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State Statutes Search

Alabama

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Alaska

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: CPS Man. § 2.2.7

From the [Child Protective Services Manual](#): Within 24 hours of being notified that the child is has run away from care, the Office of Children's Services (OCS) will report to law enforcement the matter for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

OCS will report missing, abducted minors and victims of sex trafficking to law enforcement, NCIC, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) databases within 24 hours of being notified. A missing minor is defined as an individual younger than age 18 whose whereabouts are unknown to the minor's legal custodian.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: CPS Man. § 2.2.7

As soon as possible, and no longer than 12 hours, of being notified that a child in the custody of the Department of Human Resources has run away from a department-authorized or court-ordered placement, the protective services (PS) specialist will take steps to locate and return the child to the authorized placement or other designated place of safety.

When a minor has been identified as missing, the PS specialist will do the following:

- Within 12 hours of the child's departure, notify the legal parent, guardian, resource family, local law enforcement, and assigned PS specialist having jurisdiction in the community of origin, if appropriate, that the child is missing from placement
- Contact the intake unit immediately, and no longer than within 24 hours, to ensure the minor is entered into the NCMEC database
- Notify the school, Tribal representative, guardian ad litem, and other collaterals, as appropriate, to inform them of the missing minor
- Collect information from collateral contacts regarding the reason for the child's absence from care

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care**Citation: CPS Man. § 2.2.7**

When the minor has been located, the PS specialist will document all significant case actions relating to the runaway to determine why the child is absent from care, including information gained from collateral contacts and any information regarding potential indicators of sex trafficking.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care**Citation: CPS Man. § 2.2.7**

When the minor has been located, the PS specialist will do the following:

- Notify the legal parent, guardian, resource family, and assigned PS specialist having jurisdiction in the community of origin, as appropriate, within 12 hours of the child's return to placement or other location
- If the child returns to placement, cancel the request to locate and reports of a missing child as soon as possible by informing law enforcement and the Intake Unit

When the child has been located, the PS specialist will use the *Guide for Assessing Runaway or Missing Minors* statewide form to ask the child about his or her experiences while away from care and to assess for possible signs or information regarding whether the child is at risk or has been a sex trafficking victim. If there are signs indicating sex trafficking, the OCS staff member will report to the Intake Unit immediately, or within 24 hours.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away**Citation: Res. Fam. Handbook**

From the Alaska Resource Family Handbook: If a child is away from a foster home due to an unapproved absence, such as running away, foster care payments may be authorized to continue for a maximum of 5 nights, if authorized by the assigned worker. The 5-day payment may be made only if the foster family immediately notifies the assigned worker of the unapproved absence of 10 hours or more. If the child does not return within the 5-day period, that space becomes available on the sixth day, unless other arrangements are made with the assigned worker.

If the assigned worker determines within the first 5 days that the child will not be returned to the foster home, payment will continue through the date of the determination, not the full 5 days. If the child's absence from a foster home extends beyond 5 nights, payment will resume when the child returns to the foster home and the assigned worker authorizes payment.

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American Samoa

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

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Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

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Arizona

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

From the Arizona Department of Child Safety [Policy and Procedure Manual](#): The Department of Child Safety (DCS) shall report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth to the following:

- Law enforcement authorities for entry into the National Crime Information Center database
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

DCS shall make reasonable efforts to locate a child who is a ward of the court; placed in the care, custody, and control of DCS; and who has run away from an out-of-home placement.

Upon receiving information that a child has left an out-of-home placement and is determined to be on runaway status, the department shall ensure immediate notification of the child's disappearance to the child's parents, attorney, guardian ad litem, and caregiver.

Upon notification that a child or youth has runaway, the DCS specialist (or other staff as approved by the supervisor) will do the following:

- Contact the out-of-home provider by the next working day to ensure that a report to local law enforcement has been filed
- Make a home visit to attempt contact with any identified parent, relative, or other significant person the child may have contacted
- Contact the assistant attorney general within 24 hours of the child's disappearance and initiate a motion for an order to pick up the child
- Contact the child's school and obtain any pertinent information regarding the child's disappearance
- Attempt to contact the child's friends
- Contact any prior placements the child may have contacted and determine if they have any current information about the child

With approval of the supervisor, the DCS specialist may submit a referral to the At-Risk Runaways service for assistance in locating a runaway child when one or more of the following circumstances exist:

- The child is suicidal.
- The child has been diagnosed with a serious mental illness, is prescribed medication for the mental illness, and may pose a danger to self and/or others if not receiving treatment and medication as prescribed.
- The child suffers from a serious physical illness and is prescribed medication, which if not available or administered properly, could place the child at risk of serious physical harm.
- The child is pregnant.
- Other specific child safety concerns exist (i.e., the child is age 13 or younger, the child is with a known perpetrator of abuse or neglect, the child is significantly developmentally delayed).
- The child is known to be, or is at risk of becoming, a victim of sex trafficking. Risk factors include, but are not limited to, substance use, gang affiliation, delinquency, or previous victimization.

If the child remains on runaway status and is not able to be located for a period of 90 days or longer, the DCS specialist (or other staff as approved by the supervisor) must recontact the following:

- The child's previous out-of-home care providers to obtain any pertinent information in locating the child
- The child's previous school (if enrolled prior to running away) and obtain any pertinent information for locating the child
- The child's parents, relatives, or other significant persons to obtain any pertinent information for locating the child

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

After the child returns to out-of-home care, the DCS specialist must document the factors that contributed to the child running away.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

Upon the child's return to out-of-home care, the DCS specialist must assess the appropriateness of the child returning to the same out-of-home placement and terminate the placement service authorization if a decision is made that the child will not return to the same out-of-home care provider.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

Upon the child's return to out-of-home care, the DCS specialist must do the following:

- Make a face-to-face contact with the child within 24 hours and determine the need for additional services
- Obtain a medical exam for any child when there is indication of high-risk behaviors (e.g., sexual activity, drug use) while on runaway status
- Notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency that the child has returned

- Contact the assistant attorney general and initiate a motion to vacate the pick-up order once the child has returned to out-of-home care
- Notify NCMEC's assigned case manager

Upon the child's return to out-of-home care, the DCS specialist must assess the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening to determine if the child is a sex trafficking victim. The DCS specialist must report to the appropriate law enforcement agency within 24 hours if it is determined the child was a sex trafficking victim.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DCS Pol. & Proc. Man., Ch. 4, § 8.1

If the child remains on runaway status for a period of 6 months or longer and documented diligent efforts have been made to locate the child, the DCS specialist may consult with the child's service team to determine the appropriateness of filing a motion to dismiss the dependency petition, or other course of action.

Before recommending that the dependency petition be dismissed, the DCS specialist must consider the following:

- Has the child been in contact with any service team member?
- Has the child expressed any interest in participating in services, including placement by the department?
- Is the child fully informed of the benefits and services that he or she will forfeit if the dependency petition is dismissed before the child's 18th birthday?
- Is the child in need of proper and effective parental care and control?

It is not appropriate to recommend dismissal of the dependency petition if any of the following apply:

- The child is suicidal.
- The child has been diagnosed with a serious mental illness, is prescribed medication for the mental illness, and may pose a danger to self and/or others if not receiving treatment and medication as prescribed.
- The child suffers from a serious physical illness and is prescribed medication, which if not available or administered properly could place the child at risk of serious physical harm.
- The child is pregnant.
- Other specific child safety concerns exist (e.g., the child is of a young age, the child is with a known perpetrator of abuse or neglect, the child is significantly developmentally delayed).

If the service team recommends filing a motion to dismiss the dependency petition, the DCS specialist must consult with the assigned assistant attorney general regarding this recommendation.

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Arkansas

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N1

From the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) [Policy and Procedure Manual](#): After receiving notification of the child's disappearance by the placement provider, the caseworker will do the following:

- Notify the State police, local police department, and/or sheriff's office, as applicable, within 2 hours after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth. The notification, which may occur via email, text, or phone, will include the following:
 - The child's name
 - A physical description of the child (a picture of the child may be released to assist with identification provided that the child is not identified as a child in foster care)

- The child's date of birth
- The circumstances of the missing child's disappearance, including the date the child went missing or was last seen and if the child indicated a destination (and, if so, what the destination is)
- Any other factual, biographical, or historical information that may assist with locating the missing child
- A request for law enforcement to enter the information into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Once a police report has been filed, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) no later than 24 hours after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth to provide the following information to NCMEC per the Memorandum of Understanding between DCFS and NCMEC:
 - The child's name
 - A photo of the child, if available
 - The child's date of birth
 - The name and contact information of the primary caseworker and supervisor
 - The investigating law enforcement agency name, contact information, and case number (i.e., missing person report number)
 - The circumstances of the missing child's disappearance, including the date the child went missing or was last seen
 - Any other factual, biographical, or historical information that may assist with locating the missing child
- Upon NCMEC's request, release to NCMEC any additional requested information and/or records in its possession that are relevant to locating the missing child.
- Keep NCMEC informed with up-to-date information regarding the missing child.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N; VII-N1

If the placement provider has reason to believe the child left the out-of-home placement of his or her own accord (i.e., ran away), then the placement provider will begin an immediate search for the child/youth. The search will entail the following actions:

- Searching the immediate premises
- Searching the community and contacting the child's friends and other contacts who may know of or have information regarding the child's whereabouts

If the child is located within 1 hour of initiating the search, the placement provider will notify the primary caseworker and the caseworker's supervisor of the incident no later than the next calendar day. If the child who is believed to have run away of his/her own accord cannot be located within 1 hour of initiating the search, then at that point the placement provider will immediately notify the youth's caseworker and the caseworker's supervisor.

After receiving notification of the child's disappearance by the placement provider, the primary caseworker will do the following:

- Notify the child's secondary caseworker, transitional youth services coordinator (if applicable), and attorney ad litem within 2 hours via email, phone, or text
- Notify the child's custodial/noncustodial parent(s) within 2 hours, or sooner depending on the age of the child, of the discovery of the child's disappearance by phone or, preferably, a visit to the home, if possible
- Contact the local Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) and request OCC to complete and file a pick-up order for the child no later than 24 hours after receiving notification of a missing child (which will put the court on notice that the child is missing)
- Update the child's placement information in the Children's Reporting Information System (CHRIS) within 2 business days, to include completion of fields regarding the required reports made to local law enforcement and NCMEC
- If the child is not found, do the following:
 - Continue to call previously contacted parties and inquire for information, furnish further information that becomes available, and, if appropriate, extend the search to other counties and States

- Update the custodial/noncustodial parents to assure them that the search continues no less than weekly when current contact information for the custodial/noncustodial parents is available (not applicable to parents whose parental rights have been terminated)

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N

When the division receives notification that a child has run away from out-of-home care, the caseworker will conduct a visit with the child and placement provider by the next business day to assess why the child ran away and what immediate steps may need to be taken to better support both the child and placement provider.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N2

When a child missing from an out-of-home placement is located, the caseworker will conduct a visit with the child and placement provider by the next business day after the child has been located to determine what immediate needs the child and/or placement provider may have and what immediate steps may need to be taken to better support both the child and placement provider.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N2

When a child missing from an out-of-home placement is located, the caseworker will do the following:

- Ensure the child has a physical exam by his/her primary care physician, if possible, within 72 hours of locating the child or immediately in the case of a medical emergency
- Notify immediately (but no later than 24 hours after the child has been located) all parties and individuals previously notified of the child's disappearance that the child has been located
- Update the child's placement screen in CHRIS within 2 business days of locating the child
- Determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from foster care, including the following:
 - Updating the child's Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment, including completion of the runaway CANS module within 30 days of locating the child
 - Determining if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim based on responses to the updated CANS and any other information gathered

If there is reason to believe the child is, or is at risk of being, a victim of sex trafficking, the caseworker must do the following:

- Document the finding accordingly in CHRIS and conference with the supervisor to determine appropriate next steps for additional screening related to sex trafficking victims and/or referral to appropriate services
- Report information on children or youth who have been identified as being a sex trafficking victim to local law enforcement immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving the information

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DCFS Pol. & Proc. Man., Pol. VII-N1

Even when the child is placed on runaway status, the child's Medicaid case will remain open. If the child is still on runaway status at the time of his/her Medicaid redetermination (i.e., the anniversary of his/her entering foster care), then the Medicaid case will be closed at that time.

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California

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Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Pen. Code § 11166

When a child or youth who is receiving child welfare services and who is reasonably believed to be the victim of, or is at risk of being the victim of, commercial sexual exploitation, as defined in § 11165.1, is missing or has been abducted, the county probation or welfare department shall immediately, or in no case later than 24 hours from receipt of the information, report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement authority for entry into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Wel. & Inst. Code § 16501.35

County child welfare agencies and probation departments shall develop and implement specific protocols to expeditiously locate any child missing from foster care. At a minimum, these policies shall describe the efforts used by county child welfare or probation staff to expeditiously locate any child or nonminor dependent missing from care, including, but not limited to, the timeframe for reporting missing youth, the individuals or entities entitled to notice that a youth is missing, any required initial and ongoing efforts to locate youth, and plans to return youth to placement.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Wel. & Inst. Code § 16501.35

When a child is missing from foster care, the social worker or probation officer must determine the primary factors that contributed to the child or nonminor dependent running away or otherwise being absent from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Wel. & Inst. Code § 16501.35

When a child is missing from foster care, the social worker or probation officer must respond to factors that contributed to the child or nonminor dependent running away in subsequent placements, to the extent possible.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Wel. & Inst. Code § 16501.35

When a child is missing from foster care, the social worker or probation officer must do the following:

- Determine the child's or nonminor dependent's experiences while absent from care
- Determine whether the child or nonminor dependent is a possible victim of commercial sexual exploitation

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Colorado

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Rev. Stat. § 19-1-115.3; Code of Regs. Tit. 12, § 2509-4 (7.303.4)

If a child or youth for whom the Department of Human Services or a county department has legal custody pursuant to the provisions of this title is determined by the agency to be missing, the agency having legal custody of the child or youth shall report the disappearance immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after learning of the disappearance, to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and to law enforcement. Law enforcement authorities shall notify the Colorado Bureau of Investigation for transmission to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for entry into the National Crime Information Center database. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the reporting requirements set forth for foster parents and out-of-home placement facilities in § 19-2-920 shall still apply.

In regulation: If a child who is in the legal custody of the county department is missing, then the county department shall report immediately and no later than 24 hours from when the county department receives notification that the child is missing to the local law enforcement agency and to NCMEC.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Rev. Stat. § 19-2-920; Code of Regs. Tit. 12, § 2509-4 (7.303.4)

When a juvenile who is sentenced to detention, committed to the department of human services, or otherwise sentenced or placed in out-of-home placement, pursuant to § 19-3-907, runs away from the facility or home in which the juvenile is placed, the person in charge of the facility or the foster parent shall notify the court and the local law enforcement agency as soon as possible after discovering the juvenile has run away from the facility or home.

In regulation: If a child who is in the legal custody of the county department is missing, the county department shall make reasonable efforts to locate a child who is missing and document those efforts a minimum of once per month in the State automated case management system.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Code of Regs. Tit. 12, § 2509-4 (7.303.4)

Upon the return of the child, the county department shall make reasonable efforts to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child being missing and document those efforts in the State automated case management system.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Code of Regs. Tit. 12, § 2509-4 (7.303.4)

Upon the return of the child, the county department shall make reasonable efforts to respond to the factors that contributed to the child being missing in current and subsequent services.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Code of Regs. Tit. 12, § 2509-4 (7.303.4)

Upon the return of the child, the county department shall make reasonable efforts to determine the child's experiences while missing, including conducting a sex trafficking screen to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Connecticut

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCF Pol. Man., Prac. Guide # 21-15PG

From the [Practice Guide](#): Children who have run away from placement shall be reported to the Careline and to law enforcement.

When a child has run away from a congregate care setting, Department of Children and Families (DCF) foster home, or therapeutic foster home, contacting the police immediately to file a missing person report may not always be an appropriate course of action. Factors to be considered include the child's danger to self, others, or the community; medical and physical health; chronological age; developmental age; behavioral and mental health status, including prior trauma history and especially sexual abuse or exploitation; social and emotional functioning; and the geographical location from which the child ran.

Law enforcement must be contacted immediately to file a missing person report for entry into the National Crime Information Center database when the facility staff or foster parent(s) believe that the child is a danger to self, others, or the community, regardless of age; the child has a prior history of sexual exploitation; or the child is under age 13.

In these cases, the facility staff or foster parents shall immediately contact the police and notify, by telephone, the DCF area office, during business hours, or the Careline, after hours and on holidays. Therapeutic foster parents also must contact the treatment foster care (TFC) agency that provides their support to notify it of the incident.

If the child does not meet the criteria for immediate police notification, facility staff, foster parents, or TFC agency staff should contact the area office during business hours or the Careline after hours and on holidays. The area office or Careline, together with the foster parent(s) and provider staff, shall assess the nature of the absence to determine whether police notification and intervention is necessary.

Factors to be considered during the joint assessment include the child's danger to self, others, or the community; medical and physical health; chronological age; developmental age and stage; behavioral and mental health status, including prior trauma history and especially sexual abuse or exploitation; and social and emotional functioning. If the outcome of the assessment is that law enforcement notification and intervention are necessary, DCF shall direct facility staff, foster parent(s), or TFC agency staff to contact law enforcement and report the child as missing.

Based on the youth's age, mental health issues, level of functioning, extenuating circumstances (such as recent break ups, family illness or death, change in legal or placement status, etc.), and runaway history, the police should be notified based on the timeframes given below.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCF Pol. Man., Prac. Guide # 21-15PG

If the outcome of the joint assessment does not necessitate immediate law enforcement notification or intervention, the area office or Careline staff will work with the facility staff, foster parents, and TFC agency staff to develop a plan to search for the child to ascertain his or her whereabouts.

When the child's whereabouts are unknown, DCF, facility staff, foster parents, and TFC agency staff will continue searching and a formal reassessment will be made within 3 hours or prior to the area office closing or the next Careline shift change during the child's absence.

If the reassessment determines that police intervention is still not needed, DCF, facility staff, foster parents, and TFC agency staff will update the plan to continue the search for the child, including additional action steps mutually agreed upon by DCF, facility staff, foster parents, and TFC agency staff, with another formal reassessment

scheduled within 3 hours or prior to the area office closing or the next Careline shift change during the child's continued absence.

The search and reassessment process should not exceed 6 hours before making the determination to contact the law enforcement and report the child as missing.

Upon notification of a runaway from either a foster parent placement or a congregate care setting, a social worker will be assigned to attempt to locate any child under age 15, all children who present as a danger to themselves or others, children with a history of poor decision-making that puts them in precarious situations, and children who do not have a history of frequent absences without leave (AWOLs).

A social worker shall be assigned to respond to the placement and have a discussion with the foster parent or placement staff to determine the frequency of child's AWOLs, where he or she has gone or been found in the past, whether police have been involved in the past, and who the child's contacts are. Based on the information obtained, the social worker, accompanied by police, if appropriate, may make attempts to locate the child at the addresses provided. The legal guardian and other family connections also shall be contacted in an attempt to locate the child.

When the area office receives a notification between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, the initial call will usually come from the school or other program that the youth attends during the day. The first step is to ensure that the absence is confirmed, not simply that the youth was absent from a class or marked absent but is actually elsewhere in the building or on the grounds. The next step is to contact the foster parent or facility staff to see if they are aware of the youth's whereabouts. If the youth has a cell phone, he or she needs to be called. The next step is to contact any transportation provider, to see what information they can provide. If the youth is involved with juvenile parole or probation, the juvenile justice social worker or probation officer needs to be contacted.

After all these sources have been checked and rechecked, other possibilities, such as birth family, other relatives, and friends need to be explored. Boyfriends or girlfriends need to be explored, if their contact information is known. If staff can access to the youth's social media accounts, those need to be explored as well.

All the above steps need to be repeated regularly and repeatedly throughout the day.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCF Pol. Man., Prac. Guide # 21-15PG

When there is knowledge of the child's whereabouts, area office staff during business hours or Careline staff after hours and during holidays will work with facility staff, foster parents, and TFC agency staff to ensure the child's immediate return. A child's refusal to return immediately should not, by itself, be a reason for police intervention. Area office or Careline staff must work with the child to determine how to maintain the current placement or to determine whether another placement is needed. The TFC agency shall also work with the child and DCF to assist with maintaining the current placement or determining and facilitating an appropriate alternative placement.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCF Pol. Man., Prac. Guide # 21-15PG

When a child returns of his or her own accord or is returned to the placement setting by anyone, the facility staff, foster parent(s), or TFC agency staff will immediately notify area office staff during business hours or the Careline after hours and holidays in order to assess the child's needs and discuss planning. The caregiver or agency shall work with DCF to assess, plan for, and support the needs of the child. As appropriate, emergency mobile psychiatric services should be accessed to assist DCF foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, and community-based group homes with assessing the child's status.

If it is known or suspected that the child may have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, community violence, or another type of traumatic event during the runaway episode, DCF staff shall determine whether it is appropriate to administer the DCF-approved trauma screening tool to identify any new trauma exposure

and the child's traumatic stress symptoms. The assessment shall include identification of any trauma-related needs of the child and whether the child feels safe now (upon return), both physically and psychologically, in the current placement.

The planning phase shall include developing or updating a safety plan for the child, if appropriate. The purpose of the safety plan is to ensure that the child has positive strategies and coping skills that, instead of running away, can be used during times of distress. The facility staff, foster parent(s), or TFC agency staff; the child; and the DCF social worker will participate in planning and understand and support the plan.

The need for general mental health assessment, trauma-specific assessment, or general mental health/trauma-specific treatment should be routinely assessed within a reasonable time following the child's return.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Delaware

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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District of Columbia

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: D.C. Code § 4-1323.01; CFSA Missing Children Policy

The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) shall file a missing person report with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) for any child in the custody of CFSA immediately after discovering that the child is missing from the child's home or out-of-home placement.

The MPD immediately shall report a missing child to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, if either of the following applies:

- The child has been deemed critical missing by the MPD, as defined by MPD General Order 304-03.
- The child has been missing for more than 30 days from the date the agency filed a missing person report with MPD.

For the purposes of this section, the term 'child' means a person who has not reached age 18.

In policy: Immediate notification to the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the child is placed and the CFSA Absconder Unit is mandatory and critical. The Absconder Unit shall support the social workers' efforts to locate and return the child. For purposes of this policy, the term 'child' includes both infants and youth, as applicable.

When a child is believed to be missing or absconded, to have been abducted, or to have run away, the resource provider or caregiver shall take these steps in the following order:

- Make reasonable efforts to locate the missing child (e.g., contact neighbors, the school, and the missing child's friends)
- If a child is deemed to be missing, file a police report with the local law enforcement agency (in the jurisdiction where the home or facility is located or where the youth was last seen) within 1 hour from the time the child is missing
- Ensure receipt of the police report number
- Immediately report the missing child to the CFSA hotline and the assigned social worker and provide both the hotline and the social worker with the police report number
- If the child returns home, immediately notify the local law enforcement agency, CFSA's hotline, the assigned social worker, and other relevant parties who may have been notified that the child was missing

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: CFSA Missing Children Policy

When a social worker learns that a child is missing, the social worker shall immediately complete the following steps:

- Contact the resource provider or caregiver to confirm the report and to determine whether the child has returned
- If the child has not returned, verify that the resource provider or caregiver has filed a police report with the local law enforcement agency
- If the police report was not made, contact the law enforcement agency in the missing child's jurisdiction to make the report and ensure receipt of a police report number
- Immediately notify the following individuals that the child is missing:
 - The CFSA hotline
 - The supervisory social worker
 - The missing child's parents or legal guardians and significant relatives
 - The child's family court judge
 - The assistant attorney general (AAG) and guardian ad litem (GAL)
 - Other appropriate members of the child's case-planning team

The social worker shall use reasonable efforts to try and locate the missing/absconded child within 24 hours from receipt of notice that the child is missing. These efforts may include, but are not limited to, contacting the following entities or individuals:

- The local law enforcement agency (to verify that the child is not in their custody)
- Local emergency shelters, local hospitals, and homeless youth programs
- Most recent resource provider and any other resource providers with whom the child is known to have now or has had a close or long-term relationship
- Relatives, including the child's parents and siblings
- Neighbors and landlord of the child's last known address

- Teachers, counselors, and other personnel from the school that the child last attended or other schools the child attended, if there is knowledge that the child had a close relationship with persons at that school
- Probation or parole officer, if applicable
- Juvenile and adult detention centers, if applicable

Social workers shall follow up on all leads by telephone and/or home visits as new information is received regarding the location of the child. If the missing/absconded child is in the legal custody of CFSA and efforts to locate him or her are unsuccessful, the social worker shall immediately request assistance from the CFSA Absconder Unit to locate the missing/absconded child.

If the missing/absconded child is identified as being at high-risk, the social worker shall initiate a child locator staffing. The social worker shall consult with the supervisory social worker to determine the timeframe to conduct the staffing, which should take place as soon as possible, but no later than 7 days. The child locator staffing shall include the following individuals:

- The child's family, if deemed clinically appropriate by the social worker
- The ongoing social worker or supervisory social worker
- Child locator and CFSA Absconder Unit staff
- The child or youth's resource provider
- The assigned AAG and the GAL
- Placement Services Administration
- Other relevant parties in the case

The child locator staffing shall discuss why the child or youth has been identified as being at high-risk. A written plan shall be developed to locate the child or youth. Responsibility for each action step in the plan will be designated during the meeting. The child locator staffing shall determine the need for the social worker to contact NCMEC. A plan that is developed at the child locator staffing shall supersede any other plan.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: CFSA Missing Children Policy

Once a child is located, it is imperative that the social worker engage the child to determine why the child was missing or absconded and to prevent further disruptions.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: CFSA Missing Children Policy

Once a child is located, the social worker shall determine the most appropriate placement for the child based on his or her safety and well-being and the circumstances that led to the child being missing or absconding.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: CFSA Missing Children Policy

Once a child is located, the social worker shall complete the following tasks upon the child's return:

- Immediately assess the child's safety
- Notify the following parties of the child's return:
 - Court absconder specialist
 - Local law enforcement agency
 - The child's parents, resource provider, and other relatives, as appropriate
 - The family court, AAG, and GAL
 - Other relevant parties who may have been notified that the child was missing
- Complete and submit the Request for the Withdrawal of Custody Order form and send it to the CFSA Absconder Unit for review

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Florida

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Ann. Stat. §§ 39.0141; 937.021(4); Admin. Code § 65C-30.019

Whenever the whereabouts of a child involved with the Department of Children and Families become unknown, the department, the community-based care provider, or the sheriff's office providing investigative services for the department shall make reasonable efforts, as defined by rule, to locate the child. If, pursuant to criteria established by rule, the child is determined to be missing, the department, the community-based care provider, or the sheriff's office shall file a report that the child is missing in accordance with § 937.021.

Upon the filing of a police report that a child is missing by the parent or guardian, the department, a community-based care provider, or a sheriff's office providing investigative services for the department, the law enforcement agency receiving the report shall immediately inform all on-duty law enforcement officers of the missing child report, communicate the report to every other law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the county, and, within 2 hours after receipt of the report, transmit the report for inclusion within the Florida Crime Information Center and the National Crime Information Center databases. A law enforcement agency may not require a reporter to present an order that a child be taken into custody or any other such order before accepting a report that a child is missing.

In regulation: The child's caregiver, legal guardian, or child welfare professional shall immediately report a child as missing to law enforcement when any of the following apply:

- The child is under age 13.
- The child has a physical or mental incapacity or a developmental or behavioral challenge that renders the situation more dangerous than it would be for a child with more maturity or resources.
- The child is with others who may endanger his or her safety.
- The child is known or believed to be in a dangerous or life-threatening situation.
- The child is missing under circumstances inconsistent with established behaviors.

A missing child report shall be obtained by the caregiver, legal guardian, or child welfare professional from law enforcement at the time of notification. The child welfare professional shall enter the electronic missing child report in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) within 24 hours of learning the child is missing. The department shall review the missing child report to ensure that it meets reporting criteria for case opening with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement/Missing and Endangered Person Information Clearinghouse and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 65C-30.019

When none of the criteria for an immediate report to law enforcement apply, the child's caregiver, legal guardian, or child welfare professional may take up to 4 hours from the time the child is first discovered missing to actively search for and attempt to locate the child prior to contacting local law enforcement. Active search efforts include the following:

- Searching the child's belongings
- Calling/texting the child's cell phone
- Checking the child's computer, social media accounts, or other online accounts
- Contacting the child's friends, relatives, or known associates
- Searching areas that the child is known to frequent

- Contacting the child's school
- Contacting the child's employer

After notifying law enforcement, the caregiver or legal guardian shall immediately notify the child welfare professional that the child's whereabouts are unknown. If the child welfare professional learns that the child's caregiver or legal guardian has not reported the child as missing to local law enforcement within the timeframes set forth in of this rule, the child welfare professional immediately shall report the child as missing to local law enforcement.

When the whereabouts of a child in the custody of the department are unknown, the child welfare professional shall notify the child's caregivers or legal custodians, guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem, if appointed, and Children's Legal Services within 4 hours. Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider must file notice with the court within 1 business day after being notified that a child is missing. Notice to the court shall be documented in FSFN within 2 business days.

Child welfare professionals shall be responsible for conducting both field-based and desk activities to locate the child, including the following:

- Onsite visits to locations where the child may be found
- Onsite collateral source contact interviews (e.g., interviews of teachers, employers, relatives)
- Use of electronic databases and information systems (e.g., parent locator services)
- Checking mobile apps that are popular among youth

For children reported missing while the family is receiving case management services, the case manager or designee shall make efforts to locate the child at a minimum of once a week for the first 3 months the child is missing and at a minimum of once a month thereafter.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 65C-30.019

Upon learning that the missing child has been located, the child welfare professional shall interview the child within 24 hours to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child running away (if the child ran away).

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Admin. Code § 65C-30.019

Upon learning that a child missing while a family is receiving case management services has been located, the child welfare professional identified by the community-based care lead agency shall interview the child within 24 hours to determine the child's need for additional services and/or change in placement.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 65C-30.019

Upon learning that the missing child has been located, the child welfare professional shall interview the child within 24 hours to inquire into the child's experience while absent from care, including identifying if the child has a history of running away, sexual abuse, prostitution, or a current arrest on a charge of prostitution, or the child discloses being trafficked or reporting sexual exploitation. If any one of these indicators are present, the child welfare professional shall screen the child to determine if the child is a possible victim of trafficking.

When the child is located, the child welfare professional shall immediately notify the following individuals and agencies:

- The child's caregiver or legal guardian
- Law enforcement
- The guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem, if appointed
- Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Georgia

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

In policy: The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receipt, information on missing or abducted children to the law enforcement authorities, for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

If the child is determined to be missing from a foster care placement, the social services case manager (SSCM) will do the following:

- Contact the NCMEC within 24 hours of the child's disappearance by calling the hotline number at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or making a report on the website (<http://cmfc.missingkids.org/ReportHere>) and completing the online form designed for child welfare caseworkers, as follows:
 - If the initial contact is made before there is an active missing person police report, contact NCMEC again once there is an active missing person police report
 - Advise NCMEC not to identify a child as being in foster care during any of its activities
 - Provide the child's name, date of birth, Social Security number, placement address, and contact information for the SSCM
- Follow up with local law enforcement within 24 hours of filing the missing person report to confirm that the missing child has been added to the NCIC database of the FBI

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

DFCS shall have protocols for expeditiously locating any child missing from foster care, as follows:

- Notify the DFCS Missing Children Team within 24 hours
- File a runaway report in juvenile court within 2 business days that includes efforts made to locate the child

If a child is suspected to be missing, the SSCM will do the following:

- Contact the caregiver and other household members to determine when and where the child was last seen, the child's state of mind at that time, and if any of the child's possessions are missing
- In conjunction with the caregiver, coordinate and conduct a comprehensive search for the child that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Attempting to contact the child on his/her cell phone or social media
 - Contacting the child's friends and persons with whom the child associates to determine if they have knowledge of the child's whereabouts
 - Visiting the locations where the child was last seen and where the child frequents
 - If the child is in the temporary custody of DFCS, contacting the child's parents and family members to determine if they are aware of the child's whereabouts

If the child is determined to be missing, the SSCM will do the following:

- Ask the caregiver if he or she has already filed a missing person report with law enforcement
- Contact local law enforcement to confirm that a missing person report has been filed

- If the missing person report has not been filed, file the missing person report immediately but no later than 24 hours of determining that a child is missing
- Notify the child's parent(s) as soon as possible if the child is in foster care
- Solicit the parents' assistance in locating the child, if appropriate
- Notify the DFCS Missing Children Team immediately but no later than 24 hours after a child is determined to be missing
- Notify the juvenile court within 2 business days of the child's disappearance by filing a runaway report
- Notify the following:
 - The child's attorney, guardian ad litem (GAL), and court-appointed special advocate (CASA), if applicable
 - Any other division/department that also serves the child, including the child's school officials, probation officers, attorneys, service providers, etc.
- In conjunction with the caregivers, continue a comprehensive search to locate the child, as follows:
 - Interview the child's parents and other caregivers to determine the child's state of mind when last observed
 - Revisit locations where the child was last seen
 - Continue to make attempts to contact the child via cell phone, social media, etc.
 - Utilize voicemail, text messaging, and other messaging to communicate to the child the need to return or go to a safe place (e.g., police station, fire department, hospital)
 - Interview other children at the child's placement to determine if the child shared his/her plans or contact information for other friends
 - Inquire about the child's use of cell phones or social media
 - Contact law enforcement to determine if they have made any progress in locating the child
 - Continue to follow-up with the child's friends, parents, extended family members, and other adults with whom the child had a relationship for any updated information
- Address the following monthly with the supervisor and every 90 days (at a minimum) with the county director if the child remains missing:
 - Efforts made to locate the child
 - Additional strategies that may be employed to locate the child
 - The child's history of running away (if applicable) and whether the child seems to be running to a specific place or person
 - Whether it the child is known to be or is at risk of being a victim of commercial sexual exploitation
- Encourage the child to return every time there is any contact made with the missing child

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

DFCS shall have protocols for determining the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care and, to the extent possible and appropriate, responding to those factors in current and subsequent placements.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

DFCS shall develop a written runaway prevention plan for youth at risk of runaway behavior within 7 calendar days following a youth returning from a runaway episode.

A runaway prevention plan is a method of addressing circumstances and situations that might lead to a runaway episode or a recurrence of runaway behavior. The plan is a written document that helps to promote clarity and accountability. To be more effective, the runaway prevention plan should be developed collaboratively with children, their caregivers, and others working with the children. The plan needs to be realistic, positive, and based on a child's strengths, which will increase the chances of success. Since people and circumstances change, the plan should be updated to ensure it remains applicable to current circumstances.

When developing the plan, the SSCM should do the following:

- Help children identify their strengths in language that is easy to understand (e.g., good at being on time, friendly, respectful, athletic)
- Ask children what has prevented them from running away in the past (e.g., talking to their case manager, listening to music, talking to a friend, taking a walk, sports)
- Try to help children identify triggers, feelings or behaviors that occur when they have thoughts of running away (e.g., feeling overwhelmed, trapped, not knowing what to do)
- Ask children how their case manager and caregivers can best support them in remaining in their placement
- List any other supports that may be needed (e.g., counseling, mentoring)
- Include contact information for DFCS and other significant persons in the youth's support network, such as individuals the youth may contact at any time they find themselves in an unsafe situation or simply wish to return from runaway status

The SSCM will ask children, their caregivers, and all involved parties to sign the plan and give everyone a copy. This makes the plan feel like a real commitment between all the parties involved.

Some tips for plan development include the following:

- If a child runs away to see friends, work with caregivers to increase activities the child has with friends.
- If a child runs away to see birth family, increase family visits (if possible) and make efforts to secure placement with a relative with whom the child is willing to remain. If the agency can limit trauma to the child/young adult and increase connections with supportive people, the child/young adult will be more likely to make progress toward a stable adulthood.
- If a child runs away to reunite with parents or caregivers from whom he/she was removed, determine if the factors that prevented reunification in the past are still relevant. If not, follow the department requirements for pursuing the possibility of reunification.
- If a child runs away to use drugs, refer the child for a substance use assessment and any recommended treatment.
- If a child runs away because of problems with school, increase educational supports.
- If a child runs away because of conflicts with the foster caregivers, work with the child and the caregivers to resolve the conflicts. If it is not possible to resolve the conflicts between the child and caregivers, then seek a more suitable placement for the child.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

DFCS shall have protocols for determining the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim.

When the child is located, the SSCM will do the following:

- Make face-to-face contact with the child within 24 hours.
- Notify the parent and the placement resource that the child in foster care has been located immediately, but no later than 24 hours.
- Notify the DFCS Missing Children Team immediately, but no later than 24 hours after a child is located.
- Notify law enforcement, the court, GAL, CASA, and any other entities actively assisting DFCS with the search.
- Call the NCMEC hotline number immediately to notify them that the missing child has been located, if they did not locate the child.
- Make every effort to place children previously missing from foster care in the same placement they were in prior to becoming missing, when appropriate.
- Interview the child within 24 hours of the child's return to determine factors that contributed to the child being missing, the child's experiences while absent from care, and to assess whether the child is at risk or is a victim of sex trafficking.
- Arrange for a medical examination within 48 hours of the child's return. In child protective services cases, the parent must obtain the medical examination.

- Refer the child and family for appropriate services to address identified issues related to the runaway episode or other identified at-risk behaviors.
- Develop a written runaway prevention plan with the child, their caregivers, and others working with the child to address situations that might lead to a recurrence of the runaway behavior.
- Visit the child more frequently (weekly or more often as needed) to work with the child and caregiver(s) to stabilize their relationship and to address the factors that led to the runaway episode and prevent further disruption.
- Update the case plan when there are newly identified or modified services, treatment, and/or needs based on the runaway episode.
- Document all case management activities.

If the results of the assessment suggest a child is a victim of sex trafficking, the SSCM will do the following:

- Contact the Georgia Bureau of Investigation immediately, but no later than within 24 hours, to provide notification and to discuss next steps
- Follow the procedures outlined in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Domestic Minor/Sex Trafficking Case Management Protocol
- Obtain services specifically to address the issues for the child determined to be at risk or a victim of sex trafficking

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DFCS Child Welf. Pol. Man., # 19.22

DFCS shall do the following:

- Notify the Revenue Maximization Specialist (RMS) within 24 hours of determining that a child in foster care is missing and within 24 hours of when the child is located
- Maintain an open foster care case on any missing child in the temporary or permanent custody of DFCS to continue efforts to locate the child and address the concerns that brought the child into foster care

If the child is determined to be missing, the SSCM will send a Notification of Change to the RMS to notify them that the child is on runaway status or otherwise missing from the foster care placement. The RMS will terminate title IV-E reimbursements for a title IV-E-eligible child.

When the child is located, the SSCM will submit a new title IV-E application, if a child returns to foster care from a runaway/missing episode. NOTE: New determinations of all eligibility factors, including judicial determinations of 'contrary to the welfare' and 'reasonable efforts,' are required if the child returns to foster care after 6 months, as this is considered a new placement episode for title IV-E.

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Guam

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Hawaii

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

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Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

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Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Idaho

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Standard for Responding to and Reporting on Runaway Youth

In policy: In no case later than 24 hours after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth, State child welfare agencies are required to report to law enforcement for entry into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

If a child in the custody of the Department of Child and Family Services (CFS) runs away, or is discovered to be missing from care and the child's whereabouts are unknown, the child's worker must notify the following parties:

- Immediately:
 - Local law enforcement

- The child's birth parents, unless they cannot be found or parental rights have been terminated
- Within 24 hours:
 - The child's attorney and guardian ad litem
 - NCMEC at the 24-hour call center: 1-800-THE LOST (1-800-843-5678) or at <http://cmfc.missingkids.org> and obtain a reference number
 - The child's probation or parole officer, if the child is involved with juvenile probation or the Idaho Department Juvenile Corrections

If the worker believes that a child has unwillingly left foster care or has been removed by an unauthorized person, the CFS social worker will request that the child be placed on the Amber Alert system when making the report to law enforcement. Local law enforcement officials will work with CFS to decide if Amber Alert criteria are met and will activate the Amber Alert network, if appropriate.

No later than the next business day from when the child was reported missing, the CFS social worker must follow up with NCMEC at the 24-hour call center. The CFS social worker must remain in contact with law enforcement and NCMEC (if applicable) on a weekly basis until the child is located.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Standard for Responding to and Reporting on Runaway Youth

The purpose of this standard is to provide direction and guidance to CFS programs regarding reporting and responding requirements for runaway youth and missing youth. This standard is intended to achieve statewide consistency in the development and application of CFS core services and will be implemented in the context of all-applicable laws, rules, and policies. State child welfare agencies are required to develop and implement specific protocols for expeditiously locating any child missing from foster care.

The CFS social worker must continue ongoing efforts to locate any child missing from placement and must actively search for the child until the child is found. Ongoing efforts may include the following:

- Contacting relatives and friends
- Utilizing social media
- Contacting schools and community programs in which the child may have participated

When a child is missing and/or is known to be on the run, a critical incident report must be completed. In addition, the CFS social worker must document all efforts to locate the child on a weekly basis until the child is located.

When information is received regarding the possible location of a missing child, the CFS social worker must staff the case with a supervisor immediately. The supervisor will assist in determining the most appropriate course of action in order to assess the child's safety.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Standard for Responding to and Reporting on Runaway Youth

State child welfare agencies are required to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care and, to the extent possible and appropriate, respond to those factors in current and subsequent placements.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Standard for Responding to and Reporting on Runaway Youth

When a missing child has returned to care, the CFS social worker must interview the child as soon as appropriate to determine the reasons why the child ran away or was absent from care. If the interview identifies reasons why the child ran away or was absent from care, the CFS social worker must, to the extent possible, address those factors in the child's current and future placements.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Standard for Responding to and Reporting on Runaway Youth

If a child in CFS custody returns to foster care after being reported to law enforcement as a runaway or missing person, the child's CFS social worker will ensure the appropriate law enforcement officials are notified immediately, but no later than 24 hours from when the CFS social worker was notified of the child's return to foster care. If the child has been placed on the Amber Alert system, the CFS social worker shall notify law enforcement officials within 1 hour of the child's return.

No later than 24 hours from when the child returns to foster care, the child's CFS social worker must do the following:

- Update the critical incident report
- Notify the child's attorney and the guardian ad litem
- Notify the child's parents, unless they cannot be found or have had their parental rights terminated
- Notify NCMEC
- Notify the child's probation or parole officer, if appropriate

The CFS social worker must interview the child as soon as appropriate to determine the following:

- The reasons why the child ran away or was absent from care
- The child's experiences while absent, including screening to determine if the child was a sex or labor trafficking victim

If the child indicates or reports to the caseworker or a caregiver that he or she was of a victim of any crime, including being a child victim of human trafficking, the CFS social worker must report the information to law enforcement immediately, but no later than 24 hours.

Foster youth who run away or are abducted are at a higher risk of being child victims of human trafficking. For this reason, all youth who experienced a runaway episode or abduction must be screened for human trafficking upon their return.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Illinois

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Admin. Code Tit. 89, § 329.30

Whenever a child for whom the Department of Children and Family Services has legal responsibility is believed to be missing or on runaway or to have been abducted from a placement facility, the caregiver shall report the incident to department casework staff no later than the next business day. If the child is believed to be at risk due to the child's age or degree of vulnerability, the caregiver shall report the incident immediately to the following:

- Department casework staff, if the incident occurs during normal working hours
- The State Central Register during after-hours or on weekends

As soon as the child's caseworker learns that a child is missing, the worker shall verbally notify the local police authorities (city police or sheriff's office) and follow their procedures for reporting a missing child that include filing a missing persons report at the police station in the district in which the minor most recently resided. The worker shall provide as much identifying information about the child as possible to police authorities, including a photograph of the child and whether fingerprints are on file with the Illinois State Police.

After the police report has been made, the worker shall file an unusual incident report in accordance with 89 Ill. Adm. Code 331.

In addition to the notification required above, the caseworker also shall notify the following:

- The child's parents, guardian, or legal custodian
- The juvenile court of jurisdiction
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Child Find of America

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Admin. Code Tit. 89, § 329.30

After making the required notifications, the caseworker shall attempt to locate the child by doing the following:

- Inquiring of the following persons if they have knowledge of the possible location of the child:
 - Past known caregivers who have cared for the child for at least 6 months within the last 2 years or any other caregivers with whom the child is known to have had a close relationship
 - Relatives, including the child's parents
 - Neighbors and landlord of the child's last known address
 - Close friends and classmates of the child, including any known boyfriends or girlfriends
 - Teachers, counselors, and other personnel at the school that the child last attended or at other schools the child attended, if there is knowledge that the child had a close relationship with persons at that school
 - Other staff of the department or purchase of service agency who might have knowledge of the possible location of the minor
- Reviewing the Public Aid Client Information Systems screen to seek the location of the minor and any other person with whom the caseworker suspects the minor might be living
- Inquiring of local emergency shelters and homeless youth programs whether they have any information as to the whereabouts of the child
- Requesting any of the persons contacted above to contact the caseworker if they subsequently receive any information about the child's location

The child's caseworker shall periodically (no less than once per month) check with the local police or appropriate local law enforcement agency on the status of the report. Whenever the caseworker obtains new information that may lead to the whereabouts of the child, the caseworker shall immediately report the information to the local police or appropriate local law enforcement agency.

The caseworker also shall keep the court informed of any changes in the child's status.

At their monthly supervisory meeting, the worker and supervisor shall discuss what is being done to locate the missing child and review what steps are being taken.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Admin. Code Tit. 89, § 329.40

When a child who has been missing, on runaway, or abducted has been found and returned, the child's caseworker shall conduct a thorough follow-up interview with the child to determine the circumstances behind the child's disappearance.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Admin. Code Tit. 89, § 329.50

When a child who has been missing, on runaway, or abducted has been found and returned, the child's caseworker shall determine whether the child should be returned to the placement from which the child disappeared or whether a new placement is in the child's best interests. New placements must comply with the requirements of 89 Ill. Adm. Code § 301 (Placement and Visitation Services).

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Admin. Code Tit. 89, § 329.40

When a child who has been missing, on runaway, or abducted has been found and returned, the child's caseworker shall do the following:

- Conduct a thorough follow-up interview with the child to determine the circumstances behind the child's disappearance
- Schedule a medical examination for the child within 24 hours
- Determine what needs to be done for the resumption of the child's educational program
- Replace any clothing or personal items the child may need, if these have been lost
- Inform the police, NCMEC, Child Find of America, and all others who were notified of the absence that the child has been located
- Complete a report of the incident that can be promptly accessed and reviewed if the child disappears again

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Indiana

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF \(327 KB\)](#) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

In policy: The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make ongoing diligent attempts to expeditiously locate any child missing from his or her placement. This includes a child who is placed or remains in home through an in-home child in need of services determination, trial home visit, or informal adjustment, or a child involved in an open assessment.

When a child involved in an open DCS case or assessment runs away or is missing, DCS will do the following:

- Ensure the appropriate local law enforcement agency (LEA) is contacted immediately (no later than 24 hours) to report the child missing
- Verify with the Indiana State Police (ISP) that the child has been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database
- Complete the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) form
- Email the NCMEC form, with a current photograph of the child attached, to the DCS child abuse hotline immediately (no later than 24 hours) for reporting to NCMEC
- Ensure NCMEC is contacted to report the child's missing status and to provide requested details regarding the missing child
- Ensure the child's parent, guardian, or custodian is notified, unless a termination of parental rights (TPR) has been finalized
- Ensure the court is notified (if there is an open case)
- Update the child's placement and document all actions taken in the case management system

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

When notified that a child involved in an open DCS case or assessment has run away or is missing, the family case manager (FCM) will do the following:

- Advise the resource parent(s), residential provider, or custodial parent to contact the appropriate local LEA to file a runaway/missing person report

- Gather pertinent information from the child's caregiver(s) and other household members regarding the following:
 - When and where the child was last seen
 - The child's last known state of mind
 - Any unusual events prior to the child's disappearance
 - Whether any of the child's possessions are missing from his or her placement
- Ensure the child has been reported as missing to ISP and local LEA (within 24 hours) to request that the child is entered into the NCIC database, if not already done, and request ISP and local LEA reports
- Complete the NCMEC form with pertinent information
- Utilize the email button within the NCMEC form to generate an email to the hotline and ensure supporting documents and a current photograph of the child are attached to the email prior to sending
- Verify with the hotline that NCMEC is contacted immediately (no later than 24 hours) after the youth has gone missing or runaway
- Notify the FCM supervisor of the child's absence from care
- Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian (unless a TPR is finalized) of the child's runaway or missing status and inquire about the child's whereabouts and any recent contact with the child
- Notify the court of the child's runaway or missing status (if there is an open case)
- Attempt to contact the child on his or her cell phone or social media, if applicable
- Visit locations the child frequents (e.g., school, park, movie theaters)
- Contact the child's family, friends, school staff, employer, and other individuals who have a close relationship with the child to inquire about the child's whereabouts and any recent contact with the child
- Report new relevant information to ISP and local LEA, if applicable
- Document the runaway/missing person episode, corresponding documents, and efforts to locate the child in case management system

Note: The FCM should continue regular attempts to contact the child, visits to locations the child frequents, and contact with the above individuals throughout the child's absence from care. Any new information gained should be reported to ISP and local LEA. All efforts and information gathered should be discussed with the FCM supervisor and documented in the case management system.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

When the child is located, DCS will do the following:

- Interview the child concerning the reason(s) the child ran away
- Convene a child and family team (CFT) meeting within 5 business days of the child's return to discuss circumstances that led to the runaway episode

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

When the child is located, DCS will convene a CFT meeting within 5 business days of the child's return to discuss and respond to the child's needs, circumstances that led to the runaway episode, placement concerns, safety issues, and any additional topics that may affect stability for the child.

Note: A new placement cannot be entered for a child until the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool has been completed for the child who had a runaway or missing person episode.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

When the child is located, DCS will do the following:

- Notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian; the court (if there is an open case); ISP; local LEA; NCMEC; and all other parties previously contacted to assist in the search for the child

- Interview the child concerning the reason(s) the child ran away and where and with whom the child was residing
- Complete the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool in the case management system
- If recommended by the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool, complete the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool
- Discuss the case and the results of the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool to determine next steps regarding the following:
 - Safety needs
 - Placement
 - Service referrals
 - Involvement of LEA
 - The need for a human trafficking forensic interview
- Document the results of the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool in the case management system

When the child is located, the FCM will do the following:

- Ensure the FCM supervisor is aware that the child has been located
- Notify ISP; local LEA; NCMEC; the parent, guardian, or custodian (unless TPR is finalized); and the court (if there is an open case)
- Interview the child as soon as possible (within 48 hours) and complete the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool in the case management system
- If recommended by the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool, complete the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool
- Discuss the case and the results of the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool with the FCM supervisor to determine next steps regarding the following:
 - Safety needs
 - Placement
 - Service referrals
 - Involvement of LEA
 - The need for a human trafficking forensic interview
- Contact the hotline to make a new report if a child discloses human trafficking
- Convene a CFT meeting within 5 business days of the child's return to discuss and plan to meet the child's needs, with a focus on safety, and respond to the needs of current and subsequent placements
- Update the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment, in accordance with the critical case juncture of returning from a runaway or missing person episode
- Document all decisions and actions in the case management system

The FCM supervisor will do the following:

- Discuss the case and the Indiana Human Trafficking Assessment Tool with the FCM
- Utilize the Human Trafficking Assessment Scoring Guide to provide guidance on next steps

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Child Welf. Man. Ch. 2, § 24

DCS will continue to make foster care payments to the resource parent(s) for a maximum of 5 days when a child in out-of-home placement is missing or runs away if the intent is for the child to return to the same resource parent(s). A bed hold will end prior to 5 days if there is no intent for the child to return to the resource home. If the child does not return to the placement within 5 consecutive days of absence, then the placement and per diem charge will be terminated for that child, unless otherwise approved by the DCS regional manager.

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Iowa

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

From the [manual](#): The Department of Human Services shall report immediately (no later than 24 hours) any missing or abducted child or youth in foster care to law enforcement for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and also to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or <https://www.missingkids.org>.

When a child is absent from his or her placement, the department shall do the following:

- Immediately contact law enforcement and provide the child's name, date of birth, height, weight, and any other unique identifiers, such as eyeglasses and braces
- Inform law enforcement when the child went missing and what clothing the child was wearing
- Report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information regarding missing or abducted children or youth to law enforcement for entry into the NCIC database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and also to NCMEC

When immediate attempts to locate the child are unsuccessful, the facility must report the child to law enforcement as a missing person. The facility may make the report on behalf of a child placed in group care or shelter care. The report shall be made as follows:

- Begin with local police and report to the sheriff or State police, as needed
- Give to the law enforcement agencies and State Patrol Communications the following:
 - All pertinent identifying information about the child
 - The worker's name and home and work telephone numbers or the caregiver's phone number
- Identify whether the child has been adjudicated as a child who committed a delinquent act or a child in need of assistance

If there is reason to suspect that the life or well-being of the child may be in jeopardy, the department must do the following:

- Immediately request the local law enforcement agency to enlist the aid of the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation or direct the guardian to do so
- Be aware of what information is needed to issue an Amber Alert, if the local law enforcement determines that an Amber Alert should be issued

An Amber Alert is used only when there is an abduction and the child is in danger. An Amber Alert is not used for a runaway, unless the child is known to have been abducted and the child's life is in danger.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

The care provider shall notify the department when a child under the supervision or care of the department has an unauthorized absence from placement.

The department shall take immediate action to locate a child under the department's care or supervision when there is an unauthorized absence from placement. For the purpose of these procedures, 'unauthorized absence' means any unplanned absence due to any of the following:

- Actions taken by the child (e.g., running away)
- Actions of others (e.g., abduction)

- The lack of attention or supervision by the caregiver

When a child is absent from his or her placement, the department shall do the following:

- Instruct foster care homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, shelters, and other such placements to immediately inform the department regarding any child or youth that is absent from care
- Obtain as much information as possible about the circumstances surrounding a child's absence
- Make an immediate and reasonable initial effort to locate the child by, at a minimum, contacting the school, parents, relatives, friends, and other contacts or locations identified as likely places the child may be
- Identify and contact any other individuals whom the child may have contacted for assistance while on the run and encourage them to help locate the child or return the child to foster care
- Contact the child's parents and inform them the child is missing or abducted; gather any information from the parents that may be helpful in the search for the child
- Search diligently and regularly for the child at places the child is frequently known to go to
- Notify the juvenile court
- Notify the court and the guardian ad litem, as needed, in writing within 2 working days (or within the court's preferred time limit if one has been established) when there is reason to believe that parents or others have done any of the following:
 - Failed to divulge or concealed facts known to them about the whereabouts of the child
 - Aided and abetted the unauthorized absence of the child
 - Contributed to the delinquency of the child

When a child remains on the run for a long period of time, the department shall do the following:

- Contact law enforcement on an ongoing basis about what is being done to locate the missing juvenile
- Contact parents and others involved regularly to see if they have more information about the child's whereabouts or activities
- Discuss with the Iowa Department of Public Safety the need for posting photographs of missing persons to State and national internet sites

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

When the child is located, the caseworker shall identify the factors that contributed to the child or youth being absent from foster care and determine what the child's or youth's experiences were while absent, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible victim of sex trafficking. To the extent possible, the department shall respond to those factors in the current and subsequent placements.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

When the child is located, the caseworker shall identify, and to the extent possible, respond to the primary factors that contributed to the child or youth being absent from foster care. The responses to these factors shall be documented in case notes. The caseworker shall provide a description of how these responses will be incorporated and integrated into the current placement and how it is believed that they will positively affect the current and any subsequent placement.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

When the child is located, the caseworker shall arrange for the child's return to the placement. The caseworker may negotiate with a runaway child as to when the child is willing to return. The safety and well-being of the child should be the first consideration in the negotiation. The agreed-upon return time should always be within 48 hours of the contact.

If a parent sabotages attempts to pick up a runaway child, the caseworker must notify law enforcement.

When the child is located, the caseworker shall do the following:

- Notify the parent or caretaker as soon as possible when the child is found, unless there a reason to believe this may further endanger the child
- Determine what the child's or youth's experiences were while absent, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible victim of sex trafficking
- Screen all located youth for possible sex trafficking by asking the child or youth the following:
 - How long were you on the run?
 - Where have you been staying?
 - Who has helped you and provided for you during your absence?
 - Were you threatened, abused, or assaulted during your absence?
- Assess a victim of trafficking for trauma exposure, as follows:
 - Determine if the exploiter has access to the child
 - Determine if the child needs to be placed in a secure facility or shelter for the child's safety
- Notify the juvenile court when appropriate
- Determine if the location of the child can be shared
- Immediately address any medical needs of the child
- Develop and implement a safety plan with the child, with the plan identifying who the child can contact if the child is feeling unsafe or wants to run and safe places or locations the child can go temporarily as an alternative to running
- Engage the child in selection of a foster care placement, if applicable
- Offer additional services to the child, parent, or caregiver
- Develop the permanency plan in consultation with the child, when appropriate
- Reassess the educational needs of the child or youth, if the child or youth has missed a significant amount of school

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DHS Employees' Man., Tit. 17, Ch. E

Payment may be made for a reserved bed while a child is on the run from a placement for 14 days. The maximum may be extended up 30 consecutive days with approval of the service area manager.

The provider shall notify the worker within 24 hours after the child runs away. When reserve bed payment requires approval of the service area manager (more than 14 consecutive days), the following must be included in the child's case file:

- The provider's written rationale for the extended period of reserve bed days
- The service area manager's written approval

If the child's whereabouts are unknown at the end of the allowable reserve bed period, the income maintenance worker will close the Medicaid case.

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Kansas

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: PPS Pol. & Proc. Man. § 5245

In policy: When a child in the custody of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) is missing from an out-of-home placement due to being a runaway, being abducted, or missing for an unknown reason, the child welfare case management provider (CWCMP) shall take the following actions:

- Report the missing child to the Special Response Team in the Prevention and Protection Services (PPS) Administration within 2 hours by sending an email to DCF.AWOLyouth@ks.gov and include all information available about the child and the circumstances
- Report immediately, and in no case later than 2 hours, after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth, to law enforcement authorities for law enforcement to enter into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving information on the missing or abducted child to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- Within 24 hours, provide the law enforcement agency, PPS Special Response Team, and NCMEC with the following information (as available):
 - A current photo/physical description of the child, including a description of the clothing worn at the time the child was last seen, hair and eye color, height, weight, complexion, eyeglasses or contact lenses, braces, body piercings, tattoos and/or other unique physical characteristics
 - Contact information of the child, including information about cell phone numbers, email addresses, social networking contacts, aliases, and nicknames
 - Suggested location, people, or direction where the child could be located, including parents and relatives
 - Medical/physical/emotional/mental health condition/diagnosis/disabilities and medication information that may impact the child's decision-making process and health, including any past suicide attempts and/or any other endangerments or risks, such as gang activity, online enticement, or commercial/sexual exploitation
 - Possessions the child may have with them

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: PPS Pol. & Proc. Man. § 5245

When the child is missing, DCF/CWCMP staff shall do the following:

- Contact the child's parent(s)/primary caregiver(s), if parental rights are still intact and whereabouts are known, to make them aware of the child missing from placement, elicit their assistance in locating the child, provide frequent updates on search efforts, and consult regarding whether to issue a press release
- Notify the court of the child's missing status
- Contact the child's school to make them aware of the child's missing status and ask for their assistance in locating the child
- Contact friends, other relatives of the child, and others who may have information (e.g., teachers, counselors, coaches, court-appointed special advocates), through all available means, including social media, to obtain information from them and also gain their assistance in locating the child
- Provide emotional support to the parents/primary caregivers, siblings, and placement provider in dealing with the child's missing status

Ongoing efforts to locate a missing child include the following:

- For a child who has been missing for 1 to 5 days, at least daily efforts shall be made to complete the following actions to obtain updated information:
 - Contact parents/primary caregivers, siblings, and the placement provider
 - Follow up with law enforcement to check on the status of the investigation
 - Check social media (age appropriate) for any updates
 - Contact friends and other relatives of the child, through all available means, including social media (age appropriate), to obtain updated information and assistance in locating the child
 - Contact the child's school to check attendance and determine if any staff have information or knowledge of the child's whereabouts

- Attempt to contact the missing child via mobile devices
- Update the PPS Special Response Team and the assigned foster care liaison on all the efforts made to locate the youth and any status changes weekly
- For a child who has been missing over 5 days, at least weekly efforts shall be made to complete the following actions to obtain updated information:
 - Contact parents/primary caregivers, siblings, and the placement provider
 - Follow up with law enforcement to check on the status of the investigation
 - Check social media, including post(s) with NCMEC, for any updates
 - Contact friends and other relatives of the child, through all available means including social media, to obtain updated information and assistance in locating the child
 - Contact the child's school to check attendance and determine if any staff have information or knowledge of the child's whereabouts
 - Attempt to contact the missing child via mobile devices

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: PPS Pol. & Proc. Man. § 5245

When the child returns, DCF/CWCMP staff will reassess the child's placement, treatment, and permanency plans and make changes as appropriate.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: PPS Pol. & Proc. Man. § 5245

When the child returns, DCF/CWCMP staff will do the following:

- Reassess the child's safety, permanency, and well-being, including whether they were a victim of sex trafficking and whether they engaged in any other self-harming behaviors
- Notify law enforcement immediately, no later than 2 hours after the child returns or is located
- Notify parents, the placement, school, courts, the DCF foster care liaison, and the PPS Special Response Team of child's return as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours from learning of child's return
- Interview the child to gather details about where they were, who was with them, why they left, how they left, etc.
- Develop and monitor a safety plan with the placement provider, child, and birth parents to reduce the risk of future incidents

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Kentucky

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Stds. of Prac. Man. Ch. 4, § 4.67

In policy: When a child that is committed to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services is reported as missing, the social worker must do the following:

- File a missing person report with the local law enforcement agency (city, county, or State) no later than 12 hours after receiving notification that a child has gone missing
- Notify local law enforcement immediately, but no later 24 hours after a child has gone missing, and provide the following information:
 - Any information that could aid in locating the child
 - A complete description of the child with a recent photo (if available)
 - The child's possible whereabouts, known places or locations the child frequents, and known habits of the child
 - The child's date of birth, school, and grade
 - The circumstances surrounding the disappearance
 - Medical and/or dental providers' names
 - The complete name and description of (if applicable) the abductor, or the last person with whom the child was seen, or any vehicle involved

Record the name and badge number of the officer who takes the report and the case number of the missing person report

- Ask that all data regarding the missing child be entered into the Law Information Network of Kentucky, the National Crime Information Center, and the Kentucky Missing and Exploited Children Unit
- Notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, providing the following information, to the extent available:
 - The child's full name
 - The child's date of birth
 - The date child went missing
 - City and State from where child went missing
 - Guardian information, including agency name and telephone
 - Law enforcement information, including agency name and telephone
 - A recent photo of the child (if available)
 - Physical descriptive information (e.g., height, weight, hair and eye color, clothing worn)
 - Any risks or endangerments to the child
 - Circumstances surrounding the incident
 - A description of any person who may be with the child

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Stds. of Prac. Man. Ch. 4, § 4.67

When a child committed to the cabinet is reported as missing, the social worker must provide notice to the court of the child's disappearance within 24 hours and request a pickup order. The social worker will request that the pickup order explicitly asks that the child be returned to the Department of Community Based Services or directly to a placement.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Stds. of Prac. Man. Ch. 4, § 4.67

When child that has been missing is located, the social worker must do the following:

- Attend court proceedings regarding the child upon his/her return to placement
- Arrange transportation for the child to their placement resource upon his or her return
- Interview the child within 48 hours of their return to evaluate the following:
 - Factors that contributed to the child's disappearance

- The child's current level of functioning
- The child's experiences while missing
- Screening for human trafficking victimization while absent from their placement
- Refer the child to the local child advocacy center, if applicable, and make a corresponding report to centralized intake, as needed, for any alleged maltreatment that occurred while child was missing

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Louisiana

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

In policy: Upon notice that a child in foster care has run away, has been kidnapped, is lost, or is otherwise missing, the following shall be done immediately:

- The case manager shall immediately contact a State or local law enforcement agency to report the child's runaway or absent status. The case manager shall request and document the law enforcement file number of the report.
- Even when a caregiver has made a report of the child's status, the case manager shall follow up with a State or local law enforcement agency to coordinate efforts to locate the child and to ensure all necessary information has been reported.
- The case manager immediately shall request law enforcement enter the child on the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) database and record the NCIC case number in the case record. Case managers must notify law enforcement that the child is in foster care.
- The case manager immediately shall ask the law enforcement agency to evaluate if the report meets criteria for the Louisiana Amber Alert System.
- The case manager shall list the child as a missing child or endangered runaway on the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) database. This referral shall be reported immediately, but in no case should the reporting exceed 24 hours since the child's departure.
- The case manager immediately shall provide the local law enforcement agency with a recent photograph of the child and/or description of the child, which may include photographs, fingerprints, marks, scars, tattoos, and any other identifying information.

Within 3 calendar days of a notice that a child in foster care has run away, has been kidnapped, is lost, or is otherwise missing, the case manager shall follow up with the law enforcement agency to coordinate efforts to locate the child and, if necessary, to confirm the child has been entered on the NCIC database and the Louisiana Amber Alert System, if the case meets Amber Alert criteria.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

When a child in foster care is on runaway, missing, or kidnapped, the following procedures shall be followed to ensure all avenues to locate the child are taken. It also should be noted that all children in foster care on runaway are to be considered missing children, regardless of the reason for their running away or the behaviors associated with the runaway incident. Collaborative work with all professionals named in this policy regarding the runaway, missing, or abducted child is essential.

When notifying other agencies that a child is missing or has run away, the case manager shall advise the other agencies of the necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of the child's foster care status.

Immediately upon noticing a child in foster care has run away, has been kidnapped, is lost, or is otherwise missing, the case manager shall notify the child's parents, court-appointed special advocate (CASA), and the child's attorney that the child is missing or has run away.

Within 24 hours of a notice that a child in foster care has run away, has been kidnapped, is lost, or is otherwise missing, the following shall be done:

- The case manager shall notify the court the child is missing, has run away, or been abducted.
- In regions where necessary only, the case manager shall file a verified complaint through the juvenile court, which may issue a pick-up order for the child in accordance with local court procedures for such filings.

Within 3 calendar days of a notice that a child in foster care has run away, has been kidnapped, is lost, or is otherwise missing, the following shall be done:

- The following information shall be sent to State Office Field Operations:
 - Details of the runaway/missing/kidnapped incident, including dates
 - Most recent, clear photograph available and the date it was taken
 - Date the child was last seen
 - Physical characteristics, distinguishing features, and clothes the child was wearing at the time of disappearance
 - Any possible locations and addresses where the child may be found
 - Individuals the child is known to contact
 - The number of runaway incidents in the past 6 months and where the child was found on each occasion
 - Any indication, suspicion, or proof of human trafficking, which includes forced labor, prostitution, exotic dancing, or pornography production
- The case manager shall make appropriate contacts to family, friends, previous places the child was located when on runaway, other agencies, etc., in an attempt to locate the child.

The case manager shall document each contact and effort made to locate the child in the case notes. The documentation should include the telephone numbers and addresses used for contacts.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

If the child has runaway three or more times in a 6-month period, the case manager worker shall convene a meeting of individuals selected by the youth and people important to the youth to discuss their continued reasons for running away and what would help them to feel safe or content enough to not run anymore. The case manager shall attend the meeting.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

When the foster child is located, the child should be returned by the case manager to the same foster care placement, if the placement can safely provide care for the child, is willing to accept the child, and is still appropriate based on information collected from the child regarding the events leading to the runaway episode. An assessment to determine the appropriateness of returning the child to the same placement must be made when the child states he or she ran away because he or she was mistreated. If there is any indication the child may have been abused and/or neglected, the matter shall be reported to centralized intake. Law enforcement shall be contacted as appropriate.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

When a missing child has been found, the following parties shall be notified immediately:

- Law enforcement, with a request to notify NCIC
- The child's parents
- The CASA
- The child's attorney

When the child's whereabouts become known, the following shall be notified by the next working day:

- The court
- DCFS State Office Field Operations
- NCMEC, if a child was reported as missing to them
- Any others contacted and/or requested to help in the search for the child

Within 3 working days after a child who had previously been missing is located, the following actions shall be completed and documented:

- An in-person, private interview with the child by the case manager
- A medical exam of the child
- An updated photograph taken

Within 5 working days of the child being located, a staffing to include the child welfare manager, supervisor, and case manager shall be held to discuss the information collected and need for services or actions. When there is any concern of forced labor and/or prostitution, exotic dancing, or participation in pornography (indicators of trafficking of children for sexual purposes), a summary of the runaway/missing/kidnapped event and the required documents shall be sent to the State Office. Once the packet of forms is received by the State Office, a staffing will be scheduled by the next working day to occur within a week. The staffing will include the human trafficking representative from State Office Field Operations, Foster Care, and Child Protection Investigations. The necessity for further intervention will be determined during the staffing.

If further intervention is necessary, it may include any of the following by the human trafficking representatives:

- A case review
- Further interviews with the child
- Reports to law enforcement not previously made by the field office
- Consideration of resources available to assist with suspected or confirmed trafficking

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DCFS Pol. Man., Pol. # 6-1215

When a missing child is absent from the foster care placement overnight, the Tracking Information and Payment System (TIPS) code 100 109 shall be entered in the service authorizations. When entering this code, the child's TIPS number shall be used as the provider number. This code is to be entered no later than the next working day when a child is reported missing. This code allows the data system to track a child as missing.

If the child is in an in-home, payable placement that will accept return of the child, and it is expected the child will return quickly, TIPS code 100 109 is used. This will keep the placement authorization for the provider open, to pay the placement for the purpose of reserving space for the child for up to the first 15 days of the missing status. This shall not exceed 15 days. After 15 days of absence, the case manager shall end the placement authorization for the provider.

If a provider accepts payment during the first 15 days to reserve space for the child but then refuses to accept placement of the child when he or she is found during that timeframe, the Department of Children and Family Services shall attempt to recoup any payment provided to reserve space for the child.

For 6 months following the date the child went missing, efforts should continue by law enforcement systems, the case manager, the foster parent/caregiver, and the parents to locate the runaway or missing foster child. The case manager should document efforts monthly in case documentation.

If, after a 6-month search, the child is not located, the case manager shall do the following:

- Submit a letter to the court documenting efforts to locate the child and requesting that the department be relieved of custody
- Advise the parents, the CASA, and the child's attorney of the department's request to the court for release of custody

Until the department is relieved of custody, the foster child's case record shall remain open and the case manager should continue efforts to follow up with law enforcement, family, and friends at least monthly in an attempt to locate the child. Once relieved of custody, the foster care case record should be closed and transferred to the parish with court of jurisdiction.

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Maine

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: OFCS Pol. Man. § V.B.

In policy: When a youth in the care and custody of the State is reported missing, the caseworker must complete the following actions within the first 24 hours:

- Communicate with the law enforcement entity that covers the area the child resides in and file a missing person's report
- Confirm with law enforcement that they have or will place the information into the National Crime Information Center database
- If there is reason to believe that the youth possibly was abducted, alert law enforcement of that possibility right away and give as much detail as possible about who was last with the child, the relationship between the two, etc.

The caseworker who filed the missing person's report is responsible for immediately documenting what the plan will be to respond to law enforcement's notification that the child has been found and being held for pick up. Those plans are to be recorded both in the narrative log and as 'special instructions.'

If the youth is missing for 24 hours, the caseworker must report to the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: OFCS Pol. Man. § V.B.

Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) staff have a responsibility to respond immediately when youth in the care and custody of the State have run away or are missing.

OCFS believes youth should have a safe place to sleep every night and should have responsible adults to care for them. This policy is designed to delineate tasks that OCFS staff must do when youth, who are in the care and custody of the State, become missing and/or have run away from an approved placement.

When a youth in the care and custody of the State is reported missing, the caseworker must complete the following actions within the first 24 hours:

- Conduct a review of case records in an effort to determine where the child may have gone and/or who may have been involved in the child's disappearance or unauthorized absence

- Contact other individuals who may have had previous contact with the missing child, including school personnel, physical and mental health providers, law enforcement personnel, friends, neighbors, relatives, family members, other children who may have shared a placement with the child, etc.
- Contact other community partners to inform them that the child may be missing and request they keep the office informed if they come in contact with the child or learn about his/her whereabouts
- Connect with the local homeless youth outreach agencies, as well as emergency shelters
- Notify the assigned guardian ad litem (GAL)
- Review the Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Policy (HTCSEC) (IV. D-2B) and assess the level of risk the youth is at utilizing the screening tool and follow next steps

The caseworker's ongoing responsibilities while youth is missing include the following:

- Maintain ongoing contact with the birth family (when appropriate), as well as the child's current placement provider to share information and to obtain new or additional information regarding the child
- Keep the GAL informed of the attempts to locate the youth weekly or when there is a change
- Ensure ongoing contact and collaboration with NCMEC and law enforcement

When a youth in the care and custody of the State has run away from an approved placement, caseworker responsibilities include the following:

- Plan with the youth around when, where, and how to contact them, using all relevant communication technology available, and make a plan for the next meeting with them
- Review the HTCSEC Policy (IV. D-2B) and screening tool and follow next steps based on screening tool risk factor category

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: OFCS Pol. Man. § V.B.

When a youth in the care and custody of the State has run away from an approved placement, the caseworker must gather information around the circumstances of the youth's absence from their approved placement.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: OFCS Pol. Man. § V.B.

When a youth in the care and custody of the State has run away from an approved placement, the caseworker must review all the youth's options given the situation. If the youth does not agree to return to their previous placement, the caseworker must plan with them to determine where they will be staying and follow next steps in the Selection of Substitute Care Placement Policy (V. D) for next steps with regard to placement.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: OFCS Pol. Man. § V.B.

When a missing youth in the care and custody of the State is located, the caseworker's responsibilities include the following:

- Pick the youth up as soon as possible from law enforcement and assess the need for safety, placement, and care
- Contact the law enforcement entity where the youth was reported missing to notify them that the youth has been located and that the missing person's report should be cancelled
- Contact any other individuals or organizations who have been contacted about the youth's status, including, but not limited to, the GAL, NCMEC, other law enforcement agencies, and community partners
- As soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the child has been located, utilize the screening tool found in the HTCSEC Policy (IV. D-2B) and follow next steps based on the results of the screening
- Gather information around the circumstances of the youth's absence from their approved placement

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Maryland

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18; Pol. Directive SSA-CW # 16-04

When the local department is informed that a child in out-of-home placement is missing, has been abducted, or has not returned home at a prearranged time, the local department caseworker shall do the following:

- Notify the local law enforcement agency and obtain a complaint number
- Consult with the local law enforcement agency regarding the procedure to be followed to return the child and whether the local department or local law enforcement will pick up the child

In policy: When a child is identified as a run away, missing, or abducted, the caseworker shall complete the following steps:

- Immediately have the resource provider contact the police and file a runaway/missing person report
- If the resource provider cannot file the report, file the report and request a police complaint number
- Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) by filing a missing child report
- Work with NCMEC to provide any additional information required
- Supply the police department with an up-to-date picture of the child and ensure that the police have entered the child in the National Crime Information (NCIC) database

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18; Pol. Directive SSA-CW # 16-04

When the local department is informed that an out-of-home placement child is missing, has been abducted, or has not returned home at a prearranged time, the local department caseworker shall do the following:

- Notify the following:
 - The parents or legal guardian and their attorney, unless guardianship is granted to the local department
 - The attorney for the child
 - The local department's attorney
- Compile information on the child's last known whereabouts and activities
- Contact and speak with any person who may have relevant information, including the following:
 - Relatives and friends
 - School personnel
 - Persons at the child's place of employment, if applicable
 - Persons in the child's neighborhood of origin
 - Persons in the out-of-home placement neighborhood
- Document the child's runaway or missing status with a begin and end date in the case plan
- Document weekly search efforts to locate the child in the case record
- Keep the parents, legal guardian, placement provider, and attorneys updated weekly on the status of the search for the child
- Maintain weekly contact with local law enforcement regarding the search status for the child

In policy: Once initial steps have been taken for documenting a runaway or missing child, the caseworker shall do the following until the child returns or the out-of-home placement case is closed by the courts:

- Make reasonable efforts to locate the child, including the following:

- Having continuous conversations with family and friends
- Checking with the child's school
- Monitoring the child's social media regularly
- Calling and texting the child's cellular phone and emailing
- Visiting areas the child likely may be residing
- Consult police/law enforcement weekly concerning progress toward locating the child
- Maintain contact with the resource provider
- If information is discovered that the child may be residing in another State, contact the police in the State where the child may be residing

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18; Pol. Directive SSA-CW # 16-04

When the child is located, the caseworker shall interview the child regarding the reasons for running away, if applicable, and record the discussion on the contact sheet.

In policy: Within 5 business days of the child's return, the caseworker will conduct a face-to-face visit with the child at the placement. During this visit, the caseworker shall have a conversation with the child concerning the reasons the child ran away, the child's experiences, and where the child resided during the runaway episode.

The caseworker shall process the reasons the child ran away and discuss accommodations that may prevent the child from running away again. The child may have multiple reasons for running away, and the caseworker shall address each of the reasons.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18

When the local department is informed that a child in out-of-home placement is missing, has been abducted, or has not returned home at a prearranged time, the local department caseworker shall develop a plan for the child's placement upon return.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18; Pol. Directive SSA-CW # 16-04

When the child is located, the local department with jurisdiction over the child is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring that the child has transportation to the local department
- Assisting local law enforcement or other responsible party with transportation of the child to a placement if found within the local department's jurisdiction
- Retrieving the child, if he or she is found in another jurisdiction or State
- Notifying the parents or legal guardian, placement provider, and attorneys that the child has been found
- Obtaining a physical examination of the child and appropriate follow-up medical care for the child

In policy: Once the child is located, the caseworker shall do the following:

- Notify law enforcement that the child has been located and ensure the child is removed from the NCIC database
- Notify NCMEC that the child has been located
- Conduct a face-to-face visit with the child within 5 business days

At the face-to-face visit, the caseworker shall ask specific questions about where and with whom the child was residing and how the child was taking care of him- or herself. The caseworker also shall ask if the child has a 'special friend' with whom he or she resided during the runaway episode, the nature of the relationship, and whether they felt safe.

The caseworker shall make close observations for any evidence of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or new tattoos or brands the child may have gotten while on runaway. The caseworker shall pay close attention to any unexplained purchases, such as new clothes, cellular phones, sex paraphernalia, or large amounts of cash, or any other known indicators of possible sex trafficking victimization.

If during the conversation the caseworker suspects the child has been a victim of human sex trafficking or the child admits to being a victim of human sex trafficking, the caseworker immediately shall make a child protective services report and notify the local law enforcement agency within 24 hours. For youth suspected of being victims, the caseworker shall refer the child for a full human trafficking assessment. For youth who are confirmed victims, the caseworker shall refer the child to appropriate specialized therapeutic services within 48 hours.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Code of Regs. § 07.02.11.18

The caseworker shall contact the current placement provider to determine if the provider is willing to hold the child's placement. If the placement provider is willing to hold the placement, the following terms apply:

- Payment of the board rate may be made for up to 30 days.
- No difficulty-of-care stipend payment may be made for the period the child is on runaway or missing from the placement.
- If the child fails to return within 30 days, the provider cannot be paid beyond the 30-day time limit.

If the placement provider will not hold the child's placement or the 30-day time period has expired, the caseworker shall do the following:

- Contact the financial unit to stop the foster care payment for the child
- Conduct a new placement search for the child

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Massachusetts

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF \(327 KB\)](#) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Code Regs. Tit. 110, § 7.115; DCF Pol. #2016-002

Whenever the Department of Children and Families learns that a foster child has run away or is missing from a foster/preadoptive home or from any temporary substitute care placement, the department shall immediately notify the local police department or other appropriate law enforcement agencies that the child has run away or is missing (or ensure that the foster/preadoptive parent(s) have done so) and provide such agencies with all known information that would assist them in locating the child. The name and telephone number of the department employee who should be notified if the child is located must also be provided.

Whenever the department receives information concerning the possible or suspected current whereabouts of a child who has run away or is missing from a foster home or from any temporary substitute care placement, the department immediately shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agencies and provide such information to them. If possible, the assigned department social worker also shall attempt to locate the child by going to the suspected location of the child.

In policy: Within 24 hours after a child or youth age 20 or younger in department care or custody is identified as missing, the department must contact the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children (NCMEC). If the child is in the care or custody of parent or caregiver, either the parent/caregiver or the department must notify NCMEC within 24 hours if the child is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Code Regs. Tit. 110, § 7.115

Whenever a foster parent learns that a foster child has run away or is missing, the parent shall immediately notify the department and then the local police. Such notice shall include at least the following information:

- The name and age of the child who ran away
- The time when the child was last seen
- The location where the child was last seen
- A physical description of the child when last seen, including a description of the clothing worn by the child at that time
- Any known or suspected locations where the child might be found and any known or suspected individuals who might know the whereabouts of the child

Whenever the department learns that a foster child has run away or is missing from a foster home or from any temporary substitute care placement, the department immediately shall do the following:

- Notify the child's parent(s) (unless the parents' parental rights have been terminated) and notify the foster parent(s) that the child has run away or is missing, and provide them with the name and telephone number of the department employee who should be notified if the child is located
- If the child was committed to the department by court order, notify the juvenile probation office of the court that issued the order
- Contact any individuals who might know the whereabouts of the child, attempt to obtain any information such individuals have concerning the whereabouts of the child, and provide such individuals with the name and telephone number of the department employee who should be notified if the child is located

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCF Pol. #2016-002

Within 1 day after a missing child has been located, the social worker will consult with the child to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child running away or otherwise being missing.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Code Regs. Tit. 110, § 7.115; DCF Pol. #2016-002

When a child who has run away from a foster home or from any temporary substitute care placement is located by the department, the department shall interview the child as soon as possible to determine what changes, if any, should be made in the circumstances or conditions of the child's care or placement.

If the child has not returned to the foster home, the department will notify the foster parent(s) whether the child will be placed back in that foster home and inform the parents of the following:

- If the child will return, the date and time when the child will return to the foster/preadoptive home
- If the child will not return, the reason for the child not being placed back in that foster/preadoptive home

In policy: As soon as possible after the missing child has been located, the social worker will do the following:

- Consult with the child's parents, placement resource, and others, as appropriate, about the circumstances under which the child became missing and their perspective on the location and/or type of placement that will keep the child safe and stable
- Consult with the placement resource and others with relevant information to discuss whether it is safe and appropriate for the child to return to the last place the child resided before being reported as missing
- Identify whether other children in the setting may be at risk, including for sexual exploitation or human trafficking
- For a child in department custody, determine where the child wants to live and, if a change is needed, what type of placement the child would prefer

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Code Regs. Tit. 110, § 7.115; DCF Pol. #2016-002

When a child who has run away or is missing from a foster home or from any temporary substitute care placement is located by the foster parent or returns to the foster home, the foster parent immediately shall give notice to the department. Such notice shall include at least the following information:

- The fact that the child has been located or has returned to the foster home
- The current location of the child
- The current physical and emotional condition of the child and whether it appears likely that the child requires medical, psychiatric, or other treatment
- Whether it appears likely that the child will attempt to run away from his or her current location

When a child who has run away from a foster home or from any temporary substitute care placement is located by the department, the department shall do the following:

- Ensure the child receives any required medical, psychiatric, or other treatment as soon as needed
- Notify the following that the child has been located:
 - The appropriate law enforcement agencies
 - The child's parent(s) (unless the parents' parental rights have been terminated)
 - The foster/preadoptive parent(s)
 - If appropriate, the juvenile probation office of the court that committed the child to the department

In policy: When the child is located, the department also shall notify the following:

- NCMEC
- The State police Amber Alert coordinator
- All others, including the multidisciplinary team coordinator, who were previously notified that the child was missing

Within 1 working day, the social worker will consult with the child in a trauma-informed and age-appropriate manner about the child's experiences while away to determine whether the child is a possible victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking. If the child is a suspected or known victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking, the social worker must do the following:

- File a 51A (child abuse report) if the child is younger than age 16
- Notify the district attorney and local law enforcement that the child of any age has been located and is a suspected or known victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking

If needed (e.g., sexual exploitation is suspected, the child has an injury, or the child is in an acute psychiatric state), the social worker will arrange for a medical screening and/or a mental/behavioral health evaluation.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Michigan

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Foster Care Manual, FOM 722-03A

From the Foster Care Manual: The term 'absent without legal permission' (AWOLP) is used when a child who is placed with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for care and supervision is absent from an approved placement without legal permission.

Foster parents, relative/unrelated caregivers, parents, and/or residential facility staff must immediately notify law enforcement agencies (i.e., State police, local police, the sheriff's department) and the supervising agency when a youth under their care fails to return at the expected time or leaves a home without permission. Upon notification, the supervising agency must immediately file a missing person report with the local law enforcement agency, classifying the youth as missing and endangered.

Within 24 hours of the child's absence from his or her placement, the supervising agency must notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Caseworkers and monitoring workers must take the following actions within 1 business day of the child's absence:

- Confirm the child has been classified as missing and endangered on the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN)
- Obtain the NCIC number (the number assigned by the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to all records that verifies that the missing youth was entered into NCIC) from the law enforcement agency where the missing youth was reported missing

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Foster Care Manual, FOM 722-03A

Within 24 hours of the child's absence, the supervising agency must notify the following:

- The court of jurisdiction
- The parents, if appropriate
- The lawyer-guardian ad litem

The supervising agency must take the following actions within 1 business day of the child's absence:

- Update the information system with an AWOLP placement
- Document actions taken to locate the child in the information system
- Complete an unauthorized leave report and send a copy to the court
- Provide a copy of the unauthorized leave report to the local law enforcement agency to ensure that the child is entered on LEIN as missing and endangered
- Document that the child's AWOLP status has been reported to NCMEC

As soon as possible, but within 2 business days of the child's absence, the supervising agency must commence a diligent search for the child. Required actions include the following:

- Review all available information in the case file for information on the potential location of child
- Contact family members, unrelated caregivers, friends, known associates, churches, or a neighborhood center
- Contact the school that the child last attended to verify that the child is not in attendance and determine if there are friends/teachers who may have information
- Contact the local school district office to determine if the child has enrolled in a new school
- Complete an internet search and search social networking sites for the child, the child's parents, known relatives, and acquaintances, if applicable
- Forward any new contacts or results to the court and law enforcement

Ongoing AWOLP diligent search efforts require, at a minimum, that the caseworker complete a diligent search every calendar month until the child is located. The assigned caseworker must document all efforts to locate a child and any child-initiated contacts in the case service plan. The caseworker must continue to notify law enforcement of any new information to aid in their efforts to locate the youth.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Foster Care Manual, FOM 722-03A

As soon as possible, but no later than 5 business days after locating the youth, the supervising agency must meet with the youth to determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth running away.

Caseworkers may utilize the *DHS-5333, Conversation Guide on Return from AWOLP* during the discussion with the youth. The conversation shall be structured to determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth being absent from foster care and shall include discussion of the following questions:

- What led the youth to leave placement?
- Did the placement address the youth's needs?
- Was there an incident that caused the youth to leave the placement?

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements**Citation: Foster Care Manual, FOM 722-03A**

As soon as possible, but no later than 5 business days after locating the youth, the supervising agency must meet with the youth to determine the ways in which the youth's placement should respond to the primary factors that contributed to the youth running away.

From the Conversation Guide: The conversation with the youth following his or her return also should identify future placement needs and services, including a discussion of the following questions:

- What are the youth's preferences for the next placement?
- What can the current or next placement do to the needs of the youth?

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care**Citation: Foster Care Manual, FOM 722-03A**

As soon as possible, but no later than 1 business day after locating the youth, the supervising agency must take the following actions:

- Notify NCMEC that the child has been located
- Notify local law enforcement that the child has been located

As soon as possible, but no later than 5 business days after locating the youth, the supervising agency must meet with the youth to determine the youth's activities while AWOLP, including if the youth was a victim of sex trafficking. If it is suspected that the youth was a victim of human trafficking, the caseworker must immediately contact centralized intake for a complete investigation.

From the Conversation Guide: Upon locating a youth who is AWOLP, Federal mandate requires a conversation to determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth being absent from foster care and to determine the youth's experiences while absent. This guide is provided to offer potential approaches to identify reasons a youth may have left their placement and potential trauma or risk the youth was exposed to during the AWOLP episode, including being a victim of sex trafficking. This conversation should also identify future placement needs and services. Questions to ask during the conversation about the youth's experiences while absent from care include the following:

- How did you support yourself while AWOLP (i.e., obtain food, shelter)?
- Did you earn any money? Did anyone take your money or a portion of your money? Did anyone hold your money for 'safe keeping'?
- When you were AWOLP, were you living or staying by yourself, with your family, or with others? If others, with whom did you live?
- Did anyone at the place(s) you lived monitor you or stop you from contacting your family, friends, or others?
- Did anyone take and keep your identification documents?
- Did anyone provide you with identification that didn't belong to you?
- Did anyone ask you to lie about your age or your experiences while AWOLP?

- If you did borrow or owe money, were you pressured to do anything you didn't want to do to pay it back? Are you currently in debt to someone?
- Did anyone make you feel scared or unsafe?
- Did anyone hurt you or threaten to hurt you? Did anyone threaten to hurt your family?
- Did anyone take a photo of you that you were uncomfortable with?
- Did you give out your contact information to anyone while AWOLP, including cell phone number or social media information? If so, to whom did you give it?
- In any situation while AWOLP, did anyone provide you with illegal drugs, substances, or alcohol?

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Minnesota

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13(b); DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall report immediately, but no later than 24 hours, after receiving information on a missing or abducted child to the local law enforcement agency for entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

From Minnesota Department of Human Services [Best Practice Guide](#): Caregivers, including foster parents, relative caregivers, and staff of residential facilities, shall immediately (within 24 hours) report any missing youth to the following:

- Local law enforcement agency, providing a description of what youth was last wearing, time last seen, is believed that a youth has unwillingly left placement or has been removed by an unauthorized person, etc., so its agency staff can enter the information into the NCIC database
- The child's caseworker and on-call worker, if after business hours

When a caseworker learns that a youth for whom an agency is legally responsible is missing, they shall immediately contact (within 1 business day) the following:

- The law enforcement agency to ensure a verbal report was made by the caregiver and to provide any additional information
- NCMEC

NCMEC will publish the report on its website and distribute posters locally and nationally. The name and identifying information will be published, but the youth will not be identified as a youth in foster care. This does not violate confidentiality.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13; DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall expeditiously locate any child missing from foster care.

From the practice guide: As soon as a youth enters care, a photograph must be taken for the social services case file. The caseworker also shall record physical descriptive information, such as height, weight, hair and eye color, and complexion, and identifiers such as eyeglasses or contact lenses, braces, body piercings, tattoos, and other unique

physical attributes. If a youth has a history of running away, the caseworker will create a safety plan with all parties and clearly designate roles and responsibilities.

Supervisors and primary caseworkers (the youth's assigned worker who has responsibility for case management, service coordination, and delivery) are expected to work aggressively to locate a missing youth and return them to an approved placement.

When a caseworker learns that a youth for whom an agency is legally responsible is missing, they shall immediately contact (within 1 business day) the following:

- The youth's parent(s), guardian, or legal custodian
- The youth's school and request that they contact the caseworker if youth contacts or arrives at school
- The guardian ad litem
- Other team members who may need to know
- The county attorney to request that an ex parte order be filed with the juvenile court to have the youth picked up

Caseworkers are to follow the steps outlined below anytime a youth is missing:

- Develop a plan with specific strategies to locate the youth
- Meet weekly with the supervisor regarding efforts to locate the youth
- In consultation with the supervisor, review and/or revise the plan, as needed, to ensure progress is made toward locating the youth and establishing safety
- Attempt to contact the youth via phone or text
- Check social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.

When a youth's whereabouts are unknown, caseworkers must make a sustained effort to locate the youth by contacting the people, agencies, or organizations (and others as identified by the specific case) listed below at least monthly and requesting that each person/agency contact the caseworker immediately if information becomes available that could assist in locating the youth. People, agencies, or organizations to contact include the following:

- The local law enforcement agency
- Local emergency shelters and homeless youth programs
- The most recent caregiver and any other caregivers with whom the youth has a close or long-term relationship
- Relatives, including parents and siblings
- Neighbors and the landlord at the last known address
- Close friends, classmates, or community members with whom the youth may have developed a significant relationship
- Teachers, counselors, or other school personnel
- Other employees of an agency who may have knowledge of possible locations of the youth
- Other information systems such as MAXIS (Minnesota Statewide Automated Eligibility System), MMIS (Medicaid Management Information System), PRISM (Providing Resources to Improve Support in Minnesota) child support system, and TCIS (Trial Court Information System)
- Probation officers (if applicable)
- County juvenile or adult detention centers

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13; DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care and, to the extent possible and appropriate, respond to those factors in current and subsequent placements.

From the practice guide: When a youth for whom an agency is responsible runs away from a placement and is still missing after 24 hours, agency staff and caregiver(s) must make a decision regarding continuation of the youth's placement location. When deciding whether to return the youth to the last placement, caseworkers shall do the following:

- Interview caregivers and the youth separately to determine why the youth ran away
- Discuss the reasons given by caregivers and the youth with the supervisor to determine whether the reasons for running away are related to the placement itself and whether services would be beneficial to stabilize the placement and mitigate future incidents
- Update the out-of-home placement plan to address current service needs and placement decisions

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13; DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care and, to the extent possible and appropriate, respond to those factors in current and subsequent placements.

From the practice guide: Any new placement in a substitute care setting must include a determination of the individual needs of the youth and the ability of prospective caregiver(s) to meet those needs. If a youth has a history of running away or indicates that they will not accept a specific placement, caseworkers shall discuss with the youth and take into account where they want to live or what type of placement youth is willing to accept, such as any of the following:

- A particular relative
- A former caregiver or another adult with whom youth has formed a relationship
- Reunification with parent(s), if possible
- A group home or congregate care setting
- A supervised independent or transitional living setting (if the youth is able to live independently and is between the age of 18 and 21)

The caseworker will update the out-of-home placement plan to address current service needs and placement decisions.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13; DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall determine what the child experienced while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim. The agency shall report immediately, but no later than 24 hours, to the local law enforcement agency any reasonable cause to believe a child is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.

The local social services agency shall determine appropriate services with respect to any child for whom the local social services agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision when the local social services agency has reasonable cause to believe is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.

From the practice guide: Once a youth has been located and is in a safe placement, caseworkers shall do the following:

- Conduct a thorough follow-up interview with the youth using the required Runaway Youth Debriefing form to determine the primary factors that contributed to the run, to screen the youth for possible sex trafficking or sexual exploitation, and to help them problem solve to develop solutions
- Inform law enforcement, NCMEC, and all others who were notified of the run that the youth has been located
- Determine if there is reason to believe that the youth has been a victim of sex trafficking; make a report to law enforcement within 24 hours
- Determine if there is reason to believe that the youth has been sexually exploited; refer the youth to a Safe Harbor regional navigator to determine appropriate services
- Review the youth's placement options
- Ensure that a medical examination is scheduled as soon as possible, if it is determined that one is necessary, taking into account the amount of time on the run and experiences while on the run
- Replace clothing or personal items the youth may need

- Address the youth's service, treatment, and placement needs and revise the service plan, if needed
- Ensure that a court hearing is held within 72 hours of the youth being picked up to review appropriate placement and services
- Take a current photo of the youth (and update annually) and place it in the court and social services case files

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 260C.212, Subd. 13; DHS Best Practice Guide

The local social services agency shall not discharge a child from foster care or close the social services case until diligent efforts have been exhausted to locate the child and the court terminates the agency's jurisdiction.

From the practice guide: The caseworker must keep the juvenile court informed of ongoing search efforts by filing court reports and attending court hearings. These cases shall remain open; court hearings will be held at least every 3 months.

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Mississippi

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Code of Rules § 18-006-104, Part VII; DFCS Policy § D(VII)(17)(c)

When the caseworker receives a report that a youth in care has runaway or is missing, the worker must complete following actions:

- Notify the youth court and law enforcement agency immediately in person of missing/runaway youth and sign a runaway petition (if the child ran away) within 1 working day
- Follow up with law enforcement within 1 working day and one time per week until the child has been located

In policy: In addition to the actions described above, the worker must notify the Division of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) State Office immediately of the runaway so that the child's status may be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The notification must include all the following information that is available:

- Pictures and videos of the child
- The circumstances of the disappearance and description of clothing last worn
- A summary of child's family history, including names of parents
- The child's date of birth, health status/concerns, complexion, hair color, eye color, height, weight, and identifying characteristics (e.g., scars, tattoos, or piercings)
- The child's cellular phone number(s)
- The child's friends and hangouts
- The child's social media use and accounts
- The name and phone number of local law enforcement agency involved
- The DFCS worker's agency contact numbers

If the child is under age 18, the DFCS State Office will report the runaway to NCMEC. If the child is age 18 or older, the DFCS State Office will assist local law enforcement with reporting the runaway to NCMEC.

NCMEC will generate posters and work with local law enforcement to locate the child.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Code of Rules § 18-006-104, Part VII

When the caseworker receives a report that a youth in care has runaway or is missing, the worker must complete following actions:

- Staff the incident with the regional director immediately upon receipt of information regarding the status of the child
- Complete the required notifications to law enforcement, the youth court, and NCMEC
- Notify the child's birth parent(s) or guardian
- Follow up with the resource parent/provider within 24 hours
- If there are allegations of maltreatment, enter a report in the information system within 24 hours of notification

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DFCS Policy § D(VII)(17)(c)

When the child is located or returns, the worker must interview the child to assess the reasons why the child was missing or ran away from care. Questions that may be asked, as appropriate, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What caused you to leave or runaway?
- Did anyone encourage you to leave?
- Did you leave with someone? Who?

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DFCS Policy § D(VII)(17)(c)

When the child is located or returns, the worker will complete the following actions:

- Notify the youth court immediately in person or by phone that the child has been located
- Notify law enforcement immediately in person or by phone that the child has been located
- Notify the DFCS State Office immediately via email so that the child's status may be reported to NCMEC
- Notify the child's birth parent(s)/guardian and placement providers as soon as possible; attempts to notify shall continue until contact has been made
- Take an updated photograph of the child and include any new physical attributes (e.g., hairstyles, tattoos, piercings)

The worker will interview the child to assess their experiences while they were missing/runaway from care. Questions that may be asked, as appropriate, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Where did you go?
- What is the first thing you did after you left?
- What types of things have you been doing while you were gone?
- Did you leave with someone? Who?
- Did anything happen to make you feel uncomfortable or that hurt you?

The DFCS worker shall staff with the area social work supervisor to make appropriate referrals for placement and to medical, mental health providers, and law enforcement, as needed. The worker shall document in a narrative and in the case file all information gathered regarding the child during their time missing/runaway from care.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Code of Rules § 18-006-104, Part VIII

Board payments will not be paid to the placement resource when a child is placed on runaway status.

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Missouri

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: CW Man. § 4.9.1

In policy: When a child in care is determined to be a runaway, the case manager should immediately, but no later than 24 hours, notify law enforcement to file a missing child report. The resource provider should initiate contact with local law enforcement and the child's worker if the child is missing or has run away from their premises. This includes the Highway Patrol, so they can add the child to their system, which can be searched across the State.

Within 24 hours, the case manager shall notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). When reporting to NCMEC, the case manager should be prepared to provide the following information:

- The child's case manager's name and contact information
- Information regarding the law enforcement agency involved, including the case number and assigned law enforcement officer's contact information
- Descriptive information regarding the missing child, including date of birth, height, weight, physical description (eye color, hair color, complexion, tattoos, piercings, etc.), clothing worn at the time the child was last seen, and medical and/or mental health conditions
- Details surrounding the circumstances leading to the child's missing status

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: CW Man. §§ 4.9.1; 4.9.5

When a child in care is determined to be a runaway, the case manager should take the following steps:

- Notify the juvenile officer, guardian ad litem, and the child's parents
- Contact family members, friends, counselors, school faculty, or others who may have information about the whereabouts of the child; continue to make these contacts a minimum of once per month until the child is located
- Follow procedures for creating a protective service alert
- Check with the Family Support Division and food stamp assistance information monthly to see if the child is receiving assistance or is listed in separate household receiving benefits
- Immediately send out a statewide protective service alert

If the court of jurisdiction does not agree to a release of custody and the child is not located, the worker should continue to do the following:

- Contact law enforcement, family, relatives, friends, and all other contacts once per month in an effort to locate the child for a minimum of 6 months
- Monthly cross-check the Family Support Division and food stamps databases
- If after 6 months, the child is not located, continue to contact law enforcement, relatives, and other contacts on a quarterly basis in effort to locate child
- Continue to provide a written summary to the court on all actions taken to locate child
- Resubmit the request for release of jurisdiction at all court hearings

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: CW Man. § 4.9.4

When a runaway or missing child is located, the case manager should schedule a family support team (FST) meeting within 72 hours of child's return to address the reasons the child ran away (i.e., didn't like the rules, placement issues, couldn't handle responsibilities in home, ran to be with friends, parents, others).

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: CW Man. § 4.9.4

When a runaway or missing child is located, the case manager must assess the factors that led to the child being absent and, to the greatest extent possible, address those factors in subsequent placements. The case manager also should do the following:

- Determine whether to do the following:
 - Return child to the previous resource provider
 - Place child in a new or temporary placement
 - Place child in a more secure or restrictive environment
 - Seek approval for a nontraditional placement (i.e. friend of child, older sibling, parents who rights are been terminated but continue their relationship with child)
- Schedule an FST meeting within 72 hours of child's return to address the following:
 - Safety concerns
 - Additional support services the child may need
 - Unexplored or nontraditional placements options
 - Potential changes in the child's case plan

It is important for FST members to consider case-specific information when addressing these issues or making changes to the child's case plan. Members should consider the specific needs of the child, especially when considering alternative placement settings. Any child age 12 or older should be included in the FST meeting.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: CW Man. § 4.9.4

When a runaway or missing child is located, the case manager should determine the child's experiences while absent, including whether the child fell victim to commercial child sexual exploitation (CSEC). Indicators that a child is involved in CSEC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Has frequent runaway episodes
- Has a heightened sense fear or distrust of authority
- Is unable to identify where they were while they were gone
- Has money or material goods without a clear explanation of how they were obtained
- Has physical injuries with no explanation of how they were received
- Has a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or a history of STIs
- Uses drugs and/or alcohol
- Reports sexual assaults by strangers
- Talks about a paramour but does not provide their identity
- Has frequent unexplained absences from school
- Is involved in gang activity
- Appears fearful, anxious, depressed, tense, nervous, paranoid, or hypervigilant
- Has multiple cell phones
- Has hotel keys or talks about staying in hotels
- Has suspicious tattoos or other signs of branding
- Has inappropriate, sexually suggestive activity on social media, the internet, or cell phone apps
- Refuses to talk about their experiences while on runaway status
- Associates and/or has relationships with age-inappropriate friends

When a runaway or missing child is located, the case manager also should also complete the following actions:

- Immediately assess the safety of child

- Notify law enforcement, the juvenile office, the guardian ad litem, the resource provider, the child's parents and their attorney, as appropriate, of the child's return
- Determine whether to arrange for medical or mental health screening
- Arrange for a medical examination of the child within 24 hours of the child's return

Once a child is located, the case manager must talk to the child to determine the factors that led to the child's absence and their experiences while they were gone. Questions to ask include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What made you leave your placement?
- Where did you go when you left?
- How did you take care of yourself while you were gone?
- Who helped you while you were gone?
- Did you have to do anything in exchange for their help?
- Did anyone hurt you?
- Did you do anything that made you uncomfortable?
- Are you worried about anything that happened to you while you were away?

The case manager also should notify NCMEC of the child's return.

If a child provides information that may indicate they were abused or involved in trafficking, the following must occur immediately but no later than 24 hours after receiving the information:

- The case manager must immediately contact the child abuse hotline to make a report of child abuse and neglect.
- The case manager should inform the hotline of any suspicion of involvement in human trafficking.

In addition, the case manager shall do the following:

- Ensure that law enforcement is notified of the concern
- Make a referral to the Child Advocacy Center for a forensic interview to further explore the child's experiences in care if there is an indication the child was abused or trafficked
- Contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: CW Man. § 4.9.5

The first priority of the worker always shall be to locate a runaway child and remedy the reasons that the child has run. However, there may be individual cases where the Children's Division may want to explore a request for release of jurisdiction from the court. All requests for release of custodial responsibility should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the case manager, their direct supervisor, and FST team members. During the FST meeting, there should be a thorough review of documented efforts and consideration of the following factors:

- The age of the child
- The number and type of previous placements
- The current and concurrent case plan
- Whether termination of parental rights has or has not occurred
- The child's progress and compliance in cooperating with the division's services
- The child's run history (one-time event verses chronic runs)
- Whether the child is running to a specific place or person
- Whether there is an exit plan in place for the child to provide ongoing support

It is important that a child never be released from custody without an exit plan in place as it is the division's responsibility to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system either have support services in place or know how to obtain them as needed in the future. Noncompliance cannot be used as the sole reason to request termination of custodial duties by the division. With this understanding, there may be rare situations where it is appropriate to

request a release of jurisdiction when it is clear that there is a documented history of chronic and repeated noncompliance on the child's part to accept placements and services offered by the division or in cases in which the child has been missing without contact for a minimum of 12 months.

This does not include cases in which the child has run to a nonapproved placement and remains in contact with the worker. Placement issues need to be addressed by the worker, the child, FST members, and the court.

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Montana

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: CFSD Pol. Man. § 408-6

From the policy manual: When the Centralized Intake (CI) hotline receives a report that a child in foster care is missing, CI will contact law enforcement and make a runaway youth report or verify that a report has been made.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: CFSD Pol. Man. § 408-6

Whenever a Montana foster youth is missing or has runaway, the Child and Family Service Division (CFSD) must implement protocols to locate children missing from foster care.

For purposes of this policy, 'foster youth' is defined as youth in foster care placement, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Paid or unpaid kinship, foster care, congregate care, or a residential treatment facility
- Youth on a trial home visit
- Youth in placement per a protection plan under the 30-day voluntary placement statute
- Youth for whom CFSD has a diversion court agreement with birth family and the youth is remaining in the home
- Youth for whom CFSD has court-ordered care and control, but the youth continues to reside in their birth parent's home

The procedure for locating youth missing from foster care include the following actions:

- CFSD staff, congregate care or residential treatment facility staff, or foster parents will call the CI hotline to report missing or runaway foster youth.
- CI will collect information from the reporter that is listed on the on 'Missing or Runaway Foster Youth Referral Form' to collect the required information.
- CI will contact law enforcement and make a runaway youth report or verify a report has been made.
- CI also will document the activity in the information system.

Tribal title IV-E social services agencies also will issue reports of missing or runaway foster youth to CI, as this is a requirement under the title IV-E contracts. CI will follow the same procedures that apply to other reports of missing children when referrals of missing or runaway foster youth are received from communities located on any of Montana's Indian Reservations. Within 1 working day, the Tribal social services staff assigned to the missing or runaway foster youth's case will be expected to provide additional information not available when the CI referral was issued.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: CFSD Pol. Man. § 408-6

Whenever a Montana foster youth is missing or has runaway, CFSD must implement protocols to determine the factors that lead to the child's being absent from foster care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: CFSD Pol. Man. § 408-6

Once the foster youth is located, CFSD and Tribal title IV-E social services agencies will be responsible for the following:

- Determining the factors that led to the foster youth being absent from foster care and to the extent possible address those factors in subsequent placements
- Determining the foster youth's experiences while absent from care, including whether the child is a sex trafficking victim
- Reporting related information as required by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services
- Immediately reporting to local law enforcement any time it has been determined a youth has been sex trafficked

Once the youth is located, CFSD must notify law enforcement that the youth has been located and remove any public service announcements that have been issued.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Nebraska

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCFS Prot. & Safety Proc. #29-2017

In policy: The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) believes that specific steps need to be taken to locate missing youth and ensure their safety.

When a CFS specialist is unable to locate a youth or believes that a youth is missing, the specialist will do the following:

- Contact local law enforcement immediately to provide the following information:
 - The child's full name; date of birth; Social Security number; gender, height, and weight; and race/ethnicity
 - A physical description of the child, including tattoos, piercings, body markings, and what the youth was last wearing
 - The date, time, and location where the youth was last seen
 - The names of the last persons who may have seen the youth
 - Information about the youth's general health, any medical conditions or concerns, and current necessary medication use
 - Recent changes in the youth's behavior
 - Information on whether the youth is at risk of possible sex trafficking (i.e., past history, association with certain people, suspected parental involvement)
 - Information regarding any individuals who have shown unusual attention or interest in the youth

- Information about any social media accounts the youth may have
- The youth's phone number
- Verify with law enforcement that the youth's information has been entered into the National Crime Information Center
- Report the missing youth immediately to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- Document that NCMEC was notified and include the date of notification, the name of the assigned case manager, and the associated report number
- Notify the youth's guardian ad litem, the county attorney, the parent's attorney, and the court, if applicable

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Admin. Code Title 390, § 11-002.01T; DCFS Prot. & Safety Proc. #29-2017

When a child is determined to have run away, the worker will take the necessary steps to locate and recover the child. The worker will notify law enforcement and the parent and provider, if the child is placed out of the home, as soon as possible.

In policy: When a CFS specialist is unable to locate a youth or believes that a youth is missing, the specialist will do the following:

- Contact the youth's foster parents, school personnel, friends, work associates, local shelters/at-risk programs/community designated safe places, or any other entity that may have last seen the youth to gather any information they may know about the missing youth
- Notify the youth's parents (if rights are intact) that the youth is missing and inquire if the parents know where the youth may be located
- Obtain written parental consent (if rights are intact) to use the youth's picture for the purposes of a missing youth poster through the Nebraska Missing Person's Clearinghouse and NCMEC
- Maintain active ongoing contact with the missing youth's parents (if parental rights are intact) until the youth is located
- Maintain active ongoing contact with law enforcement until the youth is located
- Contact the youth's school, friends and family of the youth, professionals who have worked with the youth, the youth's place of employment, and the youth's social media sites and phone to show ongoing active efforts to locate the youth

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCFS Prot. & Safety Proc. #29-2017

When the child is located, the CFS specialist will discuss with the youth and the placement provider the reasons the youth was missing and plan actions to prevent future episodes of the youth going missing from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Admin. Code Title 390, § 11-002.01T

When the child is located, the worker should determine the child's current status and future placement and services.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCFS Prot. & Safety Proc. #29-2017

When a CFS specialist is notified that the youth has been located, the specialist will do the following:

- Determine the youth's need for medical attention or a mental health or substance use screening
- Ensure the youth feels safe, comfortable, and cared about
- Notify law enforcement, NCMEC, and all other agencies assisting in the search for the youth
- Notify the youth's parents (if parental rights are intact), the guardian ad litem, the county attorney, the parent's attorney, and the court

Through discussion with the youth, the specialist will determine the experiences the youth had while missing from care. The specialist will utilize the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Screening Tool to determine if the youth is a possible victim of human trafficking while missing from care.

When the specialist has concerns that the youth may be involved in or a victim of sex trafficking, the specialist will do the following:

- Consult with the CFS supervisor, CFS administrator, and the service area administrator
- Contact the abuse and neglect hotline to make a report, as a 'law enforcement only' report, unless there are allegations that a parent or caregiver has involved the youth in human trafficking and an initial assessment is necessary
- Contact the Child Advocacy Center for a forensic interview for the youth
- Contact and utilize the Salvation Army Trafficking Specialists for case consultation and additional resources such as the following:
 - Victim advocacy
 - Housing, shelter, food, and transportation
 - Literacy, job training, life skills, and employment
 - Medical care and dental care and mental health treatment
 - Law enforcement coordination
 - Interpretation, translation, and immigration
 - Substance abuse assessment and treatment
 - Legal services
 - General educational development preparation

The hotline will notify law enforcement immediately.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Nevada

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Child Welf. Pol. Man. MTL # 0210

In policy: Licensed foster homes and caregivers are required to verbally notify the child welfare agency and law enforcement immediately (followed by written notice as soon as practicable but no later than the business day immediately following the event) upon determination that a child is missing, has runaway, is suspected to have been abducted, or is the victim of sexual exploitation. A child is determined to be missing when the location of the child is unknown and there has been no contact with the child for 3 hours, despite multiple attempts to make contact (in person, electronic, social media, etc.).

Verbal notification to the agency and law enforcement must occur immediately when any of the following apply:

- The child is age 5 or younger.
- The child has a cognitive delay.
- The child is vulnerable due to medical needs.
- The child has runaway or abduction is suspected.

When reporting a missing child, the foster parent should speak directly to an agency caseworker, intake worker, or on-call worker. The foster parent should be instructed to file a police report with their local law enforcement agency, obtain the law enforcement report number, and provide it to the caseworker. If the foster parent is unable to file a report, the caseworker must ensure a report is made with the local law enforcement agency.

The caseworker must make a report to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) as soon as practicable but no later than 24 hours of becoming aware that the child is missing and/or exploited. The caseworker will provide law enforcement and/or NCMEC with all requested pertinent information about the child, some of which might include the following:

- The child's full name, including known aliases and nicknames
- A current photo of the child
- For exploited children, the date, time, and location where the crime was committed
- For missing children, the following information:
 - The date, time, and location where child was last seen, if known
 - The names of the persons who saw the child last, if known
 - Any pertinent medical history, conditions such as developmental disability, or if they are medically fragile

The caseworker also shall do the following:

- Identify and secure any computers and wireless devices used by the child and provide law enforcement access to these items
- Ask law enforcement to look for clues in any chat and social networking websites the child has visited
- Provide law enforcement any known information about the child's social networking
- Compile descriptive information about the child, including items and information such as the following:
 - A recent photo of the child
 - A description of the clothing worn at the time the child was last seen
 - Cell and other phone numbers
 - Date of birth, hair and eye color, height, weight, complexion
 - Identifiers such as eyeglasses or contact lenses, braces, body piercings, tattoos, and other unique physical attributes
 - Any general health and medical conditions the child may have

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Pol. Man. MTL # 0210

child involved with or in the custody of the agency is missing, abducted, or runaway.

The child welfare caseworker must ensure notification to the birth parent or legal guardian within 24 hours. If unable to reach the birth parent or legal guardian, the caseworker must make recurring efforts to notify the parents.

The caseworker also must do the following:

- Notify the supervisor via text message, telephone, or email when notification to law enforcement has been made according to agency policy and procedure
- Notify the child's service providers that the child is missing and/or is a victim of exploitation no later than 2 business days after becoming aware of the issue

Service providers may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The child's legal representative (guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or attorney)
- The child's therapist
- The child's probation or parole officer
- The child's independent-living service provider/case manager

After initial contacts, the child welfare caseworker must make reasonable efforts to locate the child at least every 30 calendar days until the child is located or the case is closed. Efforts should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Continue to seek information from the parents, relatives, adult mentors, child's attorney, friends, and others who may have information about the child's whereabouts while the child is in missing or on runaway status
- Ask the other children in the home if they have heard from or know where the child may be
- Check past locations the child has been known to frequent or where they were previously found
- Check all the child's contacts (i.e., local family members, friends, teachers, significant other) to ask if they have heard from the child and if they know of his/her whereabouts
- If at any time new information is obtained on the child's location, immediately contact all law enforcement agencies and other agencies notified that the child was missing
- Check social media of the youth, friends, and family
- Continue to call or text youth directly on their cell phone

Caseworkers must document their actions of continued efforts to locate the child with a monthly case note until the child has been located.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Pol. Man. MTL # 0210

Upon a child's return to care, the child welfare caseworker must interview the child utilizing the returning child debriefing tool. The returning child debriefing tool asks questions to help identify why the youth ran away; what they did while they were gone; reasons that contributed to their absence; if they have any immediate safety, medical, or emotional needs upon return; and if there is anything that could have been done to prevent them from leaving.

Guidelines for completing the tool include the following:

- Within 24 hours of the child's return, a trusted adult must complete an interview with the child utilizing the tool to initiate strategies to prevent the youth from leaving and make referrals for appropriate services.
- The tool is required to be completed for the first runaway episode if a child has been missing for 24 hours or longer.
- After subsequent runaway episodes, the caseworker must review the tool to consider changes and possible referrals to support runaway prevention.
- At the next supervision of the case, the caseworker must review the tool and determine if additional supports are needed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Pol. Man. MTL # 0210

Upon a child's return to care, the child welfare caseworker must ensure that all the following steps are completed:

- Welcome the child back and ensure the child knows and is aware of the concerns regarding his/her safety and well-being by friends, family, and others who have significant relations with the child
- Assess and meet the child's immediate physical and health needs
- Notify the supervisor, child's parents, legal guardian (if parental rights have not been terminated), parole or probation officer (if child is on parole or probation), and any other agencies and people who were contacted that the child has been located
- Cancel reports to law enforcement and NCMEC
- Inform local law enforcement as soon as reasonably practicable but no later than 24 hours of becoming aware that the child has been located
- Notify NCMEC and file a recovery report within 48 hours of becoming aware that the child has been located
- If applicable, notify the Attorney General's Office, Missing Children's Unit

- Identify services the child may need

If the child was missing, returns from running away or being absconded, or is suspected of being a victim of exploitation, a screening for sexual exploitation must be completed within 24 hours of the child's return. This screening is not required if the child has previously been identified as a victim of exploitation through the use of the Nevada Rapid Indicator Tool (NRIT). The NRIT assesses whether any of the following applies to the child:

- The child is a confirmed victim of commercial sexual exploitation.
- The child is at high risk of commercial exploitation.
- No indicators apply to this youth at this time.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Child Welf. Pol. Man. MTL # 0210

If a child turns age 18, has not elected to remain on court jurisdiction, and is on missing/runaway status, case closure will be reviewed and recommendations made pursuant to agency procedure.

If the case is closed, the caseworker must follow agency procedure on case closure. In addition, the caseworker must notify the following of case closure:

- NCMEC
- All parties to the case
- The child's service providers, including, but not limited to, the therapist, independent-living specialist, and parole or probation officers

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New Hampshire

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

From the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) [policy manual](#): When a youth involved with DCYF is missing, the parent or caregiver must contact local law enforcement immediately and in no case later than 24 hours. If the report is not made by the parent or placement provider, the caseworker or supervisor must notify the law enforcement agency that the youth is missing and verify that the youth is entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, including the following information:

- The name of the youth
- The name of the reporter
- The relationship of the reporter to the missing youth
- The name, age, and address of the authorized residence
- All identifying characteristics of the missing youth (with a recent photo, if available)
- The last known location of the youth
- The length of time the youth has been missing
- All other information considered important by either the reporter or the law enforcement agency

When the caseworker determines, based on available information, that the youth may have been abducted, he or she must do the following:

- Apprise the local law enforcement agency of the reason it is believed the youth was abducted, including a description of the vehicle and/or person suspected, if known
- Request the activation of the New Hampshire Child Abduction Emergency Alert Plan

If there is reasonable cause to believe that the youth is at a specific location or is identified on a website (e.g., Backpage or a dating site), the caseworker shall notify the law enforcement agency and request the youth be apprehended. If that specific location is out of State, the caseworker shall notify the Deputy Compact Administrator for the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ).

The caseworker shall obtain the corresponding missing person report number generated by the law enforcement agency.

The caseworker also shall complete the following actions:

- Advise the law enforcement agency on the steps DCYF is taking to search for the missing youth, such as the following:
 - Making collateral contacts
 - Attempting to further determine the whereabouts of the youth and any special circumstances (e.g., medical/mental health condition) through ongoing case contacts
 - Obtaining any history significant to the possible whereabouts of the youth
- Complete the missing child/youth worksheet, with a picture of the child/youth and the plan for placement of the child/youth when recovered, and send it to the 'DHHS-DCYF-Youth Runaway' email address before the end of his or her work hours

DCYF administration shall designate one staff with access to this email account as responsible for providing notifications to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) by the end of the business day in which an email was received.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

When a youth involved with DCYF is missing, all efforts will be made to determine whether the youth has been abducted or has run away. Upon receipt of a notification that a youth with an open family services case is missing, the caseworker shall make collateral contacts, including the following:

- Checking with the school or where the youth should be at the time of the notification
- Contacting the current caregiver (the youth's parent or placement provider) for the following purposes:
 - Assess/determine if they know the youth's whereabouts
 - Inquire about any family or friends of the youth who may know more information, or any websites the youth frequently visited or used
 - Request that they contact law enforcement to open a missing child report providing all details from the youth's last known whereabouts and appearance
 - If the child has been in a placement, ask that they notify the parent that the youth is missing, and law enforcement has been notified

The caseworker also should do the following:

- Inform the parent or guardian that the caseworker will reach out every 2 weeks to share any information received and ask if they have heard from the youth
- Advise contacts that any person can add information to the NCMEC report by calling the NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST

Staff notified that a youth is missing between the hours of 4:30 pm and 8:00 am Monday through Friday, or on weekends and holidays, must direct the caller to call Central Intake. Intake staff will make the notification to NCMEC outside of business hours as necessary and prepare a referral for the caseworker assigned to the case. The caseworker must attempt to contact the youth's parents as soon as possible but no later than the close of the next business day if the child is in placement, unless otherwise instructed by the law enforcement agency.

The supervisor must verify the following with the caseworker:

- Contact was made with local law enforcement agency and the youth is entered into NCIC as a missing person.

- The youth is reported to NCMEC.
- A timely determination has been made of whether the youth was abducted or ran away.

During the absence of the youth, the caseworker shall support efforts to locate and return a missing youth by doing the following:

- Reviewing initial efforts to locate the youth with his or her supervisor within 24 hours and establishing an ongoing plan to locate the youth
- Maintaining ongoing contact with the parents or guardians, siblings, friends, school personnel, professionals, other collateral contacts, and any caseworker who may know the youth to attempt to determine the possible location of the youth
- Reviewing any websites that the youth is reported to have used every couple of weeks to monitor for updates, as accessible
- Maintaining contact with the local law enforcement and other responding agencies to provide and receive updates on any new information
- Reviewing efforts to locate the youth with his or her supervisor every 14 calendar days after the date of the youth's disappearance
- Documenting all efforts and communications in the case contact log

The field administrator shall provide oversight at least once every other week that ensures efforts to locate the youth continue.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

When the youth is located, the caseworker must meet with the youth within 24 business hours, but no later than 72 hours, after their return to complete a screening. The screening should determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth's running away or otherwise being absent from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

When the youth is located, the caseworker must take the following action:

- Meet with the youth within 24 business hours, but no later than 72 hours, after their return to complete a screening to determine the youth's willingness to stay at his or her current residence
- Determine service planning for each youth after he or she returns from an abduction or runaway episode
- Ensure that the youth's case plan addresses the primary factors that contributed to the runaway or absence episode for the current and subsequent placements
- Clearly define efforts for follow-up case coordination and service planning with the agencies involved, including consideration of any other supports the youth may need for general health or well-being

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

When the youth is located, the caseworker must take the following action:

- Contact the New Hampshire ICJ deputy compact administrator for the return of all children or youth found in another State
- Support the parent or placement provider in picking up the youth located in New Hampshire and returning the youth to the appropriate residence
- Take a photograph of the youth upon their return and appropriately document any new physical characteristics (such as marks and tattoos)
- Work collaboratively with the involved agencies to ensure the following notifications are made, if they were not previously completed:
 - Notify the local law enforcement agency

- Notify the parents or guardians, unless otherwise requested by a law enforcement agency
- Contact NCMEC to identify that the youth has been located
- Update the supervisor and the field administrator
- As appropriate, notify the supervising family court, court-appointed special advocates or guardians ad litem, schools, service providers, and other individuals or agencies involved
- Work collaboratively with law enforcement and other responding agencies to interview the youth and coordinate further investigative efforts, such as with law enforcement, child advocacy centers, or the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office, as follows:
 - Make efforts to avoid multiple interviews to support the youth's emotional well-being
 - Follow policy 1554 (Response to Human Trafficking – Screening, Referral and Case Planning) for children or youth determined to be victims of human trafficking

In collaboration with law enforcement and other responding agencies when available, the caseworker must meet with the youth within 24 business hours, but no later than 72 hours, after his or her return to complete a screening. Children or youth might experience a wide range of traumatic events while missing (including abduction or human trafficking), and the screening process must prioritize their well-being. The screening should determine the following:

- The child's activities and experiences while absent, including if he or she may be a victim of human trafficking
- Other individual(s) who may have been assisting or were involved in the incident

The caseworker must refer matters to law enforcement when information obtained during screening indicates the youth may have been or was a victim of a crime. If there is concern that a missing youth was a victim of human trafficking and is at risk for continuing to put themselves in harm's way, immediate services may be sought to keep the youth safe.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Admin. Rules § He-C 6355.21; DCYF Policy Man., Pol. # 1558

Foster care programs shall continue to be reimbursed by DCYF at their authorized board and care and treatment rate for up to 10 consecutive days if the following conditions are met:

- The foster care program remains available to expedite the return of the child to the program.
- The child has not been placed into another DCYF-funded residential treatment program during that time period.

If a child runs away, the foster care program shall not bill Medicaid during the time that the child is absent without leave.

If it is known at the time a child runs away that the child will not be returning to the foster care program, then the child's payment authorization to the program shall be closed out immediately.

In policy: The youth's DCYF case must remain open during the youth's absence unless otherwise determined by the DCYF director.

In determining whether to keep a case open if a youth is missing and does not return before their 18th birthday, the DCYF director may identify circumstances where it is appropriate to close a case when a youth has not returned. If there are no other children in the case that the division is still working with, the caseworker should consult with their supervisor and/or field administrator about the appropriateness of asking the court to close the case, if applicable.

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New Jersey

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Dept. of Children & Fam. Pol. Man., CP&P-VIII-E-2-100

From the policy manual: If a child for whom the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (CP&P) is responsible is reported as runaway or missing, CP&P must do the following:

- Contact the police to file a missing person report
- Provide to the police any known information regarding life-threatening medication the child is on
- Determine if the police have any information regarding the child's current whereabouts

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care**Citation: Dept. of Children & Fam. Pol. Man., CP&P-VIII-E-2-100**

If a child runs away while residing in a CP&P-supported living arrangement, the caseworker must notify the parent that the child has run away and keep him or her advised of the situation.

If a child is receiving CP&P services under a court order, the caseworker must notify the court in writing that the child has run away.

Location efforts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Contacting relatives and friends
- Consulting the deputy attorney general (DAG) to determine whether court intervention is appropriate
- Checking the last known address and inquiring if the neighbors and/or the landlord have information, when appropriate
- Inquiring at child's last place of employment, if appropriate
- Contacting the probation and/or parole departments, if appropriate

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care**Citation: Dept. of Children & Fam. Pol. Man., CP&P-VIII-E-2-100**

Upon the return of a runaway child for whom CP&P is responsible, CP&P must contact the child's parent to determine the reason the child ran away.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care**Citation: Dept. of Children & Fam. Pol. Man., CP&P-VIII-E-2-100**

Whenever a local office receives a referral indicating that a runaway child has been located, the following are determined:

- The child's principal place of residence
- The legal status of the child (e.g., whether the child is a delinquent currently under the court's jurisdiction)
- Whether the child is under the supervision of CP&P and, if so, which office supervises the child
- Whether the child is under the supervision of any other social services agency
- Whether the child's parent or guardian has been contacted

Upon the return of a runaway child for whom CP&P is responsible, CP&P shall do the following:

- Determine which local office is responsible for the child's return and/or the responsibilities of other local offices or other agencies involved with the child
- Contact the child's parent to determine the following:
 - The parent's willingness and ability to arrange and pay for the child's return
 - The need for services, what specific services are needed, and the plan for the child
 - The parent's willingness to consent to any needed services

Determine that placement is necessary and obtain a court order to authorize out-of-home placement

- Determine that services are needed and complete a case plan assessment, signed by the parent or guardian

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Dept. of Children & Fam. Pol. Man., CP&P-VIII-E-2-100 From the policy manual: **If a child for whom the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (CP&P) is responsible is reported as runaway or missing, CP&P must do the following: • Contact the police to**

If a child is receiving CP&P services under a court order, CP&P will terminate the case if the child is not located in 6 months, unless the case is in litigation. For cases in active litigation, the caseworker must consult the DAG regarding how long to maintain the litigation and/or warrant before termination. The caseworker must send written notification within 30 days of termination to all involved persons, agencies, and courts.

If a standing court order is applicable to the child, prior notification of the court is necessary for termination.

If a child age 16 or older is under the guardianship of CP&P and remains missing for 6 months, a recommendation for discharge of the child from guardianship may be made to the local office manager. If it is decided by the local office manager that the case remains open, renewed efforts to locate the child must occur every 3 months until the child is located, the child reaches age 18, or a recommendation is approved to discharge the child from guardianship.

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New Mexico

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Admin. Code § 8.10.8.24

The Protective Services Division (PSD) shall report immediately, but no later than 24 hours, after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth to law enforcement authorities for entry into National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

PSD shall report immediately, but no later than 24 hours, after receiving information on missing or abducted children or youth to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 8.10.8.24

PSD shall make reasonable efforts to locate children or youth missing from foster care.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 8.10.8.24

PSD shall make reasonable efforts to determine the factors that led to the child or youth being absent from foster care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Admin. Code § 8.10.8.24

PSD shall make reasonable efforts to assess the child or youth's experience while absent from foster care, including whether the child or youth is a victim of sex or human trafficking. PSD shall immediately, but not later than 24 hours, notify law enforcement of children or youth who PSD has identified as victims of sex or human trafficking. PSD also

shall identify, document, and determine appropriate services for children or youth who have disclosed or who may be at risk of being the victim of human trafficking.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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New York

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

An authorized agency receiving a report of a child in foster care's absence without consent must report the absence to the local law enforcement agency and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) immediately and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving notice of such absence.

In addition to the above requirement, a social services official must report to law enforcement and to NCMEC immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours of receiving the information, that following categories of children are missing or abducted:

- A child of a family for which the social services district has an open child protective services or open preventive services case
- A child or youth who is receiving federally funded independent-living services
- A child under the supervision of the social services district pursuant to a court order
- A youth over whom the social services district has supervision responsibilities in accordance with § 430.12(f)(4)(i)(b) of this title

An authorized agency receiving information that a child in foster care or a child for whom the social services district has responsibility has been identified as being a sex trafficking victim, as defined by applicable Federal law, must immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving such information, report such child to law enforcement.

Information provided to the authorized agency responsible for a child's care that might lead to the location of a child absent without consent from a foster care placement must be transmitted by the authorized agency to the local law enforcement agency within 24 hours after receipt of such information.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

The name of a foster child who is absent without consent from a foster care placement must be reported no later than 24 hours from the time the absence occurs by the foster parent or staff of an agency boarding home, group home, or institution to the authorized agency responsible for supervising the placement of the child.

If the authorized agency receiving the report is a voluntary agency, that agency also must report the child's absence within 24 hours to the social services district that has custody of the child.

An authorized agency receiving a report of a child's absence without consent must report the absence to the child's parents within 24 hours of such absence, unless the parents' parental rights have been terminated or surrendered or the parents cannot be located.

When the family court has approved the foster care placement, the local social services commissioner in whose custody the foster child has been placed must provide written notice to the family court within 48 hours of the reported absence.

When a foster child is reported to an authorized agency as absent without consent, the case manager or case-planning supervisor is responsible for ensuring that diligent efforts are made no later than 72 hours after the report of the absence to contact the following persons for any information concerning the child's location:

- Members of the child's foster family household or the agency boarding home, group home, or institution where the child was placed
- Members of the child's birth family and extended family or legal guardian of the child
- The child's school principal, teachers, or other appropriate staff at the school last attended
- Close friends of the child, when known
- Adults known to be working with the child in recreational or educational activities
- Professional persons involved with the child's development, including, but not limited to, doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, or clinical social workers
- The administrator or coordinators of the county's runaway and homeless youth services

If a child who is absent without consent cannot be located after conducting the required casework contacts, and the child remains in the custody of the local social services commissioner, the case manager is responsible for ensuring that a continuing effort is made to locate the child. Within each 30-day period following the child's absence, reasonable efforts must be made to obtain information on the child's location as long as the child remains in the custody of the local social services commissioner or until the child is discharged. Sources to be contacted for such information must include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Members of the child's foster family household or the agency boarding home, group home, or institution where the child was placed
- Members of the child's family and extended family, when known, or the legal guardian of the child
- The child's school principal, teachers, or other appropriate staff at the school last attended
- The administrator or coordinators of the county's runaway and homeless youth services
- The local law enforcement agency

Information gathered must be documented in the progress notes of the uniform case record for a foster child who is absent from a foster care placement. Such information must include persons contacted, dates of those contacts, and information pertaining to the child's absence.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

Whenever a child in foster care is absent without consent, the authorized agency with either case management or case-planning responsibility for the child must determine and document in the child's case record the primary factors that contributed to the child running away or otherwise being absent without consent.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

Whenever a child in foster care is absent without consent, the authorized agency with either case management or case-planning responsibility for the child must respond to the factors that contributed to the child running away or otherwise being absent without consent in the child's current and subsequent foster care placements.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

When a child is returned or returns voluntarily to foster care after being absent without consent, diligent efforts must be made to provide services to the child that will restore the child to a supportive environment. In addition to providing the foster care services required by this title, an assessment must be made of the child's need for

rehabilitative services. Such services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Remedial educational services
- Psychological counseling
- Medical services, in accordance with § 441.22 of this title
- Drug and alcohol abuse treatment, when available from a public agency

Whenever a child in foster care is absent without consent, the authorized agency with either case management or case-planning responsibility for the child must determine the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening the child as a possible sex trafficking victim, as that term is defined by applicable Federal law.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Rules & Regs. Tit. 18, § 431.8

A child who is absent without consent from a foster care placement and who has been determined to be a runaway must be reported as absent to the system of record, and payment to the authorized agency for the child's foster care must be suspended no later than 7 consecutive calendar days after the child has been absent.

A child placed pursuant to article 3 of the Family Court Act who is absent without consent shall not be eligible for conditional release as set out in § 431.19 solely by reason of such absence. Such child shall have his or her placement interrupted, as provided in § 431.20, or shall be discharged from care, if one of the following events occurs:

- The local social services commissioner petitions for and the family court grants termination of the local social services commissioner's custody of the child.
- The court order granting custody of the child to the commissioner expires.
- The child reaches age 21 or, for a child placed restrictively pursuant to § 353.5 of the Family Court Act for an act committed when the child was age 16 or 17, the child reaches age 23.

A child age 16 or older who is absent without consent from a foster care placement and who cannot be located, or is located and refuses to return after the responsible authorized agency has used diligent efforts for 60 consecutive days, must be discharged from care if one of the following events occurs:

- The local social services commissioner petitions for and the family court grants termination of the local social services commissioner's custody of the child.
- The court order granting custody of the child to the commissioner expires.
- A voluntary placement agreement is revoked by order of the court or by expiration of the agreement.
- The child reaches age 21.

A child under age 16 who is absent without consent from a foster care placement and who cannot be located after the responsible authorized agency has used diligent efforts for 60 consecutive days must be continued as a case in suspended payment after the child has been absent for 7 consecutive calendar days in accordance with § 628.3 of this title. The child's status must be indicated as absent in the system of record until the child has been located or until one of the following events occurs:

- The local social services commissioner petitions for and the family court grants termination of the local social services commissioner's custody of the child.
- The court order granting custody of the child to the commissioner expires.
- A voluntary placement agreement is revoked by order of the court or by expiration of the agreement.
- The child reaches age 21.

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North Carolina

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Child Welf. Man., Agency Plan for Abducted and Runaway Children

In policy: Upon learning a child is missing, county child welfare agencies must notify law enforcement immediately. Placement providers must immediately report any missing child or youth to a local law enforcement agency and the county child welfare services agency. The placement provider must obtain the number of the missing person report from the law enforcement officer taking the report and provide the report number to the caseworker.

When a child or youth that the county child welfare services agency has legal responsibility for is missing, the agency must do the following:

- Provide immediate verbal notification to the appropriate law enforcement agency, follow up by sending a subsequent written notification within 48 hours, and obtain a copy of the law enforcement report for the case file
- Provide immediate notification (no later than 24 hours) to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and provide NCMEC with the missing person's report number and current photograph of the missing child

Information that must be shared with law enforcement includes the following:

- The child's full name, aliases and nicknames, age and date of birth, Social Security number, driver's license number (if applicable), and other biographical information
- A description of the child (i.e., height; weight; hair, eye, and skin color; whether the child has braces; clothes worn, such as book bag and shoes; whether the child uses contact lenses, glasses, or dentures; whether the child has gold or silver teeth; any physical, hearing, speech, or vision impairments; moles; scars; body piercings; tattoos) and recent photographs
- Physical or psychological conditions, developmental delays, or any condition that may affect the ability of the child to respond to environmental dangers
- Other factors of endangerment, such as young age, hazardous location, medical needs, disability, etc.
- Medication and/or history of suspected substance use/abuse
- A copy of the most recent court order granting legal custody of the child and other relevant facts about the child's custody status
- Type of missing episode (if known), including runaway, family abduction, nonfamily abduction, or other
- When, where, and with whom the child was last seen
- Possible method of travel (e.g., car, bicycle, public transportation, on foot)
- Names and addresses of friends; relatives; present and former placement providers, including child care facilities/staff; and acquaintances
- Locations the child or youth is known to frequent
- Suspected destinations and accomplices
- Prior disappearances and outcomes

If a child is identified as 'high risk,' this must be communicated to law enforcement. It is important to inform law enforcement about any circumstances that could severely compromise the safety of a child who is missing. These circumstances include anything that would fall in the definition of a high-risk child, including the following:

- The child has a developmental disability that impairs the child's ability to care for him- or herself.
- The child is pregnant and/or parenting, and the infant/child is believed to be with the parent.
- The child is missing more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement.
- The child is believed to be in a life-threatening situation.
- The child's absence is inconsistent with his or her established pattern of behavior and the deviation is not readily explained.
- The child is known or believed to be a victim of human trafficking.
- Other circumstances are involved in the disappearance that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered 'at imminent risk.'

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man., Agency Plan for Abducted and Runaway Children

When a child or youth that the county child welfare services agency has legal responsibility for is missing, the agency must provide immediate verbal notification to the child's family (if the child is not believed to have been abducted by family members) and the guardian ad litem and discuss collaborative efforts that all parties can take to locate the child.

Upon notification that a child is missing, the supervisor must do the following:

- Within 24 hours, confirm the caseworker has completed all the required reports and contacts
- Assist the caseworker in developing and implementing a plan that contains specific strategies to locate the missing child and ensure the child's safety as quickly as possible
- Meet with the caseworker on a weekly basis after the initial reporting requirements are completed
- If the child is high risk, obtain and review daily progress reports from the caseworker that include the following:
 - Ongoing strategies and efforts to determine the child's whereabouts
 - Contacts with law enforcement and others
 - Additional steps taken to assist in finding the child
 - A placement plan for when the child is located

When a child's whereabouts are unknown, and/or the circumstances of the child's disappearance are unknown, the caseworker must make a sustained effort to locate the child by contacting the following individuals, agencies, or organizations each week:

- Local police, sheriff's office, or other law enforcement agency working to locate the child
- Local emergency shelters and homeless youth programs
- The most recent caregiver and any other caregivers with whom the child is known to have had a close or long-term relationship
- Relatives, including the child's parents and siblings
- Neighbors and landlord of the child's last known address
- Close friends and classmates of the child, including any known boyfriends, girlfriends, or anyone else in the community with whom the child may have developed a significant relationship
- Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel from the school the child last attended, if there is knowledge that the child had close relationships with persons at the school
- Employees of the county child welfare services agency or placement provider who may have knowledge of the possible location of the child
- Probation offices, when appropriate
- County juvenile or adult detention centers

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man., Agency Plan for Abducted and Runaway Children

When deciding whether to return the child or youth to the placement they were in before being reported as runaway or missing, the caseworker should interview the caregiver and the child separately to determine why the child ran away.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Child Welf. Man., Agency Plan for Abducted and Runaway Children

When a child is located, careful consideration should be given to their ongoing placement. When deciding whether to return the child or youth to the placement they were in before being reported as runaway or missing, the caseworker should interview the caregiver and the child separately to determine why the child ran away. Caseworkers should review the reasons provided with a supervisor to determine if the reasons for running away are related to the placement itself. Caseworkers and supervisors should determine whether placement stabilization or other services would be beneficial.

If the child or youth has a history of running away or indicates that he or she will not accept any placement selected by the agency, the caseworker should discuss with the child or youth where he or she wants to live or what type of placement he or she is willing to accept. Such alternate placements may include the following:

- A relative with whom the child is comfortable and has a relationship
- A former caregiver or another adult with whom the child has formed a relationship and with whom the child expresses a desire to be placed
- An independent transitional living arrangement, if appropriate
- Reunification with the child's parent(s)

Any or all these options must meet certain requirements, depending on the placement type, including any necessary approval by the court.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Child Welf. Man., Agency Plan for Abducted and Runaway Children

The caseworker must make every effort to return the child to an authorized placement. In addition to making required contacts listed above, the following information must also be sought from the missing child:

- The child's location at the time of the contacts
- Any information about where they are staying currently or for any period
- Any information about the individuals they may be with
- Information about the health and safety of the child or youth
- If the youth is parenting, the health and safety of the infant or child
- Whether they are attending school and where
- Whether they are employed and where
- Any contact they have made with family members, friends, or probation and parole agents, etc.

If the child or youth was missing from care for another reason (i.e., they did not run away), caseworkers should carefully assess the factors associated with the child or youth's disappearance and their experiences while absent from care to address possible safety and risk issues and plan for placement accordingly.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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North Dakota

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Admin. Code § 75-03-36-17; Foster Care Perm. Planning Man. § 624-05-15-50-34

The child-placing agency shall have written policy outlining the critical incident recording and reporting process to the regional supervisor, and parent or custodian of the child, if any, when an incident requires the services of law enforcement, including in the case of a runaway or absent child.

In policy: The foster care case manager, upon determining that a foster child is missing, must make a report immediately, and in no case later than 12 hours, using three specific steps:

- Immediately report the incident and pertinent information to local law enforcement, including requesting that law enforcement enter the pertinent information into the National Crime Information Center
- Immediately report the incident and pertinent information to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)

- Immediately report the incident and pertinent information to the regional office

Pertinent information includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Who, what, where, when, and exact time of the incident
- A description of the child's appearance (i.e., hair color/style, clothing, identifying marks)
- A photo of the child, if available
- The name, address, and telephone number of the provider
- Who last saw the child
- The date, time, and relevant content from the last case manager visit
- Whether this is the first time the child has been missing, if not, provide a brief history of prior missing episodes
- What was going on with the foster child at the time, including the possible primary factors that contributed to the foster child being absent from care
- Whether there is any suspicion of foul play such as abduction, human trafficking, or sexual exploitation

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Foster Care Perm. Planning Man. § 624-05-15-50-34

The foster care case manager shall document the actions taken by the case manager and foster care provider to expeditiously locate the missing foster child.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Foster Care Perm. Planning Man. § 624-05-15-50-34

The foster care case manager shall document the primary factors that led to the foster child running away.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Foster Care Perm. Planning Man. § 624-05-15-50-34

The foster care case manager shall document how case management will respond to the primary factors identified in current and subsequent placements.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Foster Care Perm. Planning Man. § 624-05-15-50-34

Once the foster child is found, notifications to law enforcement, NCMEC, and the regional office should be repeated to inform all involved parties that the foster child is no longer missing or on the run.

The foster care case manager must screen the foster child to determine both the primary factors that led to the foster child running away and the foster child's experiences while absent from foster care. This includes determining if the foster child was a possible human trafficking victim. The North Dakota Runaway & Missing Youth Screening Tool shall be used to help identify if a child missing from foster care was a victim or exploited. The foster care case manager should determine how to best integrate this screening tool upon the missing child's return to foster care. Attention should be paid to the child's ability and willingness to participate in the screening. Every effort should be made to complete the screening before NCMEC is notified that the child has been located.

In the follow-up contact to NCMEC, the case manager will be asked if there was suspicion of or actual human trafficking/sexual exploitation while the child was absent from foster care. If the screening is not completed prior to contacting NCMEC and later it is determined the child was exploited, case management shall notify NCMEC of the findings.

In the event it is determined that the foster child was a victim or sexually exploited, case management will work to ensure needed medical screenings are initiated, services are provided to the child, and all required documentation is completed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Northern Mariana Islands

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Ohio

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Oklahoma

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-9-123; DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

When notified a child or youth has run away or is missing from a foster placement, the Department of Human Services shall, within 24 hours of notification, report such status of the child or youth to local law enforcement, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

The department shall report to law enforcement authorities immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information on a child or youth who has been identified as being a sex trafficking victim.

In policy: When the placement provider learns the child or youth is missing, the provider must file a report with law enforcement and contact the assigned caseworker, providing details of the incident and information reported to law enforcement.

When the caseworker is notified the child or youth is missing, the caseworker must do the following:

- Immediately file a report with the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction and request that the child or youth be reported to the NCIC
- Report the child to NCMEC within 24 hours after receiving notification of the child or youth missing from care

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-9-123; DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

The department shall develop and implement specific protocols to expeditiously locate any child or youth missing from foster care.

In policy: When the caseworker is notified the child or youth is missing, the caseworker must do the following:

- Immediately notify the district attorney; the child or youth's attorney; and, when applicable, his or her parent or parents
- Submit the necessary paperwork, as determined by the court of jurisdiction, within 1 business day to request that the court issue a pick-up order indicating the child or youth is a ward of the court
- Document no later than 1 business day after the episode, the missing-from-care placement episode in the State information system, with an exit reason of AWOL (runaway) when the child or youth has an open removal and is in department custody
- Contact any relative or collateral, including, but not limited to, a court-appointed special advocate (CASA), guardian ad litem, service provider, counselor, therapist, or school personnel, who may have information about the child or youth's whereabouts
- Immediately notify the child welfare supervisor and district director to inform them the child or youth is missing from care and to confirm all steps are being taken to locate the child or youth, including reporting the child to NCMEC within 24 hours after receiving notification of the child or youth missing from care

The caseworker must continue to make ongoing efforts to locate the child or youth until he or she is safely returned to an approved placement, including, but not limited to, contacting the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction, relatives, any collaterals, or other sources that may assist the department in locating and protecting the child or youth. These efforts must take place as often as needed and never less than once per month until the child or youth is located.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-9-123; DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

The department shall develop and implement specific protocols to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child or youth running away or otherwise being absent from foster care.

In policy: When the child or youth is located, the caseworker will assess the reasons the child or youth left the previous placement without department permission by evaluating his or her safety in the previous placement and having a private conversation with the youth about why he or she left, if he or she felt safe there, and where he or she wants to live.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-9-123; DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

The department shall develop and implement specific protocols to respond, to the extent possible and appropriate, to those factors that contributed to the absence from care or runaway behaviors in the current and subsequent placements of the child or youth.

In policy: When the child or youth is located, the caseworker immediately shall assess the child's safety and determine whether to return him or her to a department-authorized placement, when he or she is in department custody.

The caseworker may consider seeking expedited placement approval with the person with whom the child or youth was found including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- A parent whose parental rights were terminated, when reinstatement is applicable per title 10A, § 1-4-909 of the Oklahoma Statutes
- A parent who has not completed the court-ordered individualized service plan, when this is a safe option or safety can be ensured through a safety plan, and the court grants approval for reunification
- A person who is not a department-authorized placement provider, by seeking expedited placement provider approval for such person

Approval to place the child or youth with the person with whom he or she was found is determined on a case-by-case basis, unless the person has a felony conviction per Admin. Code § 340:75-7-15. The automatic bar to placement for certain criminal history does not apply to a parent.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-9-123; DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

The department shall develop and implement specific protocols to determine what the child or youth experienced while absent from care, including an appropriate screening to determine if the child or youth is a possible victim of sex trafficking.

In policy: Immediately, or no later than 1 business day, after the caseworker has located a child or youth missing from care, the caseworker shall do the following:

- Notify the following:
 - The appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction with a request that NCIC be notified that the child or youth was located
 - The district attorney, the child or youth's attorney, and, when applicable, the child or youth's parent or parents
 - Child protective services (CPS) programs staff to close the protective service alert and reports to NCMEC, when applicable
- Submit the necessary paperwork, as determined by the court of jurisdiction, to recall the pick-up order
- Contact any relative or collateral, including, but not limited to, the court-appointed special advocate, guardian ad litem, service provider, counselor, therapist, or school personnel, who was contacted for information on the whereabouts of the child or youth to report his or her return
- Immediately report the child or youth to the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction, in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information on a child or youth who was identified as a sex trafficking victim

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Admin. Code § 340:75-7-52(11); DHS Pol. for § 340:75-6-48.3

When a child is out of the resource home for family reunification purposes, preplacement visits, or is a runaway for up to 7 consecutive days, the resource parent receives a maintenance payment when the child is expected to return to the resource home by the end of 7 business days.

In policy: The following protocol applies when a child or youth missing from care cannot be located:

- After a 1-year search, when there are no other children in the case, the child or youth is not in permanent Department of Human Services custody, and he or she was not located, the caseworker will submit a progress report to the court documenting the efforts to locate the youth over the 1-year time frame and request dismissal of the dependency case.
- The caseworker advises each parent of the request for dismissal of the dependency case.
- When the court does not dismiss the dependency case, the case remains open and the caseworker continues to make efforts every 30 calendar days until the child or youth is located or the case is dismissed. The caseworker requests that the dependency case be dismissed at each subsequent court review.
- When the dependency case is dismissed, the caseworker will do the following:
 - Notify law enforcement and the child's or youth's parent or parents, when applicable
 - Submit the necessary paperwork, as determined by the court of jurisdiction, to recall the pick-up order
 - Notify CPS and programs staff to close out the protective service alert and reports to NCMEC, the Oklahoma Office of the Inspector General, or both, when applicable
 - Update removal and custody status information in the State information system
 - Close the child welfare case

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Oregon

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Admin. Rules § 413-080-0053; CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

When a caseworker receives information that a child or young adult in substitute care is missing, the caseworker must ensure law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) are notified immediately and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving information on the missing child or young adult.

In policy: The following activities should be completed when the caseworker is informed that a child or youth is missing:

- Report the situation to law enforcement agency (LEA) immediately and in all cases within 24 hours
- Document the date and time of the report, the report number, and the name of the officer taking the report
- Be prepared to provide a recent photo of the youth, if one is available
- Provide the following additional information:
 - A physical description, including tattoos and piercings, what the youth was wearing when seen last, and a description of personality traits
 - Information about the youth's routine, friends, activities, social media presence, etc., including any recent changes in his or her life
- After the report to the LEA has been made, report to NCMEC within 24 hours

While timelines vary on when to complete the above activities, efforts to locate the child/young adult must be commenced immediately.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Admin. Rules § 413-080-0053; CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

When a caseworker receives information that a youth in substitute care is missing, the caseworker must do the following:

- Make immediate efforts to locate the youth
- As soon as practicable, ensure the court and legal parties to the case are notified, unless notification may jeopardize the safety of the youth or interfere with an investigation

In policy: In addition to the required reports to LEA and NCMEC, the caseworker must ensure the following individuals or entities are notified on the same working day the information is received:

- The youth's parents (unless their parental rights have been terminated) and caregivers
- The court
- The attorney for the youth
- Attorneys for the parents
- The district attorney
- The court-appointed special advocated (CASA)
- The youth's Tribe, if applicable

There are many ways to search for a missing youth, including, but not limited to, physically looking, using the internet, using the phone, and asking others to help locate. These efforts may include the following:

- Searching the last place he or she was seen
- Going to the homes of his or her friends
- Checking regular hang outs and any place he or she frequents and leaving messages at these places
- Going to emergency shelter's homeless youth programs
- Checking with juvenile detention if it is a child who is missing and jails if it is a young adult
- Checking with hospitals
- If he or she is a victim of sex trafficking or at risk of being a victim of sex trafficking, checking clubs
- Checking Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites
- If the missing youth is a victim of sex trafficking or at risk of being a victim of sex trafficking, checking known escort sites, such as Backpage, and ads
- Googling the youth's phone number, in case the number is in an ad
- Calling the youth's phone number or having someone he or she trusts call from their phone
- Using the phone's GPS system to try and determine a location
- Contacting individuals close to the youth

Looking for the youth includes reaching out and maintaining contact with those who know him or her well. These people may include the following:

- Relatives, including parents and siblings
- Neighbors and the landlord of his or her last known address
- Close friends and classmates, including any known boyfriends or girlfriends
- Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel from the school he or she last attended or other schools the youth attended, if there is knowledge that he or she had a close relationship with persons at that school
- Employers and coworkers where he or she was employed
- Other department staff, such as former caseworkers
- Mental health providers
- Tribal staff
- The youth's attorney, CASA, probation or parole officer, advocate, or case manager
- Runaway and homeless programs

The caseworker must maintain regular contact with the individuals close to the youth. Updates to and from these individuals are important and may identify the location of the youth. The caseworker also should maintain regular contact with the LEA and the NCMEC case managers to provide any new information on the youth's possible whereabouts and to receive updates on efforts to locate him or her.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Admin. Rules § 413-080-0053; CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

When a child or young adult missing from substitute care is located, the caseworker must determine and, to the extent possible, address the primary factors that contributed to the missing status of the child or young adult.

In policy: When the caseworker understands the primary factors contributing the youth being missing, the caseworker must try to address those factors, if at all possible. Even if the youth has a different caregiver when he or she returns, the circumstances that led to the youth being missing may be addressed in the new environment.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

In determining whether to return a youth to the last placement he or she was in, the worker should gather information from the youth and the caregiver separately about why the youth went missing. If the reasons are related to the placement itself, the caseworker must staff the placement decision with a supervisor.

If the youth has a history of running away or indicates that he or she will not accept any placement selected by the department, the worker should discuss with the youth where he or she wants to live or what type of placement he or she is willing to accept. Such placements may include the following:

- A particular relative with whom the youth is comfortable. The requirements for relative placement must be met to place him or her with that relative.
- A former caregiver or another adult with whom the youth has formed a relationship and with whom the he or she expresses a desire to be placed. Again, all certification requirements must be met to place him or her with that adult.
- Independent-living services, while not a placement, has associated housing programs. If the youth is considering independent-living services, the caseworker will determine if he or she is eligible and appropriate for these services.
- Reunification with the youth's parent or parents. If he or she expresses a desire to live with his or her parent, the caseworker should determine if the factors preventing a reunification in the past are still a factor and, if not, follow requirements for pursuing a possible reunification.

By attempting to limit trauma to the youth and increase his or her connections with supportive people, he or she will be more likely to move forward in making progress toward a stable adulthood.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Admin. Rules § 413-080-0053; CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

When a youth missing from substitute care is located, the caseworker must do the following:

- Determine the youth's experiences while missing
- Determine if the youth is a sex trafficking victim or at risk of being a sex trafficking victim
- Ensure the court and legal parties to the case are notified the youth has been located

In policy: When the youth is located, the caseworker must ensure this information is shared within 24 hours with those who were informed that he or she was missing. At a minimum, the notifications must include the following:

- Parents or caregivers
- Law enforcement and NCMEC
- The court (including all parties)
- The Tribe

The caseworker should make face-to-face contact with the youth within 3 business days after the youth has been located to determine the following:

- The primary factors that contributed to the missing status of the youth and, to the extent possible, address them

- The youth's experiences while missing
- If the youth is a sex trafficking victim or at risk of being a sex trafficking victim

This information must be gathered from the youth and may be gathered from others. The caregiver at the time the youth went missing is likely to have a critical perspective, and friends of the youth likely have relevant information. The information gathered also should include the following:

- Contact information for the youth
- If there are adults the youth trusts and would return to or speak to
- What the youth is looking for in a placement or at home (using motivational interviewing, if possible)

The caseworker must ensure information is gathered in a developmentally appropriate manner, considering the following:

- The age and developmental stage of the youth
- The mental and physical health of the youth
- The best person to gather information
- Ways to continue to gather information by being in contact more than usual (daily, weekly, etc.)

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: CW Proc. Man. Ch. 4, § 18

When a youth is abducted or has run away, the Department of Human Services may authorize substitute care payments to the substitute caregiver for up to 7 days following the date the youth was determined to be missing when the following two criteria are met:

- The plan is for the youth to return to the same substitute care placement.
- No other substitute caregiver is receiving a maintenance payment for the youth.

Permanency and administrative hearings will continue as scheduled when a youth is missing, as follows:

- Regularly scheduled permanency hearings and Citizens' Review Board (CRB) hearings will continue.
- Reports to the court and CRB will include documentation on the agency's efforts to locate the youth.
- The youth's legal parents will continue to receive notification of the hearings and reviews.

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Pennsylvania

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Puerto Rico

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

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Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

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Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

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Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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Rhode Island

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Code of Rules, Tit. 214, § 030-00-1

A child or youth is determined to be missing when he/she cannot be located within the following timeframes:

- Within 1 hour for children age birth to 13
- Within 1 hour for youth of any age determined to be high risk
- Within 24 hours for youth age 14 and older

When a child cannot be located and is determined to be missing from any placement, the placement provider, or parent/guardian if the child is placed at home, immediately shall do the following:

- Call the child abuse and neglect hotline of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)
- Notify the local police department to file a missing person report

Local law enforcement will enter missing child information into the National Crime Information Center.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Code of Rules, Tit. 214, § 030-00-1

DCYF staff, providers, and law enforcement will work collaboratively to ensure that children identified as absent or missing from their living arrangement are located immediately.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Code of Rules, Tit. 214, § 030-00-1

Once any missing/runaway child or youth is located, DCYF will assess the youth to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child or youth's running away.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Code of Rules, Tit. 214, § 030-00-1

DCYF staff, providers, and law enforcement will work collaboratively to ensure that children identified as absent or missing from their living arrangement have their current placement evaluated to ensure that the child or youth is placed in the most appropriate and supportive setting that maintains the child or youth's safety.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Code of Rules, Tit. 214, § 030-00-1

DCYF staff, providers, and law enforcement will work collaboratively to ensure that children identified as absent or missing from their living arrangement are assessed for potential exploitation and receive the appropriate services and supports, if necessary. Once any missing/runaway child or youth is located, DCYF will assess the youth to determine the child or youth's experiences while absent from care.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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South Carolina

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

From the policy and procedure [manual](#): If a child runs away or goes missing from placement, the worker shall, after receiving information on the missing or abducted child, report the case within 24 hours, to law enforcement authorities for entry into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in accordance with their protocols for such action.

The worker should provide the following information:

- Correct identifying information and any special circumstances that could place the child or the public at increased risk, including age, medical conditions, medications that could affect health or conduct if missed, physical or mental disabilities, history of criminal conduct or physical violence that could affect the responding officer's or the public's safety, and any history of suicidal ideation or action
- Whether the child has run away previously and was found at or known to have been at a particular location
- Addresses of parents, family, friends, and any significant persons in the child's life
- Any other information that could lead to helping locate the child
- A photo of the child

The worker shall file a report with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The worker shall sign the release and verification form for NCMEC, indicating his or her job title on the form and that the signer is executing the release on behalf of the Department of Social Services (DSS), the child's custodian.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

When a child is reported as missing from foster care, the worker shall do the following:

- Notify the following persons:
 - The parent/legal guardian
 - The child's guardian ad litem
 - School officials
 - Any service providers who may be affected
- Obtain a copy of any missing person report and place it in the child's case file
- Upon receipt of a signed pick-up order from a judge (if applicable), supply the order to law enforcement

The worker also shall do the following:

- Consult with the State office IV-E coordinator if the child's runaway/missing status continues for 30 days or longer
- Contact parents and/or other relatives or friends at least every 2 weeks (by letter, phone, or visit) to explore possible leads on the child's whereabouts
- Conduct follow-up contact with law enforcement at least every 2 weeks to determine the status of their efforts in locating the child
- Contact the Office of Investigation at least every 2 weeks to share information regarding efforts to locate the child
- Document all efforts to locate and retrieve the child in the case file

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

As soon as possible after a child runs away from care, the worker shall meet with the foster family/caregiver to determine primary factors that possibly contributed to the child's running away or being absent from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

To the extent possible and appropriate, the worker shall respond to the factors that contributed to the child's running away in current and subsequent placements. Upon the child returning to care, the worker shall place the child in a setting that addresses or remedies the issues that led to the child's runaway status, consulting the information provided by the foster parent/caregiver.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

Upon the child returning to care, the worker shall do the following:

- Determine the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim
- Notify NCMEC no later than 24 hours after the child's return
- Follow the local community response protocol, including the following:
 - Calling the local child advocacy center (CAC) to determine whether the CAC believes a medical needs assessment of the child is necessary
 - Arranging for a forensic interview if a forensic interview is recommended by the CAC

- Conducting a multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting for a case staffing for commercial sexual exploitation of children, if recommended by the CAC
- Report to law enforcement any related information obtained from the CAC case staffing of the child, if recommended
- Place a copy of the child's medical needs assessment, a copy of the forensic interview (if applicable), and the results of the MDT meeting in the child's case file

If, at any point, the worker has reasonable cause to believe that the child has been a victim of sex trafficking, the worker shall follow the protocol for screening and service planning for sex trafficking victims.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Hum. Serv. Pol. & Proc. Man. § 550.4

The agency shall not seek court-ordered emancipation of a child solely due to the child's runaway status.

Runaway foster children are in agency custody until a court relieves the agency of custody or the child reaches adulthood. It is not appropriate for DSS as custodian to ask the court to be relieved of custody or to ask for a child to be emancipated when the sole basis for the request is that the child is on runaway status.

To ask the court to emancipate a child, DSS must be able to show to the court that the child is not at risk of harm, is self-sufficient, and is self-supporting. To ask to be relieved of custody, DSS must be able show the child is not at risk of harm and that appropriate arrangements for care of the child are in place.

Children on runaway status are considered to be in foster care.

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South Dakota

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Tennessee

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Supp. to Policy # 31.2

From the *Protocol for Reporting Runaways, Absconders and Escapees* (Supplement to Policy # 31.2): Upon determining that a youth has run away from a placement, the caseworker, foster parent, or contract provider agency staff must complete the following steps immediately in the order listed below:

- The foster parent or contract provider agency staff shall contact local law enforcement (LE) and have the youth entered as a 'missing person.'
- The contract provider agency staff or foster parent next contacts the caseworker.
- LE is responsible for entering the youth into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and into the Missing Children of Tennessee databases.
- The reporter obtains the NCIC number and provides it to the caseworker within 1 business day. If LE cannot immediately provide the number, the caseworker makes it a priority to obtain the number as soon as possible.
- The caseworker requests a copy of the NCIC report, which is documented in the youth's case file.
- The caseworker next contacts the Department of Children's Services (DCS) Absconder Unit (DCS AU) to notify the unit of the youth's status.
- The caseworker files a report with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
- The DCS AU provides follow up with the caseworker within 3 business days to ensure this step has been completed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Supp. to Policy # 31.2

Upon determining that a youth has run away from a placement, the caseworker must do the following:

- Telephone the parents or caregiver to report the youth has run away
- Within 24 hours of the runaway incident, file a petition and request an attachment with the committing court and request copies of both

Upon notification that a custodial youth has run away, the caseworker conducts a thorough investigation of the youth's last known whereabouts. This investigation must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Contacting contract agency staff, parents, foster parents, or other caregivers
- Contacting the youth's friends, school personnel, police, hospitals, clinics, and Department of Human Services Child Support Offices
- Contacting other individuals/agencies with which the family may have been in contact
- Checking social media sites for information

The caseworker must do the following:

- Make one unannounced home visit weekly for the first 30 days
- After the first 30 days, make one unannounced home visit monthly
- Contact the youth's parents or caregivers by telephone at least two times per month
- If the parents do not live together, contact each parent separately
- Conduct a full diligent search immediately if the family has moved without notice to DCS

The DCS AU provides assistance by prioritizing cases based on the medical or mental health needs and condition of the youth, age of the youth, and length of time on runaway. The unit gathers pertinent information to investigate what happened at the location of the run and the youth's background and history to prioritize the case. The type of support

the DCS AU provides is determined by the priority level, as follows:

- Low priority: The DCS AU tracks and monitors the youth through available reports and contacts the regional absconder representative at least one time per month.
- Moderate priority: The DCS AU assists caseworkers by phone with guidance and possible resources to assist the search. DCS AU tracks the youth through social media and other media avenues to assist the caseworker in determining the possible location of the youth.
- High priority: The caseworker partners with the regional absconder representative to identify high-risk youth for an active search. The caseworker and DCS AU staff actively seek the youth by going to relative homes, schools, community centers, malls/shopping centers, and contacting local law enforcement. The DCS AU obtains information from known friends, associates, and relatives of the youth to identify any possible leads and known locations.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Admin. Pol. & Proc. § 31.2

From the policy manual: Once a youth has been located and returned to custody, the caseworker determines the primary factors contributing to the youth running away or being absent from care in order to appropriately respond to the youth's needs in subsequent placements.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Admin. Pol. & Proc. § 31.2

Once a youth has been located and returned to custody, the caseworker will convene a child and family team (CFT) meeting prior to placement, whenever possible, to determine how to best meet the youth's needs and to discourage future runaway episodes.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Admin. Pol. & Proc. § 31.2

Once a youth has been located and returned to custody, the caseworker must do the following:

- Within 1 business day of recovery of the youth, notify the LE that entered the youth into NCIC, the regional absconder representative, and the absconder unit
- Notify the parents or legal guardians that the youth has been located
- By the next business day, notify all courts where a runaway petition/attachment was filed
- Immediately send a referral packet to the placement team to ensure a safe placement is available as runaway youth are located
- Ensure that any youth who reports sexual assault, physical assault, intravenous drug use, and/or is a victim or suspected victim of trafficking receives an immediate medical evaluation from a hospital emergency room, child advocacy center, or a community health-care provider to reduce the chance of contracting HIV, STDs, and/or pregnancy

The youth may choose to refuse a medical evaluation but should be taken to a health-care provider regardless so the youth may discuss the decision with a medical professional. Any youth that has been on a runaway episode for more than 24 hours and does not have any injuries should be scheduled for an Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Standards interperiodic medical exam as soon as possible after returning to their placement.

Caseworkers and any CFT member must make an immediate child abuse hotline referral when any youth reports commercial sexual exploitation.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Texas

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Fam. Code § 264.123; DFPS Pol. Handbook §§ 6461.1; 6461.2

If a child in the managing conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is missing from the child's substitute care provider, including a child who is abducted or is a runaway, DFPS shall notify the following that the child is missing:

- The appropriate law enforcement agencies
- The court with jurisdiction over the DFPS's managing conservatorship of the child

DFPS shall provide the notice no later than 24 hours after the time DFPS learns that the child is missing or as soon as possible, if a person entitled to notice cannot be notified within 24 hours.

From the policy handbook: If a child in DFPS's managing conservatorship runs away, is discovered to be missing, or is suspected to have been abducted from a substitute care placement, and the child's whereabouts are unknown, the caseworker must notify the following:

- His or her supervisor
- Appropriate law enforcement officials in the jurisdiction where the child went missing
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- The special investigator (SI) program director and regional director assistant, after the caseworker files a missing person or runaway report with NCMEC and with the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction for the location from which the child went missing

The caseworker must provide these notifications immediately and no later than 24 hours after learning the child is missing.

From the Locating Missing Children in DFPS Conservatorship: Resource Guide: If a child in DFPS's managing conservatorship runs away or is discovered to be missing from a substitute care placement and the child's whereabouts are unknown, the child's caseworker must notify the appropriate law enforcement (LE) officials (within 24 hours, or as soon as possible) and obtain the LE case number. The caseworker files a missing person/runaway report with the LE agency having jurisdiction at the location from where the child went missing. If a missing child meets the definition of an endangered child, the caseworker must report this information to law enforcement so the child can be designated as such in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Texas Crime Information Center.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Fam. Code § 264.123; DFPS Pol. Handbook §§ 6461.1; 6461.3

If a child in the managing conservatorship of DFPS is missing from the child's substitute care provider, including a child who is abducted or is a runaway, DFPS shall notify the following persons that the child is missing:

- The child's attorney ad litem and guardian ad litem
- The child's parent, unless the parent cannot be located or contacted, has had his or her parental rights terminated, or has executed an affidavit of relinquishment of parental rights

DFPS shall make continuing efforts to determine the location of a missing child until the child returns to substitute care, including the following:

- Contacting the following on a monthly basis:
 - The appropriate law enforcement agencies

- The child's relatives
- The child's former caregivers
- Any State or local social service agency that may be providing services to the child
- Conducting a supervisory-level review of the case on a quarterly basis if the child is age 15 or younger to determine whether sufficient efforts have been made to locate the child and whether other action is needed

From the policy handbook: The caseworker must provide notice that the child is missing or has run away to the following parties:

- Appropriate law enforcement officials
- The court
- The child's parents
- The parents' attorney
- The child's attorney ad litem, guardian ad litem, and court-appointed special advocate
- The SI
- NCMEC
- The child's probation or parole officer, if applicable

The caseworker must continue ongoing efforts to locate the child, and the assigned SI must actively assist the caseworker in searching for the child until the child is found or the court dismisses conservatorship of the child. The SI must remain in contact with law enforcement and NCMEC, if applicable, on a weekly basis until the child is located.

From the resource guide: The SI assigned to the case will take the following actions:

- Obtain needed information from the caseworker, including the LE and NCMEC case numbers
- Collect recent photos of the child
- Gather information on all relatives, friends, and associates
- Obtain all relevant health information for the child, including information on medications
- Obtain a copy of all court orders granting DFPS conservatorship of the child
- Contact the LEA where the report was filed and provide the LEA with all photos; court orders; diagnoses; medication information; and available information on family, friends, and associates of the child, if not already done
- If the caseworker has not already done so, notify NCMEC

The SI requests that law enforcement or NCMEC produce a flier on the child and confirms that the child is entered in the NCIC database. The SI provides the caseworker with a copy of any fliers produced by the LEA or NCMEC.

The SI remains in contact with the caseworker, LEA, and NCMEC (if applicable) on a continuous basis, but at a minimum on a weekly basis, until the child is located. This includes monthly contacts with the child's relatives, former caregivers, and any State or local social service agency that may be providing services to the child.

The SI conducts a search through all accessible internet sites and cell phone records. The SI should document evidence of the child's location; online activity; and/or the online enticement into, or compelling the child into, human trafficking activity. The SI should consider the child's online activity, such as whether the child has a blog, instant messaging accounts, Facebook, or other social media accounts. The SI should also investigate whether the child's cell phone activity has continued or stopped.

The SI reviews the child's record and interviews case reporters, parents, other caregivers, witnesses, siblings, friends, school staff, neighbors, and any other persons with information about the child and family.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Fam. Code § 264.123

After a missing child returns to the child's substitute care provider, DFPS shall interview the child to determine the reasons why the child was missing.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DFPS Pol. Handbook § 6461.5

If the reasons the child ran away or was absent from care are revealed during the interview, the caseworker must, to the extent possible, address those factors in the child's current and future placements.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care**Citation: Fam. Code § 264.123; DFPS Pol. Handbook § 6461.5**

If a child has been reported as a missing child, DFPS shall notify the appropriate persons when the child returns to the child's substitute care provider no later than 24 hours after the time DFPS learns that the child has returned or as soon as possible, if a person entitled to notice cannot be notified within 24 hours.

After a missing child returns to the child's substitute care provider, DFPS shall interview the child to determine the reasons why the child was missing, where the child stayed during the time the child was missing, and whether, while missing, the child was a victim of sex trafficking. DFPS shall report to an appropriate law enforcement agency any disclosure made by a child that indicates that the child was the victim of a crime during the time the child was missing. DFPS shall make the report no later than 24 hours after the time the disclosure is made. DFPS is not required to interview a missing child if, at the time the child returns, DFPS knows that the child was abducted, and another agency is investigating the abduction.

From the policy handbook: If a child in DFPS's managing conservatorship returns to substitute care, the caseworker and/or the SI, whoever made first contact with the child, must interview the child to determine the following:

- The reasons the child ran away or was absent from care
- The child's experiences while absent, including screening to determine if the child was a sex or labor trafficking victim

If the interview identifies the child as a victim of trafficking, the caseworker must immediately, or no later than 24 hours after the identification, report the situation to local law enforcement.

The interviewer must contact the regional director assistant for further guidance. If the caseworker completes the interview, the caseworker must share the information with the SI, and if the SI completes the interview, the SI must share the information with the caseworker.

From the resource guide: With law enforcement cooperation, the caseworker conducts an interview with the recovered child. It is best practice to involve the SI in the interview process, if possible, due to their expertise. The interviews should consist of questions to determine the following:

- If any child abuse and/or neglect occurred while the child was missing
- If there are any indicators of human trafficking activities
- Other experiences of the child while absent from care
- The reasons why the child ran away from care

If not present at the interview, the caseworker shall share interview results with the SI so the SI can complete the found survey.

If child abuse/neglect or human trafficking is suspected, the caseworker shall schedule a forensic interview in coordination with law enforcement at a child advocacy center as soon as practical. The caseworker must consult with the assigned SI on all suspected human trafficking cases.

If the caseworker learns that abuse (including sex and human trafficking) and/or neglect occurred in the child's placement or by a household or family member while the child was missing from placement, the caseworker will make a referral to statewide intake. If the caseworker is made aware of allegations of sex or labor trafficking that may have occurred while the child was missing from placement, and the alleged perpetrator is not a household or family member, the caseworker will work with the SI to notify law enforcement.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Utah

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

From the [Practice Guidelines](#): If the child is under age 18, the caregiver must notify the caseworker immediately that the child is missing. This includes the last time the child was seen, when the caregiver noticed he or she was missing, and what he or she was wearing.

Upon receiving information from the caregiver that the child is missing, the caseworker will do the following:

- Staff the case within 2 hours of receiving the information with members of the Child and Family Team (CFT) to determine if the child has run away or is missing, kidnapped, or abducted
- File a missing person report immediately with the law enforcement agency where the child resides and provide any necessary information in the report that will promote the safe return of the child, including the following:
 - Demographic information and recent photographs of the child
 - Blood type, dental records, scars, marks, tattoos, and other identifiable features
 - Where the child was last seen
- Work with law enforcement to determine if an Amber Alert should be issued
- Obtain a case record (police report and number) from the law enforcement agency
- Request that the child be placed on the National Crime Information Center database for missing persons within 2 hours of the report being made
- Report that the child is missing to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- For the report to NCMEC, gather case information and relevant materials, including the following:
 - The child's full name and date of birth
 - The date the child went missing
 - The city and State from where child went missing
 - Guardian information, including agency name, and telephone
 - Law enforcement information, including agency name and telephone

NCMEC also requests comprehensive information regarding the child in order to be able to effectively assist in locating the child. This includes physical descriptive information (e.g., height, weight, hair and eye color, clothing worn) any risks or endangerments to the child, circumstances surrounding the incident, a description of any person who may be with the child, and a photograph.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

If it is determined that the child has run away, the caseworker will do the following:

- Notify the parent(s) and/or guardian within 24 hours that the child has run away
- Engage the parent(s) and/or guardian to determine if the child has run to the parent(s) and/or guardian, as follows:
 - If the family does know where the child is but refuses to disclose the location of the child, the caseworker will ask if the child's basic needs are being met.
 - If the family does not know where the child is but commits to notifying the caseworker if the child makes contact with the family, the caseworker will continue to follow-up with the family on possible leads. Any information gained from these conversations will be given to law enforcement to aid in finding the child.

- The caseworker will inform the family of the current statute regarding harboring a runaway.
- Notify the assistant attorney general (AAG) that the child has run away and pursue a warrant under Utah Code Ann. § 78A-6-106(6)
- Notify the guardian ad litem and child's parent or guardian who has a right to parent-time with the child that a warrant has been issued
- If it is during the school year, contact the school and request that they notify the Division of Child and Family Services if the child contacts or arrives at school
- Notify other members of the CFT that the child has run away
- Try to make contact with the child through a variety of means, including texting, email, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), as well as through any other family or relational contacts at least weekly until the child has been located or 8 weeks from the time the child was reported as runaway, whichever is sooner, to assess if the child is safe and their needs are being met
- If the child responds to the outreach made by the caseworker, gather critical information regarding the safety and well-being of the child

If the child makes contact, the caseworker will encourage the child to come back into care. This must be done with sensitivity to the child and his or her situation, as the child may have been running from an unsafe situation and does not trust the division or the caseworker.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

Once the child is located, the caseworker will determine the primary factors that caused or contributed to the child's absence from care. The caseworker will select a placement for the child that accommodates the child's needs and takes into consideration the factors and experiences that led to the child running from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

If the child engages in chronic runaway behavior (i.e., has run away more than three times a year or more than once in a 30-day period), the caseworker will assess with the CFT the reasons the child is running and implement strategies to address the behavior. This could include the following:

- Assessing the placement to determine if the placement best meets the needs of the child
- Considering a higher or lower level of care if it better meets the needs of the child
- Determining if the child is running to something/someone such as family, peers, and/or intimate relationships
- If the child is running to someone, consider making these relationships part of the CFT
- Assessing if there are issues at school that have an impact on the placement or contribute to the runaway behavior, such as bullying or other negative peer relationships or struggles with academic progress
- Addressing with the child's treatment provider issues relating to the runaway behavior
- If necessary, conducting a professional staffing with the region permanency specialists

Once the child is located, the caseworker will assist the resource family consultant to give resources to the placement that may aid in the placement's ability to care for the child, including research articles and training materials.

A CFT meeting will be convened as soon as possible after the child has been returned to determine the correct placement of the child and to determine if additional services are needed as a result of any trauma or behavioral needs the child may have.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

Once the child is located, the caseworker will do the following:

- Remove the child from the NCMEC website

- Assess if the child is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), including conducting an interview with the child in a neutral location after the child's physical needs have been met and the child is safe
- Screen the child for CSEC by asking the following screening questions:
 - Did someone control, supervise, or monitor your work/actions?
 - Could you leave your job or work situation if you wanted to?
 - Was your communication ever restricted or monitored?
 - Were you able to access medical care?
 - Were you ever allowed to leave the place you were living/working?
 - Under what conditions?
 - Was your movement outside of your residence/workplace ever monitored or controlled?
 - What did you think would have happened if you left the situation?
 - Was there ever a time when you wanted to leave but felt that you could not?
 - What do you think would have happened if you left without telling anyone?
 - Did you feel it was your only option to stay in the situation?
 - Did anyone ever force you to do something physically or sexually that you didn't feel comfortable doing?
 - Were you ever physically abused (shoved, slapped, hit, kicked, scratched, punched, burned, etc.) by anyone?
 - Were you ever sexually abused (sexual assault/unwanted touching, rape, sexual exploitation, etc.) by anyone?
 - Did anyone ever introduce you to or provide you with drugs or medications?

If the child reports that they may be victims of CSEC, the caseworker will access the appropriate resources to address the CSEC. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Report to law enforcement within 24 hours that the child may be a victim of CSEC and assist in the investigation
- Access the appropriate mental health care, preferably with a therapist that specializes in treating victims of CSEC
- Inform the placement that the child may be a victim of CSEC

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Div. of Child & Family Serv. Practice Guidelines, § 300.8

The caseworker will staff the case with their regional administrative team to determine if the out-of-home caregiver should continue to be paid, as outlined in Administrative Guidelines § 060.8, while the child is on the run. The agreement to pay the out-of-home caregiver will not exceed 10 days.

If the child is on the run for more than 8 weeks, the caseworker will contact the law enforcement agency who took the initial report to give further information, including dental records, scars, marks and tattoos, jewelry type, blood type, and other identifiable features in the event that a deceased is discovered locally or nationwide.

If the child is on the run for more than 12 weeks, the caseworker will staff the case with regional administration to determine if the case should remain open or if a petition to close the case should be filed. If a petition is filed requesting the case be closed, the caseworker must address in the petition what steps have been taken to find the child. If possible, the caseworker will include verification that the child is safe while the child has been on the run and whether the child will continue to be safe. If the case is to remain open, the caseworker will make monthly attempts to locate the child.

If the child over age 18 has run away, the caseworker will convene a professional staffing within 24 hours to determine if the case should remain open as the child is over age 18. The professional team will consider the following:

- The overall safety of the child
- The age and developmental level of the child

- The child's ability to meet his or her own needs
- The child's relationships and the level of support the relationships will provide
- Whether the case should remain open or whether the foster care case should be closed, and the child be released from care

If it is determined that the child is not safe on his or her own, the caseworker will follow the practice guidelines for a runaway child under age 18. If it is determined by the professional team that the child should remain in care, the caseworker will notify the AAG that a warrant will need to be filed with the juvenile court.

If it is determined that the child can meet his or her own needs and remain safe on his or her own, the caseworker will ask the AAG to file for an early review to close the case.

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Vermont

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

From the [policy manual](#): The Department for Children and Families (DCF), Family Services Division caseworker is responsible to take all actions detailed in this policy to locate a child missing from his or her placement and to document all efforts in case notes.

The efforts described below must be completed by the end of the business day:

The caseworker shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency and provide the child's photograph to them. The law enforcement agency with jurisdiction is of the town from which the child ran away or went missing. If the child is known or suspected to be a victim of trafficking, the worker shall share this information with the law enforcement lead investigator. District staff will consult with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) deputy compact administrator on all cases in which trafficking is known or suspected to have occurred.

The caseworker shall ensure a general broadcast communication is issued and the child has been entered into the National Crime Information Center database. Additionally, district staff will report all missing children and youth to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The caseworker should discuss the use of an Amber Alert in cases where the child has been abducted. A written, notarized report may also be requested by law enforcement. Centralized Intake and Emergency Services (CIES) is responsible for these tasks after hours, on weekends, and holidays.

The caseworker will determine if there are any unusual circumstances that would place the child at a higher level of risk. If unusual circumstances are present, the worker will contact law enforcement immediately to indicate there is a higher level of risk to the child. Unusual circumstances refer to a missing child who meets any of the following criteria:

- Is under age 13
- Is believed to be out of an area familiar to him or her
- Is at increased risk due to age or developmental level
- Is intellectually or developmentally delayed or has a mental health diagnosis that would increase risk to the child
- Is substance dependent or requires prescribed medications
- Was absent for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement
- Is in a potentially life-threatening situation
- Is believed to be with others who could endanger his or her welfare

- Is suspected or known to be a victim of sex trafficking
- Is currently at risk of self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with his or her established patterns of behavior and this absence cannot be readily explained
- Disappeared under circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered at higher risk

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

If a child is missing, the caseworker shall notify the child's parents or caregivers as soon as possible but before the end of the day. If the child's parents or caregivers are suspected of facilitating or having knowledge of the runaway—or harboring or trafficking the child—the caseworker shall consult with a supervisor and law enforcement before notifying the child's parents or caregivers.

Caseworkers will attempt to ascertain the whereabouts of the child, in conjunction with law enforcement and the Vermont Intelligence Center (VIC), and through contact with family, friends, and other community partners and providers (e.g., school personnel, foster parents, residential staff, other service providers). Any information gathered should be provided to law enforcement.

If it is suspected that the youth ran away with their peers or other youth in DCF custody, coordination should occur between district offices and workers. If the caseworker reasonably suspects the youth is at a specific location, the caseworker should notify the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction and request that the youth be picked up. If the jurisdiction is outside the State of Vermont, the worker will notify and seek consultation from ICPC deputy compact administrator.

The caseworker shall maintain weekly contact with law enforcement and the VIC and update them with any new information. At least weekly, the worker shall continue to make efforts to locate the child in conjunction with law enforcement. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Contacting the child's friends and family to request information about the child's whereabouts and persons with whom the child may be associating
- Contacting school personnel from the school the child last attended or at other schools the child previously attended, if it is believed the child maintains a close relationship with persons at that school
- Contacting the child's adult probation officer, if applicable
- Contacting any other individuals who are believed to have knowledge of the child's whereabouts
- Utilizing social media to search for the missing child and determine a possible location based on any updates he or she may have posted

The caseworker and a supervisor shall formally review all efforts to locate the youth within 7 days of the youth's runaway and every 14 days thereafter.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

After the child has been located, the caseworker shall interview the child in person within 7 business days of his or her return to care. Topics caseworkers should cover include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Why did the child leave their previous placement?
- Did the child feel unsafe in their previous placement?
- Did anyone encourage the child to leave?

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

The caseworker, supervisor, resource coordinator, and client placement specialist shall discuss plans for the child's placement upon return to DCF care.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

When the child has been located, law enforcement should be notified immediately. Parents or caregivers should be notified that the child has been located as soon as possible but by the end of the day. Division staff will ensure the child's basic needs are met immediately upon their return. Basic needs include safety and protection for the child, safe housing, food, personal hygiene, clothing, medical care, and mental health supports.

The caseworker shall interview the child in-person within 7 business days of his or her return to care and take a photograph of the child at that time. The interview may be conducted in conjunction with law enforcement and shall be when the circumstances of the child's absence are not solely related to running away. If the child is suspected or known to be a victim of trafficking, division staff should discuss with law enforcement the appropriate timing of investigation and/or consultation in order to support the victim and provide a trauma-informed response.

The interview shall be conducted in a nonjudgmental, nonthreatening, comfortable, and child-friendly location when possible. Topics workers should cover include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Where did the child go?
- What is the first thing the child did after leaving?
- What else did the child do while he or she was gone?
- How did the child meet basic needs (e.g., housing, food, clothing)?
- Did the child perform any sort of sexual act to meet any of his or her basic needs?
- Who was the child with, if anyone, while absent?
- Did anyone loan or give the child money?
- Did anyone provide the child with expensive gifts or favors?
- Did anyone pressure the child into doing something he or she did not want to do?
- Did anyone take a photo or video of the child that made him or her uncomfortable?
- Was the child the victim of a crime (including physical or sexual assault) while he or she was gone? Any affirmative answers should be referred to law enforcement and other service referrals should be considered.
- Did the child engage in any risky behaviors (e.g., substance use, self-harm, sexual activity, any sexual acts in exchange for basic needs or under the influence of exploitation or coercion) while he or she was gone?
- Did the child engage in any behaviors that might put him or her at risk of sexually transmitted infections?
- What supports or services would the child like to have to help with any experiences he or she had while they were away?
- What were the best and worst things about being away?
- Does the child plan to run away again? If so, why?
- What can the worker do to help prevent the child from not running away again?

When the caseworker knows or suspects that the youth engaged in risky behaviors such as sexual activity or substance use, they will schedule an appointment with the primary care physician. Workers should assess the appropriateness of a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) exam, health screening, and/or trauma screening. Workers should enlist the help of victim specialists or make victim services referrals as appropriate.

If information is learned that causes division staff to believe a child or youth may have been a victim of sex trafficking while missing or on run, a report of child abuse must be made to CIES. Children and youth under age 18 cannot legally consent to providing sex or sexual acts in exchange for money, drugs, food, clothes, housing, or meeting basic needs. Consultation with the ICPC deputy compact administrator is required for all trafficking cases.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: Fam. Serv. Pol. Man., Policy # 155

Division staff will update the placement form after the child has been missing or on run for 3 days. When a child has run away or is temporarily absent from a foster home or other placement, payment may continue for up to 15 days if the plan is for the child to return to that placement.

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Virgin Islands

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Virginia

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

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Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Child & Family Serv. Man., Part E, § 17.13

From the [Child & Family Services Manual](#): The local department of social services (LDSS) shall provide immediate verbal notification to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within 24 hours upon receiving information on any child who is missing or running from care. The LDSS should follow up by sending subsequent written notification within 48 hours or as required by law enforcement protocol. The LDSS should ask law enforcement to enter information about the child into the FBI's National Crime Information Center database, which includes information on missing persons.

Once a report is filed with law enforcement, the LDSS shall contact NCMEC. NCMEC can only accept reports from the legal guardian. Information to be shared with law enforcement and NCMEC (as appropriate) includes the following:

- Biographical information and photographs
- Names and addresses of friends, relatives, present and former foster parents and placement staff, and acquaintances
- Suspected destinations
- Prior disappearances and outcome

Other information regarding special circumstances that should be highlighted in communications with law enforcement officials may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The child is younger than age 13.
- The child or youth is intellectually disabled.
- The child or youth is drug dependent, including prescribed medication and/or illegal substances and if the dependency is life-threatening.
- The child or youth was missing more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement.
- The child or youth is believed to be in a life-threatening situation.
- The child or youth is believed to be in the company of adults who may endanger his or her safety.
- Other circumstances involved in the disappearance would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the child or youth may be considered 'at imminent risk.'

If the worker believes that a child or youth has unwillingly left the foster care placement or has been removed by an unauthorized person, the worker should request that the child be placed on the Amber Alert system when making the report to law enforcement. The local law enforcement officials will determine if Amber Alert criteria are met and will activate the network when appropriate.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: Child & Family Serv. Man., Part E, § 17.13

When a child or youth has runaway or is discovered to be missing from the foster care placement and the child or youth's whereabouts are unknown, the service worker should do the following:

- Provide immediate verbal notification to the following:
 - The parents, unless the parents cannot be found or have had their parental rights terminated
 - The child's or youth's guardian ad litem (GAL)
- Provide notification of the disappearance within 24 hours, or as soon as possible, to the following:
 - Family members
 - Service providers
 - Other appropriate persons

The service worker should discuss with all parties the collaborative efforts they can all take to locate the child or youth.

The service worker shall continue to make efforts to locate the child or youth each month that the child or youth remains missing or on runaway status. Data show most youth run to friends, family, or the streets. It is very important to know who and how to contact their friends or family. It is also very important to be aware of the youth's hangouts and activities.

Efforts to locate the child or youth shall include, but are not limited to, contacting the following:

- Law enforcement
- Birth parents, family members, and relatives
- Former caregivers
- Other agencies that may be providing services
- NCMEC

Efforts should also be made to track the child or youth's activities via Facebook or other social media sites. It will be necessary to work with the police or NCMEC to obtain access to restricted pages.

The case of a missing child or youth should be staffed on a quarterly basis with a supervisor to ensure that efforts made to locate the child or youth have been sufficient and no other actions are needed.

When information regarding the possible location of a missing child or youth is received, the service worker should staff immediately with a supervisor to assess the most appropriate course of action to secure the child's safety.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: Child & Family Serv. Man., Part E, § 17.13

If a youth runs to see his or her birth family, the worker should assess current safety issues and consider placement with family or an increase in family visits.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care**Citation: Child & Family Serv. Man., Part E, § 17.13**

When the child returns to the foster care placement after being reported to law enforcement as a runaway or missing person, the service worker should ensure that appropriate law enforcement are notified immediately of the child or youth's return but no later than 24 hours after the service worker was notified. When the child or youth had been placed on the Amber Alert system, the service should notify law enforcement within 1 hour of the child or youth's return, consistent with the protocol established by local law enforcement.

Parents and the GAL should be notified as soon as possible after the service worker has been notified of the child's return. Other parties notified of the runaway or missing status of the child should be notified of the child or youth's return within 24 hours but no later than 48 hours of the child or youth's return.

Engaging the youth is essential when they return. It is important for the youth to feel welcome, supported, and cared about. Their immediate needs should be met. The worker should always talk to a youth about a run episode. The main focus of the discussion is to determine if the youth is okay and to gather enough information to develop a plan to help the youth not to want to run in the future. The information obtained in this process may prevent a future run and help the service worker develop targeted information.

Some questions to ask may include the following:

- Are you ok?
- Do you need any supports, services, or medical attention?
- What do you need right now to feel safe?
- Is there anything I can do to make it easier to stay?
- Was there anything that would have changed your mind to keep from running?
- What did you hope to happen when you left?
- Did you have a plan on how to take care of yourself and did it work out?
- What made you decide to return?
- What are your plans for the future?
- What do you want to see happen in the next 3 months?

LDSS shall report to law enforcement within 24 hours after receiving information on a child or youth who has been identified as being a sex trafficking victim.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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Washington

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement**Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550**

From the DCYF [policy manual](#): Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Children's Administration (CA) staff are required to respond when a youth is missing from care (MFC). The response includes the following actions:

- A run report must be filed with law enforcement (LE) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) when a youth is MFC. CA staff cannot give NCMEC consent to release a child's information.
- Caregivers must be informed of the requirement to file a run report with LE and contact NCMEC when a youth is MFC. Caregivers must be informed they cannot give NCMEC consent to release youth information.
- The caseworker must document the LE run report number in a case note. If the caregiver did not file a run report or contact NCMEC, the caseworker must immediately contact LE to file a run report and obtain the LE run report number and contact NCMEC to make a run report.
- LE and NCMEC must be contacted for a youth remaining on the run at age 18 to terminate the run report.

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550

When a youth is MFC, CA staff are responsible for the following:

- Active and ongoing efforts must be made to locate a youth who is MFC within 24 hours of notification and until the youth returns to out-of-home care.
- When a youth is MFC overnight or longer, the case must be staffed with a supervisor within 2 calendar days, excluding weekends and holidays.
- An attorney must be requested for a youth who is MFC overnight or longer, if the youth does not have an attorney.

When a youth is MFC, CA staff must do the following:

- Notify individuals or agencies important to a youth within 24 hours of learning the youth is MFC, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - The legal parent or guardian
 - Relatives
 - The child's attorney, court-appointed special advocate, and guardian ad litem
 - The child's school
 - The child's therapist
 - The child's Tribe, if applicable
- Make ongoing search efforts to locate the child beginning within 24 hours of learning the youth is MFC and continue until the youth returns to care. Ongoing outreach and search efforts may include, but are not limited to, the following locations, individuals, and entities:
 - Bus stations
 - Youth centers
 - Family members' and friends' homes
 - Places the youth may frequently be found
 - School
 - Homeless shelters
 - Available agency databases
 - Probation/parole officers, if applicable
- Communicate with family, friends, and known associates
- Search social media websites
- Notify the regional MFC lead within 48 hours of learning a youth is MFC

The caseworker must conduct an MFC staffing with the supervisor within 2 calendar days (excluding weekends and holidays) for a youth MFC overnight or longer. The MFC staffing includes the following:

- Search strategies and efforts
- Protective factors and vulnerabilities of the youth
- Individuals contacted
- Potential reasons the youth ran
- Determining if the youth needs an attorney appointed

- Determining if a pick-up order and warrant are needed
- Discussing if a court hearing should be scheduled

If a court hearing is scheduled, the following areas must be discussed:

- Placement problems or whether no appropriate placement options are available
- Additional services needed to support or stabilize the youth
- Search and run prevention that have occurred
- Any efforts to locate the youth

The caseworker must document the following in a monthly case note until the youth returns to out-of-home care or ages out of care:

- Continued efforts to locate the youth
- Any contact with the youth
- Other critical information obtained related to the youth's health, safety, or whereabouts
- Any follow-up action taken since entry of the prior case note

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550

At the MFC staffing, the caseworker and the supervisor will discuss potential reasons the youth ran.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550

The run prevention plan is developed using information gathered from the youth during the returning debriefing interview and should focus on the following:

- Services or activities that the youth needs to help him or her stay in care, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - An increase in family time or other safe, positive social connections
 - Independent-living skills
 - Medical visits
 - Substance use disorder treatment
 - Behavioral health services
- Interventions that could prevent the youth from running from care, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Alone time
 - Time to visit with friends
 - Listening to music
- Creating a list of individuals that youth will reach out to if they have a desire to run in the future
- Talking to youth about what they are feeling during the 'need to run' moment

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550

When youth return to care, CA staff must do the following:

- Notify LE, NCMEC, and other individuals important to the youth's case within 24 hours of the youth's return to out-of-home care
- Assess and address any identified health or safety concerns and assist the youth in accessing appropriate care within 24 hours of the youth's return to out-of-home care
- Conduct a debriefing interview with the youth within 2 calendar days (excluding weekends and holidays) of the youth's return to out-of-home care, as follows:
 - Evaluate the youth for health and safety concerns and assist with appropriate care and safe placement
 - Discuss the youth's interest in re-establishing connections with their birth family, including parents, grandparents, and siblings, including discussing skills and strategies to safely reconnect with any

identified family members, and provide guidance and services to assist the youth

- Develop a run prevention plan or review and update an existing run prevention plan with any new relevant information with the youth
- Complete the CSEC Screening Tool DSHS 15-476, as required by the [Commercially Sexually Exploited Children \(CSEC\) policy](#).

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DCF Child Welfare Policies, § 4550

The youth's dependency must continue while he or she is on the run until his or her 18th birthday, at which time the caseworker must request to dismiss the dependency, unless the youth enrolls in extended foster care.

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West Virginia

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

From the [policy manual](#): When a child is missing, abducted, or is on runaway status, it is vital that information is reported quickly to law enforcement agencies to ensure the child's safe return. The Department of Health and Human Resources requires foster care providers to provide notification to the department immediately when a child runs away, is missing, or is abducted. When notified that a child is missing, abducted, or is on runaway status, the department worker is required to provide notification to law enforcement immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours after receiving information on missing or abducted children, for entry into the National Crime Information Center database of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The department worker must notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within the first 24 hours as well.

The child's worker must take the following steps to ensure that the child is located safely and quickly:

- Contact law enforcement immediately, but no later than 24 hours, to report the child is missing, has been abducted or has run away
- File a runaway petition or missing person's report, if one has not been filed by the provider
- Provide law enforcement with any information needed to locate the child, including a recent photo to assist in the identification of the child
- Cooperate with law enforcement completely to locate the child

The worker then must contact NCMEC also within 24 hours. The worker should have the following information ready and available to report to NCMEC:

- The child's full name
- The child's date of birth, gender, height, and weight
- The date child went missing
- The city and State from which the child went missing
- Guardian information, including agency name and telephone number
- Law enforcement information, including agency name, telephone, and police report number

Additional information that may be requested by NCMEC, if available, include the following:

- Physical descriptive information (e.g., hair and eye color, clothing worn)
- Any risk or endangerment to the child
- Circumstances surrounding the incident

- A description of any person who may be with the child
- A recent photograph of the child

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

When a child is missing, the child's worker must do the following:

- Notify the child's birth parents, if parental rights have not been terminated, immediately about the child's situation
- Immediately notify their immediate supervisor and community services manager
- Notify the court, guardian ad litem, or attorney for the child

Workers should consult with their immediate supervisor and community services manager to consider additional options in locating missing children, while keeping the child and family's foster care status confidential.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

Once the child has been located, the worker will complete the Away from Supervision/Runaway Event Survey to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's running away or otherwise being absent from care.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

To the extent possible and appropriate, the child's worker must respond to the factors that contributed to the child's running away in current and subsequent placements.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

Once the child has been located, the worker will complete the Away from Supervision/Runaway Event Survey with the following information:

- Determining the child's experiences while absent from care, including screening the child to determine if the child is a possible sex trafficking victim
- Reporting such related information as required by the department
- Based on the child's experiences while away from supervision, scheduling appropriate evaluations or exams

The worker will notify law enforcement, NCMEC, and court of the child's return immediately but in no case later than 24 hours.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DHHR Foster Care Pol. Man. § 5.20

If a child or youth has been away from supervision of the agency for more than 180 days and cannot be located, the department must seek a modification of disposition order releasing the department of care, custody, and control. If the rights of the child's parent have been terminated, the department cannot be released from its responsibility and must actively seek the whereabouts of the missing child or youth.

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Wisconsin

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.78(2m); DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

If an agency that has responsibility for the placement, care, or supervision of a child determines that a child is missing, the agency shall do all the following:

- Within 8 hours after making that determination, report that determination to a local law enforcement agency for entry of that information into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases
- Within 24 hours after making that determination, report that determination to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- Share information about a missing child with law enforcement agencies, NCMEC, and other agencies that are involved in efforts to locate the missing child

In policy: This standard applies to all cases in which a youth is living in an out-of-home care setting and the whereabouts of the youth are either unknown or the youth does not have permission to be away from the out-of-home care setting. This policy applies beginning at the point a youth is removed from his or her home and the Department of Children and Families or a county agency has placement and care responsibility.

Once the agency has determined that a youth is missing from out-of-home care, the agency must do the following:

- Ensure that law enforcement has been notified that a youth is missing, including whether the youth is at-risk or has been a victim of sex trafficking
- Within 24 hours, notify NCMEC
- Inform NCMEC if the youth is at risk or has been a victim of sex trafficking

The following information shall be provided to NCMEC in the missing report:

- The youth's first and last name and date of birth
- The youth's race, gender, height and weight, and eye and hair color
- The date and time the youth was last seen
- The person who reported the youth missing to the agency
- The city, country, and State the youth is missing from
- The date of the missing report was made to law enforcement
- The law enforcement agency the report was made to
- A description of the circumstances surrounding the missing episode
- Indicators or facts that the youth was being groomed, recruited, or victimized through sex trafficking
- Special needs of the youth, such as medical conditions, allergies, cognitive/developmental delays, behavioral/emotional needs, history with running, history with or at-risk of drug and/or alcohol use, suicide risk, gang involvement, etc.
- Contact information for the agency with placement and care responsibility, including the contact person's name, phone number, email address, and agency name and address

Optional information includes the following:

- The street address, zip code, and county the youth is missing from
- A current photograph of the youth
- Vehicle information (i.e., make, model, year, color, license plate) associated with the youth's missing episode
- Any companion(s)/abductor(s) (i.e., name, sex, race, relationship to youth, physical appearance, known address) who may be accompanying the youth
- The youth's nickname(s)/alias(es)
- The youth's medication(s)
- Information about the youth's parents or guardian
- The youth's cell phone number and email address
- Contact information for the law enforcement agency that received the missing report
- The law enforcement case number
- Confirmation of whether the missing report also was made to the NCIC

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

Citation: DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

Once the agency has determined that a youth is missing from out-of-home care, the agency must do the following:

- Make efforts immediately to inform the following:
 - The parent/caregiver, legal custodian, and guardian
 - The out-of-home care provider, if the youth was not with the provider when he or she went missing
 - The Indian child's Tribe, if applicable
 - The appropriate Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) contact, if a youth is placed in Wisconsin through the ICPC or ICJ
- Conduct and continue efforts to find the youth until the youth no longer meets the definition of missing in care
- Continue to do permanency planning activities, according to §§ 48.38 and 938.38 of the statutes
- Manage bed holds and provider payments

An agency may also want to inform the youth's school, mental health providers, legal representative, and other service providers working with the youth and family to coordinate efforts to locate the youth.

Agencies have the ability to determine the continued efforts to search, as this will vary depending on the circumstances of the missing episode, the individual youth, and case plan. An agency should consider the following activities in searching for a youth who has been determined missing:

- Contact the youth's friends, relatives, or significant others for possible information about his or her whereabouts
- Contact the youth's school, if school is in session
- If the youth has been missing before, contact any person the youth was found with or in the location the youth was located previously
- Determine whether any of the youth's friends or significant others also are missing and, if so, whether their families or friends have additional information
- Determine whether the youth or anyone taking the youth left any written information that may indicate where the youth has gone or been taken

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

When a youth is no longer missing from out-of-home care, the agency with placement and care responsibility shall interview the youth about the missing episode to determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth's missing episode and follow-up on any safety or well-being concerns raised by the youth or his or her caregiver(s). The issues to be determined include the following:

- Determine whether the youth was missing as the result of a perpetrator or exploiter influence, such as being forced or coerced to run away
- Determine the child's or juvenile's motivation for running away, such as either of the following:
 - Whether the youth was running to something, such as peers, birth parent(s), or other family members
 - Whether the youth was running from something, such as an unsafe environment or unsafe person

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

Citation: DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

Once the agency has determined the youth has been found and is again under the care and supervision of the agency, the agency must do the following:

- Revise the family interaction plan to consider any new safety concerns
- Discuss planning for the prevention of future missing-in-care episodes with the youth and family team to ensure youth safety, community safety, permanency, and well-being
- Describe the plan for the prevention of future missing episodes

This plan should be discussed with the youth; the youth's birth parent(s)/legal guardian; the out-of-home care provider; the youth's treatment team; the youth's Tribe, if applicable; and any other individual(s) who would be taking a role in the prevention of future missing episodes.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

Once the agency has determined the youth has been found and is again under the care and supervision of the agency, the agency must do the following:

- Make efforts immediately to inform the following:
 - The parent/caregiver, legal custodian, and guardian
 - The out-of-home care provider
 - The Indian child's Tribe, if applicable
 - The appropriate ICPC or ICJ contact, if applicable
- Verify that law enforcement has been notified of the youth's return, if the youth was listed as a missing person
- Within 24 hours, notify NCEMC of the youth's return to out-of-home care
- Manage bed holds and provider payments
- Inform the court and court officials, as specified in interagency policies or agreements
- Obtain any appropriate court restrictions to maintain the youth safely in out-of-home care
- Seek any necessary follow-up medical care or counseling for the youth
- Assist the youth in obtaining any educational materials necessary to catch the youth up from the time he or she was considered missing, if school was missed

Agencies must evaluate the child's or juvenile's need for treatment and services within 1 business day following an episode of missing from care by interviewing the youth about the missing episode to determine the primary factors that contributed to the youth's going missing. As part of this interview, the agency shall assess the youth to determine if the youth was a possible sex trafficking victim during the missing episode, seek any necessary medical attention, and discuss planning for the prevention of future missing-in-care episodes with the youth and family team to ensure the safety of the youth and community, permanency, and well-being.

When the youth is no longer missing, an assessment shall be made to address the following:

- Determine if the missing episode was the result of the youth running away
- If the missing episode was due to the youth running away, assess the following:
 - Frequency of running
 - Consistency of destination
 - Safety of destination
 - Involvement in illegal activities
 - Likelihood to return on their own
 - Involvement with others
 - Realistic expectations
- Determine if the youth was a victim of any of the following during the missing episode:
 - Sex trafficking
 - Sexual assault
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Medical trauma
 - Alcohol and other drug abuse
 - Injuries

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

Citation: DCF Div. of Safety & Perm. Ongoing Ser. Stds.

When a youth is considered missing from out-of-home care, the case shall not be closed just because the youth is missing from care. Any decision to close a case with an open court order for a youth who has not yet reached age 18, or who has reached age 18 with an open court order, should be done in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

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Wyoming

Responding to Youth Missing From Foster Care

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the [PDF](#) (327 KB) of this publication.

Current Through May 2020

Protocols for Reporting Children Missing From Care to Law Enforcement

Citation: DFS Prot. & Juv. Ser. Man., Pol. # 2.9(4)

From the [policy manual](#): When any child or youth in the care of or under the supervision of the Department of Family Services (DFS) has been identified as a runaway, has been abducted, or is otherwise missing or absent from care, a DFS caseworker shall immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, notify the following:

- Local law enforcement to be entered into the National Crime Information Center
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- The county attorney or district attorney
- The guardian ad litem or defense attorney
- The court or judge

Protocols for Locating Children Missing From Care

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Determining the Factors That Led to a Child's Absence From Care

Citation: DFS Prot. & Juv. Ser. Man., Pol. # 2.9(4)

Information on any child or youth in the care of or under the supervision of DFS who is a runaway or missing from care shall be documented in DFS data system. The information shall include the date the youth ran away/went missing and the date the youth returned, as well as the reason for leaving.

Determining the Suitability of Current and Subsequent Placements

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

Assessing the Child's Experiences While Absent From Care

Citation: DFS Prot. & Juv. Ser. Man., Pol. # 2.9(4)

The human/sex trafficking screening shall be completed, with the results documented in the DFS data system.

The child or youth shall receive a medical examination. If the youth identifies any sex trafficking indicators, services shall be provided.

Timeframes for Closing a Child's Placement After Running Away

This issue is not addressed in the statutes and regulations reviewed.

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