



POLICY TITLE: Missing and Absconded Children		PAGE 1 OF 34
 	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY Approved by: _____ Agency Director Date: _____	REVISION HISTORY: June 6, 2007 March 19, 2013
LATEST REVISION: May 12, 2017	EFFECTIVE DATE: April 8, 2013	

I. AUTHORITY	The Director of Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA, or Agency) adopts this policy to be consistent with the Agency's mission and all applicable federal and District of Columbia laws, rules, and regulations, including the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and its implementing regulations, as well as the applicable provisions of Title 4 (Chapter 13) and Title 16 (Chapter 23) of the DC Code, and the <i>LaShawn A. v. Gray</i> Implementation and Exit Plan.
II. APPLICABILITY	All CFSA and contracted agency staff.
III. RATIONALE	Studies indicate that children who enter the child welfare system may be more prone to run away or be otherwise missing than those who are not in care. As a result, the child welfare community works to prevent the circumstances that may lead to children running away or being otherwise missing. Such efforts, however, are not always successful. CFSA must have clearly outlined reporting procedures as well as access to resources that can assist in locating children who are missing or who have absconded. Timing is also an important factor because missing and absconded children are at great risk of victimization, exploitation, injury, and even death.
IV. POLICY	<p>It is CFSA's policy to establish requirements and provide instructions for the Agency and contracted agency staff to respond when children who are involved with CFSA are reported or believed to be missing or absconded. It is further the policy of CFSA that when a child is missing or absconded, the resource provider and assigned social worker shall notify the individuals, agencies, and organizations described in the online <i>Missing and Absconded Children Business Process</i>.</p> <p>Immediate notification to the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the child is placed (hereafter referred to as the local law enforcement agency) and the CFSA Absconder Unit is mandatory and critical. The Absconder Unit shall support the social workers' efforts to locate and return the child. CFSA has developed this policy to provide social workers and resource providers with guidelines for responding to reports of missing and absconded children. Within this policy, the term "child" refers to anyone under the age of 21 years of age.</p>

Commented [A1]: Is there a need for similar policy for in home cases?

Commented [A2]: Has this been discussed with MPD? They don't identify youth over the age of 15 as critically missing.

V. CONTENTS	<p>A. Reporting Requirements for Resource Providers and Caregivers B. Reporting Requirements for the Social Worker C. Requirements for Supervisory Social Workers D. The Role of the Absconder Unit E. Social Worker's Tasks When a Missing or absconded Child is Located</p>
VI. SECTIONS	<p>Section A: Reporting Requirements for Resource Providers and Caregivers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Resource providers</u> (including foster parents, relative resource providers, and staff of congregate care facilities) and caregivers shall file a police report with the local law enforcement agency within 1 hour from the time <u>that they discover</u> the child went missing or absconded. 2. Resource providers and caregivers shall also report any missing or absconded child immediately the CFSA Hotline and the assigned social worker, providing both with the police report number. 2-3. <u>Resource providers and caregivers shall also make reasonable efforts to locate the missing/absconded child (e.g., contact neighbors, the school, and the missing/absconded child's friends).</u> 3-4. If the child returns home, the resource provider/caregiver shall immediately notify the local law enforcement agency, CFSA's Hotline, the assigned social worker, and other relevant parties who may have been notified that the child was missing or absconded.
	<p>Section B: Reporting Requirements for the Social Worker</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The social worker shall use <u>reasonable efforts</u> to try and locate the missing or absconded child within 24 hours from receipt of notice that the child is missing. 2. <u>If the resource provider or caregiver has not made a police report then it is the social worker's responsibility to contact police and file a report.</u> 3. <u>The social worker shall contact National Center of Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) by filing missing child report on the the designated NCMEC website.</u> 4. <u>If information is discovered that the child may be residing in another State, the social worker will contact the police in the state where it is believed the child is residing.</u> 5. <u>The social worker shall notify the child's parents/legal guardian that the child is missing.</u> 6. If the missing or absconded child is in the legal custody of CFSA and efforts to locate him or her are <u>unsuccessful</u>, the social worker shall immediately request assistance from the CFSA Absconder Unit to locate the missing or absconded child. 7. <u>The social worker shall document in FACES.NET all attempts to locate the missing or absconded child on a weekly basis.</u>

Commented [A3]: Business Process p. 2 has a short list of examples

Commented [A4]: CFSA should consider documenting failures to do this in Faces so that they can consider a foster parent's reporting compliance when deciding to place other children in the home.

Commented [A5]: See definition in the Business Process

Commented [A6]: Time frame? Within 24 hours

POLICY TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
Missing and Absconded Children	Page 2 of 4

	<p>Section C: Case Management Requirements for the Social Worker</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the missing or absconded child is identified as being high-risk, the social worker shall initiate a Child Locator Staffing within 7 calendar days of receipt of notice that the child is missing. 2. The social worker shall consult police/law enforcement weekly concerning progress towards locating the child and any leads the police may have discovered. 3. The social worker shall maintain weekly contact with the resource provider.
	<p>Section C: Requirements for Supervisory Social Workers</p> <p>Upon notification by the social worker that a child is missing or absconded, the supervisory social worker shall ensure that all reporting requirements have been completed and review/revise the plan as necessary to ensure progress is made toward locating the missing or absconded child.</p>
	<p>Section D: The Role of the Absconder Unit</p> <p>The CFSA Absconder Unit is responsible for searching for missing and absconded children who are in the legal custody of CFSA. The CFSA Absconder Unit shall work collaboratively with the assigned social worker, the District's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) as well as other community agencies to help locate missing and absconded children and return them to CFSA's care. The CFSA Absconder Unit shall document in FACES.NET all attempts to locate the missing or absconded child.</p>
	<p>Section E: Social Worker's Tasks When a Missing or absconded Child is Located</p> <p>Once a child is located, the social worker will ensure the child has transportation to Healthy Horizons for a placement screening. The social worker shall notify the resource provider, the police, the child's parents, the court, and counsel that the child has been located within 24 hours of receiving notice of the child's location. The social worker shall notify NCMEC that the child has been located. It is imperative that the social worker engage the child within 5 days to determine why the child was missing or absconded, the most appropriate placement for the child based on his or her safety and well-being and the circumstances which led to the child being missing or in abscondence and to prevent further disruptions. The social worker shall make close observations of any evidence of physical abuse, substance abuse, or new tattoos/brands the child may have gotten while on runaway. The social worker shall pay close attention to any unexplained purchases such as new clothes, cellular phone, sex paraphernalia, large amounts of cash or any other known indicators of possible sex or labor trafficking victimization. If during the conversation the social worker suspects the child has been a victim of sex or labor trafficking or the child disclose being a victim of sex or labor trafficking the social worker will immediately</p>

Commented [A7]: How does this identification happen and where is it documented?

Commented [A8]: See Business Process (p. 6) for more details

Commented [A9]: See Business Process (p. 6) for more details

Commented [A10]: How often is the Absconder Unit required to report its efforts to the family or resource provider?

Commented [A11]: Has MPD delineated what efforts they will put forth for non "critically missing" youth?

Commented [A12]: Is there a standard measure/scale/tool that social workers will use so that CFSA can easily monitor for trends?

POLICY TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
Missing and Absconded Children	Page 3 of 4

call the CFSA Hotline and notify the police within 24 hours. The social worker shall then follow the Agency protocol for sex trafficking identification and response.

POLICY TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
Missing and Absconded Children	Page 4 of 4