

## Who We Are

We are a staff of 30 professionals with a variety of educational and working backgrounds who care about teens. We reunite families, help kids stay in school, teach young people useful skills, and teach kids how to keep their lives drug free. We are youth workers, counselors, and experienced educators.

We have a special interest in helping runaway and homeless youth, kids who are experiencing troubles, and families who want to renew and strengthen their family bonds. We've been doing this work for more than 40 years.



## What We Do

Our prevention educators go into McLean County classrooms to teach kids the reasons and skills to avoid the dangers and consequences of drug use, helping them grow up drug-free. Our counselors teach youth and families how to solve problems, deal with daily stressors, and build stronger bonds with each other. Our outreach staff help homeless youth leave the streets and stay safe. Our school specialists provide support and skills-building to keep students in school and improve their academics. We are involved in community coalition building, policy advocacy, and school-community partnerships.



We respond to crisis calls from runaway and homeless youth, and we operate the county's only emergency youth shelter and youth transitional living programs.

## Runaway Youth

Project Oz is the only agency in McLean & Livingston counties to provide emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis response, counseling, and other services to runaway youth ages 10-18. Counselors will respond around the clock to calls for help from or about runaway and homeless youth. We provide whatever the youth needs to return home or to find a safe, nurturing alternative living arrangement. Through intensive counselor attention to problem solving, most youth are reunited with their families. When immediate return home is not possible, we have a Host Homes network of families who are trained and licensed to shelter youth for a few nights while the family and counselor work together to solve the situation.

## Homeless Youth

Project Oz operates a highly successful street-based outreach program for homeless youth ages 16-23. First, our social workers make sure that youth are safe and have basic necessities. Then, we begin work on longer-term issues. We teach strategies, facts, and skills that help homeless young people solve problems and stay safe. We also help them reconnect to education and employment.

Our transitional living program goes even further, providing partial rent subsidies and intensive education and counseling to homeless youth ages 18-21. Services include weekly Life Skills classes, job preparation and seeking, GED enrollment, safety and permanency planning, and links to community services. The ultimate goal is to help youth build all the necessary skills to enable them to live successful, independent lives.

## Ending the Silence

Helping middle and high schoolers understand mental illness makes a big difference. We can teach them about the warning signs for themselves and their friends. Ending the Silence (ETS) helps raise awareness and change perceptions around mental health conditions.



We let kids know it is ok to talk about issues such as depression and suicide, and to ask for help.

First introduced in McLean County in 2016, ETS presentations now reach students in every middle and high school in the county. Presenters provide information about warning signs, coping skills, and resources while emphasizing the power of hope and sharing personal stories of recovery.

## Substance Abuse Prevention

We want to share the good news that most kids DON'T use drugs. Our educators use an evidence-based curriculum to teach young people how to avoid getting involved with alcohol and other drugs. This education works; students in our courses have increased their knowledge about ways to protect themselves and remain healthy. We work with the Heyworth Community Partners Coalition, the Adult Advisory Board, the Youth Action Board, and local governments. We sponsor activities, teach skills, engage the media, and promote policies that ensure our young people grow up healthy and pass these decision-making skills onto the next generation of young people.

## Emergency Services

Our crisis staff are on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year. We respond to calls from parents, young people, teachers, and others who are concerned about runaway and homeless youth. Our Host Homes network provides temporary, emergency shelter, and is accessed only through our staff. Callers are connected to us through our phone number or through PATH. Phone numbers on the back of this brochure will link you to people who can help you right away.



## School Services

We work with hundreds of high school students who want assistance with problems that weaken their academic achievement. We provide counseling, goal-setting, help with academics, college campus visits, and we help students identify barriers and then learn skills that will eliminate those barriers. We also work with employers to sponsor 8-week paid summer internships for students.

## How You Can Help

There are tough issues out there that need everyone's attention. You could volunteer with us or donate money to keep our services strong. You could donate items that help young people meet basic needs. You could help with your time, your talents, or your resources. The important thing is to do what you can.

## Why We Do It

We help because we care. We care what happens to young people. We care what happens to families. And we care about making our community a safe, healthy, happy place to live.

We do it because we care.

## Contact Info

Project Oz office: 309-827-0377

PATH hotline: 2-1-1

PATH toll-free: 1-800-570-PATH (7284)

National Runaway Safeline:  
1-800-RUNAWAY

Email: [projectoz@projectoz.org](mailto:projectoz@projectoz.org)



309-827-0377  
[www.projectoz.org](http://www.projectoz.org)



Find us at ProjectOzyouth



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**Serving Youth and  
Families  
Since 1973**

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