploitation of Youth

MONTREAL, January 31, 2022. —The Missing Children's Network is proud to launch a dedicated website for its SHINE program, which aims to reduce the risk of a child running away and placing themselves in a vulnerable position in the face of sexual predators.

The vast majority of disappearances in Québec are made up of youth who run away. Unfortunately, approximately one third of these girls and boys are at risk of sexual exploitation. In order to reduce this risk, education is the key to prevention.

"Last year, 12,196 students were mentored to adopt safe behaviours online and offline," says Pina Arcamone, Executive Director of the Missing Children's Network. "The shineforlife.org website will allow us to reach many more young students, teachers and parents all across Québec."

Every year, on average, more than 5000 cases of missing children are reported to Québec police forces. Runaways account for almost 90% of these cases and involve youth between the ages of 12 and 17. While most runaways return home after a few days, a small number spend time on the streets, in shelters or in other unfamiliar places. Youth become vulnerable the moment they step outside of their homes, exposing themselves to the dangers of drugs, theft, crime, homelessness or sexual exploitation.



shineforlife.org, An Essential Tool

Created in 2017, the SHINE program has reached more than 46,000 students between eight and thirteen years-old in Québec through interactive workshops given by experts from the Missing Children's Network, training for professionals, publications, advice, videos and activities.

The SHINE program generated such enthusiasm since its launch that the Missing Children's Network developed a dedicated website that will serve as a reference to prevent runaways and sexual exploitation. It will allow teachers, parents and children to access training, resources, and activities.

SHINE is an acronym for Self-esteem, Healthy relationships, Independence, No means no and Empowerment. "The workshop opened my eyes to the fact that I have to love myself just the way I am," says a secondary 1 student. For Geneviève Dragon-Leduc, Liaison Officer at the Lester

B. Pearson School Board, “There is no doubt that our students were very interested in the workshop because it generated a lot of reactions and questions!”

In order to reduce the risk of youth running away, the SHINE program relies on protective factors: working to strengthen students’ self-esteem, developing their ability to set personal limits, helping them cultivate healthy relationships and combating gender stereotypes.

SHINE’s positive approach invites students to participate actively without frightening them, a feeling that often emerges when discussing sexual exploitation. By addressing these topics in an open and engaging way, students are better protected as they gain the ability to be assertive and ask for help when needed.

To register a Québec school for the SHINE program, school personnel or parents can simply click on the “Register your school” button on shineforlife.org.

About the Missing Children’s Network

Founded in 1985, the Missing Children’s Network is a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist parents in the search for their missing child, and to educate the public in order to decrease the occurrence of children disappearing. The Missing Children’s Network works proactively with families, law enforcement, social service agencies and other community organizations, as well as the media to assist families in crisis. The creation of the shineforlife.org website was made possible thanks to the financial support of Ministère de la Justice du Québec.

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