

PROCEDURE

Series:	Operating Procedures	COA: PQI 4.02, RPM 2.02 CFOP: 170-3
Procedure Name:	Prevention, Reporting, and Services to Missing Children	
Procedure Number:	OP-1085	
Reviewed Date:	04/16/24	
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Effective Date:	09/30/04	
Applicable to:	All FPOCF Staff and Contract Providers	
PURPOSE:	This operating procedure describes a uniform procedure 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 to prevent runaways, locate missing child(ren), prevent further incidents and provide needed services.	

PROCEDURE:

References: [OP1144 - Incident Reporting and Client Risk Prevention](#)

Florida Statutes: 937.021, Chapter 39.0141, 39.202

FAC: 65C-30.019, 65C-43.001

CBBC OP 1144,

1. Definitions

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.

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.

Child: Any unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court.

Designee: a person, contractual provider or other agency or entity named by CBC of Brevard.

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.

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.

Runaway: 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 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."

Care Manager: a professional position responsible for case management for children and families.

2. General Requirements

- a. A care 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 care 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. Care managers 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.
- b. Each District/Region Family Safety Office must appoint a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC)/Local Law Enforcement contact person. The responsibilities of the contact person will include:
 - (1) To act as a liaison between the District/Region or designee's staff and FDLE-MEPIC/Local Law Enforcement to ensure that all necessary information on each child is obtained.
 - (2) To review the electronic Missing Child Report (MCR) completed by the care manager or to complete the electronic MCR based on the information submitted by the care manager to ensure completeness and accuracy prior to its transmission to FDLE. The review should focus on the information outlined in paragraph 4c (1) of this operating procedure.
- c. Family Partnerships of Central Florida or its designee will identify and support foster homes and other licensed facilities which have good skills and specific training in providing care for teenagers. Family Partnerships of Central Florida ensure that OOHC Specialists have all current placement information available to them, including information on licensed homes and facilities that may not be appropriate for runaways.
- d. Family Partnerships of Central Florida 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.
- e. If age appropriate, immediately upon placement of every child in out of home care, the care manager, jointly with the relative or non-relative caregiver, foster parent, or a staff member if placement is in a group home, informs the child that his/her safety and well-being is a major concern. Children are informed of their rights and responsibilities as recommended by the statewide teen advisory board (refer to "Know the Facts, Foster

Care through the Eyes of the Teen," 1996 edition, pages 4 and 5). All children are given the Florida Abuse Hotline number (1-800-962-2873) to call if they have concerns about their safety. In addition, they are provided the name and office number of their care manager, their Guardian ad Litem, and the District/Region Local Advocacy Committee.

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

Staff of Family Partnerships of Central Florida or its designee 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, the caregiver will call local law enforcement as soon as the determination is made that the child is missing and ask the officer to:

- (1) Take a report of the missing child.
- (2) Assign a case number and provide the number back to the caregiver or person reporting the child missing.
- (3) Provide a copy of the law enforcement case report when it is available.
- (4) 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 care manager or on-call staff to report this information. If necessary, the care manager should contact their local child location point of contact for assistance. If the local child location point of contact requires further assistance in getting a child reported as missing to local law enforcement, they should contact the Central Region DCF Criminal Justice Services Unit.
- (5) The caregiver will notify the child's care manager or Case Management Agency (CMA) 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 care manager will follow the procedures outlined in paragraph 4 of this operating procedure.

2. If exigent circumstances do not exist, the caregiver will immediately complete the following diligent search activities. Completion of diligent search activities shall take no longer than 4 hours from the time that the child is first suspected of missing.

- (1) Search the child's belongings for notes, potential contact information for the child or associates, possible locations or means of travel, etc.;
- (2) Call/text the child's cell phone;
- (3) Check the child's computer, social media accounts, or other online accounts;
- (4) Contact the child's friends, relatives, or known associates;

- (5) Search areas that the child is known to frequent;
- (6) Contact the child's school; and,
- (7) Contact the child's employer. Write down any information gathered that might help locate the child.
- (8) Provide telephone numbers and ask the individuals above to call back and share information if they have further information or see the child.
- (9) Write down what the child was wearing the last time the child was seen and obtain a recent photo.
- (10) Notify the child's care 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 care manager will gather the information outlined in paragraph 4(1) below 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 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.

4. Child Welfare Professional's Initial Responsibilities

1. The child welfare professional or designee attempts to locate the child by checking with Florida ACCESS, Medicaid, and other available information sources. The following information is also be gathered:

- (1) Name and contact information of the primary child welfare professional;
- (2) The address from where the child is missing;
- (3) The date and time the child was last seen at that address;
- (4) The names, dates of birth, and addresses of any children or adults the missing child may be visiting or staying with;
- (5) The clothing the child was last seen wearing;
- (6) A list of any known medical or psychological problems;
- (7) Information obtained from other Department data sources;
- (8) Information obtained by the caregiver during their efforts to locate the child;

- (9) The most recent court order indicating custody;
- (10) A current photograph, if available, and brief description of the child;
- (11) A fingerprint card for the missing child, if available;
- (12) Dental records for the missing child, if available;
- (13) Locations in which the child is known to frequent; and,
- (14) Any additional information that may be useful for law enforcement in locating the missing child.

2. The child's hard copy case file is 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.

3. The child's care 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 and share the information identified in paragraph 4(1):

4. Local law enforcement must be notified within four hours in all cases of missing children whose location is not determined, unless exigent circumstances exist. The responding officer must be asked to:

- a. Take a report of the missing child; and,
- b. 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.

5. The Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator will also contact NCMEC to report the child as missing by calling their 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or by utilizing their web-based reporting system at <https://cmfc.missingkids.org/reportit/>. Information to be provided by the Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator is limited to:

- a. The name and date of birth of the child;
- b. A physical description of the child including, at a minimum, the height, weight, hair color, eye color, gender, and any identifying physical characteristics of the child;
- c. A photograph of the child; and,
- d. Endangerment information, such as pregnancy status, prescription medications, suicidal tendencies, vulnerability to being sex trafficked, and other health or risk factors.
- e. The child's parents, legal custodians, relatives, or foster parents.

(3) His or her immediate supervisor.

(4) The Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator.

f. Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider. Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider must file notice with the court within one business day after being notified that the child is missing. Notice to the court shall be documented within two business days.

g. The child's Guardian ad Litem and/or Attorney ad Litem.

h. The child's therapist.

i. The child's Juvenile Probation Officer, if the child has an open case with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

(9) The Region Compact Specialist, if the child is placed out-of-state in accordance with the Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC) or if a child missing from Florida is known or believed to be out of the state. If the out-of-state law enforcement agency requires that a Take Into Custody or Pickup order be domesticated in the state from which the child is missing, the child welfare professional will work with the Regional Compact Specialist and/or the out-of-state child welfare professional to satisfy the reporting requirements of the out-of-state law enforcement agency.

(10) United States Customs and Border Protection and the Department of State, if the child is known or believed to be out of the country.

(11) Any other person the child welfare professional deems essential who is not otherwise prohibited by law. Should the child who is missing be involved in an active child protective investigation or receiving judicial or non-judicial in-home services, the child welfare professional shall immediately staff the case with his or her direct supervisor to ascertain if present or impending danger exists. If present or impending danger is identified, the child welfare professional will staff the case with Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider within 24 hours of determining that the child is missing to obtain a Pickup or Take into Custody Order if one or more of the following conditions exist:

(1) Law enforcement will not initiate efforts to locate the child without a court order.

(2) The caregiver or legal guardian of a child in an active child protective investigation or receiving judicial or non-judicial in-home services is refusing to cooperate with efforts to locate the child, including:

(a) Has not reported the child as missing to local law enforcement within the timeframes set forth in paragraphs 7a-c of this operating procedure and continues to refuse to do so after being informed of the need to do so.

(3) There is reason to believe the child's whereabouts are known by the caregiver or legal

guardian and the lack of cooperation is for the purpose of denying the child welfare

professional access to the child, or the family has or is about to flee to avoid further agency intervention.

10. In addition to notifying local law enforcement, the process for reporting a missing child is as follows:

- b. The child welfare professional or designee shall enter the MCR in the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) within 24 hours of determining that the child is missing.
 - (1) The MCR shall include, but is not limited to:
 - (a) Demographic information and characteristics related to the child that has been reported missing.
 - (b) Name and contact information of the primary child welfare professional.
 - (c) The narrative shall contain the following information, at minimum:
 - i. 1. Information on where the child was last seen;
 - ii. 2. The child's direction of travel;
 - iii. 3. What the child was last seen wearing;
 - iv. 4. The child's possible destination, if known;
 - v. 5. Prior recovery locations from earlier missing child episodes, if
 - vi. applicable, or areas in which the child is known to frequent;
 - vii. 6. Personal belongings that the child took with them, if applicable;
 - viii. 7. Any other information that might be helpful in the recovery of the child.
 - ix. Information regarding any suspected companions. An original or scanned photo of the child, if available, must be mailed or e-mailed to the MEPIC immediately. A photocopy of the child's picture is not acceptable.
- c. If exigent circumstances exist, the MEPIC can be contacted directly to assist in initiating emergency procedures with law enforcement.
- d. The local child location point of contact must check the MEPIC web page at www.fdle.state.fl.us/missing_children/ within seven days of the MCR being sent to MEPIC to ensure that the child has been entered into the missing child database. If the child is not entered, the contact person must call MEPIC at 1-888-356-4774 to find out if there is any additional information needed to have the child placed in the system.

- e. The care 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 a Missing Child must be input immediately and not exceed 24 hours.

11. If the 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 care manager immediately contacts 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 care manager contacts the caregiver with whom the child was residing and requests their assistance in reporting the child as missing.
- b. The care manager contacts any parents and/or relatives who reside locally to determine if they have any information on the location of the child. This information and the information outlined in e (1) is shared with the social service worker providing supervision or caregivers to assist law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the child was residing.
- c. When the care manager is notified by the social service worker providing supervision or the caregiver that the child has been reported as missing, the electronic MCR is completed indicating that the child was residing out of the state of Florida and has been reported missing in the jurisdiction where he was located.
- d. All information and actions taken are clearly documented in the child's FSFN chronological notes.
- e. The care manager 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.

12. As soon as possible, the child's care manager shall, with the assistance of Child Legal Services, file notice with the court that the child has been reported as a missing child.

13. An Incident Report is completed as outlined in [FPOCF OP1144](#), "Incident Reporting and Client Risk Prevention", paragraph 4, Procedures.

14. The care manager follows FSFN instructions for updating and entering specific child information for children who are in a runaway status or whose location has not been determined into FSFN. The care manager also informs the FPOCF intake and placement unit that the child has run away. A complete data records check is conducted immediately by the child's care manager to locate any service providers that may be active with the child. Should there be an active service provider; the care manager contacts the service provider immediately regarding the last time the child was seen and notifies the service provider the child is missing.

15. The child's care manager or caregivers ensures 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.

16. If at any time the child returns to the caregivers' home, all agencies notified that the child was missing are 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.

17. The child's care manager offers and arranges 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 are made.

5. Care Management Services While a Child is Missing

1. Efforts to locate the child will occur at minimum, once every 7 calendar days for the first 90 days a child is missing and then once every 30 days thereafter, unless information supports a more frequent check (e.g., severe maltreatment is alleged, or there are credible reports that a child has been frequenting a certain location, etc.). Contacts must be documented explicitly in the child's FSFN record using the missing child – efforts to locate note type which the child attached as a subject of the note and in all judicial review reports.

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

- a. Complete a data system 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 unknown. 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.

3. The care manager must interview the child's caregivers to determine whether or not the child will be placed with them upon return.

4. The child's care 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. The FPOCF child location point will ensure that the FSFN Runaway and Absconded Alert report and the Runaway and Absconded Exceptions report are being tracked and reviewed on a monthly basis.

6. 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.

7. Compliance with efforts to locate will be tracked by FSFN and the child location point of contact.

8. A missing child staffing must be held every 30 days to provide updates to the stakeholders noted in paragraph 9f (2) of this operating procedure regarding efforts to locate the child.

(1) The staffing shall be initiated by the primary child welfare professional or the Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator or designee; whichever individual is responsible for making the reasonable efforts to locate for the month in which the staffing occurs.

(2) The following individuals and entities must be notified of the staffing by the individual completing reasonable efforts to locate the child (if applicable):

- (a) Child welfare professional;
- (b) Child welfare professional's supervisor;
- (c) Law enforcement;
- (d) Children's Legal Services or the contracted legal provider;
- (e) Regional Criminal Justice Coordinator;
- (f) Guardian ad Litem;
- (g) Attorney ad Litem;
- (h) Juvenile Probation Officer; and,
- (i) Victim Advocate.

6. Response and Interventions for Children Who Return

1. Upon learning that a child who was originally missing from an active child protective investigation or a judicial or non-judicial in-home services case or a child missing from an out-of-home care case in which there may be present or impending danger has been located, the child welfare professional, on-call child welfare professional, or designee responds immediately, to include weekends and holidays, to the child's location to assess the child's safety. If the child is located outside of the child welfare professional's service area, the child welfare professional, on-call child welfare professional, or designee immediately makes an Out-of-Town Inquiry (OTI) or courtesy request to assess the child's safety.

2. Relatives, non-relatives, foster parents and other caregivers are 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 care manager immediately notifies the child location point of contact, 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 and complete either a standard or rapid recovery in FSFN.

4. If age appropriate, the child is interviewed privately by the care manager upon notification of the child's return within 24 hours to determine the child's need for further services and/or change in placement. The care manager will complete the Runaway Risk Assessment and Debriefing form with the child upon notification of the child's return within one business day. The Runaway Risk Assessment and Debriefing form (**see attached**) will be sent to the CBC Missing Child Point of Contact once completed.

Additionally, the care manager works with the child to try to determine the circumstances surrounding the episode. Inquire into the child's experience while absent from care, including identifying if the child has a history of running away, sexual abuse, or if the child discloses being trafficked or reports 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 pursuant to Rule 65C-43.001, F.A.C. In situations where the care manager determines the child ran away, a referral for a mental health evaluation must be made. For the child who is considered a Habitual Runaway (3 or more runs), a referral is made to a behavior analyst for a behavioral review or comprehensive behavioral assessment by a Certified Behavior Analyst or Certified Associate Behavioral Analyst. After the review or assessment, the Analyst provides assistance in the development of an individualized plan for the prevention of continued run away behavior.

5. The care manager consults with a supervisor and the caregiver to determine the need for staffing, to discuss service needs, and the need for a case plan update, placement changes, etc. for the child. The staffing should include caregivers, Child Legal Services Staff, clinical staff, the Guardian ad Litem and teachers, if applicable.

6. The child recovery is documented in CCWIS by completing the electronic MCR recovery form within 24 hours, to include weekends and holidays, upon learning that a missing child has been located.

(1) A rapid recovery form must be used when the MCR has not been approved by the DCF Statewide Missing Child Specialist and FDLE/MEPIC.

(2) A standard recovery form must be used when the MCR has been approved by the DCF Statewide Missing Child Specialist and FDLE/MEPIC.

(3) The DCF Statewide Missing Child Specialist reviews the missing child recovery report to ensure that the case meets case closure criteria with FDLE/MEPIC/NCMEC.

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 is conducted to determine if the home is an appropriate option.

8. Additional training or consultation with caregivers is identified and provided, if necessary, to assist them in providing appropriate care for the child who has returned.

9. All intervention actions taken when a child has returned are documented in the FSFN chronological notes.

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:



PHILIP J. SCARPELLI
President and Chief Executive Officer
Family Partnerships of Central Florida

APPROVAL DATE: 12/10/2025

Runaway Risk Assessment & Debriefing (OP1085)

Date of Interview: _____

Demographic Information:

Child's Name:	Child DOB:
Care Mgr./Agency/Unit:	Supervisor:
Date Missing:	Date of Recovery:
# Days Missing:	Location of Recovery:
# of Runaway Episodes:	Law Enforcement Agency:
Last School Attending/Grade level:	Nicknames/Alias:
Screen Names and social media accounts:	Relatives and contact information
DJJ Probation: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes or <input type="checkbox"/> No	JPO Name:
Gang Involvement: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes or <input type="checkbox"/> No	JPO Phone #:
Gang Affiliations:	

Placement Information:

Name of Placement:	Date of Placement:
Length of Stay in home/facility:	# of placements:
Name of Foster/Group Home:	Permanency Goal:
Date of Removal:	

Questions to the child:

1. What caused you to run?
2. What could have been done to change what caused you to run?
3. Where did you go when you ran?
4. Did you run away with another youth or by yourself?
5. Where do you want to live? This may include out-of-county and out-of-state.
 - a. Name:
 - b. Address:
 - c. Contact Number:

d. Relationship:

6. If that is not possible, who is your second choice?

- Name:
- Address:
- Contact Number:
- Relationship:

7. What happened to you when you ran?

8. Did anyone help you while you were on runaway (give you food, clothes, rides)?

9. Where did you eat while you were on runaway?

10. Have you used any drugs and/or alcohol while on runaway?

11. If yes, do you feel you need treatment and are you willing to get treatment?

12. Do you feel safe in your current placement? If not, why?

13. Who are the people that you feel can trust?

14. If you could change anything about your life, what would you change?

15. Do you understand why Family Partnerships of Central Florida is involved in your life right now?

16. What else can you tell me that you think would help you and other children who have runaway?

17. How do you feel in your current placement?

18. Were you given plenty of food in the foster home/facility?

19. Do you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend?

20. Are you sexually active?

21. Have you been abused/neglected while in the home or on runaway status?
22. What did you like best or least about this foster home or facility?
23. Did you feel safe living with others in this foster home or facility?
24. What can we do to help improve the situation, so that you don't feel like you need to run in the future?
25. Who would you like to have more contact with?

If you asked to call people on your approved phone list, were you ever told no?

	Y	N		Y	N
Case Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Therapist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Please feel free to list any other issues or concerns that will help you now and in the future.

Case Manager to note observations of child (emotional state, affect, appearance, clothing, bruises or injuries)

Child's Signature

Signature of Interviewer