

<u>DEPARTMENT NAME:</u> Quality Management		
<u>CHAPTER:</u>	<u>SUBJECT:</u> Prevention, Reporting and Services To Missing Children	<u>POLICY NUMBER:</u> QM-006
<u>APPROVAL:</u>	<u>EFFECTIVE DATE:</u> July 1, 2005 Revised 10/20/05 Revised 01/07/08	<u>REPLACES:</u> CFOP 175-85 QM-006 Revised 10/20/05

- I. **PURPOSE:** This operating procedure describes uniform policy for ensuring that prompt and comprehensive actions are taken when children are missing for any reason. This operating procedure identifies the steps to be taken in order to prevent runaways, locate missing child(ren), prevent further incidents and provide needed services.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** New policy.
- III. **CONTACT:** Quality Management Department
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Children's Network staff and contracted Case Management Organization providers.
- V. **POLICY:** This operating procedure is applicable to Children's Network staff and contracted Case Management Organization providers who work with children under court ordered supervision, in both out of home care and in home care.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** This policy clarifies of the procedures to follow when a child is deemed to be missing.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Department of Children and Families operating procedure 175-85.
- VIII. **DEFINITIONS:** For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:
- a. **Abducted:** 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:** 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: any unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court.

d. Community based lead agency: a contracted community based care provider whose staff perform the functions previously performed by the department. In this policy it is the Children's Network of Southwest Florida.

e. Case Management Organization: a contracted provider which provides case management services to the Children's Network of Southwest Florida.

f. Exigent Circumstances: 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: 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: a child who has left a relative placement, non-relative placement, shelter home, foster home, residential group home, any other placement alternative or the in home placement without permission 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 policy is considered a "Habitual Runaway".

i. Child Welfare Case Manager: a Child Protection Professional or contracted provider staff with responsibility for providing supervision and/or case management services to children and families.

j. Children's Network Missing Child Specialist: a Children's Network professional position responsible for maintaining communications between CMO's units and the State in order to ensure concerted efforts to locate the missing child.

k. Regional Child Location Specialist: DCF agent responsible for enhancing the coordination and communication on missing children issues within the state's criminal justice system in concert with Florida's community-based care providers

l. FCIC/NCIC: Florida Crime Information Center / National Crime Information Center

IX. PROCEDURES:

A. General Requirements.

(1) The child welfare case manager 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 child welfare case manager 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. The Children's Network staff and contracted Case Management Organization providers 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 Case Management Organization providers will identify and support foster homes and other licensed facilities which have good skills and specific training in providing care for teenagers. The Case Management Organization providers will ensure that staff with placement responsibility has all current placement information available to them, including information on licensed homes and facilities that may not be appropriate for runaways.

(3) The child welfare case manager will ensure that all caregivers are informed of potential warning signs and understand the reporting activities expected when children run away or are determined to be missing.

(4) If age appropriate, immediately upon placement of every child in out of home care, the child welfare case manager, 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 major concern. All children will be given the Florida Abuse Hotline number (1-800-962-2873) to call if they have concerns about their safety. In addition, they shall be informed of their rights and responsibilities and provided with the contact number of their child welfare case manager, their Guardian ad Litem and the District Local Advisory Council.

B. Initial Response by a Caregiver to a Child Who Is Believed to be a Missing Child (abducted, absconded or on runaway status). Child welfare case managers must instruct caregivers to immediately do the following, as applicable, and document their attempts upon discovering a child under their care is missing:

(1) **If exigent circumstances exist** 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. 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 **“missing child report”**.

(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 case 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 and document the officer's name and specific local law enforcement agency name. If the Watch Commander refuses to take a missing child report, the caregiver will immediately contact the child welfare case manager or on-call staff to report this information. The child welfare case manager will report this information to the Children's Network missing child specialist who will contact the



Department's Regional Child Location Specialist to request assistance in obtaining the missing child report.

(e) The caregiver will notify the child's child welfare case manager or the Children's Network of Southwest Florida 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 child welfare case manager will follow the procedures outlined in paragraph 4c of this policy.

(2) **If exigent circumstances do not exist**, (See comment under B (1) above) and it is not believed that the child is in immediate danger then the caregiver will, within the first hour, determine if the child is missing and, within the first four hours, 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.
5. The following providers (If applicable): GAL, therapist, probation officer and any other contacts relevant to the child.

(b) Write down any information gathered that might help locate the child.

(c) Provide telephone/beeper 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 child welfare case manager 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 child welfare case manager will gather the information outlined in paragraph 4c(1) below in preparation for reporting the child as missing.

(f) Notify local law enforcement, etc.



(3) If at any time the child returns to the caregiver 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 on 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.

c. Child Welfare Case Manager Response.

(1) The Child Welfare Case Manager will provide a photograph of the child to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (FDLE/MCIC). The child's photo needs to be available in FSFN as well as the MCTS. The photos needs to include the child's head, neck and shoulders only. Also, the photo must be of good quality as FDLE/MCIC determines whether or not a child's photo will be used on their website.

(2) The Child Welfare Case Manager will attempt to locate the child by checking with Economic Services, Medicaid, and other information sources and systems available to the department or its designee. The following information will be gathered in preparation for the reporting of a child as a Missing Child:

- Name and contact numbers of the caseworker
- The address from where the child is missing
- The last time the child was visited by the caseworker at that address
- Name(s) and contact information of any sibling and children of the missing child
- If the missing child has a child of their own, did they take the child with them
- Name, Date of Birth and Social Security number of any adult known to be involved
- If the adult's address is different from the child's, the address of the adult
- Information obtained from other department information sources
- Information obtained by the caregiver in their efforts to locate the child
- The most recent court order and or court order indicating custody
- A brief description of the child
- If available, a finger print card for the missing child
- A list of any known medical or psychological problems
- If available, the dental records of the child
- Any other information that may assist law enforcement in locating the child

(3) The child's hard copy case file will be maintained in the local office in a centralized location and available at all times for review by local law enforcement and for the provision of updated information.

(4) The child's child welfare case manager will notify, as applicable, the following persons (if the caregiver has not already done so once it has been determined that the child is missing.

(a) Local law enforcement must be notified immediately in all 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 child welfare case manager will request to speak to the appropriate Watch Commander and document the officer's name and specific local law enforcement agency name. If the Watch Commander refuses to take a missing child report, the counselor will report this information to the Children's Network missing child specialist who will contact the Regional Child Location Specialist to request assistance in obtaining the missing child report.

- (b) The child's parents, legal custodian, relatives or foster parent.
- (c) His or her immediate supervisor.
- (d) The child's Guardian ad Litem.
- (e) The child's therapist.
- (f) Any other person the child welfare case manager deems essential.

(5) In addition to notifying local law enforcement, the process for reporting a missing child is:

(a) The child welfare case manager must complete the electronic version of the Missing Child Reporting Form (MCRF) on the appropriate web site as soon as possible, but no later than within one working day of determining that a child is required to be reported as missing. An instruction for the completion of this form is titled Missing Child Tracking System (Attachment I). Completion of the electronic MCRF will initiate notification of the child as missing to FDLE /MCIC and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). All actions must be clearly documented in the child's FSFN chronological notes.

(b) The child welfare case manager 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 inputted immediately and not to exceed 24 hours.

(6) If the missing child is residing in another state or nation the following actions must be taken:

(a) For children placed pursuant to the conditions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), the child welfare 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 child welfare case manager will contact the caregiver with whom the child was residing and request their assistance in reporting the child as missing.



(b) The child welfare case manager 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 child welfare case manager is notified by the social service worker providing supervision or the caregiver that the child has been reported as missing, the electronic MCRF will be completed immediately 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) All information and actions taken must be clearly documented in the child's FSFN chronological notes.

(7) As soon as possible, the child's child welfare case manager shall, with the assistance of Child Welfare Legal Services, file notice with the court in the form of a letter that the child has been reported as a missing child.

(8) An Incident Report must be completed by the provider and/or case manager immediately upon notification that the child is missing and faxed to all appropriate parties within 8 hours for all children missing age 12 and older who are not believed to be in immediate danger. If the child is age 12 or younger or age 12 and older and believed to be in immediate danger then an incident report must be faxed immediately. The incident report should be forwarded to the Children's Network of Southwest Florida, Quality Management department, and to the District Administrator for the Department of Children and Families, District 8. If the child welfare case manager does not generate the incident report, the originator must copy the case manager.

(9) The child welfare case manager will follow FSFN for updating and entering specific child information for children who are on runaway status or whose location has not been determined into the identified data base(s); e.g., FSFN (HSn), Interim Child Welfare Services Information System (ICWSIS). A complete data records check will be conducted immediately by the child's child welfare case manager to locate any service providers that may be active with the child. Should there be an active service provider, the child welfare case manager shall contact the service provider immediately regarding the last time the child was seen and to notify the service provider the child is missing. District/region data will be updated monthly by the child welfare case manager.

(10) The child's child welfare case manager 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.

(11) If at any time the child returns to the caregivers home, all agencies notified that the child was missing must be contacted immediately. 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 caregivers home.



(12) The child's child welfare 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 traveling supervision will be made.

d. Case Management Services While a Child is Missing.

(1) Efforts to locate the child will occur at minimum, weekly for the first three months a child is missing and monthly for every additional month thereafter. The child welfare case manager must attempt to 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. Contacts must be documented explicitly in the child's FSFN record and in all judicial review reports.

(2) For the period of time that the child remains missing, all actions taken to locate the child will be documented in FSFN and reviewed monthly at the missing child staffings coordinated by the Children's Network Missing Children's Specialist.

(3) The child welfare case manager must interview the child's caregivers to determine whether or not the child will be placed with them upon return. The case manager will assess the appropriateness of the current placement, by getting input from key individuals working with the child (guardian as litem, therapist), identify the need for additional services and/or supports to maintain the current placement and identify the need to pursue an alternative placement(s) based on the needs of the child.

(4) The child's child welfare case manager 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.

(5) If a child turns 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 within 24 hours of the birthday. **THE MCRF SHOULD BE CLOSED AND LAW ENFORCEMENT SHOULD BE NOTIFIED THAT THE MCRF IS BEING CLOSED, BUT THE CHILD IS STILL MISSING.**

e. Response to Interventions for Children Who Return.

(1) The child welfare case manager will conduct a visit with the child at their current residence within twenty-four hours of the child's return and, if age appropriate, the child will be interviewed privately by the child welfare case manager to determine the child's need for further services and/or change in placement (Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.019). Additionally, the child welfare case manager will work with the child to try to determine the circumstances surrounding the episode. In situations where the family services counselor determines the child ran away, a referral for a mental health evaluation must be made. For the child who is considered a Habitual Runaway, a referral will be made to the District/Region Behavior Analysis Services Project for a



behavioral review or comprehensive behavioral assessment by a Certified Behavior Analysts or Certified Associate Behavioral Analyst. After the review or assessment the Analyst will provide assistance in the development of an individualized plan for the prevention of continued run away behavior. Services will be contingent on the capacity of the Behavior Analysis Services Project.

(2) 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.

(3) 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.

(4) When the child is located and/or returned, the child welfare case manager 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, as well as any other agency or people who were contacted regarding the missing child within 24 hours. Law enforcement should immediately be notified if they were not the ones to recover the child so they can then remove the child from FCIC/NCIC

(5) The child welfare case manager will conduct a visit with the child at their current residence within twenty-four hours of the child's return and, if age appropriate, the child will be interviewed privately by the child welfare case manager to determine the child's need for further services and/or change in placement. Additionally, the child welfare case manager will work with the child to try to determine the circumstances surrounding the episode. In situations where the family services counselor determines the child ran away, a referral for a mental health evaluation must be made. For the child who is considered a Habitual Runaway, a referral will be made to the District/Region Behavior Analysis Services Project for a behavioral review or comprehensive behavioral assessment by a Certified Behavior Analysts or Certified Associate Behavioral Analyst. After the review or assessment the Analyst will provide assistance in the development of an individualized plan for the prevention of continued run away behavior. Services will be contingent on the capacity of the Behavior Analysis Services Project.

(6) The child welfare case manager will consult with a supervisor and the caregiver to determine the need for a staffing, to discuss service needs, need for a case plan update, placement changes, etc. for the child. The staffing should include caregivers, Child Welfare Legal Staff, clinical staff, the Guardian ad Litem and teachers, if applicable. If the child is a habitual runaway then the Children's Network missing child specialist will need to be included in the staffing.

(7) The child's child welfare case manager will ensure that FSFN is updated upon the child's return to reflect that the child has returned within 24 hours.

(8) 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 and the child shall be notified of the status of the homestudy process..

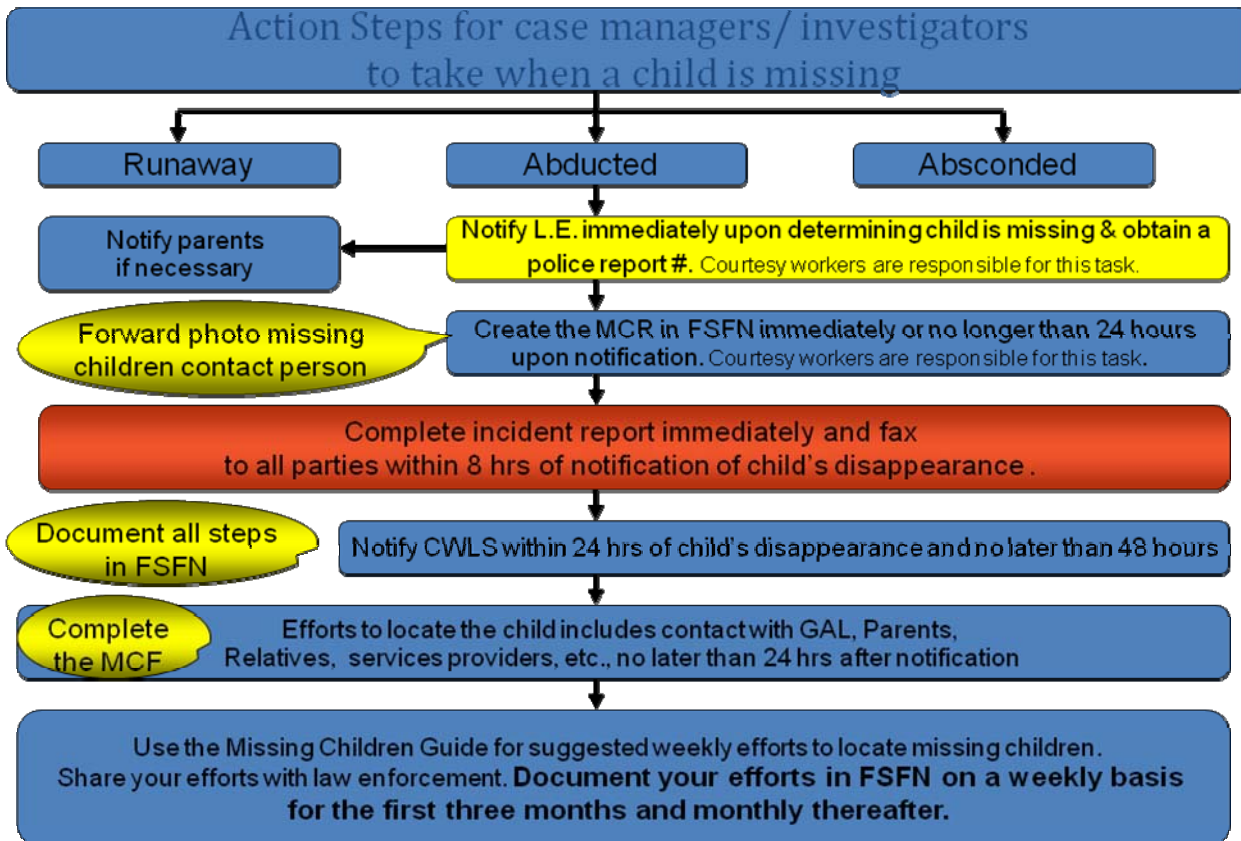
(9) The child's child welfare case manager will review the child's case plan each time a child returns and will update the case plan, if necessary, and submit the update to the court (review the case plan to ensure that it includes appropriate services). The plan will include appropriate services and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

(10) 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.

(11) All intervention actions taken when a child has returned will be documented in the FSFN chronological notes.

IX. Exhibits

A. Missing Child Tracking flow chart



If the I.R. comes from a provider you don't need to complete another I.R.

If the provider does not submit the I.R. to you, it is your responsibility to contact the provider and obtain all details in order to complete the MCR within 24 hours.



Returning of Missing Children Flow Chart



Action Steps to be taken by case managers when a child returns from Runaway, Absconded & Abducted status

Notify Law Enforcement to close NCIC/FCIC immediately

Complete the recovery interview within 24 hrs.

Complete the recovery part of the Missing Child Form (MCF).
(Send it by fax or email to CNSWFL)



Close the MCR in FSFN immediately, or no later than 24 hours

Document the child's return FSFN, notifications and update placement information no later than 24 hours

Interview Face to Face within 24 hours to determine the need for further services

