



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

Subject:	Child Welfare Services Alerts
Authority:	S.C. Code 63-7-910; S.C. Code 63-7-1990
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	Child Welfare Services Staff
Purpose:	
To provide information and directives regarding Child Welfare Services (CWS) Alerts and the requirement of all program staff to complete alerts in CAPSS so information that may enhance child safety can be communicated statewide.	
Policy Statement:	
The Department of Social Services (DSS) maintains an automated process for collection and dissemination of CWS Alerts whenever a child in any open child welfare services case, is deemed missing or abducted and there is a concern for present or impending danger. Staff shall complete CWS alerts as outlined in this policy. See Missing or Abducted Children Response Policy for additional guidance on missing and/or abducted children.	
Policy Administration:	
The CWS Safety Office is the owner of this policy. The Director, or the Director's designee, shall review this policy at least annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Services Policy Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.	
Policy Guidelines:	
A. In-State Notification of a CWS Alert	- In addition to complying with the Missing or Abducted Children Response Policy, staff must complete the CWS Alert on the missing child's person tab in CAPSS, immediately but no later than 24 hours after being notified the child is missing. The information shall include, but is not limited to: - Time and mode of last contact; - Last known address and phone number; - Perpetrator(s) or family members to be included in the alert; - All known demographic information including physical descriptions; - Circumstances requiring an alert (e.g., immediate medical needs, law enforcement, human trafficking concern); and - Mode of transportation child was last seen in. - Once the alert has been completed in CAPSS, an autogenerated email will be sent to the following: - CWS Safety Office;

Subject: Child Welfare Services Alerts

	b. CWS Operations Office; and c. DSS Trafficking Unit if trafficking is identified 3. Once the CWS Alert has been entered into CAPSS, the names of the individuals listed in the alert will be indicated with a flag.
B. Out-of-State Notification of a CWS Alert	1. DSS may be notified of a missing child by another state in the following circumstances: a. If there is reason to believe a child from their state is now in South Carolina; or b. If a child who is a resident of South Carolina is recovered in a different state. 2. A written request for an alert shall be sent to the CWS Safety Office at cwsalerts@dss.sc.gov by the requesting agency. The following information shall be included: a. Names and dates of birth of victims; b. Time and mode of last contact; c. Last known address and phone number; d. Perpetrator(s) or family members to be included in the alert; e. All known demographic information including physical descriptions; f. Circumstances requiring an alert (e.g., risks, special considerations (court orders), immediate medical needs, and law enforcement involvement that place the child at risk of present or impending danger); and g. Descriptions of the vehicle, license tag number, or other mode of travel, if known.
C. Safety Office Responsibilities	1. For all out-of-state requests for a CWS Alert, the CWS Safety Office shall enter the information into CAPSS as a CWS Alert within one business day, if the child is a resident of South Carolina and part of an open CWS case. 2. Once the alert has been completed in CAPSS, an autogenerated email will be sent to the following: a. CWS Safety Office; b. CWS Operations Office; and c. DSS Trafficking Unit if trafficking is identified. 3. Once the CWS Alert has been entered into CAPSS, the names of the individuals listed in the alert will be indicated with a flag. 4. If the child is not a resident of South Carolina, the CWS Safety Office will: a. Reach out to the requesting agency/state and inform them the alert is unable to be completed; b. Notify the DSS Trafficking Unit and intake; and

Subject: Child Welfare Services Alerts

	c. Determine the need for a referral to law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Endangered Children (NMEC). 5. The Office of Inspector General will be notified by the safety office in all instances when there are concerns for criminal activity (e.g., abduction). Note: In some circumstances, the CWS Safety Office may consult with the CWS Operations Office.
D. Locating Missing Children	1. If the identified missing child is located, staff are responsible for updating CAPSS to reflect the child is no longer missing. 2. Staff shall update the persons tab in CAPSS with the following information: a. Date and time the child was located; b. Where and how the child was located; and c. Any other pertinent information. 3. Once CAPSS is updated with the above information, an automated email will be generated and disseminated to the: a. CWS Safety Office; b. CWS Operations Office; and c. DSS Trafficking Unit if trafficking is identified. 4. Once the CWS Alert has been updated in CAPSS, the names of the individuals listed in the alert will no longer be indicated with a flag.

Forms:	DSS Form 1356: Guide for Missing Report to NCMEC
Related Management Reports:	N/A

Glossary:
Child: a person under the age of 18 Child Welfare Services Alerts: a notification issued when staff become aware that a child in an open case is deemed missing and there are concerns for present or impending danger Present danger: an immediate, significant, and observable severe harm or threat of severe harm occurring in the present

Subject: Child Welfare Services Alerts

Impending danger: a state of danger in which family conditions, behaviors, attitudes, motive, emotions, and/or situations are out of control and, while the danger may not be currently active, it can be anticipated to have severe effects on a child at any time

In-state CWS Alert: notification issued when staff is notified a child with an open CWS case has been determined missing in South Carolina

Out-of-state CWS Alert: notification issued when staff is notified a child with an open CWS case has been determined missing outside of South Carolina