



Policy: Missing/Runaway Children under ChildNet Care and/or Supervision

ChildNet Number: CN 013.008

Original Approved Date: June 17, 2003

Policy Revised Date(s): June 30, 2005; May 31, 2006; June 26, 2007; June 2, 2008; August 1, 2008, August 26, 2011, July 9, 2014

Policy Sunset Date:

COA Standard(s): FKC 12.07

Statement of Policy:

It is ChildNet's policy to ensure that comprehensive notifications are completed in a prompt/timely manner when children are missing from their legal placement as a result of abduction or because they have run away.

This policy is applicable to all staff, contracted providers and their designees who work with children under supervision.

Board Chair's Signature:

Date:

07-29-14



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Definitions (If any):

Dependency Case Manager (DCM) – a Child Net employee or subcontracted provider who is responsible for providing case management services to children that are in Broward County's and Palm Beach County's dependency system. The DCM provides these services in conjunction with approved service providers throughout the county.

Caregiver- For the purpose of this policy, caregiver is defined as the person with whom the child legally resides or the last responsible adult the child was with at the time the child became missing. A responsible adult is a person employed by ChildNet, a school official, a staff person that the child was in contact with or other person(s) that the child was given permission by the caregiver to be in their presence.

Endangered- any child whose whereabouts are currently unknown who is considered to be missing under circumstances that would indicate that the child is at a high degree of risk of immediate physical harm to themselves due to medical or physiological reasons or is believed to be with someone who places them at a high degree of risk. Any child age 11 or younger who is believed to have left his or her placement voluntarily should also be classified in this category.

Exigent Circumstances - situations that require immediate actions, such as the child is eleven (11) **years old** and under, is believed to be out of the zone of safety for their age and development, mentally incapacitated, serious medical condition, in a life threatening situation, in the company of others who could endanger their welfare or is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established behaviors.

Non-Exigent Circumstances – routine runaway situations where the child is 12 to 17 years of age and does not present an immediate danger to the child. Non-exigent runaway incidents will be processed, assigned, and investigated beginning the next business day following notification that the child has gone missing.

Habitual Runaway – A child that has runaway three (3) or more times.

Missing Persons Unit (MPU) - the ChildNet specific unit responsible for recovery of missing children.



Missing Persons Specialist (MPS) - a ChildNet Employee responsible for assisting in the locating of runaway children.

Parental Abduction is defined as any child whose whereabouts are unknown and is believed to be in the company of a custodial or non-custodial parent who has absconded from care in direct violation of a court order or any child that has been removed from his or her placement by a non-custodial parent whose whereabouts are unknown. If it is believed that the child being in the company of the custodial or non-custodial parent places the child at a high degree of risk, the episode should be classified as Endangered.

Runaway- any child age 12 or older whose whereabouts are currently unknown who is believed to have left his or her placement voluntarily and has been missing for more than four (4) consecutive hours from the time that it was learned that the child's location was unknown.

Statement of Procedure:

In order to ensure the best efforts are made to facilitate recovery and safety of a child, the Caregiver, MPS, and the CA/DCM must expeditiously work together to effectuate the most positive outcome possible for the child.

I. EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Caregiver

1. The caregiver calls local law enforcement as soon as the determination is made that the child is missing and asks the officer to:
 - a. Take a report of the missing child.
 - b. Assign a case number and provide the number back to the caregiver or person reporting the child missing.
 - c. Enter the information into the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases as described in Florida Statute.
2. After the caregiver has reported the child missing to local law enforcement, the caregiver will inspect the child's personal belongings to determine what items are missing.
3. After the caregiver has reported the child missing to local law enforcement, the caregiver notifies the Runaway Hotline (954) 414-5999 in Broward or 561-472-5315 in Palm Beach and shares all pertinent information listed above with emphasis on providing the law enforcement agency name and case number.
4. If the responding law enforcement officer refuses to take a missing child report, for any reason, the caregiver requests to speak to the appropriate Watch Commander



and documents the officer's name and specific local law enforcement agency name. If the Watch Commander refuses to take a missing child report:

- a. The caregiver contacts the Runaway Hotline and Safe Place at 954-414-5999 and 954-414-6005 in Broward or 561-313-6818 in Palm Beach to report this information.
 - b. The Missing Persons Supervisor or designee attempts to engage the appropriate law enforcement agency and if unsuccessful seeks the assistance from the Department of Children and Families.
5. The caregiver immediately notifies ChildNet when a child has been reported missing and exigent circumstances exist.

B. Missing Person Specialist (MPS)

1. Notifies the MPU Supervisor or designee, who will ensure proper notification of Client Services senior management.
2. The Missing Persons Coordinator or designee creates the Missing Child Report (MCR) in SACWIS within 24 hours of notification that the child is missing.
 - a. The MCR is provided to assigned MPS, DCM, DCM Supervisor, and data specialists.
 - b. The data specialists will update the placement information in FSFN.
3. The child's caregiver is contacted to confirm that the child is still missing and gathers all information that the caregivers may have regarding the child and their possible whereabouts.
4. A status report is filed with the court informing all parties that the child is missing.
5. All efforts to locate the missing child is documented in SACWIS. The minimum requirement for children missing between 72 hours and 90 days is once per week. The minimum requirement for children missing more than 90 days is once per month. Efforts to locate missing children may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Going to locations known to be frequented by runaway youth,
 - Distributing FDLE flyers in businesses and other public places,
 - Collateral contacts of neighbors, friends and family,
 - School Board Check,
 - DJJ check,
 - Review of commonly used social networking sites such as, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Back Page, etc.,
 - Telephone calls to the child's last know cellular phone number,
 - Accurint and/or Tracers check if the child is of age to hold employment, or if the child is believed to be with a parent whose address is unknown.



- Act as a liaison between appropriate Law Enforcement personnel, such as Missing Person Detectives, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), etc.
- 6. Throughout the investigation of each missing episode, monthly supervision with each MPS is held to review the efforts to locate the children on Active Missing status.
- 7. All children currently missing more than 30 continuous days will be staffed each month with the assigned or designated MPS, and the MPU Supervisor or designee. The purpose of this staffing will be to review ongoing efforts to locate and stabilize the child.
- 8. A weekly notification of the active Missing Child list, generated from SACWIS, is sent to law enforcement individuals designated to handle missing person's cases in Broward and Palm Beach Counties and relevant ChildNet/DCM staff.
- 9. Once a child turns eighteen (18) years old while reported as missing, a notification letter is sent to the reporting law enforcement agency that the youth is still missing and inform them that the child has reached the age of majority and ChildNet's supervision has been terminated.

C. Dependency Case Manager

1. The DCM notifies the following persons (even if the caregiver has already done so) once a caregiver has indicated the child has not been located:
 - a. The child's parent, legal custodian or relatives;
 - b. The child's therapist, if applicable;
 - c. The child's Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem, if applicable;
 - d. Any other person the DCM deems essential.
2. Ensure SACWIS has a current photograph, fingerprints, and pertinent information in the case record to assist in finding the child.
3. All efforts to locate the missing child are documented in SACWIS.
4. Determine if the last known placement is a viable place for the child to return to once recovered from the missing episode.

II. NON-EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Caregiver

1. The caregiver makes attempts to locate the child as soon as the child is determined to be missing. If the attempts to locate the child are unsuccessful or if the child refuses to state where they are, (give a specific address) the caregiver or person the



child is missing from calls local law enforcement as soon as the child's location is not known (no later than four (4) hours from the child being missing) asking the officer to complete a Missing Person's Report and provide the case number. If at any time the caregiver or person from whom the child ran feels there is an immediate need to call local law enforcement to report the child missing they should do so.

2. Once the Police Department has completed the police report, inspect the child's belongings to determine what is missing and then notify the Runaway Hotline at (954) 414-5999 in Broward or 561-472-5315 in Palm Beach or e-mail at hotlinerunaway@childnet.us or hotlinepalmbeach@childnet.us and share all pertinent information listed above. If after hours or on the weekend, leave a message with all pertinent information and a contact number. When notifying ChildNet, all efforts you made to contact and locate the youth should be included. A child that is considered missing with exigent circumstances, should also be reported to SafePlace at (954) 414-6005, who will notify the on-call staff.

B. Missing Person Specialist (MPS)

1. The Missing Persons Coordinator or designee creates the Missing Child Report (MCR) in SACWIS within 24 hours of notification that the child is missing.
 - a. The MCR is provided to the assigned MPS, DCM, DCM Supervisor and Data Specialists.
 - b. The data specialists updates the placement information in SACWIS.
2. The child's caregiver is contacted to confirm that the child is still missing and to gather all information that the caregivers may have regarding the child and their possible whereabouts.
3. A status report is filed with the court informing all parties that the child is missing.
4. All efforts to locate the missing child are documented in SACWIS. The minimum requirement for children missing between 72 hours and 90 days is once per week. The minimum requirement for children missing more than 90 days shall be once per month. Efforts to locate missing children may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Going to locations known to be frequented by runaway youth,
 - Distributing FDLE flyers in businesses and other public places,
 - Collateral contacts of neighbors, friends and family,
 - School Board Check,
 - DJJ check,
 - Review of commonly used social networking sites such as, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Back Page, etc.,
 - Telephone calls to the child's last know cellular phone number,



- Accurint and/or Tracers check if the child is of age to hold employment, or if the child is believed to be with a parent whose address is unknown.
 - Act as a liaison between appropriate Law Enforcement personnel, such as Missing Person Detectives, NCMEC, etc.
5. Throughout the investigation of each missing episode, monthly supervision with each MPS is held to review the efforts to locate the children on Active Missing status.
 6. All children currently missing more than 30 continuous days will be staffed each month with the assigned or designated MPS, and the MPU Supervisor or designee. The purpose of this staffing will be to review ongoing efforts to locate and stabilize the child.
 7. A weekly notification of the active Missing Child list, generated from SACWIS is sent to law enforcement individuals designated to handle missing person's cases in Broward and Palm Beach Counties and relevant ChildNet/DCM staff.
 8. Once a child turns eighteen (18) years old while reported as missing, a notification letter is sent to the reporting law enforcement agency that the youth is still missing and inform them that the child has reached the age of majority and ChildNet's supervision has terminated.

C. Dependency Case Manager

1. The DCM notifies the following persons (even if the substitute caregiver has already done so) once a substitute caregiver has indicated the child has not been located:
 - a. The child's parent, legal custodian or relatives;
 - b. The child's therapist, if applicable;
 - c. The child's Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem, if applicable;
 - d. Any other person the DCM deems essential.
2. Ensures that SACWIS has a current photograph, fingerprints, and pertinent information in the case record to assist in finding the child.
3. All efforts to locate the missing child are documented in SACWIS.
4. Determines if the last known placement is a viable place for the child to return to once recovered from the missing episode.

III. Child Residing in Another State / Nation / District

A. Caregiver

1. The caregiver attempts to locate the child as soon as the child is determined to be missing. If the attempts to locate the child are unsuccessful or if the child refuses to



state where they are, (give a specific address) the caregiver or person the child is missing from will call local law enforcement as soon as the child's location is not known (after four (4) hours from the child being missing) asking the officer to take a Missing Person's report and provide the case number.

2. Once the Police Department has completed the police report, inspect the child's belongings to determine what is missing and then notify the Runaway Hotline at (954) 414-5999 in Broward or 561-472-5315 in Palm Beach or e-mail at hotlinerunaway@childnet.us or Palm Beach hotlinepalmbeach@childnet.us and share all pertinent information listed above. If after hours or on the weekend, leave a message with all pertinent information and a contact number. When notifying ChildNet, all efforts made to contact and locate the youth should be included. A child that is considered missing with exigent circumstances should also be reported to SafePlace at (954) 414-6005 and Palm Beach 561-472-5315, who will notify the on-call staff.

B. Missing Person Specialist (MPS)

1. Notifies the MPU Supervisor or designee, who ensures proper notification of senior management.
2. The Missing Persons Coordinator or designee creates the Missing Child Report (MCR) in SACWIS within 24 hours of notification that the child is missing.
 - a. The MCR provides to the assigned DCM, the DCM Supervisor, and data specialists.
 - b. The data specialists will update the placement information in SACWIS.
3. The child's caregiver is contacted to confirm that the child is still missing and gathers all information that the caregivers may have regarding the child and their possible whereabouts.
4. A status report is filed with the court informing all parties that the child is missing.
5. All efforts to locate the missing child are documented in SACWIS. The minimum requirement for children missing between 72 hours and 90 days is once per week. The minimum requirement for children missing more than 90 days shall be once per month. Efforts to locate missing children will be limited due to the child residing outside Broward and Palm Beach Counties but may include the following:
 - Review of commonly used social networking sites such as, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Back Page, etc.,
 - Telephone calls to the child's last know cellular phone number,
 - Accurint and/or Tracers check if the child is of age to hold employment, or if the child is believed to be with a parent whose address is unknown.



- Act as a liaison between appropriate out of County/State Law Enforcement personnel, such as Missing Person Detectives, NCMEC, etc.
6. Throughout the investigation of each missing episode, monthly supervision with each MPS is held to review the efforts to locate the children on Active Missing status.
 7. All children currently missing more than 30 continuous days will be staffed each month with the assigned or designated MPS, and the MPU Supervisor or designee. The purpose of this staffing will be to review ongoing efforts to locate and stabilize the child.
 8. A weekly notification of the active Missing Child list, generated from SACWIS is sent to law enforcement individuals designated to handle missing person's cases in Broward and Palm Beach Count and relevant ChildNet/DCM staff.

Once a child turns eighteen (18) years old while reported as missing, a notification letter is sent to the reporting law enforcement agency that the youth is still missing and informing them that the child has reached the age of majority.

C. Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager

1. The DCM notifies the following persons (even if the substitute caregiver has already done so) once a substitute caregiver has indicated the child has not been located:
 - a. The child's parent, legal custodian or relatives;
 - b. The child's therapist, if applicable;
 - c. The child's Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem, if applicable;
 - d. Any other person the DCM deems essential.
2. Ensures SACWIS has a current photograph, fingerprints, and pertinent information in the case record to assist in finding the child.
3. All efforts to locate the missing child are documented in SACWIS.
4. Determines if the last known placement is a viable place for the child to return to once recovered from the missing episode.
5. The DCM requests all needed court report updates from the MPS with advance notice when possible.



IV. Notification Requirements of Children Who Return from Runaway Status.

A. Caregiver

1. On the day of a child's return or recovery, the caregiver notifies the local police department in the jurisdiction the child returned in and requests the officer to recover the child.
2. The caregiver or person the child returned to notifies ChildNet via the Runaway Hotline at (954) 414-5999 in Broward or 561-472-5315 in Palm Beach or email hotlinerunaway@childnet.us or Palm Beach hotlinepalmbeach@childnet.us of the child's return.

B. Missing Person Specialist (MPS)

1. The designated Missing Persons Coordinator or designee completes the Missing Child Report Recovery (MCRR) in SACWIS within the next business day of notification that the child has returned. The Recovery notification is sent through SACWIS to Tallahassee for notification to the NCMEC and will vacate the SACWIS missing child alert.
 - a. The Missing Child Report Recovery is provided to the assigned DCM, the DCM Supervisor, and Data Specialists.
 - b. The data specialists update the placement information in SACWIS.
2. A status report is provided to the court informing all parties that the child has been located and recovered.
3. Within 24 hours of notification of the child's return, if age appropriate, the MPS shall attempt to contact the child to complete an interview to determine the manner by which the child went missing, if services are required, and if the child has concerns regarding their present home.
 - a. If concerns regarding the child's placement arise during the interview, the MPS notifies the DCM so that an informed decision can be made regarding the appropriateness of the placement as well as any related services the placement may need.
 - b. If during the interview, the child discloses abuse by the current caregiver, the MPS calls the Abuse Hotline and report the allegation to the DCM.
 - c. If during the interview, the child expresses a desire for services or if it appears that the child could benefit from a service referral, the MPS discusses their concerns with the DCM. In cases where the child is considered a Habitual Runaway, the MPS and DCM determine the need for stabilization services and the recommended referrals for services will be made as agreed.



- d. If during the interview the child gives a name of a potential caregiver that they desire to reside, the MPS shares this information with the DCM to determine if a home study will be conducted and who will complete the home study.
- e. Once a child returning from runaway status expresses a desire to live with a relative or non-relative, the DCM or MPS completes a home study and background checks to determine the appropriateness of an emergency placement. If the home study and background checks are cleared and the child needs to be placed immediately, the case is staffed with the ChildNet Director/Manager, DCM Director or designee to approve the placement prior to court approval. The assigned DCM, MPS, or designee shall maintain daily contact with the child until the court approves the placement. The assigned DCM requests an emergency hearing from the Children's Legal Services so that the court can approve the placement. If the court does not approve the placement, the child shall be moved immediately.

Caregiver/Provider Support

Upon Request from Providers, the Missing Persons Unit Supervisor or designee will provide training to staff in an effort to reduce the number of runaway episodes and to provide support for prevention programs within their homes.

President's Signature: _____

Date: _____

09-06-22