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Communities Connected for Kids

Title Prevention, Reporting and Services To Missing Children		**Number** 805	
Department: Quality Management	**Owner** Director of Quality Management	**Regulatory Authority/ Related Policies:** CFOP 170-3	**Attachments:** NA
Effective Date: November 2013	**Last Revision:** March 2026	**Review Date:** March 2026	

Purpose: To establish guidelines and procedures in the event of a missing child under supervision of case management services. The Department of Children and Families' Operating Procedure (CFOP) 170-3 is incorporated herein. To describe a uniform policy for ensuring prompt and comprehensive actions are taken when children are missing for any reason. This policy identifies the steps to be taken in order to prevent runaways, locate missing children, prevent further incidents and provide needed services.

Policy: This policy is applicable to all Communities Connected for Kids staff who work with children under court ordered supervision, in both out of home and in home care.

Explanation of Terms: For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

a. "Abducted" means that an individual who does not have care and custody of a child under the jurisdiction of a dependency court has taken the child and left the jurisdiction of the court or in some manner is avoiding the supervision ordered by the dependency court.

b. "Absconded" means that an individual who has care and custody of a child under the jurisdiction of a dependency court has taken the child and left the jurisdiction of the court or in some manner is avoiding the supervision ordered by the dependency court.

c. "Child" means any unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court.

d. "Department" means the Department of Children and Families unless otherwise specified.
e. "Designee" means a person, contractual provider or other agency or entity named by Communities Connected for Kids.

f. "Exigent Circumstances" means situations that require immediate actions, such as the child is under the age of thirteen, believed to be out of the zone of safety for their age and development, mentally incapacitated, in a life threatening situation, in the company of others who could endanger their welfare or is absent under circumstance inconsistent with established behaviors.

g. "Missing Child" means a person who is under the age of 18 years; whose location has not been determined; and who has been or will be reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.

h. "Runaway" means a child who has left a relative placement, non-relative placement, shelter home, foster home, residential group home, any other placement alternative or their in home placement without permission

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of the caregiver and who is determined to be missing. A child who has run away three or more times for the purposes of this operating procedure is considered a "Habitual Runaway".

i. "Dependency Case Manager" (DCM) means a professional position responsible for case management for children in placements. The term includes Communities Connected for Kids staff and staff working for an agency named as a designee.

Procedure

a. General Requirements.

1. A Dependency Case Manager (DCM) must be alert to changes in the child's behavior, emotional, and physical status, such as school problems, drug usage, depression, withdrawal and agitation. The DCM must be prepared to act quickly when a child runs away or whose location is otherwise undetermined and must know the procedures to report a child as missing. Communities Connected for Kids or designee must ensure that all caregivers are made aware of how to detect behaviors that may precipitate a child running away, as well as the procedure to follow if a child runs away or is otherwise missing.
2. The Missing Child Point of Contact for Communities Connected for Kids will be a member of the Quality Management Department. The responsibilities of the Point of Contact will include:
(a) To review the Missing Child Report (MCR) completed by the DCM or to complete the electronic MCR based on the information submitted by the DCM to assure completeness and accuracy prior to its submission to The Department of Children and Families for approval prior to subsequent submission to FDLE.
(c) To review, resolve and reconcile any Circuit issues noted in the daily issues listings sent by the Department's Child Location Unit.
3. Communities Connected for Kids will initiate a process to identify homes where run away behavior is frequent, assess those homes to determine why children run away and conduct exit interviews in accordance with 65c-28.017, "Exit Interviews." Data analysis will be conducted and needed improvements identified.
4. Communities Connected for Kids will identify and support foster homes and other licensed facilities which have good skills and specific training in providing care for teenagers. Staff with placement responsibility will be provided all current placement information available, including information on licensed homes and facilities that may not be appropriate for runaways.
5. Communities Connected for Kids will ensure all caregivers are informed of potential warning signs and understand the reporting activities expected when children run away or are determined to be missing.
6. If age appropriate, immediately upon placement of every child in out-of-home care, the DCM, jointly with the relative or non-relative caregiver, foster parent, or a staff member if placement is in a group home, will inform the child that his/her safety and well-being is a priority and will be informed of their rights and responsibilities.
7. All children will be given the Florida Abuse Hotline number (1-800-962-2873) to call if they have concerns regarding their own safety. In addition, they shall be provided with the name and office number of their Dependency Case Manager and their Guardian ad Litem.

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8. Staff of Communities Connected for Kids must instruct caregivers to immediately do the following, as applicable, and document their attempts upon discovering a child under their care is missing:

b. Initial Response by a Caregiver to a Child Who Is Believed to be a Missing Child.

1. If exigent circumstances exist, the caregiver will call local law enforcement as soon as the determination is made that the child is missing and ask 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) Provide a copy of the law enforcement report, when it is available.
(d) If the responding law enforcement officer refuses to take a missing child report, for any reason, the caregiver will request to speak to the appropriate Watch Commander or Supervisor and document the officer's name and specific local law enforcement agency name. If the Watch Commander/Supervisor refuses to take a missing child report, the caregiver will immediately contact the DCM or on-call staff to report this information. The QM Missing Child Point of Contact is available to assist under this type of circumstance.
(e) The caregiver will notify the child's DCM or emergency on-call staff and share all pertinent information listed above with emphasis on providing the law enforcement agency name, case number and if available a copy of the law enforcement report. The DCM will follow the procedures for completing the Missing Child Report in the electronic system.

2. If exigent circumstances do not exist, the caregiver will, within the first hour, check to see what, if any, of the child's personal belongings are missing or if the child left a note; and,
(a) Call the following persons as appropriate to ascertain if the child has been seen, or has given any indications that may explain the child's missing status:
(1) School/child's teachers and school resource officer;
(2) The child's relatives/parents, both local and non-local, if appropriate and the caregiver has the means for such contact;
(3) Any friends or places that the child generally frequents, the local runaway shelter (if there is one in the community); and,
(4) The child's employer, if applicable.
(b) Write down any information gathered that might help locate the child.
(c) Provide telephone numbers and ask for the individuals above to call back and share information if they have further information or see the child.
(d) Write down what the child was wearing the last time the child was seen and obtain a recent photo.
(e) Notify the child's DCM or emergency on-call staff and share all pertinent information listed above with emphasis on providing the law enforcement agency name and case number if available. The DCM will gather this information in preparation for reporting the child as missing.

3. If, at any time, the child returns to the caregiver's home, all law enforcement agencies and other agencies notified that the child was missing must be contacted immediately. If, at any time, new information is obtained regarding the child's location, all law enforcement agencies and other agencies notified that the child was missing must be contacted immediately and appropriate efforts taken to return the child to the caregiver's home.

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c. Dependency Case Management Response

1. The following information will be gathered in preparation for the reporting of a child as a Missing Child:
The child's demographic information to include name, date of birth
A physical description to include race, gender, height, weight, eye color, hair color, as well as a description of any identifying marks/scars/tattoos
What time the child was last known to be in the home or location from where they are missing or the time they were observed to leave without permission
Description of the child's clothing and of any items they may be carrying with them such as a purse, bag, backpack
Information regarding any child or person with whom they be with such as a peer or other resident of the home
Information regarding any known medical or psychological diagnoses and any prescribed medications to treat those diagnoses

2. Law enforcement will be contacted for the purpose of making and obtaining a police report for the missing child.
(a) Local law enforcement must be notified immediately in all exigent cases and within four hours in all non-exigent cases of missing children whose location is not determined. The responding officer must be asked to:
(1) Take a report of the missing child; and,
(2) Assign a case number/case report to record in the child's case record and provide the number to the caregiver or person reporting the child missing.
(3) If the responding law enforcement officer refuses to take a missing child report, for any reason, the DCM will request to speak to the appropriate Watch Commander/Supervisor and document the officer's name and specific local law enforcement agency name. If the Watch Commander or Supervisor refuses to take a missing child report, the counselor will report this information to Missing Child Point of Contact, who will contact the DCF Criminal Justice Coordinator to request assistance in obtaining the missing child report.

3. The DCM will then notify, as applicable, the following parties:
(a) The child's parents, legal custodian, relatives or foster parent,
(b) His or her immediate supervisor,
(c) The child's Guardian Ad Litem,
(d) The child's therapist,
(e) Child Legal Services (CLS)
Request that a Take and Hold/Take into Custody Order be obtained,
(f) The Child's Attorney ad Litem,
(g) The Child's Juvenile Probation Officer,
(h) Any other person the DCM deems essential.

4. In addition to notifying local law enforcement, the process for reporting a missing child is:
(a) The DCM must immediately complete the electronic version of the Missing Child Report (MCR) in FSFN. Completion of the electronic MCR will initiate notification of the child as missing to FDLE /MCIC and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and will initiate a Missing Child alert in FSFN. All contacts with FDLE and other follow up actions must be clearly documented in the child's FSFN (electronic record) chronological notes.

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(b) If exigent circumstances exist, the DCM can request initiation of emergency procedures with law enforcement.
(c) The DCM must document efforts to locate the child in the FSFN chronological notes, explicitly indicating all contacts made and attempted. Due to the critical need for timely information, all FSFN information related to Missing Children must be input immediately and not exceed 24 hours for entry.

5. If the child is residing in another state or nation, the following actions must be taken:
(a) Children placed pursuant to the conditions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), the Dependency Case Manager will immediately contact the social service worker providing supervision to request their assistance in the reporting of the child as missing to law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the child was residing. For children not placed pursuant to ICPC, the counselor will contact the caregiver with whom the child was residing and request their assistance in reporting the child as missing.
(b) The DCM will contact any parents and/or relatives who reside locally to see if they have any information on the location of the child. This information should be shared with the social service worker providing supervision or caregiver to assist law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the child was residing.
(c) When the DCM is notified by the social service worker providing supervision or the caregiver that the child has been reported as missing, the electronic MCR will be completed indicating that the child was residing out of the state of Florida and has been reported as missing in the jurisdiction where he was located.
(d) An Alert will be initiated in FSFN immediately. All information and actions taken must be clearly documented, by the DCM, in the child's FSFN chronological notes.
(e) The DCM will notify the ICPC Office as soon as possible that the child has been reported as missing and of the efforts to locate the child.

6. As soon as possible, the DCM shall, with the assistance of Child Legal Services, file notice with the court that the child has been reported as a missing child.

7. An Incident Report must be completed in the CCKids uReport System.

8. The DCM will follow FSFN instructions for updating and entering specific child information for children who are on runaway status or whose location has not been determined into the identified electronic record, FSFN. A complete data records check will be conducted immediately by the child's DCM to locate any service providers that may be active with the child. Should there be an active service provider, the DCM shall contact the service provider immediately regarding the last time the child was seen and to notify the service provider the child is missing.

9. The child's DCM or caregivers will ensure that every effort is made to encourage a child to return if they are contacted by the child who is affected by this operating procedure.

10. If at any time the child returns to the caregiver's home, all agencies notified that the child was missing must be contacted immediately to advise of the child's return. If at any time new information is obtained on the child's location, all agencies notified that the child was missing must be contacted immediately and appropriate efforts taken to return the child to the caregiver's home.

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11. The child's Dependency Case Manager will offer and arrange safe transportation for the child's return if the child makes contacts. If the child is out-of-state or in another district/region, transportation arrangements with adult supervision will be made. DCM/Staff who pick up a child in a public location should consider the appropriate safety standards in doing so in order to ensure the child's safety as well as their own safety.

a. When possible, take a coworker with you.
b. Make efforts to meet in a well-lit, public space.
c. Ensure leadership staff are aware of your plans and maintain contact before, during and after your travel.

d. Case Management Services While a Child is Missing

1. Efforts to locate the child will occur at minimum, weekly while the child's location remains unknown. (for example, contacting the family, legal custodian, relatives, Guardian Ad Litem, provider agencies, friends, the Missing Children Information Clearing House, the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children and law enforcement). Contacts must be documented explicitly in the child's electronic (FSFN) record and in all judicial review reports.

2. A missing child staffing must be held every 30 days to provide updates to stakeholders regarding efforts to locate the child.

3. Prior to each judicial review of a child in out-of-home care whose location is not determined, the DCM will:

(a) Complete a data systems (FSFN) records check to locate service providers who may be active with the child.

(b) Contact any provider listed as having been an active service provider to the child during the dates that the child's location was not been determined. Should there be an active service provider, notify the service provider the child is missing and document the last time the child was provided a service.

(c) Include in the judicial review reports specific efforts and results related to locating the child.

(d) For the period of time that the child remains missing, the Missing Child Alert initiated in FSFN will be updated and all actions taken to locate the child documented.

(1) The DCM must interview the child's caregivers to determine whether the child will be placed with them upon return.

(2) The DCM will explore other placement options in the event the caregivers do not wish for the child to return or the child expressed a strong aversion to returning to the previous placement or return to the placement is otherwise determined not to be in the child's best interest.

(3) The Missing Child Point of Contact will track and review status of all missing children on an ongoing basis.

(4) If a child becomes eighteen years old while reported as missing, all agencies notified that the child was missing will be contacted and notified that the child has become eighteen years old. A copy of the case file will be offered to local law enforcement for their continuing efforts to locate the missing person. 805

(e) Response to Interventions for Children Who Return

(1) When the child returns, the child must hear and see statements of concern regarding the child's safety and well-being from the adults who have significant relations with the child.

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(2) Relatives, non-relatives, foster parents and other caregivers shall be instructed to take care of the child's immediate needs upon return, such as food, bathing, medical attention, rest, etc. In cases when children return from runaway status, appropriate discipline or consequences can be delayed until after the immediate needs, including psychotherapeutic and behavioral interventions, of the child are met and the caregiver and the child are ready to calmly discuss the incident and clarification of behavioral expectations.

(3) When the child is located and/or returned, the DCM shall immediately notify the child's parents, legal custodian, relatives, caregivers, the Guardian ad Litem, law enforcement, the court, the Missing Children Information Clearing House, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the CCKids Missing Child Point of Contact, as well as any other agency or people who were contacted regarding the missing child.

(4) If age appropriate, the child will be interviewed privately by the DCM within twenty-four hours of the child's return to determine the child's need for further services and/or change in placement. For children located outside of circuit 19, a telephone interview will be conducted within 24 hours of the child returning. The case manager will then make a request to have the child seen face-to-face by the courtesy case manager within three days of returning to ensure the child's safety. The DCM will document this face to face debriefing in the child's electronic record's chronological notes. Additionally, the DCM will work with the child to try to determine the circumstances surrounding the episode.

(5) The DCM will consult with a supervisor and the caregiver to determine the need for a staffing, to discuss service needs, the need for a case plan update, placement changes, etc. for the child. The staffing should include caregivers, Child Legal Staff, clinical staff, the Guardian Ad Litem and teachers, if applicable.

(6) The child's DCM will ensure that the child's electronic record is updated upon the child's return to reflect that the child has returned. The MCR will be closed with a narrative regarding the circumstances of the child's return/recovery.

(7) Should a child returning from runaway status express a desire to live with a person or family member who wishes to be considered as a placement for the child, a home study and background check shall be conducted to determine if the home is an appropriate option.

(9) The child's DCM will review the child's case plan each time a child returns and will update the case plan, if necessary, and submit the update to the court (review the case plan to ensure that it includes appropriate services). The plan will include appropriate services and tasks. The caregiver will be included in the case plan update.

(9) Additional training or consultation to caregivers will be identified and provided, if necessary, to assist them to provide appropriate care to the child who has returned.

(10) All intervention actions taken when a child has returned will be documented in the child's electronic record (FSFN) by chronological note.

(11) Upon returning to care, the child who has been missing will have their photograph taken immediately. The exception to this requirement is when a child's appearance has not changed.

(12) If a child has been missing on three or more occasions, a Human Trafficking Screening Tool must be completed by an HT Certified worker.

Approved by:

DocuSigned by:
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