

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management Section 22: Missing and Runaway Children	
	Effective Date: September 1, 2023	Version: 5

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POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) has procedures to locate a child in care who is missing and/or runs away from placement.

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PROCEDURE

DCS will make on-going, diligent attempts to expeditiously locate any missing child involved with DCS. These attempts will be made for a child who is missing and involved with DCS through:

1. An open assessment;
2. An Informal Adjustment/Prevention Plan (IA);
3. An out-of-home placement (including a residential facility);
4. An in-home Child in Need of Services (CHINS); or
5. A Trial Home Visit (THV).

DCS will continue to make foster care payments to the resource parent for a maximum of five (5) calendar days when a child in out-of-home placement is missing or runs away if the intent is for the child to return to the same resource home. If the child does not return to the placement within five (5) calendar days of absence, then the placement and per diem will be terminated for the child, unless otherwise approved by the DCS Regional Manager (RM).

Note: When a request for continued placement and per diem (for a child missing over five [5] days) is received from a Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA), the Deputy Director of Field Operations will review and, if approved, provide a written statement approving the request.

Within 24 Hours

When notified that a child involved in an open DCS assessment or case has run away or is missing, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will **complete items 1-6 within 24 hours** of being notified of the missing/runaway child (See the Missing and Runaway Child Flowchart):

1. Request the custodial parent, resource parent, or residential provider contact the appropriate local Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) to file a runaway/missing person report and obtain the LEA report number;

Note: If the missing or runaway child has an open assessment or case, and the parent, guardian, or custodian has not reported the child to local LEA, the FCM will report the child as missing or runaway to LEA and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within 24 hours of being notified of the missing or runaway child. If

the parent, guardian, or custodian states they have already reported the child as missing or runaway to LEA, the FCM will obtain the LEA report number and follow up with LEA.

2. Inform the parent, guardian, or custodian (unless TPR is finalized) of the child's runaway or missing status and inquire about the child's whereabouts and any recent contact with the child;
3. Gather pertinent information from the child's caregiver and other household members regarding:
 - a. When and where the child was last seen,
 - b. The child's last known state of mind,
 - c. Any unusual events prior to the child's disappearance, and
 - d. Whether any of the child's possessions are missing.
4. Confirm the child has been reported as missing to the Indiana State Police (ISP) via the Indiana Data and Communications System (IDACS);
 - a. Ensure the child is entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, if not already done,
 - b. Request ISP and local LEA reports, and
 - c. Maintain regular contact with ISP, LEA, and NCMEC until the child is located.
5. Complete the NCMEC form with all pertinent information, including a description of the child's or youth's physical features, such as height, weight, sex, ethnicity, race, hair color, and eye color; and ensure the Child Endangerment section of the form is completed by adding relevant information, including the child's or youth's:
 - a. Pregnancy status,
 - b. Prescription medications,
 - c. Suicidal tendencies,
 - d. Vulnerability to Human Trafficking (see Missing and Runaway Child Flowchart), and
 - e. Any other health or risk factors.
6. Utilize the "Email" button within the NCMEC form to generate an email to the Indiana Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline), and ensure supporting documents and **a current photograph** of the missing child or youth are attached to the email prior to sending;

While the Child is in Missing/Runaway Status

The following will be completed by the FCM after completing the above steps:

1. Verify with the Hotline that NCMEC is contacted immediately after the child is determined to be missing or a runaway;
2. Notify the FCM Supervisor of the child's absence from care;
3. Notify the following of the child's runaway or missing status if there is an open case:
 - a. The DCS Staff Attorney,
 - b. The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL), and
 - c. The Child and Family Team (CFT) members.
4. Attempt to contact the child on the child's cell phone (if applicable);
5. Complete a referral to the DCS Investigators for assistance with contacting a child through social media or other additional assistance in locating the child (see Forms and Tools);

6. Visit locations the child frequents (e.g., school, park, movie theatre);
7. Contact the child's family, friends, school staff, employer, and other individuals who have a close relationship to the child to inquire about the child's whereabouts and any recent contact with the child;

Note: The FCM should make regular attempts to contact the child, visit locations the child frequents, and maintain contact with all parties involved in the search for the child throughout the child's absence from care.

8. Report new relevant information to ISP, local LEA, and NCMEC, if applicable;
9. Document the following information in the case management system:
 - a. The runaway/missing person episode,
 - b. Corresponding documents,
 - c. Information gathered, and
 - d. Efforts to locate the child.
10. Staff with the FCM Supervisor, as necessary, to provide updates on locating the child.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Discuss case specifics, assessment details (if applicable), and results of the Human Trafficking Screening Tool and the Human Trafficking Assessment Screening Tool (if applicable) with the FCM; and
2. Assist the FCM, as needed, and ensure appropriate documentation, including any deviation from best practice, is entered in the case management system.

The DCS Staff Attorney will file a notice with the court of the child's missing or runaway status no later than the **next business day** after notification is received from the FCM when there is an open CHINS or IA case.

Note: Notice should advise the court of any information regarding the ongoing efforts to locate the child.

The DCS Hotline Intake Specialist (IS) will:

1. Complete an Intake Report from the Missing and Runaway Youth Information form; and
2. Notify NCMEC of the missing/runaway child and provide requested details using the NCMEC website (see Forms and Tools).

Once the Child is Located

When the child is located, the FCM will:

1. Ensure the FCM Supervisor is aware the child has been located;
2. Notify ISP; local LEA; NCMEC; the parent, guardian, or custodian (unless TPR is finalized); the DCS Staff Attorney, and all other parties previously contacted to assist in the search for the child;
3. Interview the child as soon as possible (**within 48 hours**). The interview should include a discussion of the reasons the child ran away, where the child went, and with whom the child was residing;

Note: Children may run away from placement for different reasons, including but not limited to missing family, friends, feeling unsafe or unwanted in their current placement, or wanting more freedom. Children who are missing or run away are at a higher risk of

being sexually or physically abused, becoming involved in criminal behavior, and/or becoming victims of human trafficking.

4. Complete the Human Trafficking Screening Tool in the case management system. See policy 4.47 Human Trafficking;

Note: A new placement should not be entered for a child until the Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool has been completed.

5. Make a report to the Hotline upon indication by the Human Trafficking Rapid Indicator Tool or if the child discloses Human Trafficking;
6. Discuss case specifics, assessment details (if applicable), and the results of the Human Trafficking Screening Tool with the FCM Supervisor to determine next steps regarding:
 - a. Safety needs,
 - b. Placement,
 - c. Service referrals,
 - d. Involvement of LEA, and
 - e. Need for a human trafficking forensic interview.

Note: If the Human Trafficking Screening Tool indicates the child may be a victim of human trafficking, the FCM must call and report it to the Hotline.

7. Notify the CFT members and convene a CFT Meeting within **five (5) business days of the child's return**. During the CFT Meeting, discuss and develop a plan to meet the child's needs with a focus on ensuring the child's safety and meeting the needs of the child's caregiver (if applicable). See policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings;
8. Update the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment (see policy 5.19 CANS); and
9. Document results of the Human Trafficking Screening Tool and all decisions and actions taken in the case management system.

When the child is located, the FCM Supervisor will:

1. Discuss case specifics, assessment details (if applicable), and results of the Human Trafficking Screening Tool and the Human Trafficking Comprehensive Screening Tool (if applicable) with the FCM; and
2. Assist and guide the FCM, as needed, and ensure appropriate documentation, including any deviation from best practice, is entered in the case management system.

When the child is located, the DCS Staff Attorney will file a notice with the court of the child's found status no later than the **next business day** after notification is received from the FCM when there is an open CHINS or IA case.

Note: Notice should advise the court of any relevant information regarding the child's missing or runaway episode.

The Human Trafficking Regional leads or the Human Trafficking Focused Needs Director may be contacted for assistance during any absence of a missing or runaway child. See the Focused Needs and International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) SharePoint site for more information.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

DCS Investigators

DCS Investigators are employees of DCS who are responsible for assisting family case managers (FCMs) in locating absent parents, relatives, and/or other identified persons of interest to the case and/or assessment.

Human Trafficking

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines human trafficking as:

1. Sex trafficking- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or the person being induced to perform such act is under 18 years of age.
2. Labor trafficking- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Forms and Tools

- [DCS Focused Needs and International and Cultural Affairs \(ICA\) SharePoint](#)
- [DCS Investigation Services](#): Available via the DCS Community SharePoint
- Human Trafficking Assessment Tool: Available in the case management system
- Human Trafficking Screening Tool: Available in the case management system
- Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults phone number: 1-800-831-8953
- [Indiana Data and Communications System \(IDACS\) website](#)
- IDACS phone number: 317-232-8294
- [Missing and Runaway Child Flowchart](#)
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Form: Located in the case management system
- NCMEC Instruction Tool: Available in the case management system
- NCMEC phone number: 1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST)
- NCMEC website: [Missingkids.org](#)
- [National Runaway Safeline website](#)
- [Release for Use of Photographs \(SF 54968\)](#)

Related Policies

- [4.47 Human Trafficking](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 10-13-5-4: "Missing Child"](#)
- [IC 10-13-5-4.4: "Missing endangered child"](#)
- [IC 31-33-18-2 \(25\): Disclosure of unredacted material to certain persons](#)
- [IC 31-34-1-3.5: Victim of human or sexual trafficking](#)

- [IC 31-34-1-8: Missing child](#)
- [IC 31-37-23: Interstate Compact on Juveniles](#)
- [34 USC 11201-11281: Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)
- [34 USC 11291-11298: Missing Children](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 5.22

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

N/A

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